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Attachments: Revised Redwood Park Permit & Permit Review Letter from Arcata City Manager Karen Diemer

Redwood Park to Open for Free Speech Event on 420

ARCATA, CALIFORNIA – The City of Arcata has agreed to keep the gates of Redwood Park open on April 20 this year to allow a local non-profit to hold a free speech event under a limited use permit.

The City of Arcata previously denied a permit to the Humboldt Center for Constitutional Rights on the grounds that the Arcata Police Department had a standing reservation for use of the picnic area and stage every April 20th. The local civil rights organization has been working to keep the city from closing the park off from the public.

Following a recent permit review by City Manager Karen Diemer, however, HumRights staff Monday signed and submitted a revised picnic permit allowing friends of the nonprofit access to the park on April 20 between the hours of 2:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., for an Inaugural Picnic and Gathering.

“While HumRights does not accept limits on free speech and assembly on public property without any proof of imminent danger, HumRights has agreed to accept limits on its free speech event in order to keep our public park open to the public,” said HumRights Executive Director Jeffrey Schwartz. “We feel this permit is an important first step in our efforts to keep our public spaces open.”

The permit limits the free speech celebration to the picnic area and specifies that within the permitted area there will be no smoking or alcohol. It specifically prohibits HumRights from using the stage or amplified sound.

“With the terms of the permit, the city is saying that free speech is allowed as long as we keep it quiet,” Schwartz said.

HumRights had been previously told that the Arcata Police Department had a standing reservation at the park on April 20th of every year for the picnic area, stage and building as a staging area and command post for public safety operations on that date.

“With this permit, the City of Arcata is at least acknowledging that political expression cannot take a backseat to police training,” Schwartz said. “We hope that if Arcata police still plan to hold training operations in Redwood Park on April 20, they will be respectful of the desire of our citizens to celebrate their First Amendment rights to free speech and assembly, part of the U.S. Constitution which all police officers in this country are sworn to protect.”

Redwood Park is located just south of Humboldt State University in Arcata at the east ends of 11th and 7th streets.

Further updates about the event will be posted on our website at www.humrights.org. For more information about the event or to volunteer, please email Outreach Director Kaci Poor at kacipoor@gmail.com or call [707-633-9085](tel:707-633-9085).