

**SOLANO COUNTY PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
March 12, 2020**

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

Members Present: Chairman Alvarez, Commissioner Leong, Commissioner Whited

Members Excused: Commissioner Hermsmeyer

Members Absent: Commissioner Riddle

Staff Present: Chris Drake, Jamie Harrison

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 January 9, 2019 were approved as prepared.

3. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as adjusted.

4. Chair and Commissioner Comments

The Commissioner indicated for the sake of the public attendance, No. 9.A. "Regional Parks Update" be advanced to No. 6. to discuss first.

5. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

9.A. Regional Parks Update - Moved up for Discussion

Chris Drake provided the regional parks update. Staff returned to the Board of Supervisors with a status report on February 25, 2020, to receive direction to work with community agencies interested in pursuing the creation of a parks and open space district. The staff was requested to return to the Board with a status report and obtain information on how the Board wanted staff to proceed. Staff provided a brief report advising what had been accomplished since the November meeting and asked for clarifying guidance.

After a lengthy discussion of what the Board's expectations and hopes were, it was determined that more of a community organized effort into helping steer the parks and open space district formation effort forward. The Board was still supportive of moving forward with efforts for polling and serving work done to help get public opinion as to what direction the public wants to lean towards to determine whether or not November would still be an appropriate time. We are still looking at November as a potential possibility. We still fit within

the rubric of meeting that timeline with some opposition coming towards concerns about having a mixed messaging with a parks district need or want versus a fire and safety need or want. Having conflicting issues coming to the public could potentially stymie the efforts of one or the other. There are some concerns that out but overall, the Board supported moving forward with trying to get a grass-roots effort involved in the process. Some group members from the public including the Green Belt Alliance, Solano Land Trust and Orderly Growth were brought forward and identified as agencies that were interested in providing assistance in moving that momentum. With the ultimate result being that Nicole Braddock from the Land Trust had received support from her board to try to move forward with some organizational efforts and taking the lead as a public partner. The CAO met with the Department of Resource Management Director, as well as Nicole regarding other topics which led into this topic. They decided to divide the labor of identifying who would be responsible for different things. The feeling being that making certain that an unbiased prepared poll and survey would be better suited if it originated with the Land Trust efforts, as opposed to county efforts. The efforts that we were going to initiate with public outreach were not necessarily suspended but put on pause to not interrupt those efforts.

Nicole from the Land Trust has information to move forward with the creation of a poll and survey. She has reached out to consultants that we have worked with and they have found someone that they like to participate in the creation of that project. At this point, there is conflict in that the consultant is advising that having a poll and survey is going to promote a false negative. In the last month, we have had the COVID virus wreaking havoc. It has caused enough problems and disruption in markets, as well as possibly causing support to be removed from a district. Knowing that there is only so much money and a lot of effort that goes into these projects from the public and county, they are looking at postponing the survey until May when this time is more appropriate. At this point, there is active support from members of the board for moving forward. There are still concerns from all involved in the creation of this project, that if there is going to be a potential creation of a district and it's going to be pitched to the public, it should be pitched appropriately. That means that the foundational information of the public opinion is based upon accurate data.

Chairman Alvarez confirmed that the county is not administering the survey and that preliminary outreach efforts will cease. Mr. Drake indicated that all efforts are redirected and coordinated with recommendations from meetings with the Land Trust and other agencies. County staff is now in a partnering support role with the Land Trust and working to determine what is the best way to move forward, and what further role the county has in the process while maintaining support to the Land Trust.

Chairman Alvarez proposed that the commission to consider allowing the chairman to be authorized, with Mr. Drake's assistance, to compose a letter to Nicole Braddock advising her that the Parks Commission wants to offer its assistance, volunteerism, etc. to support the Land Trust with this process in forming a committee.

Public Comments

Steve Goetz, a resident of Benicia, requested that staff provide more detail on the status of hiring a consultant to take the lead in outreach and education and if possible, the consultant could be retained by a non-profit for continuity. This hiring was discussed at the Board of Supervisors' meeting of February 25, 2020, wherein they expected to have a consultant on board by March 1, 2020. Is the county going hire a consultant to support the staff in developing a potential ballot measure for November 21st?

Mr. Goetz requested clarification on what the terms will be for surveying the public in light of the public health concerns. He indicated that Parks Commission should be the lead agency in this project and not Solano Land Trust.

Commissioner Whited concurred. Mr. Goetz indicated the importance of the letter from the commission to the Solano Land Trust to make clear the importance of the public's interest being protected and having county involvement and deliberation of whatever group is responsible for developing a potential ballot measure, that that group have a public process to do it. If grass-roots supporters are involved, more supporters will become involved. The deliberations need to be noticed and open to the public for comment.

Commissioners Leong and Whited expressed sharing the cost equally. Chairperson Alvarez agreed and indicated that is why he wants to meet with Nicole. They are unsure of what the process is to move forward.

Chairman Alvarez stated that if he had a consultant who had experience in this area and indicated that it may not be the right time for the project, he would listen to the consultant.

