

Mr. Amory Hanson
8102 Ellis Avenue
Apartment 121
Huntington Beach CA 92646

June 7, 2022

The Mayoress of Huntington Beach
2000 Main Street
Huntington Beach CA 92648

My Dear Madam Mayoress,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the recommendation of the Huntington Beach Community Services Commission to name the park at 1706 Orange Avenue "17th Street Park" and to name the building "Michael E. Rodgers clubhouse." I urge the Huntington Beach City Council to instead adopt the name "Michael E. Rodgers Park" or "Michael E. Rodgers 17th Street Park", and to instead consider naming the building a more generic name reflecting the building's usage, such as "Veterans Hall" or "the American Legion's Post 133's Hall."

The Huntington Beach Community Services Commission's recommendation, made largely due to a tie vote on a previous recommendation to avoid making no recommendation, did not consider the history behind the site. The Huntington Beach Community Services Commission's recommendation also ignored the recommendations of the Huntington Beach Community Services Commission's Park Naming And Memorials' Committee and the Huntington Beach Historic Resources Board.

I do not deny that the previous unofficial name of the park is 17th Street Park, nor that The Michael E. Rodgers Seniors' Center has been replaced by the Senior Center in Central Park. However, I believe that Huntington Beach should not erase Mr. Rodgers' name from history. I instead believe the park should be named after Mr. Rodgers.

Mr. Rodgers was one of the most prominent advocates for senior citizens in Huntington Beach. He was a founding member of the Huntington Beach Council on Aging. He was also a member of the deliberative assemblies now known as the Huntington Beach Citizens' Participation Advisory Board and the Orange County Transportation Authority's Board of Directors. Most Importantly, He also lobbied the Huntington Beach City Council to build the old Senior Center.

**SUPPLEMENTAL
COMMUNICATION**

Meeting Date: 6/7/22

Agenda Item No.: 14(22-486)

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The site now known as the Michael E. Rodgers Center was deeded to the city of Huntington Beach in 1914, for use as a new city hall. City hall at that time was on 105 Main Street. Ultimately, Huntington Beach did not move city halls until 1931, when Mayor Bowen was Mayor, and then again in 1974, when Mayor Matney was Mayor.

The park remained desolate and forlorn, and served for a time as a pistol range. During World War II, the United States military used the park for this and other purposes.

Following World War II, A building at the Santa Ana Army Air Force Base was bought by Huntington Beach, when Supervisor Talbert was Mayor. In 1949, when Mayor Greer was Mayor, that building was moved to this site.

The building served as a community center from 1949-1975. With an increasingly aging population, the building was made a senior center in 1975, when Mayor Coen was Mayor. This was largely due to the advocacy of Mr. Rodgers.

In 1984, when Mayor Kelly was mayor, the Huntington Beach City Council passed a motion by Mayoress Bailey, then a Councilwoman, to name the site "The Michael E. Rodgers Seniors' Center" by a vote of 6-0-1 (Mayor Mandic, who was a councilman at the time, was absent and unable to attend the meeting). When the Huntington Beach City Council considered this, they did not feel the need to name the park something different. The implication was that the full site should be named after Mr. Rodgers.

From 1984-2016, The Michael Rodgers Seniors' Center served thousands of Seniors. However, in 2006, when Mayor Sullivan was Mayor, a majority of The voters of Huntington Beach approved Measure T. This ballot measure proposed the creation of a new Senior Center in Central Park. After 10 years, the Senior Center in Central Park opened in 2016. The Senior Center in Central Park's opening resulted in senior services being moved from the Michael Rodgers Seniors' Center to the Senior Center in Central Park.

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In 2020, when Mayoress Semeta was Mayoress, the Huntington Beach City Council voted to renovate the parkland at 1706 Orange Avenue. I truly believe the new park should be named "Michael E. Rodgers Park" or "Michael E. Rodgers 17th Street Park."

