

CITY OF SAN DIMAS
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF
May 19, 2015
City Council Chambers – City Hall

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chairperson Kenney at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present:

Kevin Kenney, Chairperson
Susan Davis, Commissioner
Frank Neal, Commissioner
Tom Diaz, Commissioner
Jose Martinez, Commissioner
Baylee Smith, Commissioner

Larry Stevens, Assistant City Manager, Development Services
Theresa Bruns, Parks and Recreation Director
Leon Raya, Recreation Services Manager
Ann Garcia, Administrative Aide
Steve Farmer, Landscape Maintenance Manager
La Toyia Ward, Recreation Coordinator
John Ebner, City Councilmember
Collette Morse, Morse Planning Group

Absent: Kathryn Perkins, excused

Prior to Agenda Item 3, Approval of Minutes, Chairperson Kenney thanked the audience in attendance and reviewed the agenda and informed the audience of the public comment process that would follow agenda item 4a, Presentation of the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Walnut Creek Habitat and Open Space Project, prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act, and Receive Public Comment.

APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 17, 2015 MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSIONER NEAL MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 17, 2015 MEETING AS SUBMITTED, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DAVIS AND APPROVED BY A VOTE OF 5-0, WITH COMMISSIONER DIAZ NOT YET IN ATTENDANCE.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Presentation of the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Walnut Creek Habitat and Open Space Project, prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act, and Receive Public Comment

Director Bruns gave a brief history of the Walnut Creek Habitat Open Space Project including the acquisition in partnership with the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA), planning, public input process and review. In 2012 a phased plan was accepted and approved by City Council. In 2013 an application for \$850,000 of funding from the 5th Supervisorial District Prop A funds was successful allowing for implementation and completion of Phase I of the plan. Phase I includes, trail development, landscape buffers, pedestrian access through Loma Vista Park and demolition of some existing structures. The CEQA process must be completed prior to the initiation of Phase I.

Assistant City Manager Stevens reviewed the purpose of the CEQA process and noted that analysis must be completed and reviewed according to CEQA guidelines. The entire Walnut Creek Open Space concept plan was reviewed and the intent is that this is the final review for the entire plan unless changes are made to the plan. Notice was given of the public comment process including a mailed notification to all residents within 1000 feet of the boundaries of the project location and the surrounding unincorporated area, as well as via the media, notices at City Hall, the library and the City website. The actual CEQA report is available for public review on the City website, at City Hall and at the San Dimas Library.

The public has until June 10 to submit comments on the report. All comments will be included in a written summary provided to City Council. The report will be considered by City Council at the June 23, 2015 meeting. Additional notice to residents will be given prior to that meeting. The WCA will review the plan for approval at its board meeting on July 16, 2015. For the CEQA process the City is considered the “responsible” agency for the plan and the WCA is considered the “lead” agency for the plan. The lead agency makes the final decision on the plan. The City Council will make a recommendation to WCA.

Assistant City Manager Stevens noted that all public comments at the meeting tonight should be related to the CEQA report.

When City Council approved the plan they only approved Phase I and current funding is only for Phase I. Other issues related to other phases can be addressed at that time as there will be opportunities for public comment. Assistant City Manager Stevens then introduced Collette Morse of the Morse Planning Group, the firm that developed the CEQA plan, to review the main aspects of the plan.

Ms. Morse presented a Power Point presentation to the Commission (attached). She noted that the study reviewed potential impacts of the project and any subsequent action that is needed.

The plan has 17 areas of review. The CEQA process requires that 87 questions be addressed to determine impact and extent of the impact. The presentation included a map of the project with the phased design and improvements. It reviewed the key aspects of Phase I; the CEQA process, pedestrian access through Loma Vista Park, development of the General Site Trail and Meadow Trail, connection to the Antonovich Trail on the west side of the property, removal of the buildings on a portion of the site and a perimeter buffer.

Ms. Morse presented the list of all the topics reviewed in the initial study, conclusions, and mitigation measures if needed. She reviewed the levels of impact as determined by the study from no impact, to less than significant to significant. For Phase I of the project no mitigation measures were noted.

Ms. Morse reviewed the traffic study process that identified streets associated with the project and traffic flow impacts. She noted that the study concluded that a 20% to 30% increase in traffic flow was possible but that the traffic load did not exceed the capacity of the streets or warrant a conclusion.

She concluded by noting that based on the CEQA study an Environmental Impact Report is not needed and concluded the presentation.

