

Open Space, Environment, and Sustainability Committee Meeting Transcript – 2/24/2015

Title: ATXN 24/7 Recording

Channel: 6 - ATXN

Recorded On: 2/24/2016 6:00:00 AM

Original Air Date: 2/24/2016

Transcript Generated by SnapStream

=====

[2:10:20 PM]

>> I appreciate everyone being here. We'll be starting in a couple of minutes. I think my vice chair is out in the lobby button holed and she'll be here shortly and the mayor pro tem will be a couple of minutes late. A quarter after or so. We'll be starting shortly. Be sure to sign up if you want to speak with our clerk, Jessica. .

>> We've got a quorum so I'll call us to order. This is the open space, environment and sustainability achievement it's Wednesday,

[2:12:21 PM]

February 24th, 2016. The time is about 2:11 and we're at Austin city hall. 301 west second street. I'm Leslie pool, the chair. And with me is councilmember Delia Garza and -- and the mayor pro tem. Oh, here she is, we're all here. And joining us as we're fortunate every time we meet to have the chair of the parks board with us. Rivera and the environmental completion, Mary Jane max well. So this meeting called to order. [Gavel pounded] And do I have a motion to approve the minutes? The vice chair moves and a second by councilmember Zimmerman. All in favor of approving the minutes? Looks like unanimous on the dais. Thanks. Citizens' communication. >> I have -- is it Angella? Oh, you're number six okay, Scott Johnson, citizens communication. Hi, Scott, welcome, thanks for being here. You have three minutes if someone can help us with timing. >> Hello. Good afternoon, councilmember, last time I spoke to you about a foundry called pure casting and since that time I've reached out to the city of Lockhart to ask if that semester package is still active and according to what I know from that source and a different source, the answer is question yes. However, there's no uptake on that which I believe but not certain because the email that I got back from the city of Lockhart talked about expansion of the site. But I believe if it goes through, then the site would be moved -- they would move their operations outside of Austin to Lockhart completely and that

[2:14:22 PM]

would be a beneficial thing as some of you know and believe. And, hopefully, that will play out and getting more information, I'll share it with you as soon as I can. Regarding another matter I brought up. The second meeting last year was about what we called at the time in 2008-2009, the green events ordinance, a subset of the special events ordinance, the citizen input was more than two years ago, as that was being shaped through the city process. And a few different departments were collaborating on it and I got an update saying that there's no movement forward right now on the rules and regulations for that, which is disappointing to me. If you can cue up that. If you'll look at this, this is the green events ordinance, which is a separate item and it's not a living document but some of us activists along with partners from the city council, staff, got together over a period of more than a year -- and we did some work that goes beyond just requiring or asking for bicycle parking and recycling and waste diversion and as you can see, we were hoping for an effective date of January 1st, 2010, what happens was that some of the larger events said we don't want requirements. And we want to work through some voluntary process, so that was a bit disappointing because these things were not one that is I don't think would cause them a lot of heartbreak and it was for wouldn't impact people having large weddings and events at clubhouses and etc. I wanted to bring that to your attention. Hopefully, today, the parklands taskforce, you'll get an update and they had talked about this at the beginning of their deliberations and again special events ordinance, with a focus

[2:16:24 PM]

on environmental improvement and the benefit is you're educating people in large part to try and do better, recycling and waste diversion and incentivizing parking by -- and some things that were low cost or no cost. And I'm hopeful this spring with support of you that the city council takes on a briefing on the air quality and that's something that, hopefully, this group will support. Thank you. >> Pool: Thanks for coming. And I guess I should ask, did you say that you had offered those written -- Scott, had you offered your written report over to the parklands' event taskforce? >> I did, I gave it to David king when the group started and Rick who is an appointee was part of that group when he was on the zero waste victims. Zero waste advisory commission. >> Pool: Thanks for coming. Item three is an item my vice chair is interested in and she's away from the dais right now. We're move on to item four, the briefing and -- on possible action on the status, scope of work and the deliverables of the parkland events taskforce. Looks like we have speakers here to talk. Gentlemen. From the taskforce. Welcome. Introduce yourselves. >> I'm James and this is David king, both co-chairs for the parklandses events taskforce and I think you'll getting a handout what we put together to present today. Really most of it is just a overview. You know really what resolution was passed and what it's directed us to do.

