

AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT

Tuesday, May 5, 2009

C. BUSINESS BEFORE THE BOARD

5. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Alameda County/EBRPD Liaison Committee (12/17/08) (Siden)

Attendees:

Alameda County
Supervisors:

Gail Steele

Staff:

Chris Gray, Chief of Staff, Supervisor Scott Haggerty's Office; Alison Lewis, Chief of Staff, Supervisor Gail Steele's Office; Rich Conway, Administrative Analyst, Administrator's Office; Louie Martinez, Administrative Analyst, Administrator's Office; Hank Ackerman, Flood Control Manager, Public Works Agency; Chris Bazar, Director, Planning Department

East Bay Regional
Park District

Board Members:

Doug Siden; Carol Severin, John Sutter

Staff:

Rosemary Cameron, AGM Public Affairs; Larry Tong, Interagency Planning Manager, Land Division; Mary Mattingly, Administrative Assistant, General Manager's Office

Guest(s):

Aurelio Posadas, Executive Secretary, National Plant Board; Kathleen Kosta, Primary Plant Pathologist, CA Department of Food and Agriculture; Gregory Gee, Assistant Agricultural Commissioner, CDA; Dennis Bray, Agricultural Commissioner, CDA

Alameda County Supervisor Gail Steele's Chief of Staff, Alison Lewis called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. and asked for self-introductions of all present.

I. Measure WW Follow-up

After congratulations were offered from the County to the District, Alameda County Planning Director Chris Bazar inquired whether the Community Development Agency would be involved with figuring out the allocation of funds to be allotted to unincorporated areas in Alameda County. EBRPD Assistant General Manager for Public Affairs Rosemary Cameron explained that

guidelines for determining the amount were in place with \$530,722 designated for the County, confirming that the County's share was for unincorporated areas that are not associated with a special park district. Mr. Bazar indicated that staff had attended the staff kick-off meeting and as soon as the passage of the bond measure was official, the County would make decisions regarding use of the funds. Ms. Cameron indicated that the results would be certified as of January 13, 2009. Alameda County Supervisor Gail Steele emphasized that the Board of Supervisors would need to understand the project guidelines in order to make decisions on specific projects. Mr. Siden thanked the County Board of Supervisors for their unanimous support. Ms. Steele stated that the Board very much appreciates the wonderful job the Park District does in maintaining parks and addressing community needs. Chris Gray, Alameda County Chief of Staff for Supervisor Haggerty's Office asked how the support for the measure differed between Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, and how it might compare to the past. Ms. Cameron stated that the two counties voted almost identically to each other with 71% in Contra Costa and 73% in Alameda. Mr. Gray suggested that the Alameda County Registrar's office would be a good place to see detail for the Alameda County breakdown. Ms. Cameron responded that the District will perform a detailed analysis of the election results by city.

Alameda County Flood Control Manager Hank Ackerman indicated that the Flood Control trails program is looking to finance green projects to encourage an assessment increase. Mr. Ackerman described a possible Bay Trail-San Lorenzo alignment up A Street and around the community center to Railroad Avenue. East Bay Regional Park District Trails Manager Jim Townsend told the committee that the Bay Trail Project is interested in connections and may be a potential source of funding.

2. San Francisco Bay Trail Union City Segment/County Flood Control Improvement Project
 - a. Eden Landing to Union City Blvd Bay Trail Segment

Jim Townsend made the report indicating that EBRPD has been working with Union City, the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project and Alameda County Flood Control to extend the San Francisco Bay Trail south from Eden Landing to Union City Blvd. and on to Coyote Hills Regional Park. The District is aware that Flood Control has also been pursuing a levee improvement project at that location, but until recently, the time frame for the implementation of that project has been unknown. Recently, Flood Control informed EBRPD that the timing of that project has been accelerated, and has requested that the Park District suspend its planning efforts, with an eye towards incorporating the Bay Trail into the levee rebuilding project. The Park District is willing to suspend its efforts, and has requested written confirmation of the County's proposed timeline and inclusion of the Bay Trail into the project. The Park District is requesting this information so as to keep its funding partners and other Bay Trail supporters and stakeholders accurately informed as to the status of the project.

