

Sonoma County
Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission

DATE: Monday, March 16, 2009

PLACE: Board Chambers
575 Administration Drive, 100A
Santa Rosa, California

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Bill Trowbridge called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Bill Wheeler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Bill Trowbridge, John Mills, Bill Wheeler,
and Yancey Forest-Knowles

Commissioners Absent: Karen Collins

4. Acceptance of Minutes

VOTED to approve the minutes of February 23, 2009, as follows:

MOTION:	Commissioner Forest-Knowles	AYES: 4	NOES: 0
SECOND:	Commissioner Mills	ABSENT: 1	

5. Comments from the Public

None

6. Comments from Commissioners

None

7. Director's Report

Ms. Burns said that Bert Whitaker will join the Regional Parks Department as the new Park Operations Manager starting April 21. Bert's combination of skills and knowledge of the department make him the right choice.

March 3rd the Board of Supervisors adopted the first 5% in budget cuts. Regional Parks is looking at a possible reduction of 19%. There could be another 1-2 additional years of significant reductions. The Board of Supervisors' are holding a series of town hall meetings during the month of April for the public to comment and give their thoughts and ideas about the budget. The final meeting date and times they will be forwarded to the Commissioners are soon as they are confirmed. Ray Basch, Regional Parks Administrative Officer and Stan Chapman, Accountant III, are working on a chart that will show impacts and comparisons for the last few years. She hopes the chart will show visibly what the impacts are because Parks

has been getting new facilities, and new staff to take care of those facilities, while having to make cuts at the same time.

Ms. Burns met with staff and asked for suggestions about how to work more effectively and raise additional revenue. She received 248 suggestions, 16 of which could raise close to \$300,000 in revenue and are included in the in the revenue package that was submitted to the Board of Supervisors. Cross divisional work teams will be organized to take a look at the remainder of the ideas to identify which are short-term, which are long-term, and which would need further analysis.

The economic stimulus package seems to be a changing analysis virtually every week. Four of our Supervisors were in Washington last week to lobby for money for various stimulus projects.

Ms. Burns handed out drafts of the new Parks Passport Program for children to become more engaged in our parks. Regional Parks is doing this program in conjunction with State parks and is tied to the children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. At the bottom of each page you can see the various things that a child would be encouraged to participate in regarding outdoor activities. This program will be posted on Park's website. Children are encouraged to go to the various parks and engage in the activity that is featured on each page. Once all 10 pages are completed they can turn it in for a little prize.

The iWalk program is being launched on May 16. Local agencies and cities are participating. Everyone is encouraged to get out and walk. Ms. Burns encouraged the Commissioners to join in. The iWalk website will help educate people about where to walk. The City of Sebastopol already has a walk program and they hold a walk every month that is led by a local celebrity and the public is invited to join in.

8. Action Items

- **Review and Recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for Regional Parks to apply for Boating & Waterways Grants for Doran, Westside and Guerneville Parks**

Todd Holmes, Park Planning Manager, discussed the three grant applications that the Regional Parks Department will submit to the Department of Boating & Waterways for boat access improvements. Using a PowerPoint presentation, he highlighted the applications for Doran, Westside and Guerneville Parks. He discussed the deterioration of the existing ramps, floats, and the parking lots and the plans for improvements. Boating & Waterways came to Regional Parks and asked to help design the improvements. Normally, a granting agency relies on the agency that is applying for the grant to do the design work. In this case, Boating & Waterways sat down with Parks' staff in a series of meetings and came up with this plan. Mr. Holmes said the Dept. of Boating & Waterways is anxious to bring funding back to the County and use it to improve our facilities. The Department will be submitting its applications next month and he asked if the Commissioners had any questions.

Commissioner Trowbridge asked about the wash stations.

Commissioner Mills asked if wind screens could be provided. He has had the opportunity to stop at Westside for lunch and has been blasted by the wind.

Commissioner Mills asked whether there is an area for launching a kayak. He said it is a problem at Doran and there isn't any real area where a kayaker can walk out on the dock and drop in. He said providing signage for kayakers would be very helpful.

Mr. Holmes said he will make a note to consider signage.

Commissioner Mills asked if Parks has considered charging a fee for launching.

Jim McCray, Park Planning Manager, said that it is being discussed as a revenue idea for the future.

VOTED to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that the Regional Parks Department apply for Boating & Waterways Grants for Doran, Westside and Guerneville Parks, as follows:

MOTION:	Commissioner Forest-Knowles	AYES: 4	NOES: 0
SECOND:	Commissioner Mills	ABSENT: 1	

9. Reports and Division Updates

• Park Celebration – April

Mary Clemens, Environmental Discovery Center Coordinator, said that Sonoma County Regional Parks will again host 30 events in 30 days during April. However, things have changed in terms of marketing. There will be more wildflower walk and bird walks, a composting day, and a clean-up day. Only 2 large events are planned. Castles and Kites at Doran Park on April 25, and Dia de los Ninos at Spring Lake on April 26. The idea is to not put too much pressure on our own staff by using volunteers, Park Commissioners and the Parks Foundation Board members as much as possible.

This year, the resources that are usually used to print the Press Democrat inserts will be used instead to print a full page ad. As in the past, a comprehensive ad campaign will be launched by radio, local newspaper, and via a new Parks' web address at: sonomacountyparks.org.

