

Supervisor London Breed
Statement on “4/20” Celebrations in Golden Gate Park
April 22, 2013

I am grateful that San Francisco, and Sharon Meadows in Golden Gate Park in particular, remain a mecca for peaceful celebration and free expression. Unfortunately, Saturday’s “4/20” celebration presented a variety of problems for the City and the Haight Ashbury community, and I am concerned that on its current trajectory the event may not remain peaceful.

Traffic came to a standstill for most of Saturday as cars swarmed the area. Crowds strained police, Muni, and park resources, overwhelmed residential streets, and in several instances damaged public and private property. Garbage overflowed from curbside cans that proved unequal to the occasion. And on Sunday, 4/21, staff and volunteers with the Recreation and Parks Department had to laboriously collect over 10,000 pounds of litter left in the park, not to mention the trash collected by the Department of Public Works in the upper and lower Haight.

This was not a permitted event, and we are unable to charge anyone for the City’s expenses. If the event is to run smoothly in the future, we will incur even more expenses. Clearly, there was a need for porta-potties, garbage cans, fencing, more Muni buses, parking control officers to keep traffic moving, and more police officers to protect property and maintain the peace. All of these things cost money and should not come at the taxpayers’ expense.

Fundamentally though, I have serious concerns about the appropriateness of the event. I spent the last decade working with children, many of whom come from families scarred by drug abuse. I am not comfortable with an event that encourages such rampant drug use by adults and minors alike. Non-medical marijuana use, and smoking of any kind on park property, is still illegal.

Any event of this magnitude, with an estimated at 10-15,000 participants, should be permitted and organized, and we should make every effort to at least prohibit underage marijuana use. We must ensure a peaceful and safe event for residents and attendees. With no clear organizer, no structure and no accountability this year, we are fortunate there were no major injuries.

We have just under a year until the next “4/20,” which will also fall on a weekend and draw the attendant crowds. It is time we start planning. I will be working closely with neighborhood groups, the Municipal Transportation Agency, and the Police, Rec and Park, and Public Works departments to develop a plan.

I want to thank Park Station’s Captain Greg Corrales and his officers, as well as the staff and volunteers at Rec and Park for their diligence in cleaning up the park. We cannot leave this burden solely on their shoulders next “4/20.”