



Parks and Recreation Department
Tuesday, June 23, 2009

Meeting

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Parks and Recreation Board was held on Tuesday, June 23, 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, Ricardo Soliz, Chris Yanez, Robert Brennes and Tino Garcia.

A. Meeting called to order

Board Chair Guerrero called the meeting to order at 6:22 p.m.

B. Approval of Minutes

1. Board Member Francell moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Board Member Chimenti Motion Carried 6-0.

C. Citizen Communication

Elizabeth Gardner, President, Austin Rowing Club, provided a history of the Austin Rowing Club and indicated that the Club needed to be a better partner with PARD. She asked that ARC be placed on the next Parks Board agenda.

Joann Richards, volunteer instructor, spoke about the Austin Rowing Club's "Learn to Row Program".

W.T. Fraser, requested Parks Board support to deny the location of the proposed Cancer Survivor Park.

Hamilton Richards, Austin Rowing Club, provided a history of the Club and also requested that ARC be placed at the next Parks Board agenda.

Jeff Mork, Secretary, Texas Crew Foundation, announced that the Austin Rowing Club serves as an ambassador for the City of Austin. He wants to raise the awareness of the Club contributions to Austin at the next Parks Board meeting.

Gavino Fernandez, member of El Consiglio and East Town Lake Citizens, requested that the west end of Fiesta Gardens be designated as an “alcohol free” zone.

D. Briefs.

2. Lake Austin Boat Study

Dr. Scott Shafer, Associate Professor, Texas A&M University, briefed the Board on recreation boating on Lake Austin. The report outlined: 1) boater characteristics; 2) perceptions about conditions; 3) user conflicts; and 4) the development of a baseline for general comparisons. The data was collected between May and September 2008 using interviews, surveys, aerial photography and parking lot counts (boat trailers). Highlights of the boater characteristics included, most of the boaters had at least 29 years of boating experience, 78% were in groups of family and friends, and the average size of the group consisted of 4.5 people. The survey indicated that the least liked experience was crowded conditions, loud music and large wakes.

Positive changes during the last 5 years were carp and hydrilla control programs and increase presence and better demeanor of law enforcement. Perceived negative changes included crowded conditions and boater behavior. Other thoughts about the survey pointed out that property owners are the most invested and most sensitive to changes, also there are places on the lake where perceptions differ about crowding and safety, noise and generation of wakes appear to be two important “social” conditions and there is some support across groups for increased regulation of some conditions.

Several questions were raised by members of the Board regarding lake conditions and where to go from here etc... Board Chair Guerrero announced that the study will now enable the Board to address, in the annual work plan, the various problems with the lake such as wakes and wake boarding plus the environmental impact (erosion).

3. Loop 360 Abandoned Landfill Remediation

Chuck Lesniak, Watershed Protection and Development Review Department briefed the Board on the abandoned landfill located on slope on the Barton Creek Greenbelt. The site was used as a landfill in the 40's and 50's and is one of 70 similar sites in the Austin area. To determine how much waste there is in the landfill, an assessment was commissioned to test soil samples, monitor wells, use soil and gas borings, and the taking of stream sediment samples. The results indicated that the landfill covers approximately 3.6 acres and is about 2-6 feet deep. It is heavily overgrown with trees but has a lot of waste, eg. broken glass, cans and wire etc... The lead levels are high, but not extremely high, no methane gas was found, and there were low levels of antimony, (a byproduct of making glass).

Options considered to remove the waste are: 1) take no action; 2) perimeter fencing; 3) phytoremediation; 4) stabilizing the waste; 5) limited brush and tree removal; 6) complete

clearing and complete cap and 7) excavate all the waste. The selected option was complete waste removal and site restoration at an estimated cost of \$2.1 million. The restoration would include replanting of trees and native vegetation. The next step is to hire a consultant to perform the design work (in coordination with various city departments) and to get the necessary permitting. The project will take approximately 2-3 years to complete.

