



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Mel Pincus, 1st District
Marico C. Enriquez, 2nd District
Neil Merrilees, 3rd District
Marian Vanden Bosch, 4th District
Michael J. Cooney, 5th District
Henry Ruehl, Youth Commissioner

County Office Building
555 County Center, 5th Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063
(650) 599-1393
Brenda Bennett, Clerk

www.eparks.net

www.sanmateocountyparks.org

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Thursday, December 6, 2012

MINUTES

Chair Vanden Bosch called the meeting together at 4:00 p.m.

1. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Led by the Chair.

2. **Roll Call**

Commission: Cooney, Enriquez, Merrilees, Pincus (Vice Chair), Vanden Bosch (Chair), Ruehl (Youth Commissioner)

Staff: Porter, Lockman, Lombardi, Hallett, Bennett, Schoof, Harris, Herzberg, Haskell

3. **Oral Communications**

There were none.

4. **Agenda Amendments**

There were none.

5. **Consideration of the Minutes**

A. Meeting of October 4, 2012

Commission Action: M/S Cooney/Enriquez to approve as submitted with a correction to replace "Vande" on page 1 under "Roll Call" to "Vanden."

Motion carried 5-0.

6. Correspondence and Presentations

A. Introduction of Newly Hired Park Ranger IIs

Director Porter introduced and welcomed Catherine Allen, Barry Chandler, Veronica Zermani, Vern Selvy, and Jason Brien, the newly hired Park Ranger IIs.

B. Introduction of Recently Promoted Park Ranger IIIs

Director Porter introduced and congratulated Mark Donigan and David Vasquez on their promotions to Park Ranger III classification.

C. Presentation: Bay Checkerspot Reintroduction – Edgewood County Park and Natural Preserve

Ms. Christal Niederer, Creekside Center for Earth Observation, provided a presentation on the efforts to reintroduce the Bay Checkerspot butterfly to the Edgewood County Park and Natural Preserve. Her presentation included a history of the Preserve, the diverse efforts to restore and preserve the butterfly's habitat and actual reintroduction of these butterflies and the results of these actions.

Commissioner Pincus asked about the impact of global warming on the reintroduction and restoration efforts. Ms. Niederer said that global warming could have various impacts depending on weather extremes and the growth cycles of the butterflies, and indicated that restoration efforts focused on mitigating as many of the problems as possible such as weeds and small population sizes then plants or animals should be more resilient to pressures from climate change. She said however that climate change was really an unknown. Commissioner Pincus asked about the cost of the restoration and reintroduction efforts. Ms. Niederer said the butterfly reintroduction had been underfunded. She said her firm has received annual grants from PG&E for \$10,000 but that was recently reduced. She said USFWS would provide some money for this project as well.

Commissioner Merrilees said the goal was to get the butterflies to self-sustain, and asked if at a certain point sufficient numbers would be reached. Ms. Niederer said that they would not want to have to keep bringing additional animals but efforts like mowing would need to continue to maintain the butterflies' habitat. Commissioner Merrilees asked what standard would determine success and if it would be a certain number of the population. Ms. Niederer said they would want a population of 5,000 to 10,000.

7. Director's Report

Director Porter noted the passage of Measure A and an upcoming Board of Supervisors' workshop to discuss how the funding would be allocated. He said that staff would emphasize the need for some of that funding for Parks. He said they were working with PG&E at Huddart Park on a project to clear trees under high tension power lines as fire prevention measure to ensure that the work they did was as nonintrusive as possible. He said they were also discussing planting lying vegetation in the area. He said PG&E had been very cooperative and thanked staff for working with them.

Director Porter said the recent storms caused some felled trees in the parks and short closures of Memorial Park. He said there was erosion at the Dardanelle Trail the site of a trail reconstruction project and noted erosion control measures being taken and revegetation planned. He noted that the fire fuel reduction work was being continued particularly at Wunderlich and Huddart Parks and working with Woodside Fire District. Chair Vanden Bosch asked how the slash was disposed. Superintendent Lockman said it depended upon the size. He said the small portions were chipped and left on site and larger sections cut into rounds and hauled.

8. Action Items

A. Review and Adopt 2013 Annual Parks Commission Work Program

Superintendent Lockman said the proposed draft Program was based on staff's expectation of work needs including budgeting, planning and capital projects in 2013.

Commissioner Enriquez said he would like future discussion on increased population and demographic needs. Superintendent Lockman said that was a vital discussion including other areas of growth such as more facilities and lands to be managed, and would be included in the preparation of the Five-Year Strategic Plan.

Commission Action: M/S Cooney/Pincus to adopt the draft Annual Parks Commission Work Program.

Motion carried 5-0.

