



Parks and Recreation Department
Tuesday, August 25, 2009

Meeting

A regularly schedule meeting of the Parks and Recreation Board was held on Tuesday, August 25, 2009 at the Boards and Commission Conference Room, 301 West 2nd. St. Room 1101.

Board Members Present: Board Chair Linda Guerrero, Sara Marler, Mark Vane, Jane Rivera, Jerry Perales, Carol Lee and Hill Abell.

Staff Members Present: Sara Hensley, Ricardo Soliz, Chris Yanez, Robert Brennes, Cora Wright and Tino Garcia.

A. Meeting called to order

Board Chair Guerrero called the meeting to order at 6:17 p.m.

B. Approval of Minutes

1. Board Member Rivera moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Board Member Marler. Motion carried.

C. Citizen Communication

Dan Crow reported that he had contacted the person who built the bypass and they both challenge the notion that the by pass tunnel was engineered wrong. He urged the Board to support fixing the bypass by plugging the holes and laying an 8 in. floor on top of the current floor.

Robin Cravey, Friends of Barton Springs Pool, reported satisfaction with the ongoing progress with the short term projects of the master plan.

Jonathan Beall, requested that funds already identified for the bypass tunnel for reconditioning and/or rebuilding not be pulled from the city funds already set aside in the master plan.

Susan Rankin, Executive Director, Trail Foundation, reported that staff of the Public Works Department, PARD, along with the Design Team all have addressed the need for good connectivity of the Boardwalk She added that the design is sensitive to the environment, is aesthetically pleasing, and safely connects east and west Austin.

Nan Redding, owner/resident in Rivewalk Condos, reminded the Board that their primary concern is that there is not enough physical space to put the trail on land adjacent to the condos.

Stephen Title, owner/resident, passed out a rendition of what the owners think the Boardwalk will look like at the waters edge.

Fred Schmidt, expressed opposition to paving the lake for the boardwalk and asked why a multi-model transportation trail 14ft. wide is being proposed that is not seen any where else on the pedestrian oriented town lake trail.

Debra Bailey, Citizen Bull Creek Dog Off Leash Group and Bull Creek Foundation, provided a summary of the meetings held regarding Bull Creek park (part of a 65 page packet of information). She also reported that the group had over 700 petitions from concerned citizens opposed to the September 8th proposal to make Bull Creek Park, on leash. She requested that a public hearing be held in order to hear all sides of the issue.

Ron Coldiron, Chair, Northwest Austin Civic Association, supports PARD's and Watershed Protection Department plan for rehabilitation of the park. He indicated that the park cannot wait much longer for remedial action in light of the environmental issues.

Kyle Allen, reported that according to SPCA estimates there are 240,000 dogs in Austin but only 3 dog off-leash parks with water. He urged the Board to support finding other dog parks adjacent to water before closing any of them down. He is in favor of the upgrades to the park but wants it to return as an off-leash area.

D. Briefs

2. Bull Creek Contact Recreation status update and park restoration proposal

Chris Herrington, Watershed Protection and Development Review Department, thanked all stakeholders for their assistance in trying to come up with solutions to the Bull Creek issue. He reported that some of the riparian areas have been degraded due to the overuse of the park. Based on US Census Bureau data, there are 120,000 dogs in Austin and it is estimated that dogs generate ½ lbs. of poop per day. He reported that a task force was form to investigate the high bacteria levels in the park. The Water Utility Department used visual inspections, smoke testing and dry tracing methods to determine the high bacteria levels. The task force concluded that wastewater was not the likely source of the contaminated. They did determine that week end use appeared to increased bacteria with a high level of fecal contamination attributed to dog poop. As a result, a public campaign was initiated to inform the public about the contamination and to educate the public about the Scoop the Poop campaign. The campaign however, did not detect an improvement in the water quality area even after the campaign and the efforts of the dog off leash groups to improve the bacteria levels.

Staff has come up with a restoration plan for public discussion which includes:

- ? Remove off leash use effective September 8th.
- ? Re-vegetation of creek areas of the park
- ? Close park during construction (Nov.- Mar.)
- ? Continued monitoring, try new methods with grant funding
- ? Citywide “Scoop the Poop” education.
- ? Search for additional off-leash areas.

? Development of off-leash area management strategies.

Decisions/issues still pending are whether the park must be closed during restoration and the choice between off leash use and human swimming before flow returns. A final decision slated for the Spring 2010 will include swimming prohibition, the prohibition of dogs altogether or to remove the off leash area. Public input meetings will continue in August and September. The final management plan will be present in the spring.

