

**SOLANO COUNTY PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
January 9, 2020**

**County Administration Center - First Floor Hearing Room
675 Texas Street, Fairfield
10:00 a.m.**

**Members Present: Chairman Alvarez, Commissioner Leong, Commissioner Riddle, Commissioner Whited
Members Excused: Commissioner Hermsmeyer
Staff Present: Chris Drake, Teresa Schow**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Alvarez called the meeting to order. A quorum was confirmed.

2. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the November 14, 2019 were approved as prepared.

3. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved.

4. Chair and Commissioner Comments

There were no commissioner comments.

5. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

6. Election of the chair and vice chair

Chairman Alvarez noted that the commission would be electing the chair and vice chair for the commission. The term will start in February of 2020 and last one year.

Chairman Alvarez requested nominations for the chair position. Commissioner Whited nominated Mike Alvarez as the chair and Commissioner Leong seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Alvarez requested nominations for the vice chair position. Commissioner Leong nominated Commissioner Riddle and Chairman Alvarez seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Parks and Recreation Division Staff Report

7. Work Plan Update

Chris Drake noted that the Work Plan was adopted in 2014 and was due to be update in 2016. He requested that the Commission form an ad hoc committee to revise and update the Work Plan. Once the updates and revisions are complete, staff will present the Work Plan to the Board of Supervisors.

Chairman Alvarez requested comments.

Commissioner Riddle agreed that it was a good idea to update the Work Plan and he volunteered to join the committee. He requested a copy of the existing plan. Chris Drake indicated that the plan was included with the documents for the meeting.

Chairman Alvarez noted that the Work Plan serves as a guide and focuses the Commission on items of importance. The Work Plan is a good communication tool for staff, so they understand important issues for the Commission. He suggested that staff attend the ad hoc committee meetings to provide guidance. Once the updated Work Plan draft is ready, the full Commission should review it. Chris Drake noted that staff submits an annual report to the Board of Supervisors. Chairman Alvarez suggested that the Work Plan be revisited one year after it is updated and that the ad hoc committee meet with Mr. Drake before the annual report is submitted to the Board of Supervisors.

Chairman Riddle suggested that the entire Parks and Recreation Committee review the Work Plan, since they recently visited the parks. He suggested that once the entire committee identified needs then the ad hoc committee should meet and develop the plan.

Chairman Alvarez proposed that the Committee review the Work Plan during the next Parks and Recreation Meeting and form the ad hoc committee.

Chris Drake noted that he would include the discussion of the Work Plan and forming the ad hoc committee on the next meeting's agenda.

8. Staff Reports

A. Regional Parks Update

Chris Drake provided the regional parks update. He noted that on November 19, 2019 staff presented the Administrative and Finance Plan to the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors accepted the plan and provided staff direction.

Chris Drake summarized the direction from the Board of Supervisors. The Board accepted the Administrative and Financing Plan as the initial draft for the proposed District. The plan may be updated from time to time as deemed necessary through public outreach and Board of Supervisor direction. The Board of Supervisors directed staff to work with local community partners to report back with a proposed plan for next steps towards the formation of a County-Wide Regional Parks and Open Space District.

Mr. Drake noted that the Board of Supervisors accepted the timeline and next steps that were presented in the Administrative Finance Plan. The Board directed staff to move forward, but they noted concerns about the funding mechanism due to other community priorities.

He noted that the timeline was written with the expectation that there would be a funding mechanism and since there is currently no funding for the project, staff will revise the timeline.

Mr. Drake expected that the updated timeline will be ready by January 2020. He expected that stakeholder outreach will begin by early January and goals and ideas will be identified. He noted that Solano Open Space, Solano Land Trust, Green Belt Alliance, and Solano Orderly Growth Committee will be invited to participate. He indicated that there might be multiple meetings. He also expected to retain the project team and begin the conversation with city managers regarding potential projects. He will also research hiring a consultant.

Commissioner Whited noted that this will be difficult to accomplish without funding.

