

# Livermore Area Recreation and Park District

## Staff Report

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TO: Chair Pierpont and Facilities Committee

FROM: Mathew Fuzie, General Manager

PREPARED BY: Patricia Lord, Assistant General Manager

DATE: May 15, 2019

SUBJECT: Launching Rockets on District Property

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RECOMMENDATION: That the Facilities Committee recommend the Board of Directors consider amending Section 507(a) of Ordinance No. 8, Rules and Regulations regarding rockets on District property to state:

“It shall be unlawful to operate missiles, rockets, or similar projectiles powered by chemical motors including, but not limited to, black powder or composite propellants (i.e. ammonium perchlorate, potassium nitrate, aluminum powder and associated binders) in an District Facility or Parkland.”

BACKGROUND: Livermore Area Recreation and Park District, Ordinance No. 8 Rules and Regulations, Section 507(a) – Rockets currently states:

“It shall be unlawful to operate missiles, rockets, or similar projectiles powered by chemical motors including, but not limited to, black powder or composite propellants (i.e. ammonium perchlorate, potassium nitrate, aluminum powder and associated binders) in an District Facility or Parkland *without a Permit.*”

Due to the risks and safety concerns, such as fire danger associated with rocket launches on District property, staff recommends amending the ordinance to not allow permits for consideration.

A formal request for a permit was received by the District on February 26, 2018 from the Livermore Unit of the National Association of Rocketry (LUNAR). While LARPD appreciates the endeavors of LUNAR, after careful consideration, staff denied the permit for rocket launches on District property based on the aforementioned safety concerns. At the April 10, 2019 Board of Directors meeting, during public comment, representatives from LUNAR requested that the Board consider approval of rocket launches by their organization for educational purposes. (See Attachment A – Letter to Board of Directors from the Livermore Unit of the National Association of Rocketry NAR Section #534)

Records indicate that LUNAR held rocket launches at LARPD sites for approximately 15 years. From 1992 to 1993 at Gardella Greens, and from 1993 to 2007 at Robertson Park. During that

period, according to LUNAR, nearly 50,000 model rockets were launched without incident. However, even with their strict safety procedures, two serious incidents were reported that raise safety concern for the District.

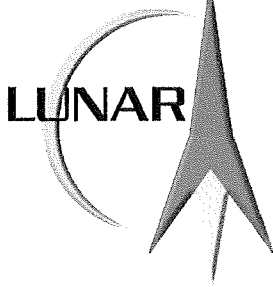
- 1) On August 5, 2001 at approximately 1:00 PM, a rocket “struck a roof and wedged beneath a shingle at a home located at 2363 Chateau Way in Livermore. According to the Livermore Police dispatch and Livermore/Pleasanton Fire District (LPPFD), the rocket created a hole in the garage roof and was stopped by a cross beam.
- 2) On September 16, 2006 at approximately noon, according to LPPFD, a fire at Robertson Park was caused by LUNAR rocket launches at the site.

Since the 2006 fire incident at Robertson Park, the site has grown in popularity and regular use. The park is heavily used year-round with sports programs, a tot lot, dog park, paved pedestrian/bicycle trail along the arroyo and an equestrian arena. The District has invested in lighted synthetic sports fields at Robertson Park. An errant rocket could cause injuries to people and animals, as well as property damage. With public safety concerns in mind, staff has not identified another location within the District to allow a permit for rocket launches.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact.

Attachment:

- A. Letter to Board of Directors from the Livermore Unit of the National Association of Rocketry NAR Section #534, received April 8, 2019.



LUNAR

The Livermore Unit of the National Association of Rocketry  
NAR Section #534

3 April 2019

Received

APR 08 2019

LARPD

Board of Directors  
Livermore Area Recreation and Parks District  
4444 East Avenue  
Livermore, CA 94550

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen of the Board,

The Livermore Unit of the National Association of Rocketry (LUNAR) will be attending the Board meeting this coming Wednesday, April 10. We will be petitioning to allow us to hold educational rocket launches on the Robertson Park gravel parking lot.

Since our founding in 1992 by Livermore police captain Mark Weiss (now retired) and myself, LUNAR has had a very strong, positive relationship with both LARPD and all of the LPFD Fire Marshals. For more than 15 years we held our launches at LARPD sites: at Gardella Greens from 1992 to 1993 and Robertson Park from 1993 to 2007. During that period we flew nearly 50,000 model rockets without incident, thanks to our strict safety procedures. We voluntarily stopped flying there as a club when housing developments were built too close for the larger class of rockets that we were flying. We did, however, get the occasional permit to fly small educational rockets for 4H and other science classes.

With the increased interest in STEM education recently, I have been teaching not only the 4H classes, but have gotten requests from the Livermore Public Library to teach a rocket class as well as private enrichment schools. When I approached LARPD for a permit, I was turned down without explanation. When I appealed to the General Manager's office, I received a vague dismissal citing "safety concerns" apparently ignoring all of the safety information I had supplied with my appeal.

Hence my petition to the Board to listen to my presentation of educational and safety information. A permit for the occasional small educational launch will allow us to continue the tradition that we as a club have established for over two decades.

Thank you for your time,

Jack Hagerty  
LUNAR #002  
Co-Founder, Senior Advisor