



ALAMEDA RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION MINUTES FOR REGULAR MEETING

DATE: Thursday, March 14, 2013
TIME: 7:03 p.m. Called to Order
PLACE: City Hall Council Chambers

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Restagno, Vice-Chair Delaney, and Commissioners Cooke, Brown, and Sonneman
Staff: Amy Wooldridge, Recreation & Parks Director

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Delaney asked about Krusi Park options for design. Director Wooldridge reported there are options to value engineer it to a simpler design for lower costs. The revised design would then go out to bid again. Alternative options will be brought before City Council.

Approved the minutes of January 10, 2013 regular Recreation & Park Commission meeting as edited.
M/S/C Sonneman, Cooke (unanimously approved)

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS, AGENDA - None

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS - None

5. NEW BUSINESS **A. None**

6. OLD BUSINESS **A. Alameda Beltline Conceptual Uses (Review and Make Recommendation)**

Director Amy Wooldridge provided a brief presentation and overview of this long-term, multi-phase project. She further reported on the community meetings, the survey and the process.

Chair Restagno asked about the sports groups accepting this as a non-sports field area. Director Wooldridge reported that at the routine spring field allocation meeting with youth sports organizations, the groups expressed interest in supporting the Beltline as passive use and instead focusing on Estuary Park, located near the old Coast Guard Housing for active athletic fields. They felt that area would better accommodate lighting and parking. All groups agreed and voted unanimously.

Commissioner Sonneman asked about the paint color for the historic railroad building that is being done as a volunteer project by the Church of Latter Day Saints. Director Wooldridge stated the colors would match what is currently on the building (pale yellow with brown trim). She further stated that she provided a memo to the Historical Advisory Board. Commissioner Sonneman expressed a thank

you to Mrs. Barbara Rassmusson, former AUSD Board Member and member of the Church of Latter Day Saints, for stepping up and volunteering to do this.

Commissioner Sonneman asked if there has been a discussion with the aquatic community about pools being an issue. Director Wooldridge stated she has talked with the various aquatics groups. She is currently presenting a proposal to the school district to renovate the existing facilities and rehabilitate for a 34 meter pool.

Commissioner Delaney asked if we should we be putting together a project list for Beltline development.

Director Wooldridge stated that once there is a plan in place this could happen. She reported adding to the Capital Improvements Plan the Beltline and Estuary Park projects, and these will go to City Council in the near future.

Commission Cooke stated it appears the community is being best served by items such as a community garden, or perhaps a gazebo because they are income producing, which could help maintain the property moving forward.

Vice-Chair Brown stated reading all 35 pages of comments and suggestions. The overwhelming response seems to be keeping the area as open space. There are wonderful opportunities. She was pleased to see so many responded.

Commissioner Sonneman agreed with the comments and response to the surveys and meetings. He feels strongly about keeping the property in line with Jean Sweeney's vision to keep it open space. He further stated that we have a big need in this community for recreation.

Commissioner Delaney stated there are many things on our agenda. He asked that the public be aware that this will be a long process, and to please be patient with the process. It could be many years moving the project forward.

Chair Restegno expressed many thanks to the people who have come forward with comments, and attending the public workshops on this project. He opened the meeting to public comment, and asked speakers to limit their comments to three minutes.

Speaker Jim Sweeney thanked the Commission for their support, including Amy Wooldridge. Jean Sweeney started this effort in 2002. He expressed that the top six items in the letter from the Jean Sweeney Open Space committee fall into the scope and vision of Jean. They aren't expecting it to be a fast process. He further thanked all of the community for coming out.

Speaker Dorothy Freeman said she and Jim would like to thank everyone, including Ms. Wooldridge and staff who have helped this project to get this far. They would also like to thank the two local newspapers, staff at the Alameda Museum, the Citizen's Task Force, Kiwanis, Rotary, Mr. Doug deHaan, and Alameda Public Affairs Forum, and all the people who have participated in this process including the meetings and walking tour.

Speaker Peter Wolfe read to the Commission a story by Dan Thomas, circa 1965. He stated the meaning of 'play' has changed, from being outside to digital play. He cited AMC 2-62-3 that is a local ordinance for a local participation policy requirement in all RFPs for local contractors/designers.

Speaker Barry Parker wanted to state that he was moved by the presentation and efforts put forth for this property. He stated that he is a swimmer and suggested getting away from the idea that a swim facility could be part of this property, due to funding issues. There is a great need to recondition the two pools. He spoke on the Highline railway rehab project in NY City being a great example.

Commissioner Delaney asked if outside Alameda groups use the pools. Mr. Parker stated, no. Director Wooldridge stated only Alameda teams use the pools but a competitive meet can bring in up to 800 people.

Mr. Parker further stated that if a swim complex was built, the high schools would have to transport students and equipment to a non-school site and it could lead to the existing pools not be repaired. The best thing to do is to rehab the current pools, especially Emma Hood.

Speaker Doug Siden, East Bay Regional Park District Board representative, wanted to share that this is a unique opportunity as many cities do not have properties able to be developed, especially of this size. He stated that we may not need to duplicate what we already have on the island. He would like operational costs and maintenance to be considered. He asked for the naming ordinance to also be considered.

Speaker Aaron Thies wanted to reiterate a thank you and is pleased to see the walking and biking trails. He and Jean had discussed a tiered system for trails and trails can be incorporated into other areas. He suggested mountain biking being separate from BMX.

