

Sunset density limits lifted for some special events

by Brad Broberg

The Highline Community Parks Board apparently will be able to bend the rules, but not break them, when it comes to holding special events at its Sunset Junior High School complex.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Port of Seattle have agreed that Sunset's 60-person density limit A

(for safety) will be lifted for approved special events.

The complex is located on land owned by the port directly below Sea-Tac Airport's north flight path.

Before a special event can be held, the parks board will be required to submit an application to the port, describing the event and how many people it is expected to involve. The port then

will forward the application to the FAA.

"What we told the port and also the parks board was that if they schedule some sort of special event for fund raising, then we can see them doing it, but not on a regular basis," said George Saito, FAA planner.

THE AGREEMENT was announced last week in a letter from Oris Dunham, director of

aviation at the airport, to Bill Bowlin, parks board president.

The parks board has fought for relaxed density limits ever since it took control of Sunset last year.

Although this new agreement will permit the board to hold vital fund-raising events (dances, bingo, etc.), it falls short of allowing the kind of regular multiple uses envisioned by Bowlin.

"The facility ought to be utilized fully by the community," he said.

The parks board controls the shop, gyms, locker rooms, band room, offices, cafeteria and 50 surrounding acres in what is known as the north clear zone.

The board bought the shop building from the port, but leases the other facilities from King County, which bought them from

the port. The board leases the 50 surrounding acres from the port.

The port originally gained Sunset in an out of court settlement of a noise suit brought against it by the Highline School District.

A MAJOR recreational park is planned for the 50 acres surrounding Sunset, which would serve as its focal point. The parks

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board, a non-profit corporation, is charged with overseeing the park's growth.

The board intends to promote development by issuing sub-leases for portions of the park to various user groups, which then would be responsible for constructing their own facilities.

So far the most active group has been the North Sea-Tac BMXers bicycle motocross club, which has built a competition course at the park.

Since the density guidelines ap-

ply throughout the park and not just to the Sunset complex, events such as motocross races must also comply with certain limits, which can range from four people per acre near Sunset to 16 per acre at the fringes of the clear zone, said Ed Parks, community relations manager for the port.

But those limits will not be enforced to the letter so long as the activities are geared toward participants and not spectators, he said.

"We're looking for people to

use the park," said Parks.

BOWLIN believes further relaxation of the density guidelines are needed, especially as they apply to use of Sunset.

He said he would like to see all of the facilities booked up "from 10 to 10 seven days a week."

For now, though, Jackie Hoobler, who is in charge of regular scheduling at Sunset, must work around the 60-person limit, which often eliminates any simultaneous scheduling.

She said that two square dance groups, two exercise classes, a

basketball group, a drum and bugle corps and a church group currently are using the facilities on a regular basis.

They are charged fees ranging from \$15 to \$30 for two to three hours of use, she said.

Groups wishing to schedule time at Sunset can do so by calling Hoobler at 243-8818.

Bowlin said that a grand opening celebration at Sunset is planned for April 3-4.

The parks board meets every third Wednesday at 7:30 at Sunset, 1809 S. 140th St.

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