



County of Santa Cruz

PARKS, OPEN SPACE & CULTURAL SERVICES

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JOE SCHULTZ, DIRECTOR

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Monday, February 9, 2009

Government Center, Board Chambers

7:15 p.m.

701 Ocean Street

Regular Meeting

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:16 p.m.

Members: Janet Doten, Dave Mercer, Katharine Minott, Michael Rosenberg and Francisco Serna

Present: Dave Mercer, Katharine Minott, Michael Rosenberg, Francisco Serna

Staff: Joe Schultz, Christine Bennett, Gretchen Iliff, Cristina James, Bob Olson

II. AGENDA MODIFICATIONS OR APPROVAL

Commissioner Minott inquired about the two Community Service Officers (CSO) assigned to the Parks Department. Gretchen Iliff stated that there are two assigned, but only one is filled and she works four ten-hour days each week, from noon to 10:00 PM. We are working with the Sheriff's Department to see if we can get the second position filled.

Commissioner Rosenberg inquired as to why the wading pool at Simpkins was demolished in the renovation. Bob Olson stated that it was to make it more user-friendly, and not due to failures.

The agenda was approved as written (Minott/Mercer 4/0)

III. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes of January 12, 2009 were approved as presented (Minott/Mercer 4/0)

B. Information and Reports (Accept and File)

- 1) Facilities Division – Status Report
- 2) Maintenance Division – Status Report
- 3) Planning Division – Status Report
- 4) Recreation & Cultural Services Division – Status Report
- 5) Arts Commission Agenda January 24, 2009

The Information and Reports were accepted and filed. (Minott/Serna 4/0).

IV. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Tom Schot spoke about his work creating a Disc Golf Course at Pinto Lake. The grand opening for the first nine holes will be March 1, 2009 at 11:00 AM. An invitation to attend was extended to all Commissioners and Parks staff, as well as members of the Board of Supervisors.

Art Alfaro spoke about the "No Rezone Save Par 3 Property Committee." The general feeling has been that the public wants the property to remain as open space and to be used for a variety of recreational activities, so the committee is soliciting support from the County.

V. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Commissioners were given the Form 700 packet and asked to return the completed form to either the Clerk/Elections office or to Parks Secretary. The Commissioner training in Cupertino on February 7th went well with one Parks Commissioner and two Arts Commissioners attending. Commissioner Minott added that there is an ethics test on the State Attorney General's web page which Commissioners should take every two years.

VI. REGULAR AGENDA (DISCUSSION ITEMS)

A. ACTION ITEMS

None

B. INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Freedom Lake Public Comment

Presentation by Parks staff on history of Freedom Lake, the water hyacinth intrusion, the current situation of 95% coverage by the plant, and the possible impacts on wildlife, native plants, etc. There were no native species identified by the Biologist, but their presence could not be ruled out either. The biotic survey, management plan, and Fish & Game application were all done. In 2008 a grant was written, and in January 2009 Parks was informed that it was unsuccessful. Parks' expenses to date are approximately \$40,000 on this project. Current County anticipated budget deficit is \$25 million and funding from State of California Propositions 40 and 84 are frozen. Possible special financing district requires 2/3 majority vote to collect funds for the task of cleaning and maintenance. The department continues to pursue other grant and funding options.

Commissioner Minott inquired about the use of the weevil, similar to what they use in the Delta. Gretchen stated that the climate here was too cold, within a little more than a year all the weevils had died. In the Delta they control it, not eradicate it and they use an herbicide, but do not harvest the plant out.

Commissioner Rosenberg was interested in the option of using herbicides here, since the hyacinth will kill other species in the lake anyway. He also thought that we were told we didn't need a permit. Cristina stated that per the Biologist's report and County Planning, any work would have to be done between July and October, and a biologist must be on site and train anyone working on the project. After the application was submitted and the \$1,200 fee paid, Fish & Game determined a stream bed alteration permit was not needed. If we do use herbicides, it leaves behind the organic materials (approximately 1,000 cubic yards) and the seedpods (which can still live for

40 years). We have to get the County's permission, but if we use federal grant funds we also to have comply with federal requirements.

Commissioner Rosenberg asked if continuing to get federal grants will help us get attention for economic stimulus programs, and asked if the Biologist gave us a "You've got this long..." type of scenario for the lake. What is worse, a lake full of living hyacinth or dead?

