

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

**County Administration Center – CAC 1<sup>st</sup> Floor MP Rooms 1600, 1610  
675 Texas Street, Fairfield  
10:00 am**

<b>Members Present:</b>	<b>Leong, Alvarez, Riddle</b>
<b>Members Excused:</b>	<b>Whited, Hermsmeyer</b>
<b>Staff Present:</b>	<b>Chris Drake and Melissa Catron</b>

**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 July 9, 2020 were amended to remove the word “Committee” and replace it with “Commission” on the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of page 6. Commissioner Leong motioned to accept the minutes as amended. Vice-Chair Riddle seconded the motion.

**3. Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved unanimously. Commissioner Riddle motioned, Commissioner Leong seconded.

**4. Chair and Commissioner Comments**

No Comments from the Chairman or Commissioners.

**5. Public Comments**

Mr. Jerry Emanuelson of the Suisun Marsh Natural History Association indicated he had comments and questions regarding Action Item #6. Chair Alvarez asked if he would mind waiting until the action item was addressed, Mr. Emanuelson agreed to hold his comments.

**6. Select Commission members for the 2020-21 Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund Evaluation Committee, recommend subject matter expert to assist (Action Item)**

Chris Drake presented item #6; this is an annual action item for the Parks and Recreation Commission. Chris stated that the time had come to select the members of the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund Evaluation Committee for the fiscal year 2020-21 Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund. He stated that the Committee typically consists of 2 members from the Parks and Recreation Commission, 1 member from outside the Commission who is an expert in the topic, and Chris Drake will assist.

For the fiscal year 2020-21, Parks has received a \$10,000 allocation, capped at \$2,500 per grant application. When the Evaluation Committee members have been selected, then, later in November, the application process for the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund will be opened, it will be open for 30 days. Chris stated that in the January Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, presentations would be made. Chair Alvarez clarified the timing of the

Evaluation Committee, the presentation, the subsequent meeting of the sub-committee, followed with another Parks and Recreation Commission meeting with recommendations. Chris confirmed the time line and further clarified that once the process was through the Evaluation Committee to make a recommendation to make the awards for the different grants, then that recommendation would go to the Board of Supervisors to review and then make their own changes and/or recommendations. If the recommendation is approved in the March meeting, then it could be before the Board of Supervisors before the end of March, followed with announcements in the first part of April.

Chair Alvarez asked if the meeting for the sub-committees would be virtual or in-person. Chris stated that the meetings can be in the format that is most convenient for the group., keeping in mind COVID-19 safety and restrictions. Vice-Chair Riddle stated his preference for in-person meetings.

Mr. Emanuelson asked when the applications would be posted. Chris answered that the applications would be posted later in November and due by the end of December. The applications and instructions will be posted on the Solano County Parks website; they can be submitted electronically or they can be submitted directly to the office (Solano County Dept. of Resource Management at 675 Texas St., Suite 5500, Fairfield, CA, 94533).

Chair Alvarez asked how many applications were submitted for fiscal year 2019-20. Chris responded that 3 were submitted; all 3 were qualified and awarded.

Chair Alvarez asked who had volunteered for the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund Evaluation Committee last fiscal year (2019-20); Commissioners Leong and Whited were on the committee last fiscal year with Chair Alvarez as an alternate.

Chair Alvarez asked if any of the Commissioners present wanted to volunteer for the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund Evaluation Committee for this fiscal year (2020-21); Chair Alvarez and Commissioner Riddle volunteered. Commissioner Leong stated he could not volunteer, he had a conflict of interest.

Chris Drake asked if the Commissioners had a recommendation for a subject matter expert for the Evaluation Committee. Chris stated that Nathan Kyle (Concessions Manager for the Bureau of Reclamation for Lake Berryessa) was used last fiscal year; he is a former Park Ranger, Chief Ranger at Lake Berryessa, and has participated in numerous restoration projects at Lake Berryessa. The Commissioners agreed to bring back Nathan Kyle as the subject matter expert. The Commissioners further stated that if Nathan Kyle was unavailable, they will allow Staff to select an appropriate subject matter expert.

## **7. Parks and Recreation Division Staff Report (Informational, with Possible Action)**

### **A. Regional Parks Update – No New Information**

Chris Drake reported that there is no new information to report or add to previous reportings. Solano Land Trust is still not moving forward due to COVID-19.

### **B. Attendance and Revenue Summary**

Chris Drake directed the Commissioners to the Revenue Summary Report handout, the dates on the handout are incorrect. Beginning with July, they dates need to be changed to 2020 from 2019. Beginning with January, the dates need to be changed from 2020 to 2021. To clarify, the information on the report is correct, just not the dates.