[2:18:26 PM]

So we've just -- here to give you an update what we've done and discussed and where we are with our March of 2016 deadline. March 5th, '15, the taskforce was put together. I don't know what this does. Oh, clicks. >> Pool: We're high tech around here. I want to compliment you on your socks, by the way. [Laughter] >> It's a distraction. We created -- you created the parklands events taskforce last year with the deadline of March of this year. I'll bring it up now. We're going to ask for an extension to this. Believe it or not. Sorry. We're probably looking at being done at the end of August. Which would give us the full year. It took a while to get

everybody put on the taskforce and be able to start doing our work once we had an quorum. 17 members on the taskforce. Diverse. As David put in here. And they are quite diverse, you've got something -- I know, people from all over the city. Event people, neighborhood people. Folks that just enjoy using the parks. So we have a very good group with all focuses of parks in mind. The objectives were inventory, number, size and scope of events and pact to neighborhoods and businesses and infrastructure. Fees and policies. We started meeting like I said in August of last year. 12 meeting to date. Feels like a lot more. We've had input from -- public

[2:20:26 PM]

input from multiple sources. Citizen communication, taskforce meetings, and speak up Austin, a tech survey with quite a few respondents and business impact survey. You know, we've -- we've gotten a lost of information. We're planning on having a full public meeting on this, once we actually have our full list of recommendations, as you get public input on that as well. So we really are looking forward to that one. Current progress, create inventory of events and number of events and reviewing current park policy, including schedules and coordination and contracts and study costs, maintenance and fees. We've put together a couple of subcommittees to do a deeper dive on fees and where we are, compared to other cities. Take a look at see if we can do, you know, what -- what options are available to council as far as fees go. And also with alternative venues and different parks around the city. Our focus is primarily due to the ordinance, on the downtown metropolitan parks, zilker and festival beach -- but looking at other parks around the city and seeing if there's anything that could be done to those park in the short term to make them more attractive to events so they're not so focused on the downtown central area. And I just covered that. So we've identified four publicly owned potential park sites. Walter long, expo center, onion creek and bolm road and John treviño. Inventory of public and private

[2:22:28 PM]

venue, the usual suspects there. Palmer and long. And Cota and Austin -- and the Austin American statesman, who knows what will happen with that. The subcommittee is looking for recommendations for each site of these alternative locations like Walter long and the expo center which there is something already being done there or looked at. That's good. Current progress -- so this is something that I'm pretty proud of. We've defined a couple of words here. [Laughter] We've defined what on means and let me give you a little bit of background on why we defined these and found it important to define these. We deal a lot in perception. There's a perception that the parks are closed more than they actually are and we thought it would be best -- we thought it would be best to put real definitions around that and take a hard look at how many days parks are actually closed and we had to determine what closed actually meant. So our working definitions for these -- open means full access to the public, no events. Closed -- no access to the public, meaning it's a ticketed event. Partially open, more than 50% of the park is accessible without a ticket or it's unfenced. Minimally open, more than 50% of the park is closed to the public, only available to ticketed patrons. In use -- is no fence, no barrier, but significant portions of the park reserved or impacted by events. So that last one, I know, it's kind of strange, but it's the best definition for that, the picture you have next to it, which is the kite festival, which has no fences -- yes? >> Let me ask a question on that.

[2:24:28 PM]

Let's use zilker as an example, we have numerous different area, rooms, so to speak there, and when you talk about zilker -- zilker is the polo fields or -- just zilker park? >> It's collective zilker park. There's north of Barton springs road and south, all of that is zilker park. However, we're realistic to -- and know that the events typically happen on the great lawn side. Right? So our focus, I think, has been primarily on the great lawn and this aspect of 50% of the park on or closed or in use or -- whatever that means. So the reality is the south side of the park is usually open, with the exception of a couple of events, I think actually one event. But for the other events it is fully accessible over there. >> Yes, we're looking at it as separate. Do we use the word "Modules" or rooms, in describing them and realize there could be multiple concurrent things going on in the park. Like the zilker hillside theater, that's by itself there, but it can have an impact on access to Barton springs pool and we're looking at drilling into those details. >> Thanks. >> Okay, so our next things on our agenda for the taskforce are define limits. Looking at the number and size of the events that currently happen at these parks. Analyze the impact of events on neighborhoods, businesses, public and infrastructure. And impact is a -- can be a tricky word. That's why we're doing the surveys to businesses and other