The reason for this is of the utmost simplicity. While 17th Street is simply the name of a geographic location, Mr. Rodgers is a man who devoted much effort to successfully lobbying for the old senior center. In fact, by successfully lobbying for the old senior center, Mr. Rodgers helped restore the decaying facility sometimes unofficially referred to as the "17th Street Park " or the "recreation center". I understand the desire for a return to the way things were in 1909, but this should not be done at the expense of the memory of a man from 1984.

While naming the outreach building after Mr. Rodgers would recognize his contributions, naming the full park more reflective of the intent of the Huntington Beach City Council when they considered the naming of this site in 1984., when Mayor Kelly was Mayor. When the Huntington Beach City Council considered this, they did not feel the need to name the park something different. The implication was that the full site should be named after Mr. Rodgers.

Using the more generic name of "veterans hall" ensures that "Michael E. Rodgers 17th Street Park" remains the dominant name in the minds and mouths of Huntingtonians. This was discussed during the community services commission's debate as an alternative. The intention is for the outreach building to be used by the American Legion.

One concern that was brought up by Mrs. Costelloe at the Huntington Beach Community Services Commission's Meeting was that the name "Veterans hall" might be too similar to the veterans resource center at the Huntington Beach Central Library. Consideration might be made to naming the building "American Legion Hall" "American legion Post 133's hall" if this is a concern the Huntington Beach City Council has. Similarly to veterans hall, This would honor the American Legion and particularly it's 133rd Post and it's long and strong presence in Huntington Beach, but be generic enough to ensure Mr. Rodgers' name remains part of our conversations and thoughts. Of note, many members of American Legion Post 133 support retaining Mr. Rodgers' name on the park.

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The Huntington Beach city council has never voted to remove an individual's name from a park. Doing so, even if it would remain on a building, would create a dangerous precedent for future councils. Every former mayor, former councilman or other Huntingtonian who has a park named after them cannot live with the certainty that their name will remain on that park, nor can future individuals, including The Mayoress and current councilmen. Not all parks have buildings on their land.

The Huntington Beach Community Services Commission showed a great lack of understanding of Huntington Beach's history during their May 11, 2022 meeting. Their arguments largely were based on personal concerns, such as the convenience for fathers and mothers to know what street a park is located on. These are the arguments of emotion, not logic.

When Mayor Katapodis was Mayor, A similar issue came before the Huntington Beach City Council in 2016. The Huntington Beach Community Services Commission recommended renaming Robert Wardlow Park after Mr. Frank Ciarelli and to name the park at the former William Lamb Elementary School after Mr. Delbert Higgins. While Messrs. Ciarelli and Higgins both made significant contributions to the City of Huntington Beach, The Council instead passed a motion by Councilman Peterson to retain Mr. Wardlow's name on the Park at 19761 Magnolia Street, and to name the new Park at William Lamb Elementary School after Mr. Lamb and his wife, Elizabeth.

The vote on the parks named after Messrs. Lamb as well as a park named after Mr. Andrés Arevalos and Wardlow was a unanimous vote. Mayor Katapodis and his colleagues at the time set aside their ideological differences to preserve the names of three individuals who had parks named after them. History was and is too important to ignore.

One of the arguments made for renaming the parks named after Messrs. Lamb and Wardlow, as well as a park named after Mr. Andrés Arevalos is that they were pioneers from Fountain Valley.

In the case of Mr. Rodgers, this is not a concern. Mr. Rodgers resided at 9861 Lapeworth Circle, Huntington Beach. Mr. Rodgers was a true Huntingtonian icon and should continue to be recognized at the parkland at 1706 Orange Avenue. Mr. Rodgers' name must not be erased from Huntington Beach's history.

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Once Again, I strongly urge the Huntington Beach City Council to stand on the right side of history by voting to name the park at 1706 Orange Avenue, "Michael E. Rodgers Park" or "Michael E. Rodgers 17th Street Park" and to name the building a more generic name, such as "Veterans hall" or "American Legion Hall."

Sincerely Yours,

Mr. Amory Hanson

CC: The Honorable Michael Posey
CC: The Honorable Rhonda Bolton
CC: The Honorable Kimberly Buck Carr
CC: The Honorable Daniel Kalmick
CC: The Honorable Natalie Tomich Moser
CC: The Honorable Erik H. Peterson