Alameda County Flood Control Manager Hank Ackerman responded that Flood Control will send a letter in about a week and indicated that stakeholders want a pedestrian bridge which will be built on the Alvarado Channel levy, forecast to be built this summer. It is not yet clear which way the alignment will go south of the Alvarado Channel because the placement impacts the land creating salt marsh by blocking fresh water. It is important for the trails to be closer to the bay, but outer levies won't be supported and may disappear, so it would be vital to build the trail on a supported levy. The new levy can be built to accommodate the trail.

Mr. Townsend noted that there are inherent conflicts between restoration for endangered species protection and public access, pointing out that some people and scientists in charge of restoration are resistant to allow significant public access to this restoration area. Supervisor Steele inquired if there is any evidence that public access has negatively impacted nesting. Mr. Townsend indicated that the science is mixed and there are public places where nesting occurs. Mr. Townsend also made the point that there is more likely to be public support where access is allowed.

In response to East Bay Regional Park District Board Member John Sutter's question about the location of the westerly alignment, Mr. Ackerman stated that it goes off the street down by Alvarado Creek. Mr. Townsend stated that it is beneficial to provide some access points to the community and there are developments along the alignment.

b. Union City Interest in Recreational Development of Alameda Creek Trail Stable Property

Mr. Ackerman introduced the topic by indicating that Union City Deputy City Manager Tony Acosta has contacted Alameda County Flood Control and EBRPD to express the City's interest in pursuing discussions with the County regarding the former equestrian stable site located on the northern side of Alameda Creek just west of Union City Blvd. The City's is interested in acquiring a long-term (minimum 20 year) leasehold interest in the parcel and developing a multi-use public recreation facility which would include an equestrian facility, community garden, youth program facilities (related to equestrian and environmental programs for at-risk youth), and perhaps a tennis court or two if feasible. Supervisor Gail Steele has visited the site with Union City staff and has indicated her support to the city for this concept, which obviously requires much more planning and discussion prior to seeking approval from the County. Supervisor Steel further stated that there is a huge need for horses in the urban area.

Mr. Ackerman has responded to Mr. Acosta indicating that at this time Flood Control does not have enough information yet to determine whether or not they will have to reconstruct or improve the levees. FEMA has recently begun requiring that all flood protection levees be certified as meeting a series of criteria that they have established in order for FEMA to consider that the levees will function during their time of greatest need. If the levees cannot be certified, for whatever reason, FEMA will map the area protected by the levees as being in a flood hazard zone. Flood Control is now conducting the necessary field investigations, primarily geotechnical borings through the levees and into the supporting soil below. Once they have evaluated all pertinent data, including the geotechnical investigations and studies, they will be able to determine whether or not they will have to make any repairs or improvements to the levees before they can be certified. Flood control believes that it may be another 6 months before they will be in a position to make that determination.

Ms. Cameron informed the committee that the District has had extensive experience with equestrian concessionaire operations and that it is a very difficult business for an operator to make successful. East Bay Regional Park District AGM for Operations John Escobar concurred, referring to the District's difficulty with finding new stable operators each time one has been lost in the past. Currently the District operates horse stables at Las Trampas, Anthony Chabot, Skyline Ranch, Piedmont Stables, and three more private stables in the Redwood-Skyline area.

Mr. Gray suggested that due to the public desire for access to urban horse riding opportunities and the difficulty the vendors have, it is incumbent on the County and the District to make the effort to help. In response to Supervisor Steele's question regarding past vendor applications for the Alameda Creek Trail Stables, Mr. Ackerman said that no one with experience had applied, pointing out that it is a big risk to contract with inexperienced operators.

