

Community Services Advisory Commission
Regular Meeting
Redding City Hall
777 Cypress Avenue
Redding, California
May 13, 2009, 3:09 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

The meeting opened with the following Commissioners present; Leona McCoach, Adam McElvain, Judy Salter and Jason Waybright. Commissioner Susan Hinz arrived at 4:05 p.m.

Also present were Council Member Mary Stegall, Community Services Director Kimberly Niemer, Support Services Director Gerry Kersten, Community Project Manager Terry Hanson, Park Superintendent Dan Cannon, Convention Center/Visitor Bureau Manager Chris Gonzalez, Management Analyst Matthew McCallum, Management Analyst Michele Davis and Executive Assistant Mari Szynal.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

CONSENT CALENDAR

The minutes from the meeting on April 8, 2009, the monthly Recreation Division Activity Report, the Convention Center Activity Report, the Convention Center Calendar, the Convention Center Capital Projects List were presented.

Motion: To approve Consent Calendar. (Made by Commissioner McElvain, Seconded by Commissioner Waybright)

AYES: Commissioners McCoach, McElvain, Salter and Waybright

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Hinz

CONSIDERATION OF CONVENTION CENTER FEE ADJUSTMENT

Director Kersten noted that in 1999 the Redding Convention Center implemented a facility fee of \$2.00 per seat for most ticketed events. During the past year, other revenue sources, such as the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), which support the Convention Center have dropped off. At this time, staff is asking the Commission to consider recommending a facility fee increase to the City Council. The increase is necessary to generate direct program revenue to offset program expenditures. Without this increase personnel will need to be eliminated, which will impact the Convention Center's ability to continue to offer the same level of programming the region has come to enjoy.

Staff recently conducted a survey of similarly sized venues and local populations. Fees charged at these facilities range from \$9.53 to \$6.78. Staff is proposing an increase to \$5.00 per seat, which is well below the lowest fee found in the survey. It is estimated that this increase will generate an additional \$137,000 in revenue per year, which will help to offset a shortfall in the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) precipitated by the economic downturn. When promoters set ticket prices, they consider many factors, so an increase in this fee does not necessarily mean the entire increase will be passed on to the patron.

Commissioner Salter inquired why staff is not requesting an increase up to the low end of the range, \$6.78? Director Kersten noted that the increase they are asking for is already more than doubling the current fee. While there is a need to raise the fee, staff are conscious that the current economic situation is impacting everyone's choices of use of discretionary income. He doubts that the entire fee increase will be passed along to the patrons. Commissioner McCoach stated her support for increasing the fee to \$6.78. In response, Director Kersten observed that staff would look at raising the fee to that level in a two-step process, beginning with the initial \$3.00 increase.. Convention Center Manager Gonzalez noted that the fee is actually on a sliding scale, depending on the price point of the ticket. Only the higher end tickets would see the full \$3.00 increase.

The Commission requested Convention Center Manager Gonzalez report back in one year regarding the impact of the fee adjustment.

Motion: To recommend to City Council the Convention Center fees be adjusted to match the lowest market rate of \$6.78, with a second option of a minimum of at least \$5.00. (Made by Commissioner Waybright, Seconded by Commissioner McCoach)

AYES: Commissioners McCoach, McElvain, Salter and Waybright
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Commissioner Hinz

CONSIDERATION OF VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCEDURES

Director Niemer recalled that at the meeting of May 9, 2008, the Community Services Advisory Commission approved a change in Department practices to require fingerprinting for all contracted instructors and continuing volunteers working in youth recreational programs.

Management Analyst McCallum observed that while fingerprinting wasn't seen as a foolproof solution, it was recognized that individuals with a questionable background could still slip through the process. Staff is proposing guidelines for volunteer recruitment which incorporate a pre-screening process to determine an individual's suitability to the position prior to fingerprinting and background checks. The pre-screening process includes an interview to determine suitability prior to advancing the application through the full background check process. The proposed guidelines are intended to provide improved structure to the current practices.

Commissioner McElvain inquired whether this new screening procedure would take place prior to fingerprinting. Director Niemer confirmed that it would.

Commissioner McCoach asked whether all volunteers are fingerprinted or whether it depends on the function they are performing. Management Analyst McCallum responded that in the past it has depended on the role the volunteer are filling. For instance, if they are handing out water at a race which is held one time vs. someone who is coaching a team of children over an entire sport season. There is a sliding scale of scrutiny of review. If they are in a low-risk position you do not put them through as much.

Commissioner McElvain requested a privacy policy statement is attached to the application form which volunteers fill out. Are they told what will be done with the information they are providing. Management Analyst McCallum related that the City does have policies regarding that issue and this is something which could be added to the volunteer application form. Commissioner McElvain stated his support of this addition to the form.