3. Barton Springs Bypass and proposed repairs

David Johns, Watershed Protection and Review Department updated the Board of the status of the pool bypass. He explained that the bypass was constructed to divert minor flood waters and prevent muddy water and flood debris from entering the pool. The bypass currently has 3 dozens holes in the floor ranging in size from a pickle to the size of a football. Bypass problems include: structural concerns, erosion of soil and backfill, deck drainpipe collapsed, failing joints etc...In order to stabilize the water flow, large blocks of limestone and plastic have been placed adjacent to the bypass. Mr. Johns reported that there can be no draw downs and bypass failure is an engineering reality. Also, if the pool is closed, the City will lose money and it will have a recreational impact including the loss of significant salamander population and habitat. Repair options include:

1. Stabilization (new concrete added to the slab and new concrete to stabilize the structure or new concrete inside the bypass with a new deck (limestone blocks to stabilize the structure or more concrete inside the bypass with a permanent wall poolside).
2. Pipe-in-a-pipe
3. Total replacement of the existing structure. (a fifty plus year fix)
4. Piers anchored to the structure (adds weight and stabilization)
5. Other ideas such as diverting water around the pool via a trench, divert water via tunnel, and store storm water in off channel pond.

More public input is forthcoming. Final design and bids will be let in the fall/spring 2011. Regular updates will be provided to the joint Parks Board/E Board as well as the Parks Board.

4. Boardwalk Design

David Taylor, Project Manager, Public Works Department, reported that the consultant team had completed 60% of design development and the budget for completion was still estimated at near 15 million. Negotiations continue with various property owners. With pending approvals, plans will be completed by the end of the year. Permits could be obtained by summer 2010 and when the funding is available, the construction of the Boardwalk is estimated to take 24 months.

In response to public comments taken, the design team initiated several recommendations. They include: environmental studies, planned restoration and enhancements, sustainable construction, landscaping and operations, emergency call stations and precautions to protect lake waters, wetlands and riparian edges.

Mr. Taylor also provided images of sections of the Boardwalk, including straight and curved sections with extensions for rest areas and bathrooms.

5. Cell Towers

This brief was pulled by Board Chair Guerrero and will be re-scheduled.

Daniel White appeared before the Board and announced that he had been applying triclopyr, a herbicide, at Duncan Park and invited the Board to a tour of the park.

6. Walk for a Day

George Cofer, Hill Country Conservancy, talked about a regional trail system that will provide public recreation and wilderness experiences that connect people to the environment. The Conservancy expects to develop a Master Trail Plan that outlines proposed routes, facilities, environmental protection needs, and safety provisions.

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center was hired to conduct an environmental analysis of the proposed route, and the Conservancy hired Greenways Inc. to develop a master trail plan for the project. Public involvement will be initiated through stakeholder meetings.

In January 15, 2009, the City Council passed a resolution requesting the creation of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) between the City of Austin and the Conservancy to spell out the roles and responsibilities of both parties. The Conservancy will receive monies from a grant from Lloyd Doggett, Texas Parks and Wildlife, private donations and monies from the stimulus plan. The MOU will be submitted to Water and Wastewater Commission, the Parks Board and the Environmental Board prior to City Council action.

Willie Conrad, Austin Water Utility, reported on the BCP Water Conservation Plan with respect to Phase I of Walk for A Day. He indicated that the current proposals to implement a portion of the Walk for a Day trail system will need to consider and address compliance requirements for the BCCP Habitat Conservation Plan and the authorized federal permits. He indicated that the current BCP Trail Master Plan calls for recommendations such as: 1) proposals to accept new trails, existing trails and conversion of unauthorized trails of specific tracts; 2) hiking, trail running and biking on sites planned as experimental are acceptable uses; 3) potential sponsors must address outlined Planning Considerations and 4) sponsors and staff must follow Proposal and MOU process. Mr. Conrad added that the Master Plan acts as a roadmap to get trails built through the BCP lands and indicated at the MOU would need approval from the BCCP Coordinating Committee, US Fish and Wildlife, and City Council. Work will continue with the Conservancy, PARD and other stakeholders to assist in approving the proposal.

7. Dam Maintenance at Northwest District Park

Edwardo Acosta, Watershed Protection Department, announced that their department has identified 20 dams (embankments over 6 feet tall) in COA parkland and are developing guidelines to develop a MOU for continuing maintenance of the dams in order to minimize impact. The maintenance associated with these dams, includes small woody vegetation removal. They are currently working with PARD to approve a final MOU for the small woody vegetation removal at Northwest Park.

8. Onion Creek District Park

Ricardo Soliz, Division Manager, reported that Watershed Protection Department along with the Army Corp of Engineers have bought out homes in the Onion Creek Corridor. Several years ago

the Corp. submitted a feasibility report that requested the city buy out all the homes in the flood prone area. In 2006, 28 million dollars in bonds were approved for the city's cost share of the buyout, including construction of parkland and ecosystem restoration. To date, the project has bought out 223 properties with 260 left to go. After the buyout is complete, the construction of the park will begin.

