



Santa Barbara County Park Commission

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SANTA BARBARA COUNTY PARK COMMISSION Regular Meeting of July 23, 2009

MINUTES

The Santa Barbara County Park Commission met at the Solvang Veteran's Hall, 1745 Mission Drive, Solvang, California.

Call to Order: Chairperson Darlene Chirman called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

1. Roll Call

Present: Commissioners: Suzanne Perkins, Darlene Chirman, Judith Dale, Gene Petersen, Bailey Hudson

County Staff in Attendance: Dan Hernandez-Director, Erik Axelson-Deputy Director, Mike Gibson, Business Manager South County; Sonia Thompson, Administrative Professional.

2. Action

A. Minutes from the May 28, 2009 meeting:

A motion was made by Commissioner Dale, seconded by Commissioner Hudson to approve the minutes as amended. Commissioner Perkins abstained. Minutes amended as follows:

Item #4: change word "evasive" to "invasive".

Motion passed.

3. Public Comment Period

Jim Hickling read a commentary to the Park Commission. Reading included in minutes.

4. Coastal Commission Meeting Update – provided by Director of Parks, Dan Hernandez

Mr. Hernandez met with the CEO office regarding strategy for the Goleta Pier. The strategy will involve receiving direction from the BOS on how to proceed with the project. Mr. Hernandez commended staff (Juan Beltranena, Dave Ward, Erik Axelson) for their work stating that they did the best job possible; they were given BOS direction and they did the

best job they could to push forward that direction. The item failed at the Coastal Commission. Mr. Hernandez stated for the record that this will be challenge adding that the first item that was overlooked was the 100 foot setback from the sensitive habitat that was not addressed in either of the two managed retreat alternatives eliminating areas where the Parks Department can put amenities for the park. Mr. Hernandez stated that the Art Commission has stated concerns regarding an art sculpture that is located in an area where the County could be losing park, as presented in one of the managed retreat alternatives. They are concerned about a precedent being set by the Coastal Commission as to deciding which art pieces to preserve or remove if the art pieces are located in a coastal zone. Mr. Hernandez completed his report by stating that the Coastal Commission has up to one year to return a letter to the County declaring findings and recommendations.

5. Budget Update – provided by Business Manager, Mike Gibson; written report submitted in meeting packet: Status Report on Parks FY 2009-10

Mr. Gibson reported that the FY 09-10 adopted budget was approved at the June 12, 2009 BOS meeting. Mr. Gibson reviewed report: Parks Department Additional FY 2009-10 & FY2010-11 General Fund Contribution Budget Reductions/Revenue Enhancements (included in minutes). Commissioner Chirman inquired about a utility costs estimate to operate the dog grooming concessions. Mr. Gibson stated the utilities were not separately metered. Deputy Director Axelson stated that they received an estimate from the vendor for the operating costs and the costs were very low. Commissioner Chirman inquired about the overall cost per year for the mutt mitts. Mr. Gibson replied it was \$25K; Mr. Axelson reported that the San Roque Animal Hospital has subsidized the distribution of bio bags (costs \$.063 each); adding that they are using this concept to encourage other veterinary groups and individuals to defray costs. Commissioner Perkins commented that this is acceptable and increasing public awareness for the need of these bags is good; however, it is important to be sure that the dispensers do not go empty and then the public does not clean up after the animals. Mr. Hernandez concurred and stated that Parks will post notices to inform the public that after a specific date the mutt mitts will not be provided by County Parks. Mr. Hernandez stated that his goal is to get the fee enhancements adopted before January 1. Commissioner Perkins complimented Mike Gibson for doing a great job on this budget and dealing with the budget cuts.

6. Front Country Trails – update provided by Deputy Director, Erik Axelson; written report and press release included in meeting packet

Reopened Areas: West Fork of Cold Springs Trail, Rattlesnake Trail, and Jesusita Trail (western segment from San Roque Road to Inspiration Point). The effort was made possible due to staff; primarily Forest Service, County Parks Department, and City of Santa Barbara. All agencies worked effectively together to help restore damaged trails in those areas. Volunteer efforts are commended as well - -June 13 was a well attended volunteer day with over 100 participants from the community pitching in major efforts to get the trails re-opened. The BOS has posted a “No Parking” zone along Tunnel Road. This is to prevent trail parking from interfering with ongoing reconstruction work in the Mission Canyon neighborhood. Other agencies are assisting in enforcing this restriction. County Parks has put in a great effort in getting the “No Parking” signs posted and getting the word out to the