Commissioner Alvarez and Commissioner Riddle noted that they attended the board meeting. He noted that the Board of Supervisors was not willing to form the District if a tax assessment was the funding mechanism for the District. He noted that the Parks and Recreation Commission needs to convince the public that the proposed District will be worth a tax assessment. He outlined the advantages for forming a Regional Park District that include more opportunities to secure funding, since a Regional Park District would only be focused on parks.

Commissioner Leong noted that Solano and Napa are the only counties that don't have a park commission. He noted that Napa is attempting to secure funding. Commissioner Leong noted that Solano County is typically against anything that will cost citizens money.

Commissioner Riddle noted that there wasn't much interest in supporting a tax for the proposed Regional Parks District for the 2020 election. He noted that they didn't say "no", they just were not enthusiastic about proposing a new tax. He noted that they took a political position of wait and see and continued to discuss other priorities. He noted that the Parks and Recreation Commission needs to get involved with the outreach and show the citizens of Solano County that this proposed district is valuable.

Commissioner Alvarez noted that there is positive momentum. He suggested that when Mr. Drake starts to meet with city managers he outlines the project in a way that everyone supports the proposed District. Commissioner Alvarez noted that he doesn't think the Board of Supervisors recognizes the proposed District as a priority. He noted that the Parks and Recreation Commission needs to drive the momentum for this.

Commissioner Whited proposed getting the information to the public by June. He wondered if this would change the name of the Solano County Parks and Recreation Commission.

Commissioner Alvarez noted that the current Solano County Parks and Recreation Commissioners would be appointed to the initial advisory group and be part of the planning process, but eventually the Solano County Parks and Recreation Commission would not be necessary.

Mr. Drake noted that the Administrative and Financial Plan is adaptable and will be updated and revised as necessary.

Commissioner Whited wondered what entity would the proposed District be accountable to.

Mr. Drake referred to the Commission by-laws and noted that the existing commission is appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Was formed to provide advice to the Board of Supervisors on topics related to parks and recreation within Solano County. The sample "commission" in the Administration and Finance Plan could be an extension of the existing Parks and Recreation Commission or the Board could choose to create an independent operational advisory board. Mr. Drake pointed out that it could be a confusing model.

Commissioner Alvarez agreed with Mr. Drake, the commission should advise the Board of Supervisors and staff and it shouldn't only communicate with the Board of Supervisors. Commissioner Alvarez asked about clarification between the draft timeline that was presented to the Board of Supervisors and the current timeline.

Chris Drake pointed out that some of the target dates on the draft timeline were dependent on the Board of Supervisors choosing to support presenting a funding mechanism in the November 2020 election. These items would need to be tabled and removed. He noted that the meeting with the Board on November 19, 2019 was on the timeline. The scheduled outreach for November and December is also on the timeline. The goal is to have the outreach completed by early February. Due to the holidays, he noted that the outreach efforts would start in January 2020. Staff would come to the outreach meeting with an updated timeline.

Commissioner Alvarez clarified the timeline and noted that after the outreach meeting and the timeline has been updated, staff will present a report to the Board of Supervisors. Chris Drake noted that the earliest staff could present this information to the Board would be early March. Due to possible delays, Commissioner Alvarez suggested they move the date to April and Chris Drake agreed.

Chris Drake noted that the staff objective for the pending board meeting would be to provide the Board with an updated timeline and to determine if funding is available for the public opinion survey. Mr. Drake noted that during the November 19, 2019 board meeting it was mentioned that there are allocated funds for the public opinion survey. He also noted that staff was not directed to use the funds for the survey. Staff will request the release of the funds for the survey. The survey needs to be updated since the last survey was conducted in 2015.

Commissioner Whited wondered how staff will initiate meetings with other government agencies. Mr. Drake noted that staff will coordinate meetings with staff at other government agencies and that County staff has started to compile a list of stakeholders and interested parties.

Commissioner Riddle confirmed that staff will meet with government officials and stakeholders to secure support for the proposed Regional Parks District and report the findings to the Board. Commissioner Riddle noted that this would take considerable time to complete. Mr. Drake noted that the process would take more than one meeting and

that he planned to hold the initial meeting by the end of January 2020. He will identify entities that are interested in forming the District and creating steering groups.

