



Parks and Recreation Department  
Tuesday, May 26, 2009

Meeting

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Parks and Recreation Board was held on Tuesday, May 26, 2009 at the Boards and Commissions Conference Room, 301 West 2<sup>nd</sup> 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, Robert Brennes and Tino Garcia.

A. Meeting called to order

Board Chair Guerrero called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m.

B. Approval of Minutes

1. Board Member Rivera moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Board Member Marler. Motion Carried 5-0, with Board Member Vane abstaining.

C. Citizen Communication

Dorothy Richter reported that the trail must pay for itself.

Charlie McCabe, Executive Director, Austin Parks Foundation, announced the June 6<sup>th</sup> National Trails Day and a call for volunteers. He reported on the improvements being made to Republic Square and acknowledged the contributions of Tony Arnold and his staff as well as Marty Stump and his crew.

Dave Andreas reported that he is in support of the Texas Rowing Center's Expansion Project.

D. Briefs

2. Alamo Recreation Center Advisory Board

Chet Jones, President, briefed the Board on the center's nutrition program - a program that emphasizes healthy nutrition and helps form good eating habits for center participants. He envisions the center's future to include forming collaborations and partnerships as a way of combating the loss city/center revenue.

### 3. Briefing on the Texas Rowing Center Boathouse Expansion Project

Matt Knifton, Owner, requested Parks Board support for the replacement of the current building. The proposed two-story building will fit and complement the surrounding natural areas. The lower level will be used for boat storage. The second level will be user friendly with public bathrooms included. At Director's Hensley's request, Mr. Knifton will contact Austin Energy about the possibility of using the building as a demonstration project on the use of solar power to provide energy for lighting and water heating. The Board will take formal action at the June 23, 2009 Parks Board meeting.

### 4. Update on Austin Cancer Survivor's Park.

Liebel Harelik, Prostate Cancer Resource Center, Charlie McCabe and Eric Schultz, TBG Partners reported on the proposed site for a public plaza that will offer hope to cancer patients and survivors and their families. The proposed location is on 1.5 acres in Butler Park near the Long Center for the Performing Arts and the Palmer Events Center along the south shore of Lady Bird Lake. Mr. Harelik said that visitors can walk to the journey of cancer, from the beginning of diagnosis to treatment and on to survivorship. Charlie McCabe, announced that they had secured a 1 million dollar grant from the R.A. Bloch Cancer Foundation to build the plaza. The plaza will feature waterfalls and stone walls with doorways which visitors can walk through. The walls will have phases about fighting cancer. A second section will have a garden of native Texas plants, including a sculpture. Eric Schultz, TBG Partners, the firm that is designing the plaza, said that the water features are meant to create a sense of calm and healing. There were some questions raised regarding close proximity to Auditorium shores and the subsequent noise. Mr. McCabe said the spot is ideal because is it visible and will attract visitors with it's calming features.

### 5. Briefing on the Trail of Lights

Laura Esparza, Division Manager, Cultural Affairs Division, briefed the board on the status of the Trail of Lights. The Trail, formerly known as Yule Fest, has provided drive through and pedestrian trail presentations since 1965. In 2007, the Trail attracted over 300,000 visitors, achieving national acclaim as a Top Ten Holiday Lighting Event by USA Today. Currently four city departments are involved in year-long planning to stage the event. Approximately 75 City of Austin staff members along with 100 volunteers work the Trail on a nightly basis. Ms. Esparza reported that it takes about 1million dollars to fund the event, however, the revenue to offset these costs is only \$397,000. A study was conducted to compare other holiday events and found that Austin's Trail of Lights was the largest and the most costly. Since the revenue is not enough to offset the total yearly costs, Ms. Esparza proposal three possible options. They include:

- 1) To Reduce the Scale of the Event. This option would keep the Zilker Tree, Yule Log and concessions on-going but the trail lighting would be abbreviated. Only four family festival nights would be held but entertainment would continue along with Santa's House.
- 2) Outsource Components of the Event. This option would outsource set-up crew, volunteer recruitment and coordination along with special needs services.
- 3) Suspend the 2009-2010 Trail of Lights Festival. This option would keep the tree lighting and the Zilker Tree and would form a committee to develop a new model for the future.

Board Member Chimenti asked if the \$400,000 revenue raised is used to offset the department's cost or whether it went into the general fund. It was reported that the revenue generated is put back in to the general fund. Board Member Vane suggested that if we have to charge for the event, that the fee not be paid/collected at the event but rather be collected through a donation

through a sponsoring agency. Passes, arm bands or the purchase of tickets in advance could be used instead of paying each night at the event. Director Hensley indicated that she is still hopeful that a sponsor would step up and help sponsor the event and not have to go to a charging option.

#### 6. Waller Creek Boathouse Update

Gary Jackson, Public Works Manager, briefed the Board on the Waller Creek Tunnel and Boat House Project and requested a course of action regarding the boathouse project.