California State Parks and Sonoma County Regional Parks have teamed together and came up with the great idea of offering a Passport Program based on the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. The program encourages children to make 10 discoveries in parks before they attend high school. It is all about getting children outside to understand natural resources and their own heritage. The *Santa Rosa* magazine featured the new program in an article last Friday. The program is scheduled to be launched on April 1 but Parks has received so many phone calls from interested parents that the program has been uploaded due to the interest. It is going to be used as a model for the whole state. Ms. Clemens believes the program will be very successful.

• Pass Promotion

Donna LaGrafte, Marketing Specialist, reviewed Sonoma County Regional Parks' Annual Park Pass Promotion. There is nothing dramatically different, but there are a few new pieces to the promotional package. This year Santa Rosa BMW Motorcycles and Burke's Canoe Trips will sell passes. Santa Rosa Plumbing is offering a free water conservation check. Unfortunately, a custom map from the Map Store is not being offered, they have gone out of business. Another change is that this year we will only offer 1 free night of camping instead of the usual 2.

Ms. Burns explained that it was one of the cost saving/revenue generating ideas submitted by staff.

Ms. LaGrafte said that there is \$200 worth of promotional items. Also, the April 1st issue of the Spotlight Newsletter will be the last. Parks is moving into e-news letters. She is very excited about this opportunity. It will be a simple no cost procedure to subscribe. She is hoping to increase outreach. Passes can be bought year-round, but the incentives are not offered until April 1.

- **Sunset Beach River Access Update**

Mr. Holmes updated the Commission on the conceptual drawing and asked for feedback on the project that is being proposed.

Joe Kase, Park Planner, presented a PowerPoint slide show. The location of the project is on River Road just past Hacienda Bridge and Sunset Avenue. A new left-turn lane was constructed by the Department of Transportation and Public Works. This last phase will complete the trail from the beach to the parking lot, provide service access, picnic areas and will be ADA accessible. A public notice was mailed out regarding tonight's meeting on March 9th.

Commissioner Forest-Knowles asked if there will still concerns about trash in the area.

Mr. Kase said it has been less of a problem since there has been a Ranger presence in the area.

Commissioner Wheeler asked if there will be restrooms.

Mr. Kase said there will be seasonal, portable toilets in a screened enclosure that will be removed in the wintertime or during a flood.

Comments from the Public:

Wayne Steltor addressed the Commission. Mr. Steltor lives on Sunset Avenue. He is a realtor in the Russian River area and is attending on behalf of the property owners on Sunset Avenue. He shared photos of the condition of Sunset Avenue before and after the County cleaned it up. He was very pleased with the clean-up.

He would like to discuss the public parking issue along River Road and Sunset Avenue. He distributed pictures of dangerous traffic conditions. The problem is worse than ever. He

believes that in order for the park to work properly the parking on the street will have to be eliminated. He suggested use of removable concrete barriers to prevent parking and force members of the public to use the new park. If the Parks Department is going to charge a fee, people are going to try to find other places to park to avoid the charge. As it is now, families park and run across the road holding hands, carrying coolers and barbecues (which are forbidden). Neighbors noted two fires from BBQ's, one in the Porto potty and one in the street. He asked the Commissioners to consider eliminating parking for the general public along the avenue.

Mr. Steltor said another issue is trespassing onto the property of the neighbors who live along the river and the need for installation of a gate to help deter this. A gate would give the neighbors privacy but allow them to walk their dogs along the beach. There should be access as a community, but not for the general public.

Mr. Steltor said that signage will not work unless you have law enforcement present 24/7.

Mr. Kase said a similar situation arose at Riverfront and there was a lot of illegal parking along Eastside Road. As soon as signs went up it stopped because people were getting cited on a regular basis. The proposal is to start with the "No Parking" signs and if more is needed then that would come about.

Mr. Steltor said that the California Highway Patrol doesn't respond quickly enough. By the time the CHP arrives, the people are gone.

Sunset Avenue is a County road and is posted with "No Parking" signs 100' on either side of River Road and then another 200' down to where the first residence is.

Mr. Steltor said he hears the squeal of tires several times a day from people trying to cross the street to the river.

Susie, a Sunset Avenue neighbor, addressed the Commission. She said she live two houses down from the park opening. She has seen families running across the road around blind corners and drivers do not slow down. She constantly hears the screeching of brakes. In 1997, during the January flood, the people who purchased the property on the other side of River Road clear cut the Redwood trees. All of the earth came down and completely covered River Road. During clearing of the slide, the dirt was pushed back an additional 8 or 9' allowing at least 100 cars to now park. She has photos of people with ice chest in hand, a small child in the other, and they are five abreast and are running across. If someone fell they would be killed. This is a safety issue.

Mr. Steltor said that the County can be sued if someone gets killed after all of these warnings.

Commissioner Mills asked if the Sheriff's Department is authorized to write tickets on Highway 116.

Mr. Kase said yes it is the Sheriff's Department.

Jim McCray, Deputy Director, said that the CHP is responsible for traffic enforcement along roadways. The Sheriff's Department is involved in criminal related activity. Our Park Rangers are also peace officers and can write parking tickets in areas like this and can assist with a surge to help deter the illegal parking.

Commissioner Wheeler said that if proper signage were put up it would be an effective deterrent. Especially if a fine amount was cited.

Commissioner Mills asked for a status on the bridge at Odd Fellows Road.

Jim McCray said that the Odd Fellows Bridge is a seasonal, summer bridge that is installed by the Department of Public Works and Transportation and does not go up until the end of June.

10. Adjournment

Adjourned at 6:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Laura Cordes, Executive Secretary