

Sonoma County
Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission

DATE: Monday, April 20, 2009

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

1. **Call to Order**

Commissioner Trowbridge called the meeting to order at 5:07 pm.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Commissioner Collins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Roll Call**

Commissioners Present: Bill Trowbridge, John Mills, Bill Wheeler, Karen Collins and Pam Stafford

4. **Acceptance of Minutes**

VOTED to approve the minutes of March 16, 2009, as follows:

MOTION:	Commissioner Mills	AYES: 4	NOES: 0
SECOND:	Commissioner Wheeler	ABSTAIN: 1	

5. **Comments from the Public**

None

6. **Comments from Commissioners**

Commissioner Wheeler said that he has been working with Todd Holmes on the Sea Ranch Bluff Trail.

7. **Director's Report**

Commissioner Wheeler recognized Commissioner Yancey Forest-Knowles with a plaque for his many years of service on the Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission.

Mary Burns, Director of Regional Parks, thanked Commissioner Forest-Knowles on behalf of the staff for all of his help and wise counsel over the years. She said that you could always count on Yancey for doing the extra. He has supported Parks in many different ways and has attended a lot of special events. Ms. Burns presented Commissioner Forest-Knowles with photos of a running event that he participated in.

Commissioner Forest-Knowles said that it is always hard to say good-bye to good friends. He knows that Parks is challenged at this time due to the County's financial situation like

never seen before. Parks has come through so many things and come out the better because of it.

Commissioner Trowbridge introduced new Commissioner Pam Stafford.

Commissioner Stafford introduced herself. She has lived in Sonoma County for twenty years and has been involved at city level for about 30 years, participating on various committees and commissions. She is currently serving the City Council in Rohnert Park. She is excited to be serving with such a great group of people.

Commissioner Mills said that he led the full moon hike at Helen Putnam Regional Park as part of the Park Celebration month. 35 people attended on a Friday night to watch the moon come up and walk around the park. It was a brilliant orange harvest type moon. The winds were blowing fiercely and it was very cold. Everyone had a great time, so he will be proposing to hold more full moon treks.

Commissioner Mills also attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for Disc Golf at Crane Creek Regional Park. There were 250-300 people who attended the ribbon cutting. He is looking forward to playing Frisbee golf at the park. He thanked Park Planner, Mark Cleveland, for his assistance with this project.

Commissioner Collins said that she received an email from someone who regularly runs in Maxwell Park and he was complaining about the rock piles on the side of the trail. He said the piles were there for at least 3 years and were never distributed. She emailed Jim McCray, Deputy Director, and within a week the rock piles were spread out and everyone is thrilled with the results. She was happy to see quick action taken with just the sending of an email.

Commissioner Mills said that the Disc Golf players are eying Maxwell Park for the next golf course.

Commissioner Trowbridge said that he attended the budget workshop held on April 16 in Healdsburg. They used City Hall Chambers and weren't prepared for the size of the crowd. The Chambers were completely filled.

Ms. Burns said that there are several workshops that anyone can attend. Ms. Burns attended the workshop in Guerneville. She believes that it is really good to get the public involved in this process. The Foundation sent out a notification to all of the park pass holders and the people who have been donors to the Foundation encouraging them to attend these meetings. There were 8,000-9,000 mailings. This is all leading up to the work that the County Administrator's office is now doing on the budget. They will be publishing the budget on May 12 and there will be hearings in early June that will contain the recommendations. Regional Parks is in the lowest tier for funding and several of the Supervisors as well as the County Administrator has brought that to the fore and there are a few dollars left in the Transit Occupancy Tax fund that they are going to reprogram for Parks. The Department has been in a growth mode primarily due to the work that is being done with the Open Space District. This year we are looking at a 15-16% cut in the budget. It is getting to the point where it is impacting and will impact on a permanent basis our ability to conduct major

maintenance to do some of the ongoing day to day maintenance. We are losing the equivalent of about 6.5 positions out of the budget. They are predicting another two years of difficult budgets as we move forward.