Cristina stated that the Biologist has looked at the lake, but no hydrological study or bathymetric survey has been done due to funding. Gretchen stated that we can call to find out what the experiences of other counties or agencies have been using herbicides, and also if the Fish & Game will allow it to be done. Public Works and Parks staff check to ensure that there is no hyacinth escaping into the water system downstream, and limited rainfall has helped. Bill Kane spoke that this problem progresses every year and the cost continues to go up. He has met with Mr. Chandler, a previous owner of the lake and surrounding land, and feels he would be a valuable resource to the county staff. There are willow trees in the lake now, which will increase the risk of flooding the entire area in heavy rains. The depth of the lake is 3-4 feet, except in the center where an old drainage ditch is. Mosquitoes are an issue as well. Would like to get federal stimulus paperwork going. There were over 200 signatures submitted to the Board of Supervisors in 2008 and they took no action, so he will be re-submitting the list this year.

Malcom Sprott stated that the fire fighting helicopters used to utilize the lake water, but that wasn't an option when the fires hit Trabing and Summit areas this year and he feels that may be a reason for lawsuits. If hyacinth goes into the watershed, there will be law suits about that, too. Migratory birds used to come to the lake, but no longer do, so there is a risk of environmental law suits as well. The mountains around the area continue to erode into the creek and lake. He has been watching the situation for less than two years and the first estimate he heard was \$400,000, the second was \$650,000, and now it is up to \$1 million. Feels that law suit(s) will certainly cost more than that.

Nita Hertel spoke that she does not support spraying herbicides. The price continues to go up, and the first time it was noticed was with mosquito abatement in 2005. She feels that mechanical removal is really the only answer, and that red-legged frogs may be in the lake now due to the fires in surrounding areas this year. She would like to form a coalition of all local wetlands groups to be a more viable entity. The Solares granted \$1 million to clean up Elkhorn Slough, so we need to find out who locally is interested in supporting this project. She stated that the community shouldn't have to do the work, and that the County should because we have staff. She has approached the Santa Cruz Land Trust about taking the Estate into conservatorship so the County can obtain the funds necessary to clean up the lake.

Commissioner Serna suggested that the group bring this to the attention of the public through the media. There may be families here in the area that have financial resources through foundations they are associated with.

Commissioner Mercer agreed that trying to find private funding is a good idea, but he does not feel the Commission has the necessary information to make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

Director Schultz stated that perhaps the conservation resource group could help begin the movement on a state or federal level of government.

Commissioner Rosenberg asked that the topic be brought back as an Action Item for the March Agenda.

2. Polo Grounds and Soquel Creek Water District

Director Schultz stated that there are no new developments since the last meeting.

3. McGregor Park and Soquel Creek Water District

Director Schultz stated that there are no new developments since the last meeting.

4. Budget Update

Director Schultz distributed copies of the CAO's budget letter to all Commissioners. Budgets are due February 20th, and there will be cuts in programs, staff, pool hours, etc. A lot will be decided when we know what the outcome of the state budget is.

5. Parks Project Update from Park Planners

Bob Olson stated that we are waiting for sign-off on the Highland Park grant so that funds can be unfrozen, which cannot happen until the state budget is decided. The Felt Street project is in the permit stage and RDA is including one year of park maintenance for landscaping into the agreement for an "establishment period" and to help take the cost off of the Parks Department. The renovation at Simpkin's Family Swim Center is moving into Phase II. Phase I is complete other than the solar for the water pre-heat. Visitors are using the back locker rooms which the front ones are under construction. The Farm Park is moving forward, with plans for a 4,600 sq. ft., single level, community building. The building cannot be larger or two-story due to constraints in parking spaces, and an agreement with neighbors that no weddings or other large events would take place at the location. McGregor Park master plan was approved by the Board of Supervisors and there will be a community meeting tomorrow, February 10th, to discuss the plan and funding options. State bonds would be very helpful, and there is funding currently up to the DRG part of the process. Staff is working very closely with South County Housing.

Cristina James stated that there will be community meetings held by RDA for Moran Lake on February 25th and Chanticleer on March 3rd, both at Del Mar School at 7:00 PM.

Director Schultz stated that he talked with Supervisor Leopold's aide to strategize about the need for synthetic turf and met with Soquel Neighborhood Alliance. Also talked to Mr. Cummings about the park projects, especially the four million gallons of water used each year. Fields would benefit on many levels. There will be community meetings held soon regarding the projects at Anna Jean Cummings Parks: athletic fields, a

possible dog park, and the parking lot project. Director Schultz will notify all Commissioners so they can attend the meetings if desired.

Due to time constraints, the remaining five park projects will be presented at the March meeting.

VII. AGENDA/MEETING FOR: Parks Commission, March 9, 2009 at 7:15 p.m. at the Board Chambers, 5th floor, 701 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 (Government Center).

A. ACTION ITEMS

1. Freedom Lake

B. INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Budget Update
2. Parks Project Updates from Park Planners

VIII. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting was adjourned at 9:24 p.m. (Minott/Mercer 4/0)