



RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION

Special Meeting **Minutes**

Thursday, January 6, 2005

Ken Edwards Center, 1527 4th Street, Santa Monica, CA

1. **Call to Order** – Chairperson Cloke called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance** – Commissioner Munoz led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **Roll Call**
Present: Chairperson Cloke
Vice Chairperson Carrey
Commissioner Munoz
Commissioner Nafshun
Commissioner Schwengel
Commissioner Wolch

Also Present: Barbara Stinchfield, Community & Cultural Services Department
Libby Carlson, Community & Cultural Services Department
4. **Approval of Minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 18, 2004**
Commissioner Schwengel made a motion to approve the minutes from the regular meeting of November 18, 2004, as written. Commissioner Carrey seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote in the absence of Commissioner Brock.
5. **Director's Report**
Director Stinchfield provided an update on the following subjects:
 - Euclid Park – The second community design workshop for the Euclid Park Project was held. Following the community workshop, the Design Team is refining the proposal to incorporate community input. Director Stinchfield will provide a verbal update on progress at the January 20, 2005 Recreation & Parks Commission (RPC) meeting. The Design Team will present the updated proposal at the February RPC meeting. Director Stinchfield recommended that the RPC designate project liaisons for future capital improvement projects.
 - 415 Pacific Coast Highway – While currently negotiating agreements with the Annenberg Foundation and the State of California, the City is also working on the Request for Bid and the scope of work for a design/build team which will include a multi-day community design charrette.

Chairperson Cloke read a letter she wrote to the City Council on behalf of the RPC praising the work of Director Stinchfield and staff on various projects, and specifically thanking her for her hard work in securing grant funding from the Annenberg Foundation to restore 415 Pacific Coast Highway to public use (attached).

6. **Committee and Liaison Reports – Overview by Chairperson Cloke**

Chairperson Cloke directed Commission committees to present their scope of work and budget considerations. Chairperson Cloke asked Director Stinchfield to give feedback on committee work plans at a later date. Chairperson Cloke also stated work plan prioritization would be the next step in the committee process.

On behalf of the Commission, Commissioner Munoz presented flowers to Chairperson Cloke as a get-well wish following her recent surgery.

A. Communications Strategy - Commissioner(s) Munoz and Nafshun presented the following scope of work:

- We would like to work with the City website and the RPC website and review them. We would also like to work with staff and the web designers to see how we might help make the sites more useful, informative, more user-friendly and more fun.
- We would like to reach out to schools and find ways to get the schools to communicate about park events and activities.
 - Commissioner Munoz noted the Committee would like to work to promote school events at parks.
- We would like to review CREST and other Recs and Parks handouts. Perhaps it would be a good idea to review a folder of all last year's handouts. We would like to work with staff and offer some helpful suggestions regarding the content of the handouts, as well as distribution methods.
 - Commissioner Nafsun illustrated this point by stating CREST materials are confusing to parents and that the Committee would like to work toward simplifying the information.
- We would like to work with staff and CityTV to develop a PSA campaign or a series of segments showcasing each park in Santa Monica. (Akin to Huell Howser's show "California Gold", on KCET.) This show, or PSA campaign, would visit each park and serve to inform the public about the different parks of the city, their historical background and highlight the features and programs each park offers.
 - Commissioner Munoz further stated this show could focus on one particular park each week.
- We would like to develop an earthquake preparedness campaign for the parks and park users.
- Special events. Work with the city to create more special events to get people in the park. Concerts, film festivals, live theater, etc.
- Enhanced communication to City agencies and the City Council, lobbying for RPC interests.
- Explore the possibility of marquees in parks listing all parks in the City, current events and construction updates.

Chairperson Cloke opened up Commission discussion of the work plan. Commissioner Schwengel noted that parks need increased and/or improved

signage. Commissioner Wolch asked for specific ideas on ways to be more proactive with Council. Commissioner Carrey suggested RPC advocate on behalf of specific issues directly before Council.