4. Republic Square Improvements

Charlie McCabe, Executive Director, Austin Parks Foundation, updated the Board on Republic Square. One hundred twenty truck loads of soil was removed from berms that surround three of the Auction Oaks. One other berm will be removed which has approximately 70 truck loads of soil. Also, a deck/stage will be built around the central auction oak. The deck will be engineered to not impact the tree but will allow people to walk under the tree. Bids for the deck will be let out soon and the goal is to have the park useable by labor day.

5. Update on the Cancer Survivor Park

Mr. McCabe also reported on the Cancer Survivor Park and said that briefings will proceed to the Art in Public Places Panel as well as the Arts Commission. Mr. McCabe also said that the site is still only a proposal and that it will be fully vetted out through the proper public process.

6. Method of Eight Planning Cycle

Director Hensley reported that the department has been selected as one of three Beta sites chosen for the implementation and the development of a contemporary planning approach that could lead to future re-design and re-development of public parks and recreation nation-wide. The objective is to implement the "Method of Eight Planning Cycle" use for effective organizational planning, and management. She added that city funds would not be used to fund this management concept.

Jamie Sabbach, CPRP, Executive Director, GPRED explained that the approach is an eight stage planning process that is both systematic and logical. The plan covers a 5-year period and is designed to be inclusive, meeting all planning expectations. The concept calls for identification of community values and issues, and culminates in how the department's services (programs, facilities and assets) align with and addresses those community values and issues. Expected benefits include:

- Development of organizational values (community, staff and leadership) along with vision and mission.
- Analysis of community issues and problems as well as community desires, opportunities and demands.
- Assessment of existing services including assets.
- Development of department Mission Statement.

- Development of an organizational Resource Allocation Philosophy that addresses cost recovery and subsidy allocation along with the agency menu of services, structure and land asset management.
- Development of the organizational work plan that outlines how the department will implement results.
- Development of community benefits and intended outcomes.
- Measurement of the intended community outcomes.

7. Update on Nicholas Dawson Park

Ricardo Soliz, Division Manager, reported that the improvements at Nicholas Dawson Park were the last in the project line of ACWP projects. Although, the project has been competed, there are still things that need to be competed such as environmental and water line concerns and the completion of trail heads. Mr. Soliz also said that staff is still meeting with the neighborhood to ensure that the last of the items are competed, hopefully by the end of the summer. Board Chair Guerrero requested a punch list of the items still pending along with the responsible department.

E. Public Hearing

8. Public hearing on Lake Austin Marina regarding variances associated with the construction of a wave break, creation of a no-wake zone and other measures to ensure public safety.

Board Member Francell reminded everyone that is was a public hearing and that no action would be taken.

Steve Alexander provided a video to illustrate the wave action at the marina during a normal weekend day. He indicated that the marina is recommending the creation of a no-wake zone. He indicated that there is a genuine safety hazard on this part of Lake Austin.

Bruce Aupperle, representing Lake Austin Marina, read a resolution asking the Board to support a no-wake zone at the lower end of Lake Austin. Since the public hearing is to gather public input only, the resolution was not accepted by the Board.

Pete Lauda, expressed opposition to further expansion of the marina and also the conveying of any of the city's public property right to benefit an individual intent. He also requested better notification of the public hearing.

Blake Tollett, requested that the Board not support the taking of the lake for private commercial gain because it sets a precedent that should not be allowed.

Carol Lee, Lake Austin Collective, requested that the Board pursue further clarification of the applicant, the application, project and the process used.

Randolph George Mueller, requested that the Board postpone any vote and allow more time for public review including an impact study. He requested that no business variance be supported.

Jim Wimberly, supports the creation of a no-wake zone and requested that the Board support a safer boating environment at Lake Austin Marina.

Jean Haggerty, requested that the Board not support the expansion of the break water or wave break at the marina.

Mike Haggerty, member of Preserve Lake Austin Now, requested the Board deny any variance request.

Bill Worsham, expressed concern regarding a public property to a private enterprise and is opposed to any break water proposal.