Commissioner Collins asked if the increases in fees will help.

Ms. Burns said that all of the fees come back to us and is how we balance our budget. We get full credit. We have been very mindful of the fact that this is an activity that people have a choice whether or not to spend the money on. Past practice is that there is a drop off when you increase fees even by the smallest amount. We don't know if the increases will make it past the Board. The Spud Point Advisory Committee is very upset about some of the increases and yet they are within comparable of the other harbors that we use as benchmarking. We have other fees that have been suggested by staff that we thought would be easy to implement. For example, we don't charge for parking at a couple of the parks, one of which is Schopflin Fields. It was brought out that one of the fields had been developed through private donation by Henry Trione and that it was thought that he wasn't ever expecting them to charge fees there. This should be researched for next year.

Ms. Burns said that Tolay Lake is scheduled for closed session at the Board of Supervisors on April 28 with a final settlement agreement with the Kellers. This is the property owner who owns property on both sides of Cannon Lane which is the only road to access Tolay Lake Regional Park. The owner sued the County saying that it was his road and he didn't want to give us access. There have been intense negotiations over the last eighteen months and there may be final agreement.

The Parks Department has been asked to conserve water. The final attachment on the Director's Report is a list of places where we have ornamental turf and will be asked to cut back on watering. The area around the County Administration is actually on well water and it doesn't affect the Water Agency.

A meeting is being organized by the Town of Windsor for Commissioners from around the county to meet on May 13.

Teryl Phillips, Department Analyst, addressed the issue that the sale of park passes for senior citizens is down. It is hoped that the numbers are just not in yet and will rise when the Rangers submit them.

8. Action Items
None

9. Reports and Division Updates

• **Watson School Update**

Todd Holmes, Park Planning Manager, addressed the Commissioner about the Watson School by reading the Statement of Significance. Watson School is the only one-room schoolhouse in Sonoma County that is located in its original site and is believed to be the longest operating one-room school in California history. It operated for more than 111 years

(1856-1967) and has had minimal alteration since its construction and remains totally in its original layout with many of its original finishes and materials. The structure is recognized on national, state and local levels. Mark Cleveland, Senior Park Planner, wrote the report and he did a great job in his summary. Mr. Holmes touched briefly on the 150th anniversary held in 2006 which attracted a lot of participants. Plans will be going forward to stabilize the building so it can be opened to the public. The total cost for the restoration is \$311,000 but it can be phased in increments. There is a prioritization in the report that starts out with work on the foundation, squaring up the building, securing it and repairing the siding to prevent moisture. The Department is really excited about this project and fundraising for it. At this point there is not an identified funding source, which is why this is being brought to the Commission.

Commissioner Trowbridge asked if any ideas for funding have been planned out.

Ms. Burns answered that when the Ice Cream Social was held several people in attendance had been students at the school and talked about helping with in-kind contributions. Several former students are contractors. We normally would look at securing State park bonds. We will have to be creative during this new funding era.

Commissioner Mills commented about in-kind contributions. He has tried in the past to do in-kind contributions. He thinks that it would be good to get together with County Counsel to figure out how someone like himself, a developer, who doesn't carry a contractor's license, can come in and work. He tried to assist with the Children's Memorial Grove and was willing to do the entire project and spend thousands of dollars in bringing skilled labor to it and was told that he couldn't because he didn't carry a contractor's license. Hopefully someone can get together with County Counsel and figure out a way to solicit skilled labor as volunteers for projects and not require them to have their own contractor's license. This is going to continue to come up over and over again and a way is needed to solicit skilled labor.

- **Sunset Beach Facility Name**

Mr. Holmes said that this project has been brought to the Commission before to discuss the improvements and the neighbors came to give input regarding parking. The parking issue was discussed with the Permits and Resources Management Division and they were in support of the public parking on the side of the road for a variety of reasons.

Ms. Burns said that with a little help from Supervisor Carrillo the department gained the support to put up "No Parking" signs along the road due to the dangerous conditions.