Motion: To endorse the proposed volunteer recruitment procedures and add a privacy policy statement. (Made by Commissioner McElvain, Seconded by Commissioner McCoach)

AYES: Commissioners McCoach, McElvain, Salter and Waybright

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Hinz

Commissioner Susan Hinz arrived at 4:05 p.m.

REVIEW OF PARK MAINTENANCE COSTS

Director Kersten noted that Commissioners have inquired into how park maintenance costs are derived for possible consideration when planning for new park development. In looking at these numbers, you will see that these metrics are really an average. Each park is unique in: developed/undeveloped acreage, type of amenities, overall size, utility requirements, neighborhood configuration, general use; as noted on the chart included in the staff report. Given that maintenance costs of new parks are dependent on unique characteristics, the Park Maintenance should continue to be consulted early in the planning stages to identify necessary resources.

Commissioner Waybright commented that while he understood how it can be difficult to compare apples to oranges, however it would be helpful to provide parameters for use by a developer, Commissioners or staff to keep in mind when developing a park area - here are the preferred layouts for a park (i.e., the canyon behind Country Heights Park is not desirable). Director Kersten responded that this is an excellent point. There are some ideal situations they would like to push from a maintenance standpoint but from a use-ability standpoint there are many things which staff must consider. The important thing to note is that the Parks Division has become much more involved in the early planning stages thanks to Director Niemer and her staff.

Commissioner McCoach inquired into pursuing replacement agreements with neighborhood associations for play structures - such as is already done with landscape maintenance agreements. Director Niemer noted that this is, of course, easier when dealing with larger developments and is currently a policy in the *Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan*.

Commissioner McCoach added that she is interested in how to fund replacement of aging equipment. Parks Superintendent Cannon replied that the maintenance budget includes funds for park improvements. Over the past several years, available funds have been used for various items such as glass for the Sundial Bridge, replacement of the fountain pump for the Signature Fountain in front of City Hall. The funds in that account do not roll over fiscal year to fiscal year. During the budget process this year, it will be requested of City Council to turn this into a rollover account so that unused funds are available in the next year. CDBG monies have been used in the past to fund some of the improvements.

A report on necessary park improvements was conducted several years ago and from this staff compiled 45 booklets specifying parks and the upgrades they need. Staff have been chipping away at this list each year through the maintenance budget funds for improvements. Commissioner McCoach suggested that the City Council be made aware of the dollar amount of outstanding maintenance needed.

No action was required on this informational item.

REVIEW OF PARK DEVELOPMENT FUND FINANCIAL REPORT

Director Niemer noted that the bottom line is that the economy continues to be sluggish and she introduced Management Analyst McCallum to provide the Commission with more detailed information on the performance of the Fund, which includes the Park In-Lieu and Park Development Funds.

McCallum noted that as of as of March 31, 2009, the total combined Park-related funds available for projects is \$4,210,983.25. The staff report and attached spreadsheets details the impact of the current recession and the poor residential construction market on the cash flow projections in the current Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Since 2006, staff has substantially decreased the Fund collection projections for the latter years of the CIP to reflect further weakening in the construction market. Conditions continued to worsen throughout 2008 and into early 2009, exacerbated by the global financial crisis and recession. Despite the economic climate, Redding's residential construction market is showing some signs of stabilization, but any sort of significant recovery is

not anticipated until some point in fiscal year 2010-11.

With over \$4.2 million in available Park funds, the City has the resources to theoretically weather three to four years of debt service without realizing any new fee income or other revenue inflows. More pointedly, however, should there continue to be an extended downturn in the residential building cycle, these reserves allow the City to cover the debt service costs while expending the annual fee generation revenues toward the projects outlined in the CIP.

In last year's park fund report, staff responded to the slow down in residential construction by lowering growth expectations significantly in CY 2008, with modest annual improvements through CY 2012. With market conditions unchanged and fee collections remaining relatively flat, growth expectations for CY 2009-15 have been lowered in anticipation that current poor conditions will continue in the near term. Additionally, project timelines have been adjusted outward based on feedback provided by developers and Development Services staff. These revised estimates will be monitored throughout the year and adjusted as necessary to reflect changing conditions.

Commissioner Salter inquired what other cities are doing with park planning as it relates to water shortages. She requested a future workshop on water-wise parks. Superintendent Cannon noted there is a new template from State of California on water restrictions which the city will have to accept.

Management Analyst McCallum summarized that the city has money in the bank to cover debt service for the next two to three years.

No action was required on this informational item.

DISCUSSION OF HEALTHY COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Director Niemer recalled the discussion at the February meeting regarding that while resources are scarce during the economic downturn, there are programmatic and policy projects which can continue. Health and fitness activities appear to be the 'hot ticket' items for the community at this time, possibly in response to the increase in childhood obesity. Staff will be looking to the Commission for some guidance on which areas they are interested in supporting. Chair Salter noted that the Commissioners were provided with four documents (*Leadership Action Strategies, Combating Childhood Obesity, Move More, Strategies for Creating Healthy Eating and Active Living Environments*) to help them prioritize their top 10 choices out of all the ideas presented and they were to be prepared to discuss at this meeting.