community. The posting of the “No Parking” signs will be revisited toward the end of the year. Front Country Trails Task Force reconvened on July 1. Newly elected positions: Chair, Commissioner Perkins and Vice-Chair, Beebe Longstreet. The Front Country Trails Coordinator position is moving forward. Parks staff met with Forest Service and City of Santa Barbara-Parks & Recreation this week to discuss this position and they expect to have a public notice about the process next month with the goal to have the position on board in Fall 2009. Each agency has committed \$10K to this effort the full amount will not go to this position. The Uniform Trail Assessment Process (UTAP) is also making process. Staff is working on contracting with Beneficial Designs, the developer of the system, to complete the base line trail survey. Some of the local trail stakeholders have offered to assist with the costs and the costs to the agencies should be fairly minimal. There is another volunteer effort sometime after Labor Day to help get the trails in shape. Parks is working with County-Flood Control as they consider procedures for erosion control. Commissioner Chirman inquired about the funds the City has received for Parma Park due to the Tea Fire; asking if funds are available for the trails. Mr. Axelson responded that he understood that the City received federal funding to pay for the hiring of unemployed people to pull weeds and he is looking at this opportunity. Commissioner Chirman stated that this could be something for San Marcos Foothills Preserve and asked if there was an opportunity for funding for the erosion control. Mr. Axelson responded that for Front Country Trails Parks he is looking to FEMA and Flood Control to take the lead on the erosion control and he will coordinate with them.

7. Guadalupe Dunes – update provided by Dan Hernandez

February 2009 a budget expansion request was presented to the Board of Supervisors regarding Guadalupe Dunes; the budget expansion request was denied. The endowment has been running down and is anticipated to be depleted in March 2010. The County has been working with the Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) to create a new plan. Yesterday Mr. Hernandez met with the site manager, Jamie Brown, Michael Brown, CEO; John McInnes, Asst. CEO; to discuss the challenges. Mr. Hernandez commented that if the Guadalupe Dunes facility were to be closed there would still be the expense to monitor the plover nesting areas as well as the expense to provide security. They are working to find alternative funding; in the short term they are looking at adjusting the operating schedule to limit or restrict hours and make the endowment last a little longer. Jeff Stone has been the liaison working with their staff. Debbie Rogers is the San Francisco representative; she is discussing alternatives for running the facility. CNLM is interested in taking over operations and putting in a long term funding effort, but they are asking for a commitment from the County that there are funds to manage it; and the funds will be there for the next three to five years. Mr. Hernandez reported that they cannot give a commitment at this time. Supervisor Gray, Alice Patino, and Jeff Stone will meet to discuss the direction the BOS will want to take in the short term. Mr. Hernandez commented that this is an incredible facility and we will want to be sure that it stays open to the public. Commissioner Chirman commented that she is in favor of a long-term contract with the CNLM in order to keep this park in public ownership.

8. Reports – Park Operation Reports

A. Director's Report - written report included in meeting packet.

Orcutt Sports Commission - The Parks Department is working with the 4th District office to put together a Request for Contractors to get some cost estimates. Mr. Hernandez commented that there are challenges out there, primarily irrigation. Active sports fields require a different type of maintenance and regimen than an open space park area. There are issues related to traffic; once the open fields at Waller Park become active sports fields this will increase the amount of vehicle traffic. Commissioner Chirman asked for clarification of the management and location of the YMCA. Mr. Hernandez clarified, the YMCA is on County property as well as the sport fields and the County manages the fields with the exception of the Babe Ruth Fields. The Babe Ruth Fields is a separate contract with the Babe Ruth Organizations that manage and maintain. Mr. Hernandez also clarified that the new fields will be soccer and the multi-use fields will be on the turf fields close to the administrative offices at Waller Park. The plan is to put in about 8 fields. Commissioner Chirman asked if they are proposing to take the lead and raise the money and manage this or are they asking for County assistance. Mr. Hernandez responded that regarding the costs; Parks has made it very clear that the County cannot absorb the cost.

YMCA in Montecito - Mr. Hernandez met with Sal Cisneros, President of the YMCA and Joan Russell, Executive Director. Purpose of the meeting was to keep Parks in the loop. The YMCA has not developed any plans but they are probably looking at building up because they have restricted space at their location. They will make sure that the County is kept informed of their plans. Mr. Hernandez commented that if there is any expansion to the current use; the County will enter into negotiations.

Integrated Pest Management Roundtable – kick off meeting was in June. The group is North County and South County field supervisor level positions sharing information regarding pesticide uses and best practices. Commissioner Dale asked that UCSB be included in these meetings.

B. North County Division - Deputy Director Stone submitted written report included in the meeting packet.

Request - Commissioner Chirman requested that the written reports include the person's name of who submitted the information. Commissioner Dale stated that she would like to see more lake activities for the local residents.

Nojoqui Park - Commissioner Chirman inquired about the development of a recreational vehicle park. Mr. Hernandez responded that that project would require a detailed plan, but due to the current budget constraints the project is not being actively pursued.

- C. South County Division -Deputy Director Axelson submitted written report included in the meeting packet.