[2:26:28 PM]

folks, is because it could be a positive impact, it could be a negative impact. So we're cognizant there are two sides to every question that we're asking the public. Develop recommendations, fees, limits, impacts and policies. Alternative public and private venues. Legacy and new events. One of the things that is -- that comes up in the conversations at meetings is there are folks that don't want to just limit the parks to the old events. And they would like to increase the opportunity for new events to happen as well and I think one of the things that we're cognizant of is that we would love to have new events but probably not in these parks. Which is why we're looking at alternative parks that might need just a little bit of infrastructure to be able to support those larger size things. I'm not wrong in that, am I? >> No. >> Okay. Good. Produce ago distribute the final report with recommendations by the end of August of this year and present, if needed, the report to council. >> And I just wanted to point out we're going to host public meetings and there could be potentially more than one public meeting. We're not sure. When we get our draft list of recommendations together, we'll invite the public to come in and give feedback and take that feedback and refine the recommendations and come out with the final set of recommendations. So -- and then present those with our final report. >> Is your list of the park areas sand beach or Lamar beach, for example? Or some of the property that's over by Austin high? Publicly owned land that's over there. David is writing it down.

[2:28:29 PM]

>> We'll look at those two. Pass the information over to the subcommittee on -- the alternative -- >> Pool: It would be interesting to see the list of all of the public spaces that are in the parks department inventory and make sure just to tag back and make sure you're looking at -- >> It's substantial. >> Pool: Yeah. >> Very substantial. And we've been looking at -- we have that list and staff has provided us with all of that information and we're looking at parks that could be used for events. A lot of the property that's under parks and recreation management is heavily wooded, it's heavily -- it's just dense. It wouldn't be amenable without significant work done to it to host an event currently as it is and I don't think this taskforce wants to be in the business of recommending tree cuts. >> Pool: And I suppose it depends on what kind of event it is. I think the Austin blue grass society maybe does something at the Pollo fields and it's -- polo fields. >> And the other

thing we'll get into is policies. A lot of the exist the properties can't support cars or parks which is another big deal and we're taking a long hard look how we do traffic during these park events as well. >> Pool: Great. What questions do yard line have? >> [Inaudible] >> Pool: Okay. Councilmember Zimmerman. >> Zimmerman: Take me back to the line in here about the Austin American statesman listed as a convenient sue. Based on speculation? >> No, no, we had one of their representatives come and talked to us, they currently rent out

[2:30:30 PM]

their flags to events and I know it's been used in the past for south-by-southwest and several one-off type of events throughout the year as well. >> Zimmerman: Renting? >> Correct. >> Zimmerman: Final question on -- you listed the water long expo center. I wondered about that, the reason -- two reasons that we wouldn't want to off-load events there. It's not developed enough -- I think the neighbors would be thrilled to get some events out of Zilker park and move them out of the city. But there's not hotels around there. It doesn't have the same feeling for people who want to come in and see downtown skyline and all -- the river. >> Certainly a challenge we thought about. As we look at these different parks, we're also looking at what it would take infrastructure wise, electricity and water in those specific parks to be able to host an event of -- you know, substantial size. >> Zimmerman: Okay. >> Including like the transportation infrastructure and things like that and along with -- and coordinating with master planning that might be going on, which Walter Long and the expo center, there's a study going on with the expo center itself and we'll be coordinating with the parks department to make sure that the master -- it dovetails with that plan. We're going to look at the alternative sites not just from the share the fun and give everybody a chance to participate in having events near their neighborhoods but also compiling the impacts to say these are the impacts that come along with the events. You could have bands playing and fireworks and traffic and noise. And you know, so those things go

[2:32:30 PM]

along with many of the events so when we talk about alternative sites we're also going to be providing information about these are the potential impacts including environmental impacts to the trees and grounds and the air. Things like that. >> Zimmerman: Yeah, that's the point, if we had some more remote locations they could have noise that doesn't bother the neighbors because there's not that much out there. >> Correct. >> Zimmerman: Do you think you'll be done with this August of this year? >> Yes. Yes. >> Zimmerman: Okay. Thanks. >> Thank you very much. >> Pool: Mayor pro tem. >> Tovo: Thanks for coming here and providing the update and serving on the committee and I see another taskforce member, Jeff Smith. Thanks, too, for your work and if there are others, thank you all. My first question is about the line regarding profit on -- let's see the timeline and current progress and I assume you're talking about the fees. I missed the reference to that because we can't include anything beyond actual cost is. That what that meant? >> Yes, the state law dictates what the city can and cannot charge. >> We're looking at -- one. Reasons we created the fees subcommittee, how they have calculate those fees and do those calculations including like the legal department when they have to get involved with a contract? Does it include all the costs? The overhead costs that companies often charge when you ask for a service and there's a cost to that service and they have an overhead charge for those kind of services dollars peripheral or supportive of that particular activity. We want to make sure we are getting all of that information and it's included in the fee structure. >> Tovo: That's

great, it's good to have a full [inaudible] Of what the costs look like.