In the interest of time, Chair Salter requested that the Commissioners email to Executive Assistant Szynal their Top 10 priorities by end of day on Monday, April 13. Commissioner McElvain volunteered to work with Executive Assistant Szynal to compile a Top Ten Strategies list for the Commission to discuss at the next meeting. Commissioner McElvain noted that they culled through the information provided to come up with those which were most in common. This resulted in the Top 5 listing on page one, while page two includes everything else brought up by fellow Commissioners as their Top 10 priorities. It is apparent that the items listed on page one should be focused on first.

Commissioner Salter related that this list is a work in progress and the Commissioners should feel free to add items which did not initially make the list but which they feel are important enough to be on included.

Commissioner McCoach observed that the article in the local paper recently highlighted the Safe Route To Schools program, which she had not previously been aware of. Director Niemer advised that the county-wide School Choice program has an impact on promoting walking/biking to school, as many children attend schools which are outside of their neighborhoods. Commissioner McElvain inquired whether there are there any schools which currently have Safe Routes in place?

Director Niemer responded that this Safe Routes To School program does fund infrastructure that provides safer routes to school. Making sure that infrastructure is in place (i.e., sidewalks, crosswalks) increases safety for children to walk/bike to school. Another concept which is gaining some momentum is the virtual bus stop. In this system, the parents who are driving their children to school arrive at a pre-designated location several blocks from the school and the children all then walk to school as a group.

Commissioner Salter suggested that the best way to approach this list might be to hold discussion on one topic at each Commission meeting. Director Niemer agreed to prepare information on each topic up for discussion.

No action was required on this informational item.

PROJECTS UPDATES

Community Project Manager Hanson provided updates on the following projects:

Buenaventura Trail

The Redding West Rotary Club is holding their meeting at the Buenaventura Trail trailhead next week to commemorate the completion of the Stone Bench project and their adoption of the Trail. The Club came before the Commission several months ago to present their idea for the benches, one of which overlooks a waterfall and the Gold Run Creek and one other has a view of the Sacramento River and the River Trail. The Commission is invited to attend this event. Commissioners McCoach and McElvain agreed to represent the Commission.

Sacramento River Parkway

This project involves both trail, riparian restoration and education. This was on hold for a while due to the State bond freeze, but that has now been lifted and staff is working to complete the project. The wayfinding trails and interpretive plaques are the final pieces to be completed. We will be combining the remaining funds from this grant with another grant recently received (EEM) to widen, repair and overlay the Sacramento River Trail from the North Market Street Bridge to the Sundial Bridge and from the Diestlehorst Bridge to Harlan Drive behind the Lake Redding Estates subdivision.

South Bonnyview Boat Ramp

Three grants from the State totaling approximately \$700,000 will allow staff to make

improvements at the boat ramp, including adding a canoe launch, an ADA fishing ramp, repaving the parking lot, fixing up the restrooms and adding security cameras. Also included in the work would be a new trail from the parking lot of the boat ramp to the Bonnyview neighborhood.

No action was required on this informational item.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None.

DIRECTORS' COMMENTS

Community Services Director Niemer explained that the impact of the global recession is necessitating budget cuts in all Departments throughout the city. The impact to the Community Services Department will be that the Community Projects Manager position currently held by Terry Hanson will be eliminated. Director Niemer noted that she was working with the City Manager to retain Terry as a part-time employee with his salary paid for through grants already in place. The two projects Terry discussed above are prime examples of areas where his expertise is needed. While we are fortunate to be able to utilize Terry's knowledge base, the loss of this position will have a significant impact on the Department's ability to facilitate other projects. Rather than being able to work alongside outside groups to achieve their goal, we will only be able to provide some initial information upfront. Groups like the parents at Rivercrest Park who are looking for assistance to fund a portable bathroom will not receive the attention they have in the past. Staff will not have the resources to do the community outreach which has proved so successful.

The Recreation Division will not be a severely impacted as most of their programs pay for themselves - thus, cutting the program will not save any monies.

Director Niemer advised that the Riverbend Golf Course appraisal is in the works. In Phase I, the appraisers will determine the highest and best use of the property.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Center Blue Ribbon Committee has met six times and drafted an Action Plan for the Center. Chair Salter has represented the Commission at these meetings. Staff will present this Action Plan to the Commission at the next meeting for consideration.

Support Services Director Kersten noted that the Parks Division lost six positions with the budget cuts.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, at the hour of 5:35 p.m. Chair Salter declared the meeting adjourned.

Chair Salter