Jim Von Wolkse, requested that the Board deny any requested variances by the marina.

Marceline Lasater, Lake Austin Collective, requested Board support to create a task force to draft an ordinance to protect public safety, including wakes and retaining walls.

Board Member Chimenti expressed concern about the improper notification of the public hearing and also that no application was filed and no fees were paid as the Land Development Code requires. After additional discussion, Director Hensley suggested that a letter be drafted to the City Council, with copies to the Environmental Board, that addresses issues such as establishing a task force to review and make recommendations. In addition, the Lake Austin Study should be used as a resource to address concerns on the lake relating to traffic regulations, wake boarding, wave breaks and erosion. It was agreed that the Navigation Committee would forward the resolution/letter to the full Board for approval and subsequently to the City Council.

F. New Business and Action Items

9. Make a recommendation to the Director regarding the Method of Eight Planning Cycle

Board Member Chimenti reported that she was pleased that Austin has been chosen as one of three beta sites to pilot this management concept and moved to approve the recommendation to the Director to proceed with the Method of Eight Planning Cycle, seconded by Board Member Marler. Motion carried 7-0.

10. Make a recommendation to the Director regarding the temporary and permanent use of parkland at Shoal Creek Greenbelt for the Pemberton Heights Water Improvements, Phase II.

Kristen McKenna, Public Works Department, reported that signage would be posted, orange safety fencing would be placed to ensure safety and that notification of homeowners would be initiated. Only 10 of the 15 parking spaces would be affected due to equipment staging. Board Member Marler moved to approve the recommendation, seconded by Board Member Bostick. Motion carried 5-0.

11. Parks and Recreation Department's Budget recommendations regarding fees, leagues, and Park Ranges, for FY 2009-2010.

Director Hensley reported that the Park Ranger and the Trail of Lights were put on hold, an action that was supported by the Board. Fill and draw pulls would be switched to splash pads and some pools would be affected by closures and reduction in hours. The paying of utilities on private lands would be reassessed in the hopes of using those monies to provide scholarships to kids whose families could not afford the fee. Other budget reduction recommendations include: office and contractual supplies, 4 full-time positions, staggering of hiring park ranger supervisors, and the reduction in scale and scope for the Trail of Lights.

After considerable discussion regarding the utility agreements (not following up on providing scholarships) and facilities that are not paying for utilities, Board Member Chimenti moved to send a resolution to the Mayor, City Council and City Manager, seconded by Board Member Marler that:

- The Park Ranger Program be placed on hold for one year and to use the money as a proposed budget reduction.
- Utility payments totaling \$200,000 annually for Little Leagues organized on private land be discontinued and considered as a true budget reduction.
- Priorities for youth league financial assistance be re-focused by developing an equitable scholarship program for families that cannot afford league membership fees replacing the current practice of paying utilities for certain groups.

Motion carried 6-0.

12. Make a recommendation to the Director regarding Loughran Boat Dock.

This item was pulled by Board Chair Guerrero.

12. Director's Report

- Director's Hensley reported on the following:
- The Police Parks Unit is regularly monitoring Gus Fruh Park.
- Future update on "Walk for a Day" trails connectivity project in July.
- The Barton Springs Pool by-pass tunnel will be over budget by about 1 million dollars.
- Future update on Bull Creek Park regarding water quality issues.
- ADA Landscape improvements will move forward at the Ney Museum.
- The Boathouse may have to be moved to another location. The RFP for services will continue as planned.

- Dam maintenance at Northwest park briefing in July.
- Update on the Zilker Park Great Lawn. Public meetings will be held and final recommendation will come to the Parks Board for approval.
- Austin Neighborhood Council East concerning PARD vendor fees. The resolution requests the PARD review and assess its policies for charging fees for organized activities to maximize the participation of children of struggling, low-income families.

G. Future Items from the Board.

Board Chari Guerrero announced east-west activities at Palm Park and also requested a policy on the process to change alcohol permitted parks to non-alcohol permitted parks.

With no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 9:56 p.m.