



Parks and Recreation Department
Tuesday, April 28, 2009

Meeting

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Parks and Recreation Board was held on Tuesday, April 28, 2009 at the Boards and Commissions Conference Room, 301 West 2nd St. Room 1101.

Board Members Present: Board Chair Linda Guerrero, Board Vice-Chair Danette Chimenti, Jeff Francell, Sara Marler, Marilyn Bostick, Mark Vane and Jane Rivera.

Staff Members Present: Sara Hensley, Stuart Strong, Farhad Madani, Ricardo Soliz, Chris Yanez, and Tino Garcia.

A. Meeting called to order

Board Chair Guerrero called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

B. Citizen Communication

Steve Tittle is opposed to the Waterfront Overlay Task Force draft recommendations because of clerical and improper notification of property owners. He also is concerned about the omission of benefits and concessions in the recommendation.

Mary Arnold requested that the Board approve the recommendations with added language to assure that the Waterfront height limits cannot be over-ridden through PDA/PUD agreements. She also requested that the Waterfront Overlay Board be put back in place.

Jeff Jack, representing Save Town Lake, wants to keep Lady Bird Lake with beautiful vistas instead of wall-to-wall development. He wants the Board to recommend to the City Council the reinstatement of the provisions of the 1986 ordinance and close the loopholes of the PDU's. A Waterfront Overlay Board should be created to focus on the lake issues.

Note: Board Chair Guerrero announced that she was moving the Waterfront Overlay Task Force agenda item to the front so the same presentation could be provided to the Planning Commission meeting in the adjacent council chambers.

C. New Business and Action Items

1. Make a recommendation to the City Council regarding the Waterfront Overlay Task Force Recommendations.

Robert Heil reported that the purpose of the Overlay is to provide a harmonious transition from the urban development to the parkland along the waterfront. He reported that the task force met many times and on December 12th submitted the final report to the city council. The five major recommendations to the Council were: 1) State the goals of the Town Lake Corridor Study in the Waterfront Overlay; 2) Establish a new Waterfront Planning Advisory Board; 3) Re-establish the sub-district maximum heights; 4) Develop a clear method for awarding bonus provisions commensurate with community benefits derived; and 5) The revised Waterfront Overlay District ordinance should supersede all other city wide design policies and regulations.

He also reported that, at the direction of Council, staff developed an ordinance that includes all of the task force recommendations except for a system to award height bonuses. After the Parks Board presentation, the draft ordinance will go to the Planning Commission and then to the Council.

Danette Chimenti, also a member of the Waterfront Overlay Task Force recommended a resolution to be considered by the Board (see attached). Board Member Chimenti moved to approve the resolution, seconded by Board Member Rivera. Motion carried 6-0.

D. Approval of Minutes

Board Member Rivera moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Board Member Chimenti. Motion carried 6-0.

E. Citizen Communication (continued)

Charlie McCabe, Executive Director, Austin Parks Foundation, reported on a press release pledging \$100,000 for planting trees in and around the Barton Springs Pool area. The pledge also announces the establishment of a Barton Springs Tree Care Fund for planting in and around the pool at Zilker Park.

Jennifer Berliner requested Board support to build an outdoor handball court(s) in the City of Austin. She provided a handout which detailed the projected estimated costs (up to \$90,000 for a 3-wall and 1 wall combo) and the type of construction and maintenance that would be required.

Phil Burns, is concerned about the continued cutting at Red Bud Isle and the process involved in filing a complaint. He is requesting that a sign be placed at the kiosk to read “no cutting or trail making at park”

Wolf Sittler, Chairman, Norwood Posse, requested that the Board focus it’s attention on the Norwood Tract and acknowledge it’s importance as a part of our inner city park system. He requested Board support to pursue increased funding for operations and maintenance for park properties.

Sharon Hamilton, ACWP, reported that the tunnels have been completed at Nicholas Dawson Park and thanked the Department, the Parks Board, and neighbors of the park for helping make this a successful project.

Fred Schmidt, addressed the Board and asked that the lake not be paved and to continue the “Boardwalk Trail” discussion.

Mark Nowacki, requested that the Boardwalk web site be updated and improve transparency.

F. Briefs

2. Bicycle Master Plan – Gordon Derr, Austin Transportation Department, provided an overview of the Austin 2009 Bicycle Master Plan. He reported that the City of Austin has earned a bicycle friendly designation call the “Silver Lead”. Austin is now the only city in Texas with this designation. The plan calls to make Austin into a world-class bicycling city and to significantly increase the bicycle use over the next decade. The project hopes to complete 70% of the bicycle network by 2020 and 100% of the network by 2030.