Speaker Doug deHaan said all the individual speakers previous have thanked everyone but he wanted to make a mention to the Commission. He shared some of the constraints with this property. He provided the background on renaming and remediation of Estuary Park. The community is willing to do many different aspects for developing this project and could keep the funding issues low. He suggested asking for help from the community. He stated the pools need to be rehabbed, but the schools need to put in their part. He's looking forward to the next step.

Speaker Pat Colburn said her house overlooks the Beltline and agreed the Commission has identified sports facilities options in other locations. We don't have a space that fosters wildlife, and sports facilities and wildlife won't mix. She suggested moving the parking area.

Speaker Debra Arbuckle said she was a friend of Jean's for years prior to the beltline project. People love the sense of peace in this property. There is a sense of wonder in this property and would love to have kids play in this area.

Speaker Mali McGee said she is a 17 year resident of Alameda and said she proposed building a 5-acre community farm on the Beltline property. A community farm would employ good land management with grazing with goats, pigs, and chickens. The project would be self-funded and could benefit the community in many ways. She runs a shareholder dairy.

Speaker Marisa Wood said she is a resident and here to represent the youth community. She is working with Mali McGee to learn about raising animals. She supports her proposal for a 5 acre community farm. Many people have to travel far to visit a community farm.

Speaker Jane Jackson said she is glad to see a community garden as part of the beltline plan. She owns a plot in the Eagle community garden. She would like to know how big the community garden would be.

Amy Wooldridge reminded the public there is a sign-up list to receive email announcements and information on the Beltline project.

Speakers Lil Arnerich said he understands the role of Commissions and he has been on several. He complimented the people who have come to the meetings and participated in the project. He and Norma like to stay active in the community, and they have been friends with Jean. Lil provided the Commission a briefing on the history of Jean's vision, with handouts. He said personally he wants to see swim centers, but not at this location and this isn't the vision of Jean's. He asked for the Commission to read the articles he handed out.

Chair Restagno closed the public comment period of the meeting.

Commissioner Sonneman asked if this was a conceptual recommendation or more detailed. Director Wooldridge stated this was a recommendation for specific use types. There will be further discussions on things like parking and fencing around the property.

Commissioner Sonneman stated the comments for open space, and the words, "walk, look, listen and enjoy" were in mind when reviewing comments and listening to others. He recommends passive use.

Vice-Chair Brown agreed to the passive use, and community gardens should be a part of this proposal, although she isn't sure if a community farm is appropriate for the beltline.

Commissioner Delaney stated we are all in agreement, and while working with Director Wooldridge and others he suggested this proposal matched what came out of those meetings, and that we begin to prioritize accordingly but also to include picnic areas.

Chair Restagno stated there could be other uses but in keeping with the vision is important, and is supportive of a plan to include other items from the list.

Commissioner Cooke agreed that this isn't something that will happen overnight, and she feels very sensitive to the neighbors around the area and parking issues. She would really like this become a passive open space facility in the vision of Jean and moving forward needs to happen.

Commissioner Sonneman expressed concerns with this being a big area and the need for security.

Director Wooldridge stated the most common question is when the property will be open. It is contingent on two major factors, those being soil clean-up, and safety (lighting and police access).

Commissioner Cooke anticipates the community coming out to help when asked.

Commissioner Delaney talked about the approval of this report and how the process would work, with designs and more detailed items coming to this Commission before those items move forward.

Motion to recommend conceptual uses for the Beltline/Jean Sweeney Open Space Park that define the definition of passive space with the top six uses based on community input. These items include walking/bike trails, natural open space, picnic areas, community gardens, playgrounds, and open lawn areas. M/S/C Delaney, Cooke (unanimously approved)

7. REPORTS FROM RECREATION COMMISSION AND RECREATION & PARK DIRECTOR

A. Recreation Commission Reports – Vice-Chair Brown reported that Mastick is continuing with their free tax preparation. Some special presentations upcoming. The daily lunch program continues, fund raising, trips abroad, and the annual volunteer recognition lunch will be held in April. They are hosting a walk around the Beltline. Chair Restegano suggested a wheelchair or walker be made available to clients if needed.

B. Friends of the Park Report – Commissioner Delaney reported they have schedule the Play-for-the-Parks golf tournament on September 25, 2013. He thanked the Greenway Golf people for helping this happen. He reported that the exercise equipment at Lincoln Park is getting a lot of use and looks terrific.

C. Recreation and Parks Director Report - Director Wooldridge reported working on a grant application for Encinal Boatramp, due April 1st. The July 4th Jubilee has been canceled due to declined attendance and sponsorship. September 28th is being planned for an event to celebrate everything Alameda and she is asking for volunteers for a Steering Committee. Summer program registration is in full swing, and the activity guide is coming out soon. She explained that she is working to get more aquatic based programs available, and subsequently this summer ARPD partnered with Alameda Dragonflyers for a Dragon Boat camp for teens, free Family Fun Runs and New Paddler clinics. ARPD is teaming with City of San Leandro for Camp Concord, which is a week-long family camp. New offering of trips for families and active individuals to location such as Costa Rica and the French Riviera. We are offering new sports camps such as Lacrosse and Advanced Basketball for Girls. The egg scramble is March 23rd

D. Other Reports – Chair Restagno was given a letter regarding the naming of the beltline property, and asked that it be discussed at an upcoming meeting.

8. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS, GENERAL - None

9. ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA – Item 7.D.

10. SET NEXT MEETING DATE: Thursday, April 11, 2013.

11. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C Commissioner Sonnemen motioned to adjourn at 9:17 p.m. Commissioner Cooke seconded, and unanimous.