A meeting will be held on Saturday, September 26th, at the Dove Springs Recreation Center to kick-off the project. Neighborhoods from the surrounding areas will be invited to attend. Other public input meetings will be scheduled as well.

F. New Business and Action Items

9. Election of Officers

Board Member Vane suggested that this action be postponed until September 2009 to allow the newly election board members to have time to get to know the existing members.

10. Make a recommendation to the City Council regarding the temporary use of parkland for the Rosedale Storm water and Water Quality Improvements, Phases IIA and IIB.

The Watershed Protection Department is requesting temporary use of workspace easement to access work site and store construction materials for storm drain CIP project. The project would use 40,000 sq.ft. of space and would take 405 calendar days to complete. Meetings with the neighborhood association have been held and while they regret the negative impact of locating the staging area in the park, they agree that the project should proceed. Board Chair Guerrero said that she did not want the project to be left half completed and requested that a contact person be given the association to ensure that all areas of the project are complete. Board Member Vane moved to approve the recommendation, seconded by Board Member Marler. Motion carried 7-0.

11. Make a recommendation to the City Council regarding an amendment to the Noise and Amplified Sound Ordinance.

Sergeant Candoli, Austin Police Department, briefed the Board on amendment to the Noise and Amplified Sound Ordinance. He reported that the current ordinance did not specifically address the issue of noise from a watercraft and that officers have to rely on voluntary compliance from violators. Two areas that generate the most complaints are Bull Creek and Bee Creek, which on any given weekend, over 200 boats may be in the same area at the same time. They are requesting amending Chapter 9-2-1 to include the definition of a Watercraft and to include restrictions of the watercraft as well. Board Member Rivera moved to approve the recommendation, seconded by Board Member Perales. Motion carried 7-0.

12. Support a resolution passed by the Environmental Board regarding bulkheads.

A resolution was read that the Parks Board support and recommend an Environmental Board resolution to the Planning Council and the Austin City Council that directs the City Manager to initiate staff development of code and criteria changes as necessary to clarify shoreline protection requirements for development along Lake Austin, Lady Bird Lake and Lake Walter E. Long. The resolution also includes the prevention of vertical bulkheads and promotion of stable shorelines with materials that will provide environmental function of native riparian vegetation and shoreline geomorphology while providing the necessary erosion control. Board Member Rivera

moved to approve the resolution, seconded by Board Member Lee. Motion carried 6-0 with Board Member Vane off the dais.

13. Make a recommendation to the Director that the Parks Board supports the Design of the Boathouse on Waller Creek.

Gary Jackson, updated the Board on the Waller Creek Tunnel Project. Current design calls for combining the current two facilities into a single two-story structure. Mr. Jackson provided several design options that detailed: 1) the current design with minor modifications; 2) a re-configure with the same footprint; 3) and a re-configure with an expanded footprint. Board Chair Guerrero inquired about the Parks Department office. Mr. Jackson provided and added option that included a PARD office.

-Elisabeth Gardner, President, Austin Rowing Club, updated the Board on the Austin Rowing Club.

-Jeff Tulis, member of the Austin Rowing Club also updated the Board and spoke of some misconceptions.

-Sara Conway, Manager, Austin Rowing Club, spoke on behalf of the Austin Rowing Club as a non-profit business model.

-Matt Knifton, Texas Rowing Center, updated the board on the Texas Rowing Center activities.

Board Member Vane moved to approve the new updated design (using modifications of options A and B), seconded by Board Member Rivera. Motion carried 7-0.

14. Make a recommendation to the City Council regarding that Zilker Park will no longer be programmed or reserved for athletic league play.

Joanne Mesecke, Division Manager, Central Park Division, reported on the construction of the Great Lawn. The project is a public/private partnership funded by C3 Presents and includes: grading and leveling, installing an automatic irrigation system, the installation of high traffic turf grass, drinking fountains, and upgrading the telecommunications equipment. Although no athletic leagues will be programmed, the park is available for mixed use to inspire visitors to play, imagine, rest and interact with nature. Ms. Mesecke invited all to the grand opening on Friday, August, 21, 2009 at 11:30 a.m. Board Member Rivera moved to approve the recommendation, seconded by Board Member Lee. Motion carried. 7-0.

G. Director's Report

Ms. Hensley reported on the following:

- ? Ms. Hensley presentation at Oglebay Park, West Virginia, Director's School.
- ? Inclusion Workshop, Palmer Events Center, September 9, 2009.
- ? Trail of Light bids

H. Future Items from the Board

Board Chair Guerrero made the following appointments: 1) Board Members Hill Abel and Jerry Perales to the Land and Facilities Committee; 2) Board Member Carol Lee to the Navigation Committee; 3) Board Members Carol Lee and Jerry Perales to the Joint PARD/Environmental Board Committee; 4) Board Chair Guerrero to the Downtown Commission and; 5) Board Member Marler to the BCP.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:55 p.m.