

Erin Dunn
Community Comment
April 24, 2018

This is Erin Dunn from the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a community comment.

There's a grassy area between the Fortuna Chamber office, the Fortuna Library and the Veterans Memorial Building. It's on 14th Street, just off of Main Street. It's a tranquil spot, with trees and a lush lawn. There are two picnic tables located in that spot. Perfect for families who are visiting the library and want to come outside with the kids and read or have lunch. Right?

Wrong. For ten years now, I have looked out the window from my desk at the chamber, through the gorgeous rhododendron and stately tree, and watched the picnic tables being used--not by families—but by transients who end up holding court there throughout the year. They pile their belongings on the table, tie their dogs to the bench and gather for day-long discourses on whatever is the topic of the day. It's intimidating.

And now that the weather is getting better and it's staying lighter longer, the problem is exacerbated.

After talking with our Librarian—who shares my sentiment—I felt like the Grinch when I sent a note to the City asking if they would consider taking out the picnic tables and replacing it with a bench.

I feel I am uniquely qualified to gripe about the picnic tables. Not only do I work within eye sight of the tables, I live across the street from them. So I see what goes on pretty much 24/7.

The people who gather at the tables don't always go home when it gets dark. It's disconcerting to have people you don't know hanging out across the street from your home until the wee hours of the night. And

that happens winter, spring, summer and fall. They can't stay in Rohner park past dark, why can they stay in this mini-park past dark?

I mentioned dogs earlier. I love dogs. I'm a dog fanatic. And it pains me to see the dogs that are brought in to that area. For the most part, they are well-mannered. But every other week or so in the summer, there is a dust-up among the well-muscled dogs.

I can't imagine that every dog that comes through with a transient has been vaccinated for Parvo. Parvo lives in the ground long after the dog has moved on. This area would be perfect for people to bring their small dogs to play in the grass—on leash of course—but I would caution anyone against that.

My request for removal of the picnic tables has merit as far as I'm concerned. But you may have a different opinion. The City is not going to remove the tables if there are Fortunans who use them and have a passion to keep them there.

Please let me know if you use the tables and don't want them taken out. You can email me: erin@fortunachamber.com. Or call me at 707-725-3959.

The good news is, they will relocate the tables to another park in town so they will go to good use.

I understand that having picnic tables by the library seems like a great idea on paper. It sounds idyllic and the symbol of a friendly small town.

But the dream doesn't match the reality. It's time to find another home for the picnic tables.

This has been Erin Dunn with a community comment.