B. City As Park/Sustainable Design – Chairperson Cloke and Commissioner(s) Schwengel and Wolch presented the following work plan:

- We request that the city staff create a GIS map of ¼ mile buffers around existing parks, to identify areas that do not have easy access to park and recreation facilities. Further, this analysis should identify general zones for additional parks, such that all residents in the city could enjoy ¼ mile access. Our longer term goal is to identify such ‘areas in need of parks’ and propose that the city ‘double zone’ them as parkland (in addition to their existing or zoned uses). This analysis should also consider current park acres per capita, and identify the sizes of additional parks needed to meet both easy access goals, and minimum acceptable park acres/capita levels. Should city staff be unable to allocate time-resources for this analysis, we request that the council provide the needed resources for consultants.
- We request that the Commission review all plant palettes used in existing parks, and any plant palette guidelines for future park development. Should such guidelines not currently existing, we recommend that resources to prepare such guidelines be requested from Council. Our objective here is to promote the use of native and regionally appropriate plants in all city parks, to minimize water use, provide a landscape model for private residences and businesses, and enhance the value of the city’s open space as habitat.
- We request a presentation of the new Watershed Management Plan (draft) from Environmental Services staff, and link this plan to development of recommendations for an updated, active-living oriented pathways plan that will be part of the revised circulation element.
- We request that the consultants responsible for the Land Use and Circulation Elements make a presentation to the Commission, in order to educate us and also receive our input.
- We suggest that the Commission recommend to relevant City staff that opportunities for roof-top recreational spaces be incorporated into building codes, capital plants, etc., in order to promote active living among the city’s residents.

Chairperson Cloke opened the item to Commission discussion. Commissioner Schwengel urged fellow commissioners to read the article from *Planning* entitled, “Parks: How Far Is Too Far?”. Chairperson Cloke stated she would like to invite the Community Forester to address the Commission regarding the state of the community forest and streetscape improvements. Chairperson Cloke also noted the committee is aware of possible existing restrictions on the use of rooftops for recreational purposes, but stated there may be opportunities meriting exploration.

C. Agency Partnerships – Vice Chairperson Carrey and Commissioner Wolch presented the following work plan:

- Joint meetings and collaboration of 3 Governmental Agencies, SMC, SMMUSD and the City

- Vice Chairperson Carrey requested feedback from Director Stinchfield on this item and noted the goal of these meetings would be to improve the working relationship between the three entities.
- Land Trust Partnership
 - Commissioner Wolch suggested the City form a community land trust with SMC and SMMUSD to combine focus on joint land acquisition and use of bond funding. Commissioner Wolch stated this model facilitating cooperation and joint use of open space resources is commonly used in cities similar to Santa Monica facing a lack of available open space (i.e. Los Angeles Land Trust).
 - Vice Chairperson Carrey suggested the City look for land outside of City bounds for use as field space for adult sports, opening fields within Santa Monica to use by youth sports groups.
- Memorial Master Plan and use of SMC Bond Money
 - Vice Chairperson Carrey highlighted the importance of this issue following the purchase of the Fisher Lumber site and the vague use restrictions set upon the SMC Bond money. Vice Chairperson Carrey recommended RPC encourage the City to use land for recreational purposes.
- Search for more resources at all levels and for joint use
 - Vice Chairperson Carrey stated an ad hoc committee might need to be formed to search for alternative (non-government) funding sources and explore ways to maximize their use.
- Use of SMC and SMMUSD Bond money for recreational facilities on City property
- Meeting with Committee and Bobby Shriver and Commission liaison if different
 - The Committee would like to meet with staff and Council liaison to brainstorm ideas for collaboration between SMC, City and SMMUSD, and to discuss the possibility of using SMC bond funds to build playing fields at the Civic Center.
- Santa Monica Youth Coalition (SMYC)
 - Vice Chairperson Carrey reported SMYC regularly meets to discuss issues with SMMUSD and suggested RPC work more closely with them.

Chairperson Cloke opened the item to Commission discussion. Commissioner Nafshun suggested reaching out to groups representing demographics other than youth. Vice Chairperson Carrey stated the Committee focused on youth issues because it felt this area needs the most attention. Commissioner Wolch stated groups such as WISE Senior Services may be in need of recreational space and that the committee needs to re-examine needs of agencies other than SMC and SMMUSD.

