

Approved Meeting Minutes
PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4-27-09

ATTENDING: Bank, Cant, Coomber, Guarienti, Hooper, Hudson, Kaplan, Kirby, Mercurio, Peters, Shalaby, Shimansky, Southworth, Vann, Walters
NOT ATTENDING: Coffey (excused), Harryman, Williams (excused)
STAFF ATTENDING: Barial, Collins, Kenny, Pfuehler, Wiese
GUESTS: John Sutter
PUBLIC: Norm Kidder

The meeting began on time at 7:00 p.m.

1. **Approval of Minutes:** The March 23, 2009 meeting minutes were approved.

PAC Member Shimansky moved and approval was seconded by PAC Member Kirby.

PAC Members Cant and Mercurio 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:**

Board Member John Sutter complimented the PAC on the discussion about the Contra Costa Centre's Special Use Permit for Segways and electric bicycles. The PAC's discussion was very effective and instructive so he requested copies of the minutes be sent to all Board Members. It was a great discussion. The item came before the Board which agreed with the PAC and voted six to one against granting the Special Use Permit. The use of Segway's and electric bicycles will be a topic of discussion when the Board next considers changes to Ordinance 38. It is a controversial issue and could be a slippery slope in the sense that allowing Segways really would be allowing motorized vehicles on non-motorized trails. The survey showed that 20% of users of the Iron Horse Trail said they either would not use the trail or use it less if the Segways/electric bicycles were allowed. The PAC demonstrated its value to the Board with its in depth, detailed discussion on this issue.

Sutter commented on the current negotiations between labor and management at the District. He emphasized these are difficult economic times. The District is concerned about the decrease in operating funds from declining property tax revenue, which could be as much as a 5% reduction. Approximately, 80% of the District's operating revenue comes from property taxes. When property values, and therefore taxes, decline the reduced levels get locked in under Prop. 13. This means the reductions remain and are not just a one time occurrence. Also under Prop. 13, once property tax levels are reset they can only increase by 2% a year. The District will also need to contribute more to the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) because of the drop in the stock market. The state budget also presents a challenge. The May 19th ballot measures are not polling well. If they fail, the state may try to invoke the old Prop. 1A and shift money from local governments, like EBRPD, to the Education Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF). Under Prop. 1A, the state is supposed to pay the shifted funds back, but if they are broke how can they? This will be a challenging year financially.

Sutter continued by discussing the District's master plan. It was last revised in 1997 and the Board is in the process of re-considering it. The PAC will be a vital part of revising the master plan and members should be thinking about items they would like to see enhanced. Sutter acknowledged the District is likely to focus more attention on urban creeks given the resonance of that issue with the public during the Measure WW effort.

Finally, Sutter noted some of the Board and District staff attended the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) conference in Washington, D.C. in March. District representatives met with Representatives George Miller and Jerry McNerney. The I-580 undercrossing between Pleasanton and Dublin was discussed with McNerney. With Rep. Miller, District representatives discussed the Concord Naval Weapons Station. He was sympathetic and hopeful that the City of Concord will be pleased with the final outcome. The District representatives also met with staff from the rest of our Congressional delegation and Senators.

4. **Public Comments:**

Norm Kidder had a question regarding the Campership program. Kenny clarified that Anne Kassebaum, Recreation Manager, runs the program. Kenny agreed to follow up and get back to the PAC.

5. **Presentations:**

a. **Fuels Management & Vegetation Plan Update – Brian Wiese, Chief of Planning/Stewardship/GIS**

Brian Wiese, Chief of Planning/Stewardship/GIS began by apologizing that Assistant Fire Chief John Swanson could not also be at this meeting. Wiese will provide background and updates about the District's wildfire protection plans. Staff is working on its third administrative draft and hope to make it public by mid-summer. Measure CC, which passed in 2004, provided resources for fuels management work in Wards 1 and 2. The administrative draft will provide a base for all fuels management work throughout the District.

Wiese emphasized this is truly a story about the East Bay landscape. The threat of wildfire and the character of the landscape are intertwined. Given the topography of the region, fire is a natural, regular and inevitable occurrence. Since the turn of the 21st Century, fires are also man-made and man-managed events.

When the District first acquired parkland in 1936-37, grazing was halted on those lands. To demonstrate the changes, Wiese showed different pictures of Wildcat Ridge, Trestle Glen, Claremont Canyon and Round Top taken beginning in the 1880's up to and through the 1900's. The original topography had very little trees and minimal development. The more inhabited the land became, the more trees appeared on the landscape.

