

**Approved Meeting Minutes**  
**PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
 4-25-11

ATTENDING: Mercurio, Vann, Simmons, Beyaert, Bank, Pellegrini, Godfrey Madison, Madsen, Weiss, Volin, Shalaby, Soderstrom, Palacios, Hudson, Walking, Southworth  
 NOT ATTENDING: Walters, Johnson, Kirby, Coomber  
 STAFF ATTENDING: Pfoehler, Margulici, Collins, Wiese, James, Wilson, Jones  
 GUESTS: Whitney Dotson  
 PUBLIC: Marie Grisham, Alan LaPointe, Joe Engbeck, Jack Gill, Norm Kidder

The meeting began at 7:00 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** PAC Vice Chair Mercurio called the meeting to order. The March 28, 2011 meeting minutes were approved with one amendment.

PAC member Simmons moved and PAC member Godfrey seconded approval of the minutes. PAC members Palacios, Shalaby and Southworth abstained as they were not at the last meeting.

1. **Introductions:** Mercurio asked PAC members, staff and members of the public present to introduce themselves.
2. **Board Member Comments:** Director Whitney Dotson had very brief remarks about the important issues facing the District and the Park Advisory Committee adding that it is a pleasure to be in attendance at this meeting.
3. **Public Comments:** None.
4. **Presentations:**

a. **Reservations Process Update – Tiffany Margulici, Reservations Supervisor.**

Tiffany Margulici, Reservations Supervisor, gave the PAC an overview about the reservations department. Services provided by the reservations department represent about \$2 million in revenue each year. The reservations staff of eight receives 170,000 incoming phone calls per year. In addition to handling facility reservations, program registrations and camping reservations, the reservations department has a special initiative on data collection and analysis of park users.

PAC member Beyaert asked what percentage of reservations are made on-line. Margulici stated 60% of camping and 30% of programing reservations are made on-line. As part of the data collection initiative, the department has learned about 40% of people who contact the District learned about programs through the Regional In Nature (RIN) publication. Cash registers for point-of-sale registrations are being replaced with computers which store more in depth information about programs in which people participate. PAC member Weiss asked if the District mines for demographic information such as people's age, ethnicity or gender for resource allocation. Margulici responded this is the goal for the department and she is excited about the possibilities. PAC member Palacios asked when people call in for service are they asked about their sex, age or gender. Margulici responded staff does not currently ask those types of questions, unless necessary to attend the programs. Simmons asked if the system has a map for camping reservations. Margulici said yes and added reservations for camping are space specific. Godfrey commented he found registering for the Trails Challenge difficult and suggested the District re-evaluate the process to make it more user friendly. Margulici said District staff is looking into making the process more user friendly. PAC member Vann asked if the reservations system captures ethnic data. Margulici said not right now. Vann commented this type of data could be used to identify areas where more community outreach might be useful. Margulici agreed and said some of this analysis can be done by zip codes. Beyaert asked if the District uses demand pricing for campsites. Margulici said the District does not have demand pricing, rather prices are the same year round – \$22 a night and \$45 for electrical. PAC member Walking thanked Margulici for not using a powerpoint, but wondered how others in the District learn about the work the reservations department does. Margulici stated her department reports financials and annual reports, but a lot of information is provided on a more ad hoc basis. Weiss asked if the District has a refund policy. Margulici stated payments for programs can be refunded within seven days. The District has the discretion to refund if a guest had a bad experience. Picnic sites have a graduated refund site. Weiss wondered if the District has a satisfaction guarantee. Margulici stated the District has close to a satisfaction guarantee. She also oriented the PAC to the location of the

reservations department at Peralta Oaks and the phone number. Additionally, Margulici extended an invitation to the PAC to come and listen in on phone calls to the reservations department for an hour. Marie Grisham, a member of the public, commented about the great service she has received from reservations. Mercurio commented about the great effort made by the reservations department to accommodate park users.