Mr. Drake indicated that the CAO and the Director met with Nicole and made the decision that the survey will be conducted by Solano Land Trust. The outcome of that meeting was that Solano Land Trust would take on the survey portion of the workload. It is unknown what level of contribution to consultant work will come from the county. Mr. Drake indicated that he would follow-up on that information.

Chairperson Alvarez asked to have the county's role defined. Mr. Drake said he would follow-up. Chairman Alvarez requested an email be sent with the information and he would distribute to the commission.

6. Fish and Wildlife Propagation Funds Evaluation Committee Recommendation to Board of Supervisors to Award Funds (Action Item)

Commissioner Whited indicated that there had been "so much" money already allocated to the Environmental Education Field Trips. Mr. Drake confirmed that there was \$10,000 in the fund. The maximum that can be requested per grant is \$2,500.

Commissioner Leong scored the applicants above 85%. He suggested that the commission grant the money to each applicant as requested.

Commissioner Whited stated that the applicants have met the criteria and should move forward.

Commissioner Leong moved to recommend the awards be funded. The Commissioners agreed by consensus.

Mr. Drake stated that this was the first-time utilization of a different outside agency expert, Nathan Kyle from the Bureau of Reclamation. He was very tough and very fair. In reading is review and analysis, it is a good recommendation that we look to him for future cycles.

7. Work Plan Update Discussion and select Ad Hoc Committee Recommendation to Board of Supervisors to Award Funds (Action Item)

Chairman Alvarez indicated that at the previous meeting it was decided to form a subcommittee. He determined that he would like the subcommittee to work with staff in reviewing and updating the Work Plan and bring it back to the commission for input before proceeding to the Board of Supervisors. Terry is appointed. The Chairman asked for one more volunteer. Commissioner Leong volunteered. Mr. Drake suggested that the commission review the information and then forward to Mr. Drake by the end of March.

8. Review Proposed Fee Increases / Recommendation to Board of Supervisors to adopt fee increases (Action Item)

Mr. Drake stated that every year the staff is tasked with reviewing the fee schedule for parks. A marketing analysis was prepared which will be presented for recommendation to the Board to adopt any new fees and to continue to adopt the existing fee schedule. There are a couple of increases and a new fee.

002(a)- Auto Parking daily fee \$8 Increased by \$2 for the peak season (Summer)

Note: The chairman asked that the peak season be listed on the schedule. He also confirmed that there was no senior discount for day use. For consistency, the chairman also asked if the bus parking fee could be posted as seasonal/non-seasonal. Mr. Drake indicated that the bus parking is significantly lower use revenue source. The revenues received are very infrequent.

016 – Boat rental hourly rate \$15 Increased by \$5
017 – Boat rental half day rate \$45 Increased by \$15

Commissioner Whited suggested that the boat rental fees reflect as peak season only. Mr. Drake indicated that he was hesitant to place a peak season designation on this rate since our weather patterns are adjusting and it would limit the flexibility of generating revenue at a later date.

Commissioner Leong asked if there is a concessionaire. Mr. Drake indicated that the county does not at this time. There is year-round staff to include seasonal staff. There are currently nine seasonal park aides that help with operations when there are high volumes of people in the park. They receive minimum wage at \$13.

037 – Dogs in the campground fee \$2 Increased by \$1
038 – Boat Storage fee \$48 Increased by \$8

Commissioner Whited asked if the keys are labeled “do not duplicate.” They do not since they are small pad lock keys. Mr. Drake indicated that they regularly changed the locks.

040 – Boat Launch Fee \$12 Increased by \$2
055 – Ranger Staff Special Services \$77 Increased by \$12
056 – Interpretive Program \$77 Increased by \$12
057 - Parks Division Permit \$77 Increased by \$12

Chairman Alvarez asked if the \$77 Ranger Staff Fee includes overtime. Mr. Drake indicated that it did not. Ranger Staff Special Services typically does not incur overtime. The rangers generally work a flex schedule. Vacations are expected to be scheduled in the off-peak season.

Chairman Alvarez asked for clarification of 057. Mr. Drake indicated that this fee is for a special event that occurs in the parks that is not a park-sponsored event. The fee is for evaluation the special use permit application. An example of a special event would be if a business wanted to do a special event not associated with the parks.

A motion to accept the fee increases was made by Commissioner Leong and seconded by Commissioner Whited. The Commissioners agreed by consensus.

9. Staff Report (Updates: Informational and Possible Discussion)

B. Attendance and Revenue Summary

Mr. Drake indicated that park attendance is where he expected it be for this time of year. He indicated that revenues and attendance had been high in the off-season. The numbers for the campgrounds have dramatic increases from October thru February. If weather is warm, fishing is typically not as good in Belden's Landing and the attendance drops. We have had more RVs and boats. We are currently seeking grants to find ways to off-set the impact and make improvements to the parks.

10. Confirm date of next regular meeting on May 14, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. and Adjourn (Action Item)

The next Commission meeting was confirmed for May 14, 2020.

Since there was no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:11 p.m.