

City of San Diego
Park and Recreation Board

March 15, 2012

Minutes

“WE ENRICH LIVES THROUGH QUALITY PARKS AND PROGRAMS”

Meeting Held at:

City Administration Building
Committee Room, 12th Floor
202 C Street
San Diego, California 92101

Mailing Address is:

City of San Diego
202 C Street, MS 37C
San Diego, California 92101

Members Present

Wilbur Smith, Chair
Bruce Brown
Rick Bussell
William Diehl
Amy Denhart
Claudia Dunaway
Vicki Granowitz
David Kinney
Michael Stepner
Kathryn Warburton

Members Absent

Bobby Hughes

City Staff Present

Stacey LoMedico
Bonnie Pearson
Shannon Thomas

CALL TO ORDER – Chair, Mr. Smith, called the meeting to order at 2:08 p.m and welcomed all in attendance.

Chair Smith yielded the floor to the Park and Recreation Director, Stacey LoMedico who introduced the new Park and Recreation Department’s Executive Secretary, Bonnie Pearson. Bonnie comes to Park and Recreation from Councilmember Marti Emerald’s office, where she was Executive Assistant to the Councilmember. Councilmember Emerald was kind enough to allow Ms. Pearson to attend today and take minutes for her first Board meeting. She will start with the Department on Monday. Bonnie has been with the City for 14 ½ years. Please welcome Bonnie.

Ms. LoMedico also welcomed and introduced two of the three new Board Members at the meeting today. This is their first Board meeting and Council confirmed the three new appointments a couple of weeks ago.

Mr. Bobby Hughes, is unable to attend this month due to previous commitments. Mr. Hughes is a member of the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Council and been active in District 4 and involved in volunteer opportunities for many years. Mr. Hughes replaces Olivia Puentes-Reynolds.

New Board Member Amy Denhart, replaces Board Member Norman Greene. Amy is the Director of Public Affairs for Planned Parenthood and also has an extensive volunteer background; National Women’s Political Caucus as well as the PTA President for San Diego Cooperative Charter School. Welcome Amy.

We also have Kathryn Warburton who is retired from the County of San Diego after serving 25 years. She also has a very long history of volunteering in San Diego County. She is a member of the Tierrasanta Community Council. Welcome Kathryn. Please feel free to welcome the new members after the meeting. We appreciate your service. One final item for Board Members, you have until April 2nd to file your Form 700.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 16, 2012

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mr. Brown/Mr. Stepner

A motion was made by Mr. Brown and seconded by Mr. Stepner to approve the February 16, 2012 meeting minutes. The motion was unanimously approved (10-0).

WORKSHOP – Plaza de Panama, Circulation and Parking Structure Project

Mr. Smith introduced the three consultants, Gordon Kovtun, Mark Johnson and Vicki Estrada. Mr. Kovtun introduced Rob Fitch, David Marshall, Bobby Hertes and Kathy Pupilava

Gordon Kovtun– KCM Group
Mark Johnson – Civitas
Vicki Estrada , Estrada Land Planning
Rob Fitch, Rick Engineering
David Marshall, Heritage Architecture & Planning
Bobby Hertes, Raycon
Kathy Pupilava, Horticultural Consultant

Mr. Smith yielded the floor to the presenters. Mr. Kovtun advised the Board this is an update to the last presentation made to the Board on August 18, 2011. Since that time the 4,000 page draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been issued. The consultants have engaged in over 180 community outreach sessions, which has yielded support for the project. It has sixteen hundred supporters and fourteen institutions who support the project. The following is outlined in the presentation:

Schedule for the Plaza de Panama

- Public comments on EIR due March 22
- City response to comments will be included in the Final EIR
- Advisory votes May-July 2012:
 - Balboa Park Committee
 - Park and Recreation Advisory Board
 - Planning Commission
- City Council vote July 2012
 - Certify Final EIR
 - Approve amendments to BPMP and CMPP
 - Approve Site Development Permit

The primary goal of the project is to remove all of the cars from the core of the park, so it will become the pedestrian place it was designed to become.

Mark Johnson presented the design portion of the presentation. The project will include: Plaza de California, El Prado west, Plaza de Panama, Centennial Bridge, Alcazar Parking Lot, The Esplanade, Centennial Road, Pedestrian promenade & tramway, Park on top of garage, Centennial Road and the new intersection at Presidents Way. Mr. Johnson provided more detailed information on the various locations of restoration/rehabilitation of the project.

EIR Overview

Discloses potential environmental impacts of Plaza de Panama project and 13 proposed alternatives.