**b. Measure CC Progress Report - Dave Collins, AGM Finance and Management Services**

Dave Collins, AGM Finance and Management Services, introduced Megan Jones, Administrative Analyst II, who assists on this project. Collins discussed the background of Measure CC, which passed in 2004 and provides operational funds through 2020. It is not based on property tax and therefore not tied to property values. It is a 15 year excise tax and will net the District about \$42 million. Collins mentioned the project list included in the PAC packet. Collins reported the District has appropriated about 40% of Measure CC funds. He briefly highlighted a few items in the 2012 staff report – appropriations to new projects, equitable distribution of funds throughout the Measure CC zone and the reserve fund. Beyaert had comments on the Park Operating Budgets chart on page four which was not clear. Collins said Beyaert made a good point and the District will continue to work on the chart. Yann asked for the definition of the term ‘resource related projects’. Collins defined it as ‘to maintain the environmental structure i.e. ponds restoration, fuels management or environmental management.’ Yann asked about the accrued interest and project overruns. Collins responded the accrued interest goes back into the Measure CC program and there are some contingency funds which can compensate for overruns. PAC member Southworth asked about Alameda Point which is over budget. Collins said it needs to be addressed and policing costs need to be contained. Mercurio pointed out a recurring theme of replacing chemical toilets with vault toilets. He wondered if this had long term cost reduction benefits to the District. Collins said yes as chemical toilets do not have to be serviced daily. PAC member Soderstrom asked if there were more plans for expansion at Alameda Point. Collins stated yes, but while the District has been engaged for several years future plans are still vague.

**c. Alvarado/Wildcat Land Use Plan – Brian Wiese, Chief, Planning Stewardships and Everett James, Park Planner, Planning and Stewardship**

Brian Wiese, Chief, Planning, Stewardship and GIS stated this amendment to the land use plan is focused on addressing parking challenges to take some of the overflow off of the street, provide equestrian parking and make some of the pathways ADA accessible.

Everett James, Park Planner, began with a few slides of this 42 acre park, showing a close up shot of the staging area’s current condition. On the busiest days, the attendance at the park is 600 with the staging areas holding only 23 cars. One of the key recommendations of the plan is to add 38 additional striped spaces and an overflow parking area that is not striped. An equestrian parking area will be moved to be more accessible to the trails and pedestrian access will be improved – including better ADA accessibility.

PAC member Pellegrini asked if trees will be removed. James said maybe a couple will need to be removed. Pellegrini asked about a slide area in the park. James said the slide area is not where the LUP amendment proposes parking expansion. The lawn will also require some minor grading and excavation. District staff would also like to formalize the drop off spots for equipment and people. Soderstrom asked if there were maintenance and repair issues with the stone bridge. James stated the District looked into this issue, but there was nothing that prevented maintenance. Soderstrom asked if the District would be interested in acquiring property to the west of the park office. James answered he understood it was not for sale. Wiese added it was not a part of the current LUP discussion. Beyaert stated he had not seen the existing LUP and wondered if anything in this current plan deletes anything in the existing plan. James explained the only difference is this amendment increases parking. Beyaert asked what the thinking was when the original parking area was reduced from 140 spaces to 23. James understood there was a lot of criminal behavior and the residents had concerns. Wiese added the district looked at the possibility of acquiring more land some 20 years ago and it did not happen. Beyaert added he goes to the park on weekdays and the staging area is filled. He wondered if there is any breakdown between users – bikers, hikers, picnickers. James said no. He added the District had a public meeting attended by 70 or so people and they gave insight into the parking challenges. Beyaert expressed concern about making people walk ¼ mile through the parking lot to get to the trailhead. James said by expanding the parking lot within the park, people would actually be closer to the trails and picnic areas. Walking noted the Sierra Club letter pointed out FEMA gave the District \$3 million in funding for Wildcat Creek restoration and to restore steelhead trout to the creek. He worried the additional parking would prevent the removal of

existing culverts and set back restoration efforts. He asked the District to renew its commitment to creek restoration efforts. James added fish come from upstream and the access from downstream is blocked. Removing the culverts is not off the table. Wiese said removing the culverts would require a new bridge to be built across the creek. Vann said he participated in the PAC field trip to this park. He was impressed with the park, but thought parking was inadequate. He expressed concern about the accessibility for disabled visitors. He was concerned about a 1200-1500 foot long ramp which could be difficult for folks to go back up. He wondered if disabled vehicles could just park closer to the park. James responded the ramp is conceptual and the alignment is not set in stone. Vann wondered if the disabled community had a chance to weigh in on the ramp. James said no, not specifically. Vann said the District should go back and do that. Beyaert added Tom Butt, Richmond City Councilman, pointed out that McBryde Avenue is wider than it needs to be. He asked if the District has explored requesting the city to narrow McBryde Avenue to create more parking. James said the city has agreed to look at that possibility, but that would not be part of the District's land use plan. Beyaert suggested it could eliminate the need for additional parking. Wiese said it is a good idea, but it would probably not supplant the need for additional parking and it is out of the District's planning jurisdiction. Simmons wondered if any additional construction would be needed for the new parking spaces. James said only for the turnaround. Weiss suggested the District may want to consider charging for parking at this park. Soderstrom wondered if there might be any residential properties nearby which the District could purchase to develop a staging area. Wiese said the District would look at it if there was a willing seller. Beyaert said there is a parcel of land across from Alvarado which could be desirable for the District.