B. Review and Provide Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on the 2012 Draft San Mateo County Parks Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies

Director Porter noted that in 2008 the Parks Division completed their last five-year strategic plan, which was primarily goal-oriented. He said it was not known at that time the depth of the recession that began in 2007. He said the goals of that Plan had not been realized due to the economic impacts to the County and reduction of staff and funding for Parks. He said in 2012 the Board of Supervisors asked staff to look at

where they would like Parks to be in five years. He said they looked at the 2008 plan and the history of the parks system and prior years of staffing and service levels. He said a survey was sent out and received about 2,000 responses. He said the results indicated four areas of focus the public wanted: increased recreational opportunities, enhance environmental protection programs, improve interpretive and educational programs, and increase volunteer program and community engagement. He said in addition to the external input staff also provided input as to what they would like to see if funding was not an issue. He said the draft Plan presented to the Commission contained the goals developed from the input. He said there was no implementation plan at this time but it was being developed. He said the expectation was to present the Plan to the Board of Supervisors at the end of January to have them adopt the Plan to guide the budgeting process for Parks. He said some of the things staff would like to see happen internally was to open areas that had been closed due to staffing reductions, to increase efforts on fire fuel reduction programs, to widen trails to allow for ATV use for equipment hauling rather than staff having to haul it manually to sites for trail maintenance. He said there was much facilities work needed. He said they had received money to do the design work for the wastewater treatment plant and water treatment plant at Memorial Park. He said there were over \$100 million of capital projects that had been identified.

Public Comments: Ms. Lennie Roberts, Committee for Green Foothills, said both she and her organization have been long term advocates of parks. She said the last five years did not achieve the goals of the previously adopted Strategic Plan and there were setbacks because of financial constraints. She noted Measure O and the expectation that some of that new funding would be used for parks. She said one major goal should be to establish County Parks as its own department and should fund a natural resources management position noting that Mid-peninsula Open Space District maintains an entire section of natural resources management personnel. She said one heading indicated "Environmental Protection" but that would be better stated as "Environmental Resource Protection." She said she had only received the Strategic Plan that day and thought it should have been posted on the website earlier. She said on page 7, under "Recreational Opportunities" it stated to "maintain trails so they are accessible and safe." She said the first goal was to widen trails for ATV accessibility. She said Director Porter had indicated this was primarily to allow for ranger access but as written it seemed to allow public ATVs.

Superintendent Lockman said recently there had been emergency situations in which persons had become injured in very remote locations and getting emergency response to those individuals had been very difficult and in some instances the person had to be carried out on a stretcher because the trail was too narrow for any other type of access. He said the intent was to define a selected set of trails widened as appropriate to allow for emergency response and secondarily as staging sites for trail maintenance equipment. He said this was not for public ATV or motorized access nor was it for every trail.

Ms. Roberts noted that there had been many areas of cutbacks to operations and that it was starting to show. She referenced Director Porter's statement about \$100 million of deferred maintenance. She said that had been a concern for a long time and when Mary Burns had been the Parks Director it had been \$80 million. She said parks advocates had tried for many years to increase funding for parks and noted that there were now funds because of Measure O. She said they needed to engage their supporters and persuade the Board of Supervisors of this need for Parks which in her opinion had been cut disproportionately compared to other departments.

Ms. Faye Brophy, Woodside, said she was also concerned about the language referring to ATV accessibility. She said the explanation made by Superintendent Lockman made sense. She said she was representing equestrians and asked if they could be made aware of where the trails which might have ATV use could be identified.

Superintendent Lockman said the placement of these would be done very carefully and would be addressed sensitively based.

Mr. Mike Ferrera, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, said he had also seen the mention of ATV in the proposed plan and suggested using different language. He asked if the Commission would approve and then go to the Board of Supervisors after written comment or would the Plan go directly to the Board. He said he thought his Chapter would like to comment on the Plan.

Director Porter said the proposed Plan was a draft document and the meeting today was to receive public and commission comment. He said those comments would be addressed in the document and then be taken to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Ferrera indicated that he had just received the document and thought his chapter would like to comment. Director Porter asked that comments be submitted within the next two weeks and that would allow the report to be prepared within the month lead time to the Board's meeting date.

Mr. Ken McIntire, San Bruno Mountain Watch, said he also chairs the Coalition of Natural Resources in San Mateo County. He said he just saw the Plan at today's meeting. He said his concern was the natural resources preservation part of the Plan, and many of the parks had been created through efforts of advocates to maintain natural resources. He said both his organizations would like to see a natural resources staff person with biological and ecological education to advise regarding trails and buildings. He said he would like that highlighted in the Plan.

Chair Vanden Bosch closed the public comment period.

Youth Commissioner Ruehl said he liked the plan for Goal 12 related to environmental protection and stewardship. He suggested a fourth strategy that he thought was in line with the goal of being environmental stewards: to seek to acquire, restore and preserve currently marginal lands in San Mateo County.