Commissioner Riddle wondered if other divisions in the Resource Management Department were participating in the process. Mr. Drake confirmed that the project is assigned to the Resource Management Department and other divisions were participating. Mr. Drake noted that when they present at the pending board meeting, staff intends to present a comprehensive plan, so the Board can make a recommendation regarding the project.

Commissioner Alvarez noted that if the Board approves the proposal for the November ballot, staff will need to turn it over to an outside consultant to manage. Mr. Alvarez noted that he is encouraged by the support from the Board.

Commissioner Alvarez opened the meeting to public comment.

Steve Goetz, the President of the Local Chapter of the California Native Plant's Society noted that his Board of Directors is very interested in the Regional Parks issue and asked him to find out more about the issue. He noted that finding information has been difficult. He also noted that there has been very little information available to the public on this issue. He noted that the Board of Supervisors was working on this when the legislation passed a couple of years ago. He noted that if the Parks District is formed, the Administrative and Finance Plan will act as the core of how to run the organization. He was interested in learning about this group and knowing more about the Annual Report that was presented at the November 19, 2019 board meeting. He noted that his group had been working on this issue and the goal was to continue to work on the issue into 2020 with public education and outreach. He noted that members of his organization are interested in providing direction and comments about their concerns and desires. There are items on the timeline that are due between now and January 2020. He requested the dates for the listening sessions, so they can help get people to the meetings. He was surprised that no meetings have occurred yet. He encouraged the Commission to set some dates, so interest groups can attend the meetings and provide input, so the Board will have information from the community about this issue. He encouraged the Commission to update the web-site with information, so the public can educate themselves regarding the issue. He was concerned with the tight timeline but assumed that everything can be done. He pointed out that hiring a consultant was on the timeline and he asked for an update on hiring a consultant who will work on public education and outreach.

Chris Drake noted that there are funds budgeted in the 2019-2020 budget for hiring a consultant and conducting the survey. He also noted that he requires Board direction before the funds are committed.

Commissioner Alvarez asked Mr. Drake to request funds from the Resource Management Department for extra help, so that staff can meet the timeline requirements. He also noted that the Board votes on the budget in June and updates the budget mid-year.

Bob Berman noted that he has been involved in this for 20 years and he agreed with most of what Steve Goetz said. He was surprised to learn that there are funds in the budget, but staff is not authorized to use the funds. Mr. Berman noted that the Board

discussed the fact that there isn't a public outcry to create the Regional Parks District. He is disappointed that since the legislation passed in September of 2017 and now it is 2020, there hasn't been the type of the public dialog that is necessary for this to be successful. He pointed out that for this process to be successful, there really needs to be public outreach and there is an opportunity to do that. He noted that Chris Drake will be scheduling meetings between staff of public agencies and interests' groups. This will start the public dialog process. Mr. Berman suggested that public outreach include visits to the seven cities in Solano County and to have a listening tour or process that could be sponsored by the the local planning commission or the Parks and Recreation Commission. They could gather information from people and individuals who will use and benefit from the District. This way, when staff reports back to the Board of Supervisors, they can have specific information about the needs of the individual communities in the county. He mentioned that it just can't be staff to staff; the Board of Supervisors needs to hear from the public. He noted that it is the only way they can go through the process and for it be successful. Mr. Berman urged staff and the commission to get the process moving quickly. He noted that he was under the impression that there was money in the budget to hire a consultant to organize the listening tour. This way, they could hear from citizens and the information would flow up. This way supervisors would begin to hear information from the local communities in terms of what it is that they want to see. He noted that when you go to the local communities they are not interested in administrative and financial plans, they are interested in what they can get out of it. He recognized that Chris Drake had put together a list of all the parks and noted that people are really interested in information about the parks. People want to know that Mare Island Preserve can be opened to the public or people can have more access to Lynch Canyon. He really encouraged staff and the Commission to begin to get that process moving as quickly as possible and to develop the outreach program that he noted was essential to make this work. Mr. Berman offered to help in any way that he can.

Mr. Alvarez asked for comments from the commissioners.

Commissioner Leong noted that they needed to get going.

Commissioner Riddle noted that they were concerned that they only meet every other month. He asked for dates to add to the calendar.

