

**SOLANO COUNTY PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF  
January 14, 2021**

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

<b>Members Present:</b>	<b>Whited, Leong, Alvarez</b>
<b>Members Excused:</b>	<b>Riddle, 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 November 12, 2020 were approved as prepared.

**3. Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved unanimously.

**4. Chair and Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Leong commented that he went by Belden's Landing on 11/7/2020 and saw no available parking spaces, people were having to park outside the regular parking area; he commented on how well it was being used by the public.

**5. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**6. Election of Chair and Vice Chair (Action Item)**

Commissioner Leong asked Parks Manager Chris Drake if he had information about how long each Commissioner had left in their terms. Chris responded that Michael Whited is in the process of being re-appointed; Commissioner Leong still has another year on his term; Chairman Alvarez is due for re-appointment; Commissioner Hermsmeyer's term has ended and is due for re-appointment; Commissioner Riddle's term has ended and is due for re-appointment; he is currently in the process of re-appointment. Commissioner Leong announced that this will be his last year on the Commission. Commissioner Leong announced that this will be his last year on the Commission.

Chris commented that, according to the By-Laws, if a re-appointment hasn't been made at the end of a Commissioner's term, then the existing commissioner is to remain active until the re-appointment is made official by the Board of Supervisors member for their District.

Commissioner Robin Leong was nominated as Chairman, Commissioner Mike Whited was nominated as Vice Chair; the nominations for both were carried, and the motions for both were approved.

## **7. Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund Applicant Presentations (Informational Only)**

Chairman Alvarez announced that there were 3 applicants present (out of 6 applications received) with Speaker Cards. Chris Drake stated that each applicant has 5 minutes of speaking time, Chair Alvarez stated that Commissioner Whited would keep the time and announce to the applicant when they had 60 seconds remaining to speak.

Chairman Alvarez stated that the 6 applications would be reviewed by a Sub-Committee, and then the Sub-Committee would make recommendations to the Parks & Recreation Commission for grant awards; that recommendation would then be brought to the Board of Supervisors for ultimate approval of grant awards.

### **Speaker #1**

Monique Liguori, representing the Suisun Marsh Natural History Association, which operates the Suisun Wildlife Center. They are requesting grant monies to help them rebuild after a fire occurred at the wildlife center on June 3, 2020. Several enclosures were lost as well as non-releasable display animals and wildlife that had been rescued and were waiting for release were lost. Monique stated that repairs are underway, some structures have been repaired such as the Large Flight Aviary for birds of prey. They are also working on building a new squirrel enclosure. She stated that their application for this program would potentially fund the construction of 2 songbird aviaries to replace a large aviary that was destroyed in a fire.

### **Speaker #2**

Doug Darling, the local sponsor and representative for Friends of Lake Chabeau and the Dept of Fish & Game program "*Trout in the Classroom*", also known as "*The Classroom Aquarium Education Program*". He provides the aquarium equipment and fertilized trout eggs to an elementary school teacher in Solano County who signs up to have his aquarium in their classroom and has completed training from the Dept of Fish & Game. Over a 6-8 week period, the students get to see the life cycle of the trout from fertilized eggs to a trout mature enough to release into the wild. The classroom will take a field trip to Lake Chabeau in Vallejo and release the trout back into the wild. During the field trips, Mr. Darling coordinates with local Conservation Districts and Reclamation Districts to provide education to the students on-site at Lake Chabeau. He then collects the equipment and tank back from the teacher, sterilizes everything, and reserves that tank for the same teacher for the following school year. Each tank comes with a special insulated case that is hand built for the tank and features art work on the front from a local artisan. He currently has 7 tanks in classrooms in Solano County and is applying for this grant with a goal of making 10 more available this next school year, and then applying for the grant monies the year after with the goal of an additional 10 tanks, etc. This year, he is specifically hoping to reach classrooms in Dixon, Rio Vista, and Benicia. Each equipped tank is approximately \$210-\$235 to produce.

