

Approved Meeting Minutes
PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE
10-26-09

ATTENDING: Bank, Beyaert, Harryman, Mercurio, Peters, Shalaby, Coomber, Guarienti, Hooper, Hudson, Kirby, Madsen, Southworth, Vann, Kaplan, Coffey, Walters
NOT ATTENDING: Cant, Williams
STAFF ATTENDING: Radosevich, Escobar, Wiese, Bell, Bobzien, Lewis, Fujita, Pfuehler, Schinnerer
GUESTS: Whitney Dotson
PUBLIC: Norm Kidder, Mike Nicholson (LARP), Cyndy Shafer (CA State Parks), Karen Molinari, Paola Bernazzani (Jones and Stokes), Jean Shinn (Dept. of Fish and Game), Mike Thomas (US Fish and Wildlife Service), Dallas Harryman, Helene Pfuehler.

The meeting began at 7:05 p.m.

1. **Approval of Minutes:** The September 28, 2009 meeting minutes were approved with two edits.

PAC member Kirby moved and approval was seconded by PAC member Coomber with minor edits. Hooper and Shalaby abstained.

2. **Introductions:** Chair Guarienti asked PAC Members and District staff to introduce themselves as well as members of the public.

3. **Board Member Comments:** Director Whitney Dotson stated he enjoyed the PAC meetings and learned something new at each one. The District is moving forward in implementing some key projects in Richmond. Dedications include the Miller Knox playground area and the campsite at Pt. Pinole, which he especially appreciated. He attended a planning meeting with staff regarding the state grant funded restoration of the Pt. Pinole shoreline. Whitney thanked the group and added Saturday's dedication went well. (*Director Whitney Dotson made his comments after the second staff presentation regarding the East Contra Costa County Parks HCP)*.

4. **Public Comments:** None.

5. **Presentations:** (shifted in order per Chair Guarienti)

- a. **Americans with Disabilities Act Plan** – District Counsel Ted Radosevich gave the PAC a brief history and update on the District's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. He explained the District has been involved in access and disability issues since the early '80's. In 1987, the District developed a Whole Park Access Plan, which looked at District parks and noted accessibility (or lack thereof). In 1990, the Federal Government passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which set a national access standard throughout the country. In early 2002, the District began working with the Disabilities Rights Advocates (DRA) to come into compliance with the ADA. Throughout a multi-year process, the District worked to bring its most used facilities into compliance. Counsel Radosevich used beach wheelchairs, parking, water fountains and restrooms as other examples of ADA compliance. Radosevich also discussed how technology has made it easier to improve access to information about District parks for those with visual challenges. While the District's ADA compliance plan runs through 2029, the District will continue to try to improve accessibility for all. Radosevich concluded with a couple of antidotes and a quote from an article from the DRA.

PAC member Hooper asked if the present financial situation is slowing the District's ADA plan. Counsel Radosevich replied it was not significantly slowing it because the Board voted to fund \$500,000 per year to ADA projects. There is also an "ADA strike team" to ensure compliance. Although outside grants may slow, within the District, ADA compliance is a big priority.

PAC member Coomber spoke about providing more trail signs with Braille. Counsel Radosevich agreed and stated that some things are already translated into Braille.

Chair Guarienti mentioned Counsel Radosevich's reference to make it easier for park users to get out for their cars and believes the District has made some major efforts to address these challenges. He asked for statistics for projects completed. Counsel Radosevich noted he did not bring the full list, but he gave a brief background of the tracking process for the projects that are non-compliant in the parks and how they are tracked until they are compliant. He reminded the group that projects are prioritized by "where do most people want to go" and "where can we do it within budget." Chair Guarienti agreed the District has made good progress.