Commissioner Merrilees said he agreed with speakers that some sort of natural resources preservation or management position was needed noting the difficulties to do anything in parks because of environmental regulations and permitting necessities. He said that would help prevent mistakes and save money. He noted that costs to plan projects had considerably increased and suggested adding augmenting planning staff in the Plan, perhaps even a cross-jurisdictional position.

Commissioner Pincus noted Goal 1 that states: All facilities will be open and operating in a safe, sanitary and wellmaintained manner by 2018. He said that seemed to indicate that nothing would need to occur until 2018 and should address the incremental benchmarks leading to the culmination of Goal 1.

Director Porter said the goal was to have all facilities operational by five years with the sub-goal of getting as much done each year as possible noting the need for studies, permitting and funding.

Chair Vanden Bosch said that the language about ATV accessibility should be revised to indicate that Park ATVs would need to use trail for emergency first aid and trail maintenance.

Commissioner Cooney asked if the document was on the website. Superintendent Lockman said it was not yet on the website and that was the next step by the beginning of the following week. Commissioner Cooney asked if Parks staff could have computer equipment for use in parks operations. Superintendent Lockman said that was done by a manual weekly work plan but there was not funding in the budget at this time. Commissioner Cooney suggested Executive Director Bott could find the needed resources.

Youth Commissioner Ruehl asked about Strategy 11.5 "Implement program to eradicate and replace exotic and invasive high fire dangervegetation." Superintendent Lockman said the goal was to target certain species rather than a certain area that have high fire risk noting diseased pine trees for example.

9. Marina

A. Harbormaster's Report

Harbormaster Hallett reported in addition to his written report that South Beach Marina would be raising their rates 26% over the next five years. He noted the closure of Pete's Harbor which probably would not help occupancy very much at the Marina as that was mainly used by liveaboard vessels.

10. Operations and Maintenance Activities

A. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Lombardi said in addition to the written report that there had been a meeting of staff, Commissioner Merrilees, Fitzgerald Marine Reserve Friends Board members Ciotti and Cohen, and Fish and Game staff to discuss the requirements applicable to the Reserve. He said also there was discussion to create an MPA for the area.

B. Volunteer Programs and Activities Report

Volunteer Programs Coordinator School said that the first electronic newsletter would be sent out the following week.

11. Support Services

A. Bi-monthly Alternative Funding and Programs Reports

Consultant Harris said she had hoped to hear from grantors in November but many of them had extended their decision making. She said she expected a better report in February 2013.

12. Friends and Subcommittees

A. Parks and Recreation Foundation

Executive Director Bott reported on end of year donations and providing holiday wrapping services at REI using recycled and repurposed papers.

13. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Pincus noted that Youth Commissioner Ruehl's participation was exciting and refreshing.

14. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned in memory of former County Supervisor Mike Nevin and Mr. Gene Sheehan (at staff's request – please see next page.)

The meeting adjourned at 5:33 p.m.

Gene Sheehan: At staff's request, the Commission adjourned the meeting in memory of Mr. Gene Sheehan, who was a trail building contractor, and recently passed away. He was 85. Numerous retired Park personnel have phoned to share their memories of working with Mr. Sheehan. To refer to Mr. Sheehan as just a trail building contractor would be like referring to Kilimanjaro as just a mountain. Our retired staff shared that Mr. Sheehan was a little rough around the edges, but he was passionate about building trails and rangers who had the opportunity to work with him not only respected but loved him for his incredible work ethic, his innovative trail machine and trail design, his ability to create great switchbacks that were safe for equestrians, and his ability to combine function with aesthetics creating points of interest along the way. Our retired Rangers said they thought they knew how to build a trail until they worked with Mr. Sheehan. The trails he constructed they say will probably last forever and continue to be enjoyed in San Pedro Valley Park, Edgewood, Wunderlich, Huddart, and San Bruno Mountain as well as portions of the Crystal Springs Trail along Canada Road. Working with Mr. Sheehan revolutionized trail building in our Park system and his trail building methods are still used by our Rangers today. Today, Ms. Kitty Haddix, an equestrian who has ridden our County Park trails since 1958, called to make a donation to the Jack Brook Horse camp, and recalled with delight meeting Mr. Sheehan in Woodside when he was building trails there.

Ranger Brock who lives in Oregon and kept in touch with Mr. Sheehan said that this great man was passionate to the end about trail building and at 85 years of age was planning to work on yet another trail. His trail legacy runs all over the West Coast from Southern California to the Sierras, to Oregon and Washington States, and closer to home here in the East Bay, Palo Alto, Portola Valley, Woodside and San Mateo County Parks.