D. Capital Projects Advisory – Chairperson Cloke and Commissioner(s) Schwengel and Nafshun presented the following work plan:

- Financial Impact: Each Year, millions of dollars are spent by the City of Santa Monica on overages for Capital Improvement Projects that we believe are due to a faulty contract awarding process. These cost overruns are monies that could be

spent to improve more facilities and to acquire additional parkland. The financial impact is huge. Presently, apparently, the city building contracts are awarded to the lowest bidder, with no evaluation of a Contractor's financial capacity to complete the project. This type of process opens itself to potential malpractice whereby a Contractor will intentionally bid low on a job knowing the City will award the contract and pay for all cost overruns necessary to finish the project. This Advisory Committee would like to recommend sending a letter to the Santa Monica City Council highlighting the recent overages to the city, as requesting a re-evaluation of the business practice of awarding contracts to build and/or improve parks and recreational centers to better utilize the city's funds.

- Zoning Change: This Advisory Committee would like to recommend the Land Use Element process include an inventory of property, which could be dual-zoned for potential parkland acquisition at a later date.

Chairperson Cloke opened the work plan up to Commission discussion. Commissioner Nafshun requested a report on the status of the old SMASH site. Commissioner Munoz inquired about the significance of the site. Commissioner Schwengel stated there are better potential uses for the site, such as a pocket park.

Commissioner Cloke thanked the Commissioners for their hard work in forming the committee work plans.

E. Virginia Avenue Park Advisory Board – Commissioner Munoz reported on a recent informal meeting with Betty Macias, Human Services Community Services Supervisor, and Board members, where he conveyed RPC's interest in celebrating the re-opening of VAP. Commissioner Munoz suggested putting up a countdown banner at the construction site. Director Stinchfield stated staff has a banner in the works.

F. Sports Advisory Council Liaison – No report.

7. New Business

A. Update, Discussion and Possible Action on Formulation of FY05-06 Recreation & Parks-related Budget Priorities - The Commission discussed and formulated recommended priorities for the FY05-06 Budget.

Commissioner Schwengel recommended the RPC include a summary of last year's priorities in the budget recommendations. Director Stinchfield recommended tying the budget recommendations to major themes or policies, as opposed to specific expenditures.

Commissioner Wolch reviewed a list of themes to be included in the RPC's budget recommendations.

- Maintenance: Restoration of budget cuts and improvements
- Equity: Roll back user fees to promote access to recreation opportunities

- Sustainability: Establishment of a tree fund, importance of the community forest, review of plant palette
- Active Living: Support of new programs and projects promoting this concept
- Communication: Expanded communication strategies to make community aware of recreation opportunities in the City
- Resource Development: Continued funding for capital improvement projects and researching new opportunities in both the public and private sectors

Commissioner Schwengel made a motion to adopt themes discussed as budget priorities for FY05-06, and to authorize Chairperson Cloke to represent the Commission at the Council meeting and prepare a letter to Council. Vice Chairperson Carrey seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote in the absence of Commissioner Brock.

Jerry Rubin, a member of the public, commended the RPC on its work and asked Commission members for their support of the Unleash the Beach proposal. He urged the Commission to evaluate the ban of smoking on the beach in order to show its positive effect. Mr. Rubin also requested RPC remember the upcoming 35th annual Earth Day and commented on building diversity in Santa Monica.

8. **Adjournment** – Vice Chairperson Carrey made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Schwengel seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Attachment 1: Letter to City Council, dated January 4, 2005



Recreation & Parks Commission
1685 Main Street
PO Box 2200
Santa Monica, California 90407-2200

Attachment 1

City of
Santa Monica

January 4, 2005

Honorable Mayor O'Connor and City Council Members
1685 Main Street, Room 200
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Dear Mayor O'Connor and Councilmembers,

On behalf of your Recreation and Parks Commission it is my pleasure to write to you to commend Barbara Stinchfield and staff for their outstanding work on securing the grant funding for the 415 PCH site. Because of her excellent work we will, at long last, be able to begin the work on this wonderful project, which promises so much benefit to our city and our residents.

I want you to know that excellence is what our Commission expects from Barbara and her staff and excellence is what she delivers – not only to the Commission, but in the many other areas of her responsibility and to the many residents of Santa Monica and the region whom she helps with real solutions, with kindness and with humor.

Sincerely,

Susan Cloke
Chair, Recreation and Parks Commission

Cc: Recreation & Parks Commissioners