Counsel Radosevich closed by reminding the group that the Board is committed to the ADA and the funding needed to comply with it.

b. **East Counties HCP** – Wildlife Program Manager Doug Bell and consultant Paola Bernazzani from Jones and Stokes presented an overview of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for the eastern part of the District. Bell explained what an HCP is and why the District is working to establish one. He discussed the habitat and terrain of the zone the HCP would cover. He explained how an HCP helps protect species and their habitat, as well as streamlining the permitting process. Having an HCP in place provides a substantial cost savings because the District would no longer have to pay on a per-permit basis. The plan mirrors and takes advantage of the information in the East Contra Costa County HCP (ECCCHCP).

PAC Member Beyaert asked why the HCP area didn't include Sunol and Pleasanton Ridge, etc. Bell stated those parts of the District have slightly different habitats and species. Bernazzani added the District HCP intends to build on the East Contra Costa County Plan. PAC member Hooper asked what was covered. Bernazzani answered the ECCCHCP was a development-based plan which allows for new areas to be protected as mitigations for development. It did not take into account existing protected open space. Bell added the District's HCP would help fulfill the big picture for land management.

Director Dotson wanted to know if species outside the zone would be compromised in any way. Bell answered not on District lands, but noted there are a number of other regional HCP plans in the San Francisco Bay area.

Chair Guarienti noted the stark ecological differences separated by the ridgeline to the west of I-680 and suggested a topographical map would show the differences in habitats. Bell agreed and stated there would be one in the final plan. He then listed the proposed covered parklands and species.

PAC member Beyaert asked about the location of a specific botanical species and whether the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) was happy with the proposed HCP list. Bell noted the outreach process had just begun.

PAC member Hooper expressed his interest in understanding why animals and plants in this region are in so much trouble. Bell indicated developing an HCP helps provide some answers, but certainly pollution and development put pressure on species. Bernazzani added the list of impacted species is still being developed. AGM John Escobar asked about how the list for this HCP would differ from the ECCCHCP list. Bell noted there are a few species not covered in the ECCCHCP, but would be covered under this plan, and vice versa. Bernazzani used the Pallid Bat as an example of a species covered in this plan, but not the ECCCHCP.

PAC member Hooper asked about finding a species after the HCP is adopted and could it be added. Bernazzani stated that would require either a major amendment to the HCP or a separate permit.

PAC member Kirby asked if the District acquires land currently covered in the ECCCHCP would it be managed under that plan or the District's HCP. He added the various conservation plans and mitigations throughout the region present a management challenge. Bernazzani agreed it is a jigsaw puzzle, but one of the goals for the District's HCP is to make it compatible with other conservation plans. Kirby asked if there was legislation to enforce coordination. Bernazzani stated there was no mandatory legislative requirement, but all conservation plans use a regional context to foster coordination.

Chair Guarienti asked the presentation continue with questions at the end.

PAC member Beyaert asked how new parklands acquired by the District would be integrated into the HCP. Bell answered the goal is to develop a streamlined integration process.

Bell referred back to Kirby's question about different management agreements and suggested the group look at it another way. In a way, the HCP actually provides a more uniform conservation management tool.

PAC member Hooper asked if grazing was covered. Bell stated it was. He then reviewed the next steps, Phases I and II.

Chair Guarienti asked Bell to give more detail about the public outreach meetings happening this week. Bell reviewed the dates and locations for the plan's review.

PAC Member Southworth wanted to know how many staff people would be needed to implement the plan. Bell answered none, but that Stewardship would reprioritize other projects. Steve Bobzien stated the HCP would actually create less work, because the permit application process would be uniform. Bernazzani stated having an HCP in place could make the District eligible for additional grants and volunteer opportunities would be part of the plan as well.

b. **PAC Goals 2010** – Chair Guarienti and Erich Pfuehler reviewed the 2010 Park Advisory Goals. Chair

Guarienti summarized the goals for 2010 and listed the activities for 2009 and 2010. Chair Guarienti added there was an Executive Subcommittee meeting before the regular PAC meeting tonight where the goals were discussed. Guarienti spoke about adding a new ongoing goal: Review of Special Use Permits. He added the PAC completed all but one of its 2009 goals. The Executive Committee agreed to add reviewing the District guidelines for special uses and concessions to the 2010 goals since the PAC did not complete that review in 2009.

