

City completes review of sport leagues

Four adult and one youth sports league will have limited access to Costa Mesa fields beginning in the fall of 2016, after they failed to meet the city's new local residential participation guidelines.

In July of 2015, the Costa Mesa City Council adopted a new Field Use and Allocation Policy to provide a clear and concise set of rules and regulations regarding field usage.

Paperwork submitted by the five sports leagues failed to meet the guidelines set forth by the new field use policy.

In accordance with the policy, various users of both youth and adult sports must meet certain requirements in order to use the fields, one of which is verification of local residency and proof that a percentage of those who participate reside in the school district boundaries and/or attend a public or private school within the Newport-Mesa School District boundaries. Using this criteria, sports leagues are placed into six different groups that have priority for field use.

Youth sports groups that either pay coaches and administrators or hold tryouts instead of letting all children play have to meet a higher percentage of local resident participation than youth leagues that are largely recreational in nature.

"The policy was created to ensure that Costa Mesa residents and children who play in recreational programs are at the top of the list when it comes to who gets to use our fields and resources," said Travis Karlen, the manager of the city's Parks and Community Services.

Further, by making these field usage changes effective by next fall of 2016, the city is giving these sports leagues ample time to find other options.

"We are letting these groups know they are out of compliance now so that they have enough time to look for other fields for their participants to use," Karlen said.

To ensure the leagues complied with the policy, city staff worked diligently in requesting rosters and verification documents from each organization to confirm that each one met the required percentage of local residency for the appropriate group classification.

While the original deadline to submit residency verification was Aug. 31, 2015, the deadline was extended to Oct. 30, 2015 to give applicants more time to meet the requirements.

All groups will be notified of the audit results and those who did not meet the guidelines will be given every opportunity to submit the proper paperwork for future consideration.

City staff and ambassadors will continue to enforce the Field Use and Allocation Policy and audits during the spring 2016 season and in subsequent seasons.