Assistant City Manager Stevens again reviewed the public comment process and that there would be no responses on the report unless required to clarify a detail of the report or requested a point of additional information. He also reiterated that the CEQA review includes impacts for the complete concept plan and only Phase I improvements are to be completed at this time.

Chairperson Kenney thanked Mr. Stevens and Ms. Morse for the presentation and invited public comment.

John Margis, a resident who lives in Via Verde south of the project spoke and noted that he felt a review of section 4.16 of Transportation and Traffic question A should be reviewed. He stated that it addressed the worst case scenario of an “active park” design and requested that this portion of the report also address the impacts of the current Phase I design which calls for a “passive” park and the traffic load related to such use.

James Murphy a resident in the Via Verde area commented that the project calls for trail development and that the result would be increased traffic. He noted that he believed the project should call for parking in the park rather than on the street behind the park.

Glenn Ford of Ford Management spoke representing 58 homeowners, of the homeowners association in track 3117 of the Via Verde neighborhood. He stated that the association had a meeting to share concerns of the impact of the project and asked for him to speak on behalf of the group and to present their concerns. The group had composed a letter that outlined the concerns and then he addressed some of them. He noted that the proximity of the habitat project was a concern and that residents wanted a buffer for sound and privacy. They have a concern for safety from trespassers that might result in increases in burglary. There is an issue with the trail being on the perimeter of the property and that it provides a visual access into homes. The residents hope the trail can be relocated. Speeding and traffic on surrounding streets is a concern. There is a general concern for a loss of property value for those homes closest to the project and fear that this loss of property value will trickle out to other homes. He presented the association letter to Assistant City Manager Stevens.

Gene Osling, a resident whose home backs up to the project property spoke to note that he considered the traffic report portion, “offensive.” He felt that a 20% - 30% increase in traffic in a developed area was a concern. He requested that a pathway access through Loma Vista Park be eliminated. He stated people will park on streets near Loma Vista Park and will be parking in front of resident’s homes.

Albert Salgado, of 903 Calle Frondosa spoke to share his concerns about traffic safety. He sees the increase in traffic as a danger to children who would be trying to get out of the way. The street in front of Loma Vista Park is a downhill and drivers forget how fast they are going. He stated the increased traffic will be a safety hazard.

Chairperson Kenney thanked the audience for their comments and then invited comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Davis had no comment at this time.

Commissioner Diaz stated that the report did not discuss the impact on emergency vehicle access or increased parking congestion. A 20% - 30% increase in traffic may not translate well to people and the traffic analysis should be looked at further.

Commissioner Martinez noted that regarding the 20% to 30% traffic increase cited in the presentation, at what point should mitigation action occur and what mitigation action would be required.

Commissioner Neal stated that Avenida Loma Vista is not made for two way traffic and parking. There is very little parking on the north side and it would be difficult for a bicyclist and automobiles to pass at the same time.

Commissioner Smith had no comment at this time.

Commissioner Kenney noted he used to live in the area and used to walk with his children to Loma Vista Park. He observed that folks speed by houses. He expressed concern about the traffic impacts and the problems with traffic on the street. He stated that if it was a park that only the nearby community attended it would not be a problem but agreed that it is a security issue. Many people come from out of the area to go to Bonelli Park, and this project will likely draw many users as well.

With no further comments Assistant City Manager Stevens thanked the members of the community for their comments. He reminded members they were welcome to use the comment cards or submit comments by email or letter. He advised community members to call City Hall if they had questions. All comments will be compiled and responded to at the conclusion of the comment period and should be up on the City website by June 20, 2015. Chairperson Kenney asked how the responses would be addressed. Assistant City Manager Stevens replied that they will likely be grouped by topic area and there will be an opportunity for revisions or adjustments to the report. Notices will be given five to six days prior to the City Council review meeting. At their meeting City Council will make a recommendation on the Mitigated Negative Declaration to the WCA.

The public comment portion of the meeting was concluded.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

A. Director of Parks & Recreation

1. Update on Via Verde Park Plan

Director Bruns advised the Commission that staff is continuing to work with a landscape architect to redesign the playground pads and entry. Plans will be presented at the July Commission meeting.

2. Update on Water Conservation Efforts

Director Bruns stated that there has been an Executive Order from the Governor's office on water conservation and introduced Landscape Maintenance Manager Farmer to give an update on the Departments water conservation efforts.