Goleta Beach - is in process of removing a portable toilet on the pier.

San Marcos Foothills Preserve (SMFP) – Mr. Axelson commended staff and Claude Gaciacelay; stating that they responded to the challenge of moving forward with the trail development and the habitat management plan at the SMFP in the face of the damage from the Jesusita fire which has scorched at least 70% of the land area. In addition they have been working with stakeholders to determine how to manage an integrated trail system in the SMFP. The concept is to provide an east west trail from the main pedestrian and vehicle access to the site at Via Gaitero on the western part of SMFP over to a subsidiary pedestrian entry on the eastern end. This concept was presented to a group of stakeholders and neighbors. There was a trails meeting; Mr. Axelson was not able to attend. Commissioner Chirman attended the meeting and gave an overview of the meeting. Commissioner stated that due to the fire the topography is now visible. Parks requested to relocate one segment of the trail that currently goes onto private property. A new route has been identified and was supported by the stakeholders. Ray Ford and others from the Santa Barbara Trails Council said they would do the work. Parma Park and what happened after the fire was also discussed. Basically, there was an explosion of weeds after the first rain and they hoped to address this situation near the trails and realize that this cannot be addressed in the overall park. Commissioner Chirman commented that it is important to address this now and would like to see the volunteer effort move forward. They understand that the effort may need funding to provide for a supervisor. Mr. Axelson responded that he did not see a need to hire an outside manager or supervisor and said they are willing to work with the stakeholders to explore funding options.

Courthouse Grounds – Mr. Axelson handed out a map of the newly proposed wedding grounds and gave an overview of the sites. Updated map is available on the website.

Arroyo Burro Beach Overlook Project – contractor has been selected, but will not go ahead with a contract until the money is raised. They expectation is that with a specific cost and specific schedule to complete the project it will be easier to get private funding. Tile fundraiser: individuals who contribute \$100 will get a 6x6 tile which will be installed on the risers of the steps going up to the overlook. After the construction is complete there will be an aggressive fundraising project. August 23 is the open house at the South Coast Watershed Resource Center.

- D. Capital Projects Report – Project Manager, Juan Beltranena submitted written report.

Ocean Beach Park – Mr. Hernandez reported that item was approved and documentation will be going forward to the Coastal Commission.

9. Receive and File Reports

- A. Trails Planning & Development Report
- B. Capital Projects Report
- C. Project Status Report
- D. Park Donations
- E. Park Mitigation Fee Status Report
- F. Monthly Concession Report
- G. Park Visitor Customer Survey Report

Commissioners' Non-agenda Items

Motion to adjourn: Commissioner Petersen moved to adjourn; Commissioner Hudson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.



Daniel Hernandez, Director of Parks

Is it a futile effort to save Goleta Beach County Park?

By Jim Hickling

In San Luis Obispo on July 8, your county staff and leadership, hundreds of people who worked on the project, thousands of dollars spent in studies and monitoring, and most importantly the over 1.5 million – yes, million – park visitors were denied the opportunity to save Goleta Beach Park by the California Coastal Commission. Unfortunately, our local commissioner was forced in a political power play to recuse himself, even while several other extremely biased commissioners were not. With that action Santa Barbara County lost a key voice who understands Goleta Beach.

Many commissioners, parroting *ex parte* propaganda from Environmental Defense Center (EDC) lobbyists, regurgitated a laundry list of unsubstantiated, untested and radical assertions by EDC and their very slick and choreographed presenters. Unbelievably, even before the county and the Coastal Commission's own staff could present the facts, one commissioner used a procedural disclosure period to recite an endless list of uncorroborated EDC factoids and opinions. Do some of these commissioners simply show up prepared to ignore objective facts and hard data and ram them down a rabbit hole worthy of Alice in Wonderland? Does the public interest of 1.5 million visitors to Goleta Beach County Park even enter into these deliberations? These biased, condescending commissioners embraced EDC's half-truths, and signaled the end for Goleta Beach as we know it. Along the way, the commission majority completely discounted their own staff recommendations to approve the county plan, and they waved away comprehensive analysis and modeling done by the county's consultants over the past year-and-a-half.

Let's talk about the facts. EDC has proposed "Park Reconfiguration," a new label for "Managed Retreat." Translation: let nature wash away the park. We note that the tons of rock that EDC's consultant, David Revell, said in 2005 would be needed to save the park under Managed Retreat have now just disappeared (down that rabbit hole again?). The Coastal Commission gave EDC lots of time for a slick presentation of this last minute alternative -- unverified and without rigorous official review. How can that be? The county took a lot of grief from EDC about an incomplete EIR process, but it was a process nonetheless. What EIR process did the last minute Park Reconfiguration proposal go through? What scrutiny did that get? What representative working group looked at its assumptions and engineering? Who reviewed EDC's data with even a fraction of the detail to which the county's plans were subjected? Since the county's project was a permeable pier and the alternative was managed retreat, how on earth did Park Reconfiguration even have standing?