Supervisor Steele stated that she would like to keep the topic on the table and see what can be done, including outreach to make sure it can't be done before giving up on the idea. She also emphasized the importance of local stables for the area. Mr. Bazar indicated that there had been outreach in the last few years, including streamlining permits, and indicated that the resultant connections made with horse community people would be a boon toward further outreach, and suggested taking the topic to the Agricultural Advisory Commission. Ms. Steele suggested a small three-way partnership between County, District and Union City and move it up on the agenda with the County taking the lead. The committee agreed it would be incumbent on the partners to work out what the needs are, including getting ideas from the community as to how large an operation is needed. Mr. Ackerman indicated he will coordinate a meeting.

3. Alameda County Flood Control property Adjacent to Coyote Hills – County Proposal for License to California State Department of Agriculture

Kathleen Kosta, California Department of Food and Agriculture Primary Plant Pathologist discussed the proposal to use up to ten acres in Coyote Hills Regional Park to establish a "world class" nursery for the study of Sudden Oak Death Syndrome. This property actually belongs to Alameda County Flood Control and has been leased to the Park District. The state has been through a multi year process of site selection, having eliminated many that did not meet the requirements for the facility which include location in a county that has the disease, a climate conducive to the disease and no hosts (such as oak or bay trees) or other nurseries nearby. The state's main objective is safety, being extremely careful not to cause spread of the disease.

Ms. Kosta indicated the nursery would be housed in portable buildings, and an impermeable membrane would be laid down to contain and recapture any water used on the site. Trees would be planted in containers rather than in-ground, in order to better control the spread of pathogens they will be studying. The project would have to meet CEQA requirements, including meetings for public comment on its environmental impacts.

Mr. Escobar indicated that the District had worked for years to protect a greenbelt around the Park and the proposal is actually contrary to that. This particular site, which is adjacent to property that will be added to Coyote Hills as part of the Patterson development, will soon be at the entrance to Coyote Hills and opposite the area that is being considered for future development of a new visitor center. Mr. Escobar expressed EBRPD's strong concerns that proposed Department of Agriculture use would be inappropriate at this location and not acceptable to the Park District. It is staff's hope that it will be possible to work with Alameda County Flood Control District staff to develop an alternative site for the Department of Agriculture use that will not have such a negative visual impact on the park. Ms. Cameron pointed out that the environmental process for such a center at Coyote Hills would be opposed by Friends of Coyote Hills and Citizens to Complete the Refuge who have worked for 20 years to keep the area in open space. Mr. Grey pointed out that the groups may be receptive to an

environmental health project and pointed out that the Friends of Coyote Hills is small and has been unable to pass a ballot measure due to lack of City or other environmental group support.

Mr. Ackerman indicated that the previously discussed horse stable area seemed like the perfect fit, however there are flooding problems and conflicts with the operation of the stables. Mr. Sutter suggested the State give the criteria to the District's Land Acquisition Division, and asked if there are funds to buy or lease. Ms. Kosta indicated that there will be funding, which is in the process of being put together. Mr. Ackerman will coordinate a meeting with Kathleen Kosta, John Escobar, and Park District Land Acquisition staff after the first of the year in 2009. Ms. Kosta will send criteria and proposal to EBRPD staff.

4. San Lorenzo Barn Update

Supervisor Steele reiterated to the committee her strong belief that that it would be beneficial to the public and children to have the San Lorenzo Barn moved to Ardenwood to serve as an agricultural museum focused on the history of farming in the region.

The committee also discussed how the District and County would benefit from a Federal Economic Stimulus package. The District has been contacting representatives and sent a letter to Senators and Congress discussing the history of the District's early years supported by the WPA and CCC in the building of trails and facilities and how the District can now work to put people to work quickly on park projects.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Set Date for Next Meeting

The committee did not set a date for the next meeting, which would need to be arranged after committee appointments for 2009 were set. The committee did agree to have the following topics on a future agenda:

- Niles Canyon Update
- Cull Canyon Reservoir Update
- Proposed County historic ordinance – 50 year criteria status
- Alameda Creek Stable Project Update (Report on meeting between Union City, EBRDP and County Flood Control)