Thorough analysis of potential impacts in the following issue areas:

- Land Use
- Historical Resources
- Visual Effects & Neighborhood Character
- Transportation/Circulation & Parking
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Energy Conservation
- Geological Conditions
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Health & Safety/Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology
- Noise
- Paleontological Resources
- Public Services & Facilities
- Public Utilities
- Water Quality

Alternative Analysis

- Project and alternatives fall into one of three categories:
 - Build bypass bridge to provide alternate route for traffic
 - Close Cabrillo Bridge to vehicle traffic
 - Allow traffic to continue through Plaza de Panama
- All alternatives and the proposed project have significant unmitigable impacts, as well as benefits
- All alternative – except the No Build Alternative – have temporary impacts resulting from construction

Environmental Impacts & Benefits

Impacts/Negative Effects – Three unmitigable impacts, all as a result of Centennial Bridge

- Historical Resources – alters spatial relationships of CA Quadrangle
- Land Use – inconsistency with preservation goals of Master Plan
- Visual Effects – introduction of new architectural element in historic district

Benefits – Restores historical/visual fabric of Plaza de Panama, Plaza de California, West El Prado, esplanade and Pan American Road

- Maintains public/proximate vehicle access from both east and west
- Provides a net gain of 270 parking spaces
- Reclaims 6.3 acres of parkland
- No unmitigable traffic impacts as a result of project

Mr. Smith acknowledged there are several requests for public comment in favor and in opposition: In favor – 10; Opposed – 9; Neutral – 0

Mr. Smith asked for the organized presentations, with public speaker comments to follow.

Mr. Jay Shumaker, member of AIA provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled – Balboa Park – Design Questions:

- Are we mistakenly applying city thinking and city traffic rules to our attractive park?
- Is slow traffic the problem, or is it the solution?
- When is a big plaza too big?
- What if we concentrate on the space north of the fountain?
- Would a sunny lawn suit Balboa Park better than a busy new roadway so close to the Alcazar Gardens?

In addition, Mr. Bruce Coons, Executive Director of Save Our Heritage Organization (SOHO) provided the following comments/concerns:

- Across the Cabrillo Bridge, turning toward the Plaza down toward the drop-off doesn't currently include the parking garage. This can be closed at times when most pedestrians are out there.
- A number of people have written to us and said that it's one of the greatest experiences in San Diego
- Stated KCM Group talks about restoration to the Plaza de Panama, but he doesn't see any plans to restore any of the Plaza.
- Stated the plan is so massive, it will transform the park so that the lovers of Balboa Park will not recognize; sterile plan.
- Felt the plans are not detailed enough to see the retaining walls etc. on the west side
- West side is 100% integrity as Goodhue designed and built it.
- We should take our time and do it right
- The Plaza is one of the most incredible icons in San Diego
- Stated the project was fully born when it came before the public; has not gone through any significant changes since coming before the public.
- Stated that more than 80% of the people SOHO has spoken with, does not like this plan
- Paid parking issue has not been fully vetted; families are talking to SOHO saying they need a place to take their families on a regular basis and not be charged

Board Members Comments and Questions:

- Mr. Stepner had concerns regarding the proposed changes to the park/traffic road designs. He stated dangerous inducement/faster traffic. He also stated a traffic study needs to be re-examined.
- Mr. Diehl asked if the project was \$40K?
- Ms. Warburton commented that this is a huge project. Will it be done by 2015? KCM Group replied "yes".
- Mr. Brown commented on the Alcazar parking lot. Bottleneck, safety concerns and stop and go traffic. KCM Group commented it will be better crossing for cars vs. pedestrians.
- Ms. Denhart also commented regarding safety for pedestrians. KCM Group acknowledged that the 15 mph will continue and there will be a separation between pedestrians and the tram. The tram will run between trees; New York Botanical runs the same way.

- Mr. Bussell stated he hopes that Dr. Irwin Jacobs will continue to support the intent and not on the particular plan itself.
- Ms. Dunaway asked if the parking fee will be \$5.00. Free parking will still continue throughout the Park and the paid parking is in the garage only.
- Mr. Kinney stated the Balboa Park Committee has not voted on the proposed project yet.
- Mr. Smith asked about the garage opening and will it open on one side?
- Mr. Brown commented regarding pedestrian access. Want cars parking out of the Prado. How much space would be retained if cars park? The plan would call for 2.8 acres of parking space.
- Ms. Dunaway asked if looking east and seeing traffic jam looking at Gold Gulch, would we see a jam? KCM Group does not see a traffic jam.
- Ms. Denhart asked how much would that cost? Director LoMedico will have to provide an updated operational cost.

Mr. Smith thanked the consultants and citizens for their input.

ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 4:24 p.m.

Next Meeting: **Thursday, April 19, 2012 2:00 p.m.**

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Submitted by,

Stacey LoMedico
Park and Recreation Director