

To: Members of the San Francisco Sugary Drinks Distributors Tax Advisory Committee

**From: Janna N Cordeiro, MPH
Sugary Drinks Distributors Tax Advisory Committee Member
Seat 15 –Parent of student at SFUSD appointed by SFUSD Parent Advisory Council**

June 19, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

I apologize for not being able to make tonight's meeting. I have come down with a bad cold and it's best I keep my germs to myself. I was very much looking forward to the discussion about the Mayor's Budget and her vision for the soda tax dollars.

In lieu of being there in person, I've asked the backbone staff to pass this letter on to either one of the co-chairs or to Vanessa, the chair of the Community Input Subcommittee to read aloud.

First and foremost, I am very pleased that the Mayor concurred with the majority of our recommendations, which is a testament to the transparency, thoughtfulness, and expertise we all brought to the table to craft the recommendations. I am also pleased that she was able to identify additional projected revenue to recommend.

In addition, I am extremely pleased that SF Recreation and Parks Department is now committed to increasing access to scholarships for low-income families for their programming and provide programming on-site for youth living in shelters, low-income, and public housing. I've seen firsthand how difficult it has been for low-income families to find essential summer camps and safe, afterschool activities for their children. These are very worthy investments. I look forward to seeing a detailed plan from SF Rec and Park, including a budget, and a sincere process for community engagement to plan and implement these ideas. I expect that most, if not all of you, concur with these sentiments as I know we are all committed to increasing equitable access to physical activity for youth most targeted by the beverage industry (e.g. low-income, youth of color).

However, there are a few things that need to be stated for the public record, and I've asked staff to include this letter with the minutes.

Taking a long view, please keep the following in mind as we work to hold SF Rec and Park leadership accountable to their promises made in the press release from the Mayor's office on May 24, 2019.

- 1) SF Recreation and Parks Department is the only City Department that has publicly accepted funds from the soda industry. They have taken several hundred thousand dollars from the Coca-Cola Foundation (with the Parks Alliance as a pass-through) to fund their mobile rec program. The current senior leadership was in place when that happened. They have not publicly received funds from the soda industry in the last few years, but there is record of it in recent years since the soda tax was first introduced into San Francisco in October 2013.
- 2) Rec and Park currently receives voter legislated “baseline” or “set-aside” funding from general funds. Soda taxes are general funds and about 30% of all the soda tax revenue must go to these legislated budget requirements (Rec and Park is just one of several). Thus, Rec and Park, is already getting soda tax dollars with no accountability required.
- 3) The first representative from SF Rec and Park that sat on this board missed several crucial meetings and thus missed opportunities to advocate for funding for Rec and Park. And while the City Administrator’s office did not take a record of attendance (they were the backbone staff at the time), I am very confident that if we had the attendance policy we currently have, the Rec and Park representative would have been removed from the committee. The remaining members on the committee made extraordinary efforts to attend the meetings—including changing flights, attending during family emergencies, and attending shortly after giving birth to a child. I am volunteering my time, unlike the Rec and Park appointee, and attended almost every single meeting during that first very important year.
- 4) When Rec and Park realized that they would not automatically get the \$2+Million they expected from the SDDTAC process in early 2018, they sent an advisory email out to their community members (a list I am on) falsely claiming that the SDDTAC was going to cut free Zumba programming at Rec centers, and we had very upset community members take time out of their busy lives to let us know how important Zumba was. Soda tax money that we had control over had nothing to do with Zumba programming. Rec and Park staff also alerted staff and participants of the Peace Park program about potential funding going away and we did benefit from hearing very passionate descriptions of the value of Peace Parks, and included funding in our recommendations both last year and this year to support the Program because it aligns well with our mandate.
- 5) Since last fall we worked very hard on developing our next round of recommendations and developing systems to ensure the funds support health equity and are transparent and accountable. We heard this priority from staff from the Mayor’s office, and the committee is in agreement. While we received requests from other City Departments, from SFUSD,

from the Faith Community, and others, we did not receive one request from Rec and Park during this process, and the new Rec and Park representative on the board made no indication that RPD wanted anything further than the Peace Parks recommendation.

- 6) Now, with the release of the Mayor's statement and funding recommendations, we learned a few things. Rec and Park leadership bypassed our community-driven, open and transparent process, and went directly to the Mayor's office for their request. We don't know what they asked for, we don't know what was promised in return, but we do know that the Mayor decided to cut a few things from our recommendations and use the expected excess tax dollars to give RPD over \$2Million for 2019-2020 alone with no community input process or plan available to the public. Furthermore, part of the funds taken from our recommendations and recommended for RPD was \$680,000 the committee thoughtfully set-aside to tell the wonderful stories of all the good programs and work being done with the soda tax dollars. The stories, more than anything, will counter the misinformation that the multi-billion dollar sugary drink industry has been spreading about soda taxes all over the world. This budget recommendation has taken possibly one of the most important tools we have to counter the beverage industry's targeting of young people, poor people, and people of color. We can do better.

The world is watching how we spend these dollars. And they are waiting for our stories. Stories about the impact of our investments are desperately needed now.

Given the Mayor's elimination of the media funds, I would like to advocate that we build in a media requirement to the larger organizations that apply for the CBO funds later this summer (RFP is not final yet). It could be a small amount to include—much like funders often require a small percentage to be for evaluation. I'm happy to share my communications ideas since I have implemented similar projects, on limited budgets, with minimal communications expertise.

Let's work together to hold SF Recreation and Parks Department accountable for the promises they've made with these recommendations, and moving forward, we must do everything we can to keep this process open, transparent, fair, and equitable.

Thank you all for your consideration.

In solidarity,

Janna Cordeiro

The above letter represents the facts as I understand them, and are my own viewpoints. They do not represent the opinions of my employer, nor those of the PAC.