Annick Beaudet, Neighborhood Connectivity Division, said the next step is to continue data collection, updating city codes and criteria manuals. She also explained that enhancing the current trails system is a component of the master plan. Board Member Vane expressed concern that the Parks Board was not given the opportunity to provide input regarding the trails network and Board Member Rivera was concerned about neighborhood plans. As a result, the plan will now better delineate the role of all three department’s; PARD, Transportation and Public Works.

3. Waller Creek Master Plan Study and Downtown Plan for Parks and Open Space-

Jim Robertson, Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department, briefed the Board on both plans. The project will eliminate a large amount of acreage that is currently in a floodplain. The goals include a community vision, which they currently do not have, a conceptual design for the creek and finally plan implementation. After initial evaluation and analysis of the creek is conducted, community outreach efforts will begin. Options considered will be pedestrian access as well as an inventory of the physical

improvements. A second round of community input will be conducted which will result in finalizing the master plan and initiating an implementation strategy.

The Downtown Austin Plan is being coordinated in conjunction with the Master Plan. A lot of the work has already been completed. The deliverables, which includes a vision and priority use policies, will also include a Parks and Open Space Master Plan. Ten parks are within the boundaries of the Downtown Plan. The strategy calls for design and facility improvement of the parks, including plans for the operations and maintenance of the parks.

4. Water Quality Update on Lady Bird Lake and Lake Austin.

Mary Gilroy, Watershed Protection Department, reported on the condition of the water quality on both lakes. Lady Bird Lake's water quality is generally good especially during base flow (when there has not been a significant amount of rain prior to sampling) and it meets the contact recreation standards. The lake has healthy fishery and a limited amount of invasive plants. A water quality index has been developed to track the quality of the water including chemistry, sediment, water algae, biology and aesthetics.

Lake Austin, who also serves as the city's water supply and is completely within the city limits, has its water quality impact/concerns coming from upstream. Water flowing from Lake Travis has very low dissolved oxygen, and there has been a noticeable shift in algae. On the positive side there is been significant hydrilla decline. Generally both lakes have good water quality but there is a need for ongoing protection. Concerns for both lakes include: 1) the algae shifting; 2) the current drought; 3) invasive species and 4) wastewater discharges.

Andrew Clamann, reported that the natural shoreline that provides water quality benefits is being eroded due to excessive vertical bulkheading. He reported that the bulkheading actually exacerbates erosion by removing a lot of sediment from beneath and inhibits the growth of aquatic vegetation. He also reported that nearly half of the entire shoreline of Lake Austin has vertical bulkheading but added that there are many alternatives to constructing them. Mr. Clamann requested that the Board not approve vertical bulkheads greater than 10 ft from a boat dock and to insist on environmentally-friendly alternatives for bank stabilization.

5. Downtown Street Event Closure

Gordon Derr, Transportation Department, reported that a street event closure task force has submitted a draft resolution to the City Council which combines the Parade Ordinance along with the Special Event Ordinance. He reported that the City had 150 street events last year and in an effort to better inform the public, city staff departments are meeting on a regular basis to ensure all potential issues or concerns are discussed.

6. Barton Springs Tree Assessment Report and Action Plan.

Walter Passmore, Urban Forestry Program, briefed the Board on the following:

- ? In 2007, during the Barton Springs Pool Master Plan process, a local certified arborist identified trees of concern.
- ? A nationally recognized arboricultural company was hired to professionally assess the trees around the pool.
- ? In the fall of 2007, the department's Urban Forestry Unit identified 7 unhealthy trees proposed for removal and 46 trees of concern for additional assessment by the company.
- ? In October 2008, Davey Resource Group (DRG) was hired to conduct the assessment. They were the only bidder after 3 attempts to solicit bids. They used industry standards to assess criteria including; 1) radar imaging; 2) foliar analysis; 3) root condition analysis; 4) pedestrian traffic and soil compaction; 5) tree location; 6) wind exposure and 7) major pests, diseases, woundwood development, shoot growth and twig dieback.
- ? The DRG report was shared due to public safety, high levels of public use and to allow discussion.
- ? DRG recommended potential removal of 22 of the original 46 trees they evaluated.

Mr. Passmore announced that no action would be taken on the trees until a full public review has occurred. Also, press conferences have been held to inform the public about the assessment. Additional public meetings will be held in April and May.

Board Member Chimenti expressed concern over the substantial loss of tree canopy and Board Member Francell requested that Austin Energy be contacted to assist in the planting of large trees. Director Hensley added that there are several other entities that have offered to donate large mature trees. Board Chair Guerrero wants to review the list of ideas offered by the public at the last joint Parks Board/E Board meeting.