Chris Drake noted that the ad hoc committee would be included in the entire process.

Commissioner Riddle noted that Mike Alvarez would concur that the ad hoc committee would be part of the entire process.

Mike Alvarez requested that Chris Drake send the updated timeline to the commissioners as an information item. He noted that only two commissioners can attend the individual meetings, so there isn't a quorum issue. He proposed that commissioners attend the public meetings in their respective communities.

Commissioner Whited wondered if there would be enough time to visit each city, since there isn't much time.

Commissioner Alvarez indicated that he thought there would be enough time to visit all cities. Chris Drake noted that he will discuss the schedule with the other city officials in

the county and identify the venues that would be the best to get their citizens involved. He noted that speaking with individual staff members from the cities is important because they will know the best way to communicate with their citizens and elected officials. Mr. Drake noted that each city might have a different way of reaching out to citizens that could include city council meetings or at parks and recreation commissions.

Mike Alvarez noted that if they will be presenting at city council meetings they will need support in creating the presentation. Parks and Recreation Commission meetings are less formal than city council meetings. He suggested that board members meet with council members because city council members will listen to board members.

Commissioner Whited agreed with Chairman Alvarez and noted that if board members will be meeting with city council members, it will happen after staff has met with staff and they have a proposal.

The commissioners discussed presenting the Regional Parks District concept to the citizens of Solano County and that this concept is for all cities and the County. Mr. Alvarez noted that it is very important that staff hire an outside consultant to help with the outreach effort.

Commissioner Whited wondered if there would be a date in February to start the outreach effort. Mr. Drake noted that it was a bullet point in the timeline and the outreach effort would start by then.

B. Attendance and Revenue

Chris Drake reviewed the attendance revenue information provided to the commissioners. Chris Drake pointed out that they are tracking at 57% at mid-year and that is ahead of projections. Attendance is high due to nice weather. He noted that for the last five years, Solano County Parks have had approximately 200,000 park visitations annually. He recognized that the volunteers, camp hosts, docents, educators, and staff enhance the visitor experience and quality of Solano County Parks. He noted that the Solano County Parks receive over 5000 volunteer hours annually.

Commissioner Whited noted that he stayed at Sandy Beach during November and it was busy during mid-week.

Chairman Alvarez asked if most volunteer hours are concentrated at a specific park. Chris Drake noted that Lake Solano and Lynch Canyon log the most volunteer hours. The County is in contract with Solano Land Trust to provide volunteer outreach and services for Lynch Canyon and with the Solano Resource Conservation District and Putah Creek Council to provide volunteer outreach and services for Lake Solano. Volunteers provide a variety of experiences for visitors including environmental education, mindfulness, and health programing.

Commissioner Leong noted that at Lynch Canyon the Land Trust utilizes the Audubon Society a lot, so that people come in and monitor nesting boxes or do raptor and bird tours.

Chairman Alvarez asked about the cash value of volunteer hours. Mr. Drake noted that he tracks volunteer hours for grant reporting and applications and includes volunteer hours in the Parks and Recreation Annual Report.

Chairman Whited noted that having volunteers is a good selling point. Chairman Alvarez agreed with Chairman Whited and commended Mr. Drake for the good job.

C. Project Updates

Mr. Drake noted that project work was impacted due to the holidays and staff being out.

Staff is working on the restoration grant at Beldens Landing and tree trimming at Lake Solano and prepping for the stewardship programs. Staff is performing routine maintenance at Lynch Canyon and creating interpretive sign design. They are creating signs for new users to the parks. They have been performing routine maintenance at Sandy Beach including updating wind screens.

D. Mr. Drake noted that closures due to red-flag warnings ended.

Chairman Whited inquired about the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund. Mr. Drake noted that they received three applications and will email the applications to members of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Chairman Alvarez confirmed that during the March meeting there will be discussion on the Work Plan and an update regarding the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund.

Chairman Leong commented that he completed his training and the annual report does not reflect this. Mr. Drake noted that information for the report was current as of September 2019 and everyone was in compliance when the report was reported out.

The next Commission meeting was confirmed for March 12, 2020. Since there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Chairman Alvarez adjourned the meeting at 11:38 a.m.