Three main issues were identified:

1. Stay on the course with the existing design which is at 60-70% completed. Watershed Protection is funding the project with mitigation funds from the Waller Creek Project. The design is approximately 9,900 square feet, with emphasis on rowing and sculling, however, mixed used options are possible.
2. Continue with the current design but with slight modifications that would allow for mix use. Depending on the modifications, there may or may not be fiscal implications. There are site constraints so the modifications must be sensitive to the site constraints.
3. Explore new site options. New design options would allow for a larger facility, but the project would no longer be administered through the Watershed Protection Department. The mitigations funds, 1.3 million would be forwarded to the Parks Department to administer the project.

Mr. Jackson, summarized the implications and opportunities of each of the proposed options. After some additional discussion, the Board instructed Mr. Jackson to proceed with option #2 with slight modifications that would allow for mix use.

#### 7. The Parks and Recreation Department's FY 2009-2010 Proposed Budget Reductions.

This item was pulled by Board Chair Guerrero.

#### E. New Business and Action Items

8. Make a recommendation regarding the Waller Creek Project, the Downtown Density Bonus Program and the Affordable Housing Strategy.

Jana McCann, ROMA Design Group and Jim Robertson, Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department.

Mr. Robertson reported that in the spring 2008, Council directed staff to develop an affordable housing strategy and a downtown density bonus program. Drafts have been submitting and public input is currently being taken. Ms. McCann explained that the density bonus is a tool that helps promote a downtown that is sustainable and affordable. It is a tool that expands the building beyond the base zone to increase square footage but requires the developer to provide community benefits to the city. The goal of the program is to: 1) be predictable and transparent; 2) based on economic conditions; 3) supports healthy growth; and 4) results in clear community benefits.

The guiding principles of the Plan stipulate that density should be encouraged, existing zoning heights and densities should be the baseline, the design should be of high quality, there should only be one pathway to a density bonus, additional density should be allowed only where it is appropriate and compatible and finally community benefits should be focused on the most "at risk" elements. Nine test sites were selected for the Program in three different zones; 1) the core

area; 2) uptown district; and 3) northwest district. The findings concluded that only the residential districts gained enough value to support leveeing a public benefit fee and that commercial developments do not produce a high incremental return to justified a public benefit fee.

Ms. McCann explained that projects seeking to participate in the Bonus Density Program must provide schematic level design plan, comply with the Great Cities guidelines and compliance with the Downtown Urban Design Program. A revision to the guidelines will be to add a density bonus reward program to projects that provide publicly accessible open space on private sites, a revision supported by the Board. Ms. McCann conclude that the Program will probably not achieve a large amount or revenue but will provide a proactive program of affordable housing, improving, managing and funding parks and open space, the preservation of live music and cultural vitality and guidelines that will require high quality designs. She added that the Parkland Dedication Fees will be removed to help reduce the development cost of affordable housing. Questions regarding using the fee option to enhance PARD facilities (Old Bakery, O, Henry and Suzanna Dickenson) will be considered.

9. Make a recommendation to the Director regarding Sherriff Boat Dock.

Board Member Francell reported that the owner had provided documentation that indicated the mouth of the slough where they dock their boat is greater than 100 feet. The owner also complied with the request to build the dock parallel to the shoreline. Board Member Marler moved to approve the recommendation, seconded by Board Member Rivera. Motion carried 7-0.

10. Make a recommendation to City Council regarding the temporary and permanent use of parkland at Parque Zaragoza for the East 7<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor, from Navasota to Pleasant Valley.

Clay Harris, Public Works Department, reported that the City has had quite a few complaints regarding drainage in this area. In an effort to address the problem, the Public Works Department is requesting use of parkland to install a storm drainage pipe. The project will require the use of 4,725 sq. ft. of permanent use and 7875 sq.ft. of temporary use and will take approximately 90 days to complete. Board Member Francell moved to approve the recommendation, seconded by Board Member Chimenti. Motion carried 7-0.

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

Kristen McKenna, Public Works, informed the Board that residents along Gaston Avenue who will be affected by the water line have been notified of the project. The project will require the construction of a water line that will affect those residences and also another shorter water line that will impact a portion of Shoal Creek greenbelt. Fifteen (15) parking spaces will be lost to a staging area. Due to several Board Member concerns regarding the process and the substance of this project, the discussion will be referred to the Land and Facilities Committee for further discussion. Signs will be posted all the greenbelt to let people about the project.

F. Director's Report

Director Hensley reported on the following:

- ? Metz Recreation Center Child Care Camp is considered a pre-school program and must be licensed. If it remains as such, we need to enhance our staffing efforts there and pay a licensing fee.

- ? The department initiated an emergency RFP for the tree assessment and received one that was too costly. We are working with the purchasing department to submit another RFP for one week.
- ? There is a possibility that tree #34, which looks like a suspiciously bent tree, may be a marker tree that may have historical significance. The Department has been asked to re-examine it carefully.
- ? The department hopefully will be selected a Beta site to implement the Method of Eight, a process that is used to evaluate staffing, public involvement, processes etc....

G. Items from Board Members

Board Member Vane announced that on November 6<sup>th</sup> there will be a benefit for Doug Sahm at Doug Sahm Hill.

With no further business, the meeting as adjourned at 9:40 p.m.