Chair Guarienti then verified the work plan for accuracy and discussed Subcommittees, such as Community Outreach. He also added a review of the District's trail use checklist process to the 2010 goals.

PAC member Peters commented about the Community Outreach Subcommittee. She stated that she, along with PAC member Southworth and PAC member Coomber, volunteered to serve on this Subcommittee along with former PAC member George Phillips. She stated this group never met. Pfuehler clarified the Subcommittee did meet prior to the February PAC meeting per the 2009 work plan, but only Coomber attended. Coomber stated the last contact he had with the Community Outreach team – Elizabeth Hales, Rick Parmer and Anne Kassebaum – was earlier in the summer, but he had seen Hales at an event and knew she was extremely busy.

Chair Guarienti stated the Subcommittee is free to meet as issues arise.

AGM Escobar shared this will be a big year for outreach with the Oakland Strokes, Tidewater, the Mobile Fish Exhibit and Mobile Visitor Center on the road in 2010.

PAC member Hooper noted that Oakland Strokes will be an extremely difficult project. AGM Escobar agreed and reminded PAC members that outreach staff is working hard.

PAC member Vann moved and PAC member Harryman seconded the approval of the PAC Goals for 2010. They were unanimously approved.

6. PAC Member Comments - PAC member Beyaert suggested the group be aware of the Segways on trails. He cited this week's *Via AA* magazine's ads, an article on Segways and an interview with a local Segway dealer.

PAC member Peters asked if Segways were legal. AGM Escobar stated they are illegal on District property, but some parts of the trail may not be District property. Chair Guarienti informed PAC member Beyaert the longest PAC meeting ever was earlier this year when the use of Segways on District trails was discussed.

PAC member Coomber commented about a meeting with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) which focused on improving access for those with disabilities. He noted 30-40 people with disabilities attended. He learned about the importance adding Braille translations to trail signs.

PAC member Southworth discussed a reusable mug she purchased from the Harvest event at Ardenwood. There was additional discussion about the 75th Anniversary merchandise available on the District's website.

7. Report from the Chair - PAC Chair Guarienti stated he attended the October 3 Carquinez Straight event celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the District and the 20th Anniversary of the Bay and Ridge Trails. He noted that PAC member John Mercurio and Hulet Hornbek attended as well. Chair Guarienti met a couple who watched the PBS special on National Parks which inspired them to walk the trail that day. He helped them get maps for other District parks.

Chair Guarienti then asked PAC member Hudson to speak about the late PAC member Mike Shimansky, whose memorial he also attended. Hudson explained Shimansky was a well-loved member of the community; there were easily 300 people at the memorial. Even though he was on many committees with Shimansky, Hudson learned a lot about him at the memorial he didn't know. Chair Guarienti added that an article called Shimansky "Mr. Danville." Chair Guarienti stated Shimansky was a big supporter of the parks.

Chair Guarienti stated he attended the Executive and Board meetings and noted the Ambassador plan will be discussed at the PAC meeting in January. He also attended the Cowboy Extravaganza at Sunol.

8. Board Committee Reports - PAC member Judi Bank reviewed her attendance at Operations Committee, where concession agreements and the 2010 fee schedule were discussed.

PAC member Hooper spoke about the Finance Committee and added that next month the Budget for 2010 should come to the PAC. There will be a presentation before the upcoming Finance committee on October 28 as to the current status.

9. Status of Recommendations - No comments.

10. **Old Business** - Chair Guarienti commented next month new PAC officers will be elected. He encouraged the PAC committee members to think about a Chair and a Vice-Chair for next year, as this is his last term.

11. **New Business** - Chair Guarienti said the PAC will adjourn until Nov. 16th, a week earlier due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

12. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

Summary of Actions:

1. The September 28, 2009 meeting minutes were unanimously approved with minor edits.
2. The PAC goals for 2010 were unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Schinnerer, Confidential Secretary