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Big Peace Sign Wins Speedy Rec-Park OK

Plan irks some neighbors of Golden Gate Park

By Phillip Matier and Andrew Ross
Chronicle Staff Writers

Despite objections from neighbors, plans for a giant peace sign at Golden Gate Park got the green light yesterday from the San Francisco Recreation and Park Commission.

In a unanimous vote, the seven commissioners handed a tree-lined slice of the Panhandle to the Art Commission — with a nonbinding suggestion that it consider downsizing the sculpture from 28 feet to, say, 18 feet.

**MATIER
& ROSS**

Stanlee Gatti, the Art Commission president behind the Summer of Love monument, joked: "Sure, we'll consider it . . . maybe by a few inches."

Seriously, he said, the size of the sculpture would probably be left open to the artist, Tony Labat, who at the hearing appeared sympathetic to the park commission's size concerns.

Technically, the plan for the stainless steel sculpture now goes back to the Art Commission for a final round of hearings — but considering it was the commission's idea in the first place,

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it's safe to say that the love icon is on its way.

Mayor Willie Brown hasn't spoken up on the sculpture issue, but has privately expressed support for it, according to Gatti.

For its part, the Rec and Park commission steered clear of the issue of whether the huge peace sign was appropriate, or even art.

Instead, the commissioners only gave their blessing to handing over the grove of trees near Oak Street and Masonic Avenue to Gatti & Co. to use for a sculpture — any sculpture.

As we reported Wednesday, the peace sign would be paid for and maintained with private funds.

Nonetheless, some neighbors were up in arms over something so big — and so man-made — going into the park.

Rachel Ellis, a Panhandle resident, likened the structure to "a trinket you can get for a buck in the Haight."

Others objected to any new sculptures going into the park.

There were also objections to the "fast track" pace at which the sculpture was approved.

"They're all just lackeys of (Mayor) Brown," neighborhood activist Ellis fumed as the vote was cast.

Although the peace sign got the thumbs-up, another monument — this one in honor of former Mayor Joe Alioto — didn't fare as well.

At the same meeting, the Rec & Park commissioners tabled restaurateur Angelo Quaranta's idea of renaming historic Washington Square in North Beach for the ailing ex-mayor, pending a community hearing next month.

And you can bet that will be noisy, too.

"I'm not opposed to naming something after Joe Alioto, but why do they have to do it now?" fumed North Beach Chamber executive director Marsha Garland. "The man isn't even dead yet."

OAKLAND LOGIC: When it comes to crazy logic, it's hard to beat the Oakland City Council.

Tuesday night the august body voted to give itself a 62 percent pay hike, raising council salaries from \$37,000 to \$60,000 a year.

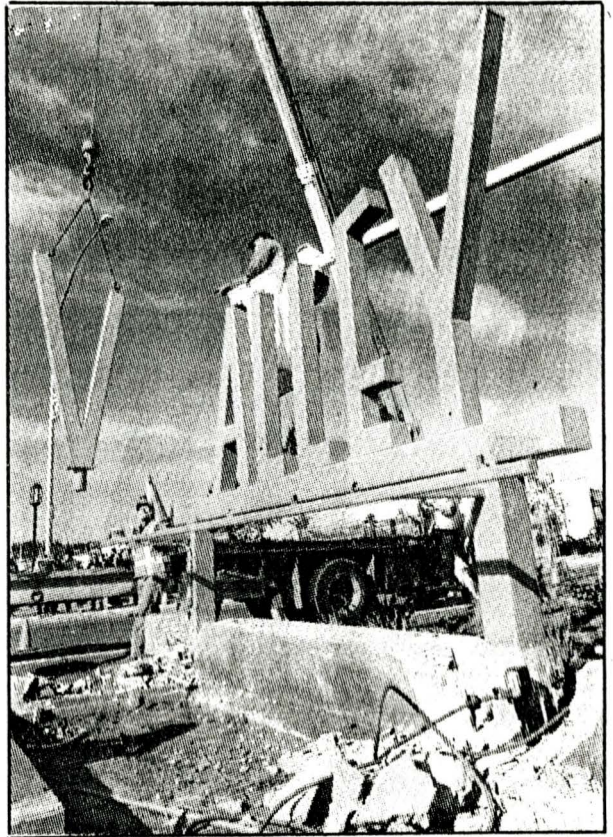
The council members' logic: Since the pay increase was handed to them by the duly appointed Ethics Commission, they had no choice but to accept it.

But the real icing on the cake came when they intoned that taxpayers might sue if the council members didn't take the raise.

Riiiight — taxpayers suing to force politicians to take a pay raise. We can see 'em lining up now.

COFFEE, TEA OR WILLIE: About 600 Willie Brown supporters — from commissioners to department heads — paid \$37.50 each to have breakfast with the mayor last Friday at the San Francisco Hilton.

The 90-minute breakfast consisted of orange juice, rolls and a rambling Willie rehash of his most recent speeches — covering everything from the need for



BY MICHAEL MACOR/THE CHRONICLE

The Welcome to Castro Valley sign was removed after residents' vehement protests

more attention to Muni to cleaning up city streets.

How did it go down?

"People were not as wildly enthusiastic (as earlier gatherings)," says one attendee. "Frankly, some of the things he's said in the last six months have rubbed off badly on people."

If guests were hungering for a bit more, they weren't alone. As soon as the event was over, the mayor took off to have himself a real breakfast.

SIGNING OFF: They didn't dance in the street, but there sure was a lot of cheering and horn honking in Castro Valley when the infamous "Welcome" sculpture came down yesterday.

"People were just going nuts. Honking, taking pictures, even grabbing pieces of cement," said Ken Carbone, owner of Java Bob's coffee shop, located on Redwood Boulevard just across from the sign.

And no one was happier than Alameda County Supervisor Mary King, whose district was up in arms over the canoe-topped sculpture.

"Ding dong, the sculpture's gone," King sang as she answered the phone yesterday.

All jokes aside, King said she was sad for artist Sheila Klein and sad that it took a near revolt to get the sculpture down.

As for where the Welcome canoe goes next — that's anybody's guess ... but "Welcome to The Castro" does have a certain ring to it.

Chronicle columnists Matier and Ross can be heard on KGO Radio on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Phil Matier can also be seen regularly on KRON-TV. Their e-mail address is matierandross@sfgate.com