### **Speaker #3**

John Takekawa, Operations Manager for the Suisun Resource Conservation District. The SRCD actively partners with Solano Parks in the Suisun Marsh area, including Belden's Landing. They are applying for this grant program to purchase a drone or other UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) that will allow them to remotely assess habitats and areas of the Suisun Marsh that they are not able to access currently; vegetation and the levee areas and their infrastructure. They currently have a member of staff getting his certification to pilot the drone. They are currently working with the landowners of the Suisun Marsh area and use a spray drone (purchased in 2019) that delivers controlled herbicides and is able to narrowly target phragmites and other non-native species growing in the Suisun Marsh area. The spray

drone has a 4K camera on it that allows them to view and identify the plant species so they know what areas to treat. The lifespan of a drone is 5-10 years.

After the presentations were complete, Commissioner Whited asked Chris Drake if he and Commissioner Leong could be supplied copies of the applications since they were not on the sub-committee reviewing the applications.

Chairman Alvarez asked Chris what the total fund amount available was; Chris responded that it was \$10,000. Chairman Alvarez and the Commissioners thanked the applicants who came to the meeting.

#### **8. Workplan Update and Adoption (Discussion/Action Item)**

Chris stated that the Workplan he was presenting was an updated version of the document adopted for 2014-2016; the 2014-2016 document was out of date and some of the items were no longer appropriate to continue tracking. Chris said he wanted to provide a workplan to the Commissioners to review, as well as provide comments and suggestions/recommendations that would assist Staff and provide guidance. The new workplan is based on a review of the previous workplan with recommendations from the Commissioners over the past calendar year for additions, removals, and comments on statuses of workplan tasks, as well as additional items added by Parks staff.

Discussion of item 5B (page 3): the proposed maintenance program would serve to set standards for maintenance levels influenced by operational use and determine maintenance activities and modes to achieve those. Chris discussed the training he received at a maintenance management school and how it pertains to this workplan item. This item was added to the workplan list from Parks Staff; staff is requesting the Commission appoint an ad-hoc committee to assist staff with a maintenance management program. Chris stated that all the forms to set this program up are available in a digital format and they can be integrated into Microsoft Teams; what is needed is time with staff to determine the length of time the different activities take to complete.

Commissioner Whited asked Chris if there was a maintenance schedule posted at the different parks locations. Chris said that there was not a posted list, or formalized system in place. He said staff who perform the maintenance tasks within the parks are seasoned Parks employees and are aware of what items need to be completed and when. Chris recognized the potential pitfalls of this system with respect to seasonal hires and directive being provided to them verbally; there is the risk that some things intended to be verbally conveyed will fall through the cracks because there is nothing in writing. Chris stated that the Park Ranger/Supervisor assigned to each park perform monthly inspections, he then performs a quarterly inspection of all parks.

Commissioner Whited stated that putting together this ad-hoc committee would give the Commissioners a chance to meet more of the parks staff, and offer parks staff the same opportunity and to see what the Commissioners do.

Commissioner Leong asked Chris about whether there was a maintenance program for the trees in the parks. Chris stated that he started a maintenance program in 2010 when he was the Park Ranger for Lake Solano, but that it did not continue after he was promoted to Management. He said that they worked with an Arborist that was contracted to assist with hazard mitigation, and the trees identified with the potential to cause hazards were numbered with tags, that could then prioritized and removed. Chris stated that all seasoned staff have received training in how to fell and trim all of the trees in the park they work in, as

well as how to identify a healthy tree from an unhealthy tree; this was part of a week-long training program in 2015. Due to COVID-19, new staff have not received this training. Chris stated that there is not a dedicated arborist on staff, but they have access to an Arborist via the Public Works Department. Commissioner Leong suggested to Chris that he look into the Master Gardeners Association; members have to volunteer 50 hours of their time annually. The UC Davis Botany program may also be another resource; have the students get involved and assist with species identification, tree trimming recommendations or even removals.

Chairman Alvarez commented that Chris' workplan was ambitious and commented that he wanted to add a discussion topic to include an item for the formation of the County-wide Parks and Recreation District. Commissioners Whited and Leong stated that that language could fit in either item 5A or 5C for that item; Chris concurred and made note of their request; he stated that he could add it into item 5A.