Mr. Holmes said that the Department will start with the signs first.

He would like to come back to the Commission with a "Park Naming" policy to formally name facilities. He did not want to name it "Sunset Beach River Access" because he felt that this was really a park and not river access.

He did the analysis and referred to his report for a brief description of terms:

The term "Regional Park" denotes a large facility that supports a diverse range of activities.

The term “River Park” applies to midsize river facilities such as Cloverdale River Park and Guerneville River Park.

“River Access” and “Fishing Access” refer to the smallest most basic facilities that provide access to the river.

Commissioner Trowbridge led off the conversation because he has a little history about the river. When you denote something as access that means that you can launch boats and this really is foot access and not boating access and it will confuse people if they think that they can come in their and launch a boat or kayak. He believes that the idea of not calling it an access park is appropriate.

- **Fee Increases**

Teryl Phillips, Department Analyst, and Ray Basch, Administrative Services Officer, offered a brief summary of the proposed fee changes for FY 09/10. In the Commission packet is a one-page narrative that summarizes the key points relating to our proposal along with a chart that itemizes each of the individual fees. This year, fee revenues play an increasingly important role in helping our department meet its budget goals. General Fund revenues are shrinking, and as a consequence, the department is challenged to find alternative sources of revenue to continue delivering services to the public. Regional Parks expects to be able to reduce departmental reliance upon the General Fund by approximately \$219,000 in FY 09/10. No new park or veterans’ building fees are proposed this year. The cost of business increases proposed range from 3.7% - 6.3% and are based on the annual survey and are typical in keeping with those charged by other agencies. If adopted, the department would be able to maintain service levels with only small impacts to the public and would be able to provide basic health and safety for customers and employees.

The Spud Point Marina proposal includes new fees and increases to help offset operational costs and is expected to generate an additional \$343,000 in revenue. New fees are identified with an asterisk in the chart and include a boat dealer fee, hourly and daily parking fees, trailer storage and pay shower fees. Increases are based upon the cost of business and policies recommended by County Counsel in order to discourage bad check writing and derelict vessels. The fees do not fully recover operating costs for the Marina. The Spud Point Marina Advisory Committee reviewed our fee proposal in March and expressed objection to a number of fees that would impact marina berth-holders including ice, electrical utilities, parking showers fuel and key deposits. The recommended increases would bring the fees into line with comparable marinas based upon the annual survey of facilities located within the Spud Point Marina market area. Park Mitigation Fees are charged to residential development projects within the County and are held in a special revenue fund until they are expended on park capital improvement projects. A 5.7% increase in the flat fee per dwelling unit is proposed and is based upon the cost of construction. To date, staff has not received comments from the development community objecting to the proposed fee increase. If adopted, this increase would result in \$28,000 additional funds for park acquisition and development. The Board public fee hearing will be held tomorrow beginning at 2:10pm at which time interested members of the public may offer comment on all of the proposed County fees under consideration.

Commissioner Mills said that he wished fees had been raised more. He believes that this Commission is sorely underused and he suggested is that the department get together with the Commission to discuss what they think the public will bear in terms of fee increases. Commissioners could hold hearings in their respective districts and invite the public to come and make recommendations to be taken to the Board of Supervisors.

- **Planning Division Update**

Mr. Holmes would like to add an update to the Commission agenda as a regular item. He gave a brief verbal update on the following projects:

- County-wide Bicycle and Pedestrian Masterplan.
- Ross Station Road Trailhead improvement going out to bid.
- Guerneville Stage Project and soliciting community feedback.
- The Coastal Prairie Trail is the next segment of the Bodega Bay Trail (which goes from the Bodega Bay Community Center, north to the state park).
- Boating and Waterways has become a new funding partner with Parks and a number of new projects are coming up including the boat launch ramp at Guerneville River Park.
- The webcam for the SPM is operational.
- Signage will be installed directing people from River Road to Riverfront Park hoping to increase park usage.

10. Adjournment

Adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Laura Cordes, Executive Secretary