Michael Embesi, City Arborist, reported that he is working with PARD staff and will be ruling on the requests for removal (not yet submitted). Director Hensley added that no permits would be submitted until all public input has been conducted. Board Chair Guerrero asked if the wood could be used by artists to create beautiful and artful things from the wood. Mr. Passmore responded that a marketing effort would be initiated similar to the Treaty Oak effort. Mr. Passmore also confirmed that the amount of money spent on the tree assessment is \$57,000.

Barbara Lowe, frequent swimmer, requested that the Board reject the recommendation to cut the trees.

Mark Nowacky, expressed concern with the analysis and insisted that analysis was misleading.

Ken Sherman announced that one of the main problems is that the Parks Department does not have enough money to properly maintain and care for the trees and confirmed that

some of the trees will have to be removed. He added that if any trees need to be removed, they should be removed one at a time.

Dave Crow, reported that he had forwarded a plan to the department and the Council suggesting to set up a task force to review one tree at a time.

Robin Cravey, President of Friends of Barton Springs Pool, requested that an Arbor Tree Care Plan be initiated as soon as possible. He also thanked the Austin Parks Foundation for their offer of funds to start replanting of trees.

Bill Frazer, wants a parallel plan for planting new trees so that the tree canopy is not lost.

Gretchen Ostler thanked all who have submitted possible solutions to the problems with the trees.

Sean Shriver, Owner, Affordable Tree Care, offered his services to prune and/or cable the trees at Barton Springs.

Patrick Brewer, certified arborist, Bartlett Tree Experts, confirmed that there are some trees with significant problems especially around the playground area. Although he agreed that his company assessment and the DRG is similar, he said that more discovery should occur especially underground in the root areas.

Shannon Halley, Urban Forestry Board, requested that everyone consider further consideration to the preservation options. She added that we need to factor cultural and historical considerations into the analysis.

Guy LeBlanc indicated that he also agrees that some defects do exist and some of the trees should be removed. He requested that a more thorough assessment be conducted before removing any trees, specifically a more thorough root crown excavation.

Tom Hayes, Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, indicated that he and Don Gardner both agree that only 6-8 trees are in dire jeopardy and much more work needs to be done in restoration and remedial work such as mulching, pruning and above ground aeration.

E. New Business and Action Items

7. Make a recommendation to the Director regarding 4307 Island Cove.

The applicant is requesting construction with 10 feet of a side lot line and shoreline modification.

Board Member Francell reported that the affected neighbor sent a letter which indicated that there was no issue with the proposed construction. Board Member Chimenti moved to approve the recommendation, seconded by Board Member Bostick. Motion carried 6-0.

8. Make a recommendation to the Director regarding 15 Hull Circle.

The applicant is seeking to construct within 10 feet of side lot line and extend beyond 30 feet from the shoreline. The Navigation Committee has reviewed the request and recommends approval. Board Member Marler moved to approve the recommendation, seconded by Board Member Bostick. Motion carried 6-0.

9. Make a recommendation to the Director regarding 8216 Big View Drive.

The applicant is requesting extension beyond 30 feet from the shoreline. Board Member Rivera moved to approve the recommendation, seconded by Board Member Marler. Motion carried 6-0 contingent on approval by staff member Chris Yanez.

F. Director's Report

Director Hensley reported on the following:

- ? The department has been instructed to make a an additional 2.4 million dollar reduction in the FY 2009-2010 operating budget
- ? Presented a map that illustrated the ¼ mile radius for parks. She added that this proposal would add 165 more parks into our system.
- ? The Board will be briefed regarding the focus of the Art in Public Places program along with a program initiative called Click or Ticket, a program about responsible driving.
- ? The department is currently reviewing an agreement with the Austin Rowing Club that has been in existence since 1988 and will go out with a Request for Services (RFS) to interested bidders. A meeting will also be held with the Austin Area Garden Center to review that agreement.
- ? An invitation will be forthcoming to the Board to attend the Texas Rowing Center's paddling event - a project that will create paddling trails on the lake.

G. Future Items from Board Members

Board Member Marler reported that some citizens are concerned with the lack of police monitoring of Gus Fruh specifically the homeless, trail cutting etc... She requested a brief in the coming months. Board Member Rivera requested a list of the private agreements (private entities that have exclusive use of public facilities) that the department has. Board Member Bostick requested a list of parks/facilities that can be dedicated for naming after outstanding civic citizens.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.