Chairman Alvarez asked Chris if his list was too ambitious and clarified with Chris about whether the Board of Supervisors would see the Workplan they were discussing at this meeting. Chris confirmed that the Board of Supervisors would see the Workplan. Chris stated that the target dates listed on the workplan were not dates for the completion of the project, but dates to have the ad-hoc commissions appointed and begin the process. Chris said that he didn't anticipate the maintenance management program to be completed by the end of fiscal year 21/22, but he wants to see it in process with forward momentum by then. Chairman Alvarez commented that the workplan was a living document, the other Commissioners agreed.

Commissioner Whited commented on item 4A, whether the current services offered (boat/RV storage, boat rental, firewood, ice cream vendor) at Sandy Beach were still offered. Chris confirmed that they were seasonal services offered at Sandy Beach and added that he also wanted to open conversation about the services offered, should some of the current services available be removed and/or replaced with other service(s). Item 4A is to explore alternative revenue streams for Solano Parks, whether current services offered need to be removed from the list or if adding new services would be appropriate for alternate revenue streams, i.e. Yoga in the Park. Any new fee-based programs imagined would be brought before the Commission for review and discussion.

Commissioner Whited asked if WiFi could be added to the Parks. Chris responded that they have not added WiFi to the Parks locations because it would put Parks Staff in the position of having to address any potential IT problems that occur, which they are not qualified for; it would take them away from their job-related responsibilities within the Parks.

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

### **Item A – Attendance and Revenue Summary**

Chris reported that Parks is operating at approximately one-third of normal expected revenues. Normal revenues are between \$240,000 - \$280,000 and current revenues are at approximately \$91,000. Chairman Alvarez asked if Chris has been asked to make revenue adjustments. Chris responded that he has been working diligently on Parks revenues and looking into any funds available through the CARES Act (COVID-19 related reimbursements due to increased sanitization practices). Chris stated that he is also currently reviewing the budget for mid-year, and when he has been able to review the budget documents, that is when he will be making any necessary revenue projection adjustments/cost reductions.

Chris stated that the lead Ranger for Lake Solano, Sean McDowell, had recently retired; Jamie Fussell, formerly Park Ranger at Sandy Beach, promoted into Sean's position.

### **Item B – Project Updates**

Lake Solano: Chris stated that everything lost in the LNU Lightning Complex fire will be rebuilt. He is actively working with the insurance company for replacement of the Ranger Residence; this is important for after-hours security and after-hours emergency maintenance offered at Lake Solano. Bids have recently been received to repair the fire suppression system, the bids are currently under review. Once the fire suppression system has been repaired, and they have received phase 2 clearance (including soil testing), the Nature Center and day-use campground may be able to be opened to the public. Soft projection for this is beginning of February 2021.

Belden's Landing: On December 15, 2020 the Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution to include Belden's Landing Water Access Facility into the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail as recommended by this Commission. Solano Parks has provided the resolution and is awaiting approval from the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail Board for the next step in the process.

Lynch Canyon: Routine maintenance continues, with some shared duties between Solano Parks and Solano Land Trust.

Sandy Beach: Day-use waste pump vaults have been problematic recently, they are currently being trouble-shot with the goal of having them in peak operating condition by the time the peak-season hits.

### **Item C – Park Closures**

Lake Solano: Lake Solano remains closed due to the LNU Lightning Complex Fire.

Sandy Beach: Sandy Beach campground is closed; however, the day-use and boat launch are open. Sandy Beach re-opened November 2<sup>nd</sup> and closed on December 16<sup>th</sup> due to COVID-19 purple tier restrictions. Solano Parks is waiting for updates on when they can re-open this location. Any reservations scheduled during the time frame the park is closed will be rescheduled or cancelled.

Commissioner Leong asked if Solano Parks had made any lay-offs; Chris responded that no Parks Staff has been laid off. He expanded that they did augment the hours for some of the Extra-Help Park Aides; their hours were reduced. For the Extra-Help Park Aides at Lake Solano, their season normally ends October 1, but with the LNU Fire closing park, the decision was made to end their season early.

## **10. Confirm date of next regular meeting and adjournment**

The next Commission meeting was confirmed for March 11, 2021. Since there was no further business the meeting was adjourned.