Alan LaPointe, Chair of Friends of Wildcat Canyon, gave a very detailed history about the reasoning behind the formation of this group as it relates to the canyon and his reasons for commenting on this item. He began in 1930 with the Olmsted Report; the 1960's, 1970's, 1980's and brought the PAC up to the current year 2011. He asked the PAC recommend staff go back, dig into these issues and for the PAC to not send this item on for Board approval. LaPointe mentioned he knew of two willing sellers in the area and would see they provide letters to the District. Soderstrom asked where the sellers' property was on the photograph. Marie Grisham of California State Horseman lives in El Sobrante and commented there should be equal access for horse trailers in the park. Joe Engbeck, Vice President of Regional Parks Association, asked the PAC to not recommend approval of this LUP as it now stands. Wiese asked Engbeck to elaborate on his proposals. Engbeck reiterated: triangle parking, upper McBryde and the Riverside School property. Jack Gill commented on the stated goals for the LUP and believes the current plan misses the targets. He noted that parking is being provided 1800 feet away from the demand area and there will be a long stretch of unobserved parking. He also commented on the equestrian access. Pellegrini asked about visuals on Park Road and wondered how many parking spaces the 'triangle' property across the road could accommodate. Wiese thought 40 spaces could fit in the triangle.

Beyaert moved staff take a further look at finding parking at other locations which would further the creek restoration goals and eliminate the need for the culverts, working with Richmond to quantify additional parking at McBryde Avenue below Alvarado, and acquiring the land in the 'triangle' across the street from Alvarado and Riverside School. He also moved staff work with ADA interest groups to make sure their concerns are taken into account with regard to access.

Simmons stated he believed elements of the plan should move forward prior to exhausting the parking search. Addressing the equestrian and ADA concerns should move forward. He also recommended the District renew its commitment to creek restoration. Vann stated he agreed with both Simmons and Beyaert's motion. PAC member Bank mentioned there would be two public hearings coming up on this plan and staff may have time to review some alternatives. James stated there are two, one on May 10<sup>th</sup> and the other the Board meeting. Wiese added the purpose of the public meeting is to make comments on the plan and District staff often make changes to various aspects of the land use plans based on public feedback. PAC member Madison stated a recommendation on this item seemed pre-mature and the PAC should table the issue. He wondered if the item could come back to the PAC in May.

Beyaert changed his motion to ask staff to come back to the next PAC meeting and provide additional information to address the points he made in his previous motion. Simmons seconded with a friendly amendment that if staff is not ready by May, they can bring it up at a later PAC meeting. Madison expressed his support. The motion to table the item was unanimously approved.

- 5. PAC Member Comments** – Beyaert passed around Wildcat Marsh Bay Trail Guide and invited the PAC to the grand opening. Weiss talked about the Ironhorse Regional Trail article in Via Magazine. Soderstrom attended the Walnut Creek Horse Fair where the majority of the participants were large horse training

facilities. He spoke with a number of people that felt that they were not being reached out to by the District in terms of their therapeutic riding programs for children with disabilities.

5. **Report from the Vice Chair** – Mercurio remarked the California Trails Conference was a success. The District was very helpful with monetary and staff contributions.
7. **Board Committee Reports** – None reported.
8. **Status of Recommendations** – Current.
9. **Old Business** – Legislative Affairs Manager Pfuehler reminded PAC members the field trip is May 7<sup>th</sup> at Garin Dry Creek. PAC members can meet at Peralta Oaks Headquarters or Carden Lane in Hayward.
10. **New Business** – None.
11. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Summary of Actions:

1. The March 28, 2011 meeting minutes were unanimously approved with an edit.
2. The next PAC meeting is on May 23, 2011.
3. The PAC voted unanimously to table recommendation on the Alvarado/Wildcat LUP.

Respectfully submitted,  
Yolande Barial, PAC Secretary