Manager Farmer stated that the City has 176 landscaped acres. Typically in winter and wetter months the Department backs off on the water schedule but due to the fact that for the last 2 years there has been very little rain they have not been able to do that and have had to increase watering of turf and landscape due to the high temperatures. Due to the Governor's order of a 28% reduction in water use, irrigation for turf medians has been turned off. Turf will be turning brown and will be lost. Landscaped medians will be retrofitted to be irrigated by either drip or neo spray systems in order to maintain the urban forest. During the transition to new systems, mulch will be installed at the base of trees for the short term to retain moisture and decomposed granite transitions to rock installed for a nicer finish, and to retain material. Landscaped medians will be maintained in the current condition.

Director Bruns stated that it is a difficult task but it is required. The transition will take place in steps and she asked for the public's patience. The City has several major thoroughfares with turf that will be transitioned to drip or Netafin system to maintain trees but turf will be lost. Commissioner Diaz stated he has heard about rebate plans for turf replacement and asked if the City has applied for any rebates. Manager Farmer replied that we have submitted seven median projects for consideration. Director Bruns noted that the challenge is that live turf must be replaced and the medians may lose live turf before they can be replaced. It is not likely that the timing will work to qualify for the rebates.

Commissioner Martinez stated that in his work with his water district he is very familiar with the challenges being faced and shared his insight. He stated that the drought is legitimate and urgent. He noted there are rebate programs for turf replacement but there is a temporary hold due to demand although applications are still being accepted.

He inquired if Golden State Water, the water purveyor for San Dimas has made any announcements regarding reductions. He said the medians will go brown and that he recommends posting signs on the medians noting that the City is doing its part to conserve water. He stated that water districts are trying to come up with plans but it is a complex situation. He recommended asking Golden State Water for flexibility in the irrigation schedule. He noted it might be worthwhile to discuss since the City has been using smart irrigation technology for several years.

Director Bruns stated that the City has been very proactive with smart controllers. The City is committed to conservation and maintaining playing fields to playable standards for liability and safety reasons. There was discussion from Manager Farmer on the irrigation schedule and the number of days and duration. The frequency of days may not change but the duration can in order to keep playing field turf healthy.

Commissioner Martinez again offered any assistance he might have to staff in order to troubleshoot issues. Director Bruns stated that she will be meeting with the golf course staff and Golden State Water staff next Thursday to discuss water conservation. Commissioner Kenny asked if the City uses any reclaimed water. Director Bruns noted that there is no access to reclaimed water in San Dimas.

3. Update on Via Verde Avenue Median Island Landscape

Director Bruns stated that a contract has been entered with a landscape architect to design a drought tolerant landscape plan for the Via Verde Avenue median. Manager Farmer noted that there is 99,000 square feet of turf on the median. Director Bruns noted that the concept will be similar to the look that is at the north end of San Dimas Avenue with the goal being to maintain trees.

4. Calendar of Upcoming Events

Manager Raya distributed the calendar of events through July noting that summer is a very busy time of the year. He highlighted the start of summer classes, day camps and Music in the Park and the Family Campouts.

B. Members of the Commission

Commissioner Davis- No comment.

Commissioner Smith – Not comment.

Commissioner Neal – No comment.

Commissioner Diaz – He thanked all who prepared the Walnut Creek presentation and all who came out to comment.

Commissioner Martinez – He shared that it is his last meeting and it has been a privilege and an honor to serve on the Parks and Recreation Commission. He thanked staff and Commissioners for their commitment and hard work.

Commissioner Kenney- He thanked Commissioner Martinez for his service and wished him the best. He noted it was a pleasure working with him.

C. City Council Liaison

Councilmember Ebner shared that the Council reviewed a plan for the downtown that involves removing the wooden sidewalks, modifying landscaping and making street improvements. It should improve the look and experience of the downtown. The final plan will be reviewed by City Council shortly. He added that the Parks and Recreation Department has several capital improvement projects in the budget and that it has not had that number in many years. Director Bruns noted that eight of fifteen projects listed on the CIP project page of the budget are Parks and Recreation Department projects. Councilmember Ebner noted the budget is scheduled to be adopted by City Council on June 9. He thanked Commissioner Martinez for his service of six years.

D. Members of the Audience

John Margis shared the efforts his homeowners association has made towards water conservation. These include removal of 25,000 square feet of turf and qualifying for the rebate available as well as transitioning to mulch and changing landscaping. The next phase is to look at smart technology irrigation.

ADJOURNMENT

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 7:34 P.M.



Leon Raya, Recreation Services Manager