Tracking from the beginning of the fiscal year, July 2020;

Belden's Landing: Operations re-opened in June 2020. Attendance picked up in July, and then, once the normal/usual boat-launch users began using that location again, attendance and revenue began tracking like the year prior (before COVID-19).

Lynch Canyon: Attendance started off higher in July and then tapered off back to normal operations; this is attributed to an overall lack of Open-Spaces available for use in the area

in July. August/Sept, there were a number of red flag days, which impacted operations and revenues. Overall, this location is still tracking very close to normal (pre-COVID-19). October is tracking above-normal for this location.

Sandy Beach: This location is showing negative revenues due to the COVID-19 restrictions in place, and the continued issuance of refunds for reservations. Operations recently began beyond the launch/leave only access that has been in place since March, but the recent increase in use has not been enough to overcome the refunds and rescheduling of those reservations. Sandy Beach re-opened to a 75% occupancy rate as of 11/2/2020; reservations for Thanksgiving weekend were full within 3 days.

Lake Solano: Had been operating at 60% occupancy levels; comparing between prior fiscal year at \$30,000 for the month vs \$18,000 for the month in this fiscal year, attendance and revenues are where they should be. Plans were to run Lake Solano at 60% occupancy levels through August, and then incrementally increase to 75% operations through September, and then by October, release to 100% operations (full service). Historic park use played a large part in determining this operations model. The standardized operations model for this location is a maximum 8 people to a site and 2 vehicles per site. August 18, 2020 changed all of the operations plans for this location with the LNU Lightning Complex Fire. Lake Solano has been closed to the public since the fire.

The portion of the Lake Solano Park that was impacted was the campground area, from campsite #38 to campsite #20. It also burned the entire middle section of the campground and the uphill/upland section near Campsites #11 – #8. Regarding damaged infrastructure, those items are still being discovered, such as the recent discovery that the irrigation and water lines were damaged. The fire suppression system for the Nature Center was also damaged, although the Nature Center was not burned. The Nature Center is closed at this time, until the fire suppression system comes back online; at that time, some level of attendance may be allowed.

On the Day-Use side of the Park, the Shop and all equipment (except one ATV and a couple shovels) was lost. One of the Lake Solano Park Ranger's who lived on site also lost their home. This same Park Ranger has also decided to retire at the end of this year. 3 other Parks staff also lost their homes in the LNU Lightning Complex Fire.

Chairman Alvarez asked if Chris was collecting information for potential assistance from FEMA for the damaged equipment and damaged property. Chris responded that because Solano Parks is a public entity, we are ineligible for FEMA assistance. Solano Parks is self-insured, a work plan is being put together for Phase 2 clean-up and eventual replacement of the damaged assets. Once Phase 2 clean-up is complete for the residence, the Shop, the maintenance yard, and the fire suppression building, some level of operations will be able to begin. An ETA on when operations can resume is unknown at this time. Chris will send out communications to the Parks and Recreation Commission when he has any news on this. Parks has been issuing refunds for reservations on a month-by-month basis, due to the uncertainty of when operations can resume (pending completion of Phase 2 clean-up).

Solano Parks is working with our partners with Putah Creek Council and Solano Resource Conservation District, there is an existing stewardship/docent/restoration agreement in place and is on-going. Normally, habitat restoration in other areas of the park would be the focus, but now, our partners are working with us for habitat restoration to the burned areas of the park. The hope is that since it was a quick, fast burn, the native species (animals and plant life) will soon return, which then means less replacement of plantings. Any plantings that are used will be thoughtful and planted with long-term conservation in mind (i.e. shade and support for oak tree sapplings to replace to 400+ trees that were lost). Short-term plantings will also be thoughtful, such as plantings that are native but will also bring the "pollinators" back to the Park.

Chairman Alvarez asked, with almost \$600,000 projected revenues for the fiscal year, has Chris been asked to adjust or address the revenues or expenditures? Chris acknowledged that mid-year is fast approaching and he has been reviewing the revenues and expenditures. Chris stated that the County has been understanding and supportive of Parks, both before and after the fire. Prior to the fire and COVID-19, attendance and revenues were on track to set another record year for Parks. Both COVID-19 and the fire are a localized impact and are also incidents that Solano Parks has no control over. The public re-surgence into the Parks will happen; now, more than ever, the public needs space to recreate. As soon as we can re-open some level of operations within some portion of Lake Solano, we will. Until then, we're waiting for a date.

With Lake Solano being closed to the public, there are some savings there with expenditures; i.e. the contract for the vault pump outs, electrical bill savings, etc.

Commissioner Leong asked if there would be a salary savings with the Park Ranger that has chosen to retire at the end of the year. Will Parks be replacing that Ranger right away? Chris responded that yes there would be some salary savings, and yes they would be recruiting for that position as soon as they can. Parks operates with a very small number of staff, and any regular staff position, such as a Park Ranger, vacant for any amount of time is significant for the department. Chris stated that they would not be able to recruit for the Park Ranger position under after it is officially vacated.