PAC member Hooper asked what the landscape looked like when the Indians were inhabitants. Wiese acknowledged the Indians burned the landscape and it was probably more covered with bunch grasses and coyote brush. When the Spanish settled here, they let cattle graze which altered the landscape. Wiese added that former AGM Jerry Kent said between 1936 and 1945 (WPA, early war years) the District planted 250,000 trees – mostly pine planted under the direction of Jim Wolf. Those pine trees and eucalyptus are now fuels which need to be managed. Eucalyptus are a major problem because they re-grow so quickly.

Wiese continued from 1923 until the present time, there have been 11 wildfires in the East Bay hills and four were wildfire conflagrations/firestorms. Those storms were caused by Diablo winds and unmanaged fuels. Diablo winds come from the east, move fast over the hills and down into the valleys. The first major conflagration was the 1923 North Berkeley fire which destroyed property. After the 1973 eucalyptus freeze, the District undertook some industrial logging operations. At one point, the District actually contracted with logging companies to take eucalyptus away virtually for free.

After the 1991 hills fire, the Hills Conservation Forum was formed. The Forum recognized the combination of factors – Diablo winds, hazardous fuel conditions, hillside development and steep topography – all could lead to a repeat of the disastrous '91 fire. With the support of Forum partners, the District embarked on a bond measure – Measure CC – in 2003 (passed in 2004) to provide resources for fuels reduction. Of the overall bond measure, \$9.5 million was designated for fuels management to protect lives and property from wildfires. The District has been developing a plan with three main aspects for fuels management – public benefit, environmental impact and cost effectiveness. The plan has four major goals:

1. To protect life and property by reducing wildfire risks.
2. To maintain ecological values and wildlife habitat.
3. Preserve the aesthetic landscape.
4. Provide a vegetation management plan which is cost effective, as well as ecologically and economically sustainable.

The District works with consultants to evaluate the location and the adequacy of the fuel break as well as the environmental impact. Other considerations are wildfire hazard assessment, fuels treatment methods, vegetation management and implementation. The fuels management plan is being developed with all of these considerations so the Board can make ongoing, adaptive decisions as conditions change.

The fuels management plan will cover the whole Measure CC zone, about 19,000 park acres in 20 parks (13 hillside and seven shoreline). Approximately, 3,000 of these acres need to be managed to protect against wildfires.

In the wildfire assessment process, the District mapped and classified all of the vegetation from ortho-photographs. Additionally, interns made on the ground checks based on the photos. The District developed color coded maps based on fuel type and proximity to houses. The District divided the areas which need to be managed into 120 polygons. Each polygon has its own fuel treatment prescription.

In the resource assessment process of each fuel treatment area, the District developed an overlay map to show slope, topography, hydrological conditions, cultural resources, and the status of plant and animal species. Additional concerns are erosion control and water quality impacts. Overall, the District intends to shrink eucalyptus loads which should allow oak bay or grassland savannah to dominate.

The District formed a fuels group which includes staff from the fire and stewardship departments. They are charged with writing the management prescription for each polygon.

The District reviews this work annually and prioritizes treatment areas depending on conditions.

PAC member Hooper commented the last time the PAC reviewed the fuels management plan (about two years ago) concerns were expressed about making sure the public understands why heavy logging equipment is in the parks. Wiese acknowledged he'd been working with Public Affairs to educate and provide adequate notice to the public. Hooper also asked about parkland in east county outside of the Measure CC zone and wondered what the District's plan was for managing those lands. Wiese indicated the plan was less formal for those areas and more ad hoc.

PAC member Southworth asked if it was the District's responsibility to notify homeowners near vulnerable parklands about the need to manage their property. Wiese replied this was largely a city and county responsibility because the District has no enforcement authority outside of its parklands. Through the Hills Conservation Forum, the District works with cities and their fire departments to assess areas within 200 feet of fuel breaks.

PAC member Shimansky asked if the District uses grazing as a way to manage fuels. Wiese responded that grazing is used.

PAC member Kirby asked if it would help limit the District's liability if it approached those homeowners within 200 feet of fuel breaks. Wiese responded state law requires homeowners to manage within 100 feet of their structure, but does not mandate they do so for 200 feet. Kirby added the location of the 'structure' in proximity to the parkland can make a big difference.

Director Sutter asked about the projected annual cost for maintenance. Wiese said currently there is no projected annual cost. He added the Measure CC fuels management allocation is pretty flexible. Sutter asked if the District had managed each polygon at least once yet and if that would give a basis for estimating an annual maintenance cost. Wiese responded the plan has been evolving, and as it is adapted staff learns more about cost and how to do the work more effectively. Wiese reminded the PAC that the District has been clearing brush since the 1970's and it has only made a dent in reducing it.

PAC member Peters asked if there was anything besides stump treatment that could be done to prevent re-sprouting of eucalyptus. Wiese noted the District now treats the stumps, but historically did not always do so. Kirby commented in the 1970's, the District allow private contractors, such as himself, to remove felled trees.