Our community and local businesses, our neighbors, all of whom will be directly harmed by this decision, need to be heard loud and clear. One is Supervisor Janet Wolf who is a decent, conscientious public servant with a genuine concern for her constituents. She may be the ideal person to work with county and Coastal Commission staff to clarify what the real implications are of Reconfiguration/Retreat. How much parking would disappear? What picnic areas will be sacrificed? Which restroom building(s) would be dismantled? How many disabled visitors would be shut out of an accessible day at the beach? Which children's jungle gym will be torn out? How many disadvantaged kids will not be able to participate in programs that won't be available in the brave new world of managed retreat? What essential utility lines (high-pressure gas, reclaimed water, sewer, electrical, etc.) will be washed away, or forced to be

Jim Hickling GB CCC meeting observations, July 8, 2009

relocated at the cost of millions more than EDC's bogus estimate? What about the real danger of salt water intrusion into Goleta Water District's fresh water supply? The plain fact is that EDC's radical reconfiguration just won't fit in this 29-acre park. Some Coastal Commissioners don't understand this plain fact, and perhaps others understand it all too well.

The final indignity on July 8 was being lectured by one commissioner that Santa Barbara is the ideal place to "test the concept of a managed retreat process on the coast." Great -- our county beach is invited to be the lab experiment for one speculative notion while this same commissioner derided as "experimental" the county's elegant and environmentally sound permeable pier solution. Another commissioner condescendingly instructed Santa Barbara beach goers to get used to carpooling, biking, or taking mass transit to the beach. This is what passes for coastal planning today in our great state of California. The elitist views of these few commissioners hurt us locally more than we know. But our children will know it when they must make do with a downsized or destroyed Goleta Beach. Those 1.5 million visitors will dwindle down inexorably, year by year, if we let these radical commissioners succeed in retreating into oblivion the Goleta Beach we know and love.

Parks Department Additional FY 2009-10 & FY 2010-11 General Fund Contribution Budget Reductions/Revenue Enhancements			
FY 2009-10 General Fund Contribution (GFC)	\$3,671,323		
10% of FY 2009-10 GFC	\$367,132		
10% of FY 2010-11 GFC	\$367,132		
	FY 2009-10	FY 2010-11	
Description of Reductions/Revenue Enhancements	Financial Impact	Financial Impact	Service Level Impact
1. Reduction of Cuyama pool schedule to conform with lifeguard season (Memorial Day weekend - Labor Day weekend). Current Cuyama pool schedule includes the months of May and September, which would be eliminated from schedule.	\$50,000	\$50,000	Reduced pool operating hours during the off-peak time of the year.
2. Hold South County Park Ranger II position vacant (Jack Finnegan's position)	\$76,000	\$76,000	Further reduced capacity to provide visitor services and perform maintenance throughout South County parks.
3. Increase day use group picnic area reservation fees by consolidating two lower-tiers in fee structure	\$3,200	\$6,100	Minimal cost increase for day use park group picnic area users to reserve sites for events and activities.
4. New wedding event fee program at County Courthouse Sunken Gardens	\$25,000	\$25,000	Free use of lawn areas in Courthouse Sunken Gardens for wedding events would no longer be available.
5. Increase camping fee by \$10/site for premium campsites at Cachuma Lake & Jalama Beach campgrounds	\$20,000	\$40,000	Cost increase could be justified based on preferred camping sites that users are willing to pay for to ensure reserved premium camping location.
6. Increase fee for RV storage at Cachuma Lake (from \$75 to \$90)	\$13,000	\$26,000	Cost increase could be justified based on current market rates at other comparable public and private RV storage facilities.
7. Expanding RV concession and/or cabins/yurts operation at Cachuma Lake	\$10,000	\$20,000	Expanded RV and/or cabins/yurts concession would meet current market demand at Cachuma Lake.
8. New catamaran dock/storage fees at Goleta Beach	\$5,000	\$5,000	This new fee would fill a needed service demand at Goleta Beach, as expressed by park users.
9. Reduction of deferred maintenance capital projects funded by the General Fund by another \$165,000 (from \$425,000 to \$260,000)	\$165,000	\$0	Would further delay necessary deferred maintenance, repairs, and upgrades for park facilities throughout the system.
10. Hold two South County Park Maintenance Worker positions vacant (Alex Sanchez's & Tim Anderson's positions) & partially backfill the work through contract services and/or Extra Help staffing	\$0	\$119,000	Further reduced capacity to perform maintenance throughout South County parks.
Total Amount of Additional Budget Reductions/Revenue Enhancements	\$367,200	\$367,100	