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Play ball. It was almost comical, the parade of candidates who used a public hearing earlier this month in Sebastopol on the new Laguna Park master plan as a forum for political grandstanding. Breaking along predictable philosophical lines, several of them insisted—over the objections of the city Planning Commission and the local environmental community—that a new baseball field should be a part of the plan.

After all that sound and fury dissipated, Little League President Mindy Marshall countered with a mild voice of reason, supporting the concept of passive ecological recreation close to the Laguna and seeking support for a new plan to squeeze an additional ballfield onto the Analy High School campus just a few blocks away.

With that support readily forthcoming, the Analy plan has advanced swiftly, quickly winning key backing from both school and city officials. As things stand now, the new ballpark project should be moving forward in just a few months, a time frame that could see the field in use well before the critical council aspirants could have concluded another contentious series of hearings to impose their will on the Laguna Park. Seeking solutions instead of butting heads is not as dramatic and carries a lower political profile, but it also brings people together, instead of exploiting false dichotomies to drive them apart.

Yes, the Analy project will be more expensive than a Laguna field would have been, but much of that difference will go to the renovation of the existing high school ballfield, which has suffered badly from the double-barreled demands of heavy use and school budget cutbacks. There are also major costs involved in making manifest the vision of the Laguna Park embodied in the Master Plan, although they will surely be spread out over a longer time.

The hope here is that Laguna defenders and Little League advocates can find ways to join forces in support of both causes. It should be clear by now that they are not mutually exclusive; both segments of the community include future users of both facilities.

By Bruce Robinson
"APPLESAUCE"