Chair Guarienti commented the District fuels management work has led to a number of contentious meetings. The public has been upset because they did not have enough time to review the plan. Wiese agreed and recommended the public be allowed 60 days to review fuels management plans.

PAC member Southworth appreciated the historical perspective Wiese provided and asked if he uses this kind of presentation with the public. Wiese said he did. Wiese additionally noted the District's hillside parklands are often narrow strips of land where birds and wind deposit seeds into them which makes 'management' of these fuels difficult and requires an adaptive approach.

b. Measure CC Progress Report – Dave Collins, AGM Management Services and Finance Division

Dave Collins, AGM Management Services and Finances Division began by stating that Measure CC is a parcel tax and not subject to changes in property values. The ten year Measure CC program is about 1/3rd of the way completed. Capital project funds endure until they are spent. Operating funds expire each year and go back into the fund balance. Collins also referenced a spreadsheet which lists the voter approved projects of Measure CC. One project is \$10 million for fuels management.

Collins stated that in 2008 about \$1.1 million of funding from Measure CC was used for operating costs and about \$400,000 was not spent and reverted back into the fund. Collins discussed the complexity of the project schedule which is more or less in chronological order. He added the Board has the ability to pick and choose projects out of turn as long as we are within the fund balance. PAC member Shimansky asked if the District has any oversight of the Oakland Zoo funds. Collins responded the District had none, but the Zoo does provide a summary of what they are using the funds for even though they are not required to do so.

PAC member Shalaby asked about what happens if monies allocated for capital projects are not used. Collins replied the District is committed to completing the projects to which the voters agreed. The Board has a 10% contingency fund in Measure CC which can be used to complete projects.

PAC member Vann asked why Eastshore has a negative balance. Collins responded because the District overspent its budget for Eastshore, but not by much (about \$4,000). PAC member Shalaby asked how the overage was covered. Collins

said it came from other leftover funds. For example, there was \$1.9 million which had not been planned for appropriation and \$4.8 million in Board contingency funds.

Vann asked if any funds were allocated for creek cleanup. Collins responded not much because creek restoration was not identified in Measure CC, but it these projects were identified in Measure WW.

PAC member Peters asked if projects were completed the same year they were funded. Collins responded not necessarily because projects were subject to the work loads of staff.

Guarienti commented fuels management maintenance is a big issue. Collins replied the fire group (stewardship and fire departments) has been developing a plan as was previously discuss. Guarienti asked the District include east county areas in their fire management plans. Collins added the Board has traditionally been open to appropriating monies if there were critical fire management needs to be addressed.

Chair Guarienti mentioned he took a tour of Brooks Island (which is #42 on the spreadsheet) and complimented staff for improving the unloading/loading dock.

c. District Camping Plan – Jack Kenny, Chief of Parks

Jack Kenny, Chief of Parks said the last camping report to the PAC was in 2007. In 1995, the Board authorized the formation of a Camping Task Force which developed recommendations and guidelines for the development and assessment of camps within the District. In 2005, the task force reconvened and recommended the Board Operations Committee and PAC receive periodic updates about the District's camping plan.

Kenny began by highlighting projects completed since 2007. In 2007, Round Valley Group Camp was completed, preliminary work was done for a group camp at Point Pinole and preliminary work was done for a backpack camp at Anthony Chabot. In 2008, more work was done at Point Pinole and Anthony Chabot, updates were completed at Coyote Hills, Dairy Glen and Briones. This year, the District is developing a camping brochure. Also in 2009, the District will be completing work on a backpacking camp at Anthony Chabot which will create a loop possibility for hiking and camping along the East Bay Skyline Trail.

At Roberts, the District is working on developing a residential group camp. The District is working with the Chabot Space and Science Center and the City of Oakland to find city property for a group camp.

At Tilden, one of the youth camps had an arson fire and it is scheduled to be rebuilt. At Briones, the Archer's field may be used for a potential group camp. Another site for the Archers will be found. The District refurbished shelters at Redwood's Girls Camp and at Fern Hut. Coyote Hills will have a new shelter and a vault toilet at the entrance to Dairy Glen.

PAC member Shimansky asked about the need for a reservation for a backpack camp. Kenny answered one was advised need because capacity is determined by the size of the area. It is supposed to accommodate between five and 25 campers. Shimansky also asked if there were problems with homeless using campsites. Kenny said this is mainly an issue at family campgrounds and not backpacking camps.

Five Year camping plan highlights: The District plans to reconvene the Camping Task Force in 2010. Statistics: Family camping 55%, group camping 43% and backpacking 2%.

PAC member Kaplan asked about the 2% use of backpacking camps. Kenny said the backpack camps are very seldom used. He continued, the Camping Task Force will discuss if new backpack camps are actually needed given the lack of use. Kenny added that developing family/residential camps are very expensive.