### **C. Operations Update, LNU Complex Fire Impacts**

Chris provided a timeline-review for this portion of the Staff Report:

March 17, 2020 – Closures began. All day-use, public events and youth group areas were closed.

March 27, 2020 – All remaining public access operations were cancelled.

May 4, 2020 – Limited operations for boat-launch access only returned to Belden's Landing, Lake Solano, and Sandy Beach.

May 16, 2020 – Lynch Canyon re-opened with Phase 1 protocols in place, i.e. limited access, shortened days.

May 29, 2020 – Lynch Canyon returned to a normal operations schedule.

June 22, 2020 – Limited day-use and campground operations at Lake Solano.

August 18, 2020 – Lake Solano closed due to fire damage from the LNU Lightning Complex Fire.

November 2, 2020 – Sandy Beach re-opened for on-site public access.

#### **Current status:**

Belden's Landing: Open for launch and leave access only.

Lake Solano: Closed due to the LNU Lightning Complex Fire.

Lynch Canyon: Opened to normal hours and days.

Sandy Beach: Opened at reduced occupancy levels with operational adjustments including 75% campground occupancy; reservations only at this time. Campsite occupancy reduced to 8 from 10. Returned enforcement of 2-vehicle per site rule. 30 day-use vehicles and 40 launch vehicles are allowed on site at a time.

The operations model above is also the model used at Lake Solano when it was re-opened. This will be the standardized model moving forward. All Parks' high-touch assets are sanitized daily, starting at 8am, before the Park opens at 9am. There are no group gatherings permitted.

Chairman Alvarez requested Chris provide the Commissioners a bullet-point memo of the timeline dates mentioned above. Chris said he would prepare it and send it out to the Commissioners the following week.

#### **D. Grant activity updates**

At Belden's Landing, the kayak launch has been purchased and will be installed later this Winter. This will increase safe access for kayaker's at this location. The bait table with fish composting station has been installed. Invasive species removal is on-going. There have been several successful remediation programs with spraying the phragmites. Over 2,000 plugs of native species have been planted in the areas where the remediation of the non-native species has taken place. Solano Parks is working with students at Solano Community College to do bio-monitoring, although it has unfortunately been impacted by COVID-19; not as many students are available to be on-site.

Chairman Alvarez asked about the resolution passed in the July Parks and Recreation Commission meeting regarding the inclusion of Belden's Landing into the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail; did the Board of Supervisors act on the resolution? Chris responded that that item was going before the Board of Supervisors in the first part of December.

Vice-Chair Riddle asked if the fishing dock at Belden's Landing had gotten repaired. Chris responded that it had not, repairs would be made this Winter.

At Lake Solano & Sandy Beach, the Prop 68 per capita program is a grant program where each parks agency is allotted a certain amount of funds based upon availability and equal distribution that counts for local districts, cities, as well as counties. Solano Parks was allocated over \$700,000 in per capita funds. Staff have identified projects that are on the existing capital improvement project list, have been on the list for years, but have been listed as unfunded because Staff were seeking grant opportunities to fund those projects.

The projects identified are:

- 1) Sandy Beach: accessibility improvements to the day-use area, including the day-use restroom and over-all beach accessibility improvements. This is a "no-match requirement" project within the Prop 68 program, meaning it fits the program guidelines to be fully funded up to the \$700,000+ in grant monies Solano Parks has received.
- 2) Lake Solano: Updating the waterfront and boat launch area, including ADA accessibility, access for non-motorized boats, kayak accommodations and other current use-trends. Updates to the kayak/canoe rental area for a more stream-lined interface/experience for the public using it during the off-season. The project at Lake Solano requires a 20% cash match in order to use funds from the Prop 68 program for the project.

Chairman Alvarez asked if Cal-Boating was in any way funding kayak launch improvements. Chris responded that Cal-Boating funds are a part of the Prop 68 funds, that there are facility improvement funds coming out, and new grant opportunities available all the time. Solano Parks is currently working with Solano RCD on a planning grant that would create a native garden area with connecting hiking area that has direct access to the boat launch area to create better flow within the area for the public. This project will be in the upland area at Lake Solano. Responding directly to the question regarding a Cal-Boating grant or fund, Chris said that he hasn't found one specifically that Solano Parks can meet the deadline for or have the planning and ground-work complete for yet.

The Commission gave Chris confirmation that they agreed to use the Prop 68 funds at Sandy Beach and Lake Solano.

**8. Additional Comments**

No additional comments.

**9. Confirm date of next regular meeting**

The next Commission meeting was confirmed for January 14, 2021. Since there was no further business the meeting was adjourned.