Director Sutter asked about the difference between a group vs. family camp. Kenny answered a group camp was developed mostly for youth, family camps one can drive a vehicle to and to reach the backpacking camps one needs to hike.

PAC member Walters asked if there any violence against campers. Kenny answered, no generally just noise and disturbance from other campers. District park police have also emphasized the need to protect campers.

PAC member Mercurio asked if Round Valley was open for anyone to use. Kenny said youth groups have priority.

PAC member Coomber asked if the District intended to promote backpacking as a low cost/local recreational alternative. Kenny stated that was part of the purpose of the camping brochure and there would also be a link to it on the District's website.

PAC member Vann asked if the District would be building more log type structures so camping facilities didn't look so prefabricated. Kenny responded the District would be open to that, but stone structures are not seismically stable and some actually needed to be torn down.

Chair Guarienti commented that District naturalists would be excellent backpacking tour leaders. He also suggested a backpacking program similar to the trails challenge where participants would be challenged to camp at a certain amount of District sites. Kenny responded that was a good idea, particularly once backpacking loop trails were completed. PAC member Kirby noted that one of the trails on the trails challenge could provide a backpack camping opportunity which would give trails challenge participants an opportunity to try camping.

5. PAC Comments

PAC member Kirby discussed the California Trails and Greenways Conference near Yosemite which fellow PAC member Mercurio was involved with. Board Member Beverly Lane and AGM Bob Doyle were both in attendance.

PAC member Mercurio commented the California Trail and Greenways Conference happens annually, generally in late April. Next year the conference will be held in Cambria which is near the Hearst Castle.

PAC member Southworth attended the Coyote Hills bird and butterfly festival and the Bay Friendly Garden Tours. Both were well attended. Protesters from the Xerces Society threatened to picket if the butterflies were released, so they were not.

PAC member Vann participated in two ambassador Earth Day events at the Oakland Zoo and Eastshore State Park. Vann said there was good turn out for both events.

PAC member Peters commented the LGBT Rainbow Ramblers had a great event and she complimented the District for providing diverse programming for the LGBT community.

Chair Guarienti mentioned Peters wrote a nice letter complimenting staff.

6. Report from the Chair:

PAC Chair Guarienti attended the April 21, 2009 board meeting where the Segway issue was discussed. He appreciated Director Sutter requesting that each Board member receive a complete copy of the minutes from the PAC's discussion of the issue. Guarienti re-emphasized this was a policy issue not simply a special use permit. The Contra Costa Centre's application was denied by the Board six to one.

Guarienti participated in a couple of ambassador programs at Sunol and John Muir, went to the March 25th Pleasanton Trail Ridge Planning meeting, went on a trip to Brooks Island where District Naturalist Dave Zuckerman did a great job. He commented about the beauty of the wildflowers at Sunol and Round Valley, and showed a copy of Bay Nature magazine.

7. Board Committee Reports:

PAC Member Banks attended both the Board Operations Committee and Board Executive Committee Meetings. She handed out a report to the members and spoke about some of the highlights.

PAC Member Hooper sent minutes from the Finance Committee prepared by PAC member Harryman to the committee members. Hooper appreciated Harryman attending the meeting on his behalf.

8. Status of Recommendations:

Chair Guarienti stated the status sheet in the PAC packet is current. The only thing left outstanding is the Quarry Lakes Master Gardener Special Use Permit.

9. Old Business:

PAC member Hooper added a meeting of the Finance Committee will take a look at last year's finances prior to the next full PAC meeting on May 18th. Everyone is welcome to attend.

10. New Business:

PAC member Kaplan announced that John Waters is very ill and is happy to get cards. He has his address.

Chair Guarienti cannot attend the Board Capital Finance workshop which is Thursday, April 30th. PAC member Hooper thinks he might be able to go.

Legislative Administrative Manager, Erich Pfuehler added the PAC field trip will be held on May 30th and will be a discussion of the District's fuels management plan with Assistant Fire Chief John Swanson and Fire Chief Ken Blonski. We will meet at 10:00 a.m. as a group at District Headquarters before the field trip.

Guarienti said the Volunteer Recognition Dinner is going to be held on May 20th at Cull Canyon.

Kenny mentioned staff will be bringing a recommendation to the next PAC meeting for the Boy Scout Jamboree proposal which requires a Board vote.

Chair Guarienti announced there will be a new member joining the PAC, Bruce Beyaert, who was appointed by Director Dotson.

PAC members Guarienti, Vann, Shimansky and Kirby have conflicts and will not be able to attend the May 18, 2009 PAC meeting.

II. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:26 p.m.

Summary of Actions:

1. The March 23, 2009 meeting minutes were unanimously approved.
2. The next PAC meeting will be Monday, May 18, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,
Yolande Barial, PAC Secretary