[2:34:31 PM]

You have a subcommittee on fees and on alternative sites. Yes. >> Tovo: Others I've missed? >> No, coming soon will probably be policies. >> Tovo: And the four potentially owned -- publicly owned potential sites I'm reminded we were going to organize a tour of Walter E. Long, looking at Jeff. Has that happened for your taskforce members yet. >> Not yet. >> Pool: Come up to the table. >> Tovo: We were looking into that and it may be that the ball dropped with me. I have apologize if that's true. >> We're trying to get the subcommittee organized to do that for some time in the next coming weeks. >> Tovo: Great. >> And somebody from parks staff will be accompanying us. >> Tovo: Super. That's important. And will you then tour the other sites and make assessments of the -- do you have a sense at this point about which of these other locations might be promising? Have you heard from neighbors in those neighborhoods they're interested in in those activities? >> What we wanted to start with what are realistic parks that exist with minimum needs to accommodate an event and once we've identified those as viable, then we would, obviously, do the diligence. We didn't want to alarm people that fun might be coming to their area, if it's not. >> Tovo: That makes sense. If it's financially -- >> That's I good question, one of these that might require more work to get it up to, you know, where -- you know, needs to be for these events and maybe it would drop of the list or be lower on priority. We're not really ready to make a final recommendation until we do more due diligence on those

[2:36:33 PM]

sites. >> Tovo: I like the looking ahead -- I assume some of the work you might do is think about policies that would maybe rotate events for the same -- so that the same events aren't in the same location over and over again. >> Sure, absolutely. And I think we're all realistic, there are certain sensitivities with that. But it's certainly on the table. So we're looking at everything. >> Tovo: This is great. Great to have a group of people focused on this issue. >> Pool: Dr. Rivera? >> First, I want to say thank you to the see of you and the other members. I know Mr. Coffeer is participating in this and I'm impressed how much you've accomplished in a short time and I'm delighted to hear from you and my question is, how do you plan on holding the public hearings that need to be done once you get the recommendations together? Do you know yet? >> David is going to do them all on his own. [Laughter] >> Good. >> No, that's a good question. We'll definitely appreciate any advice and be talking to parks staff about the outreach process and before I forget, I want to thank Dan for all the work, the works that been accomplished, they've done so much support work for us and compiled so much good information for us and everything we've asked for, they've provided and they're very responsive and I wanted to give them a shout-out. Jason and Kerry and Mike and Larry. Also facilitating our meetings, very thankful to have them therous. >> I know you have a good group working with you. Thank you. If there's anything -- for example, the parks board or parks department to help you with public outreach. We'd be glad to help. >> Thank you. >> When we talk about

[2:38:36 PM]

alternatives -- alternative venues and ready to say these are what we're going to recommend, we might then want to target the neighborhoods in those areas and say, hey, we would like to do a special outreach to you

because, you know, that park is near your neighborhood, it's on the list of recommended parks for events and we'd like to get your input on this. >> Sounds like a perfect idea. Thank you. >> Will your taskforce report up through the parks board, do you have a plan for that? >> We'd like to open the council committees and boards and commissions, we're happy to do that, I mean, I would assume we would do a parks board presentation at some point and also maybe the environmental board. I don't know, because parks and the environmental and the impact on parksland has been one of the issues that you all address from time to time. Happy to give any board or commission or council committee a report. >> Pool: Dr. Max well, did you have any questions? What I might suggest on that, work with the park staff on the different citizen commissions that are out there and just get recommendations. There may be -- it may be that just the environmental board and the parks board would be appropriate, but you might find that there's some others. I have two other questions. Did you have a question? I wanted to just let you know that if you think there are some potential changes to legislation at the state level that would be helpful as you're looking through -- I know you mentioned there's things you can and can't do based on restrictions in state law, let uses know, we can put that on our legislative agenda, the city can go through and work through the different items and if there are things that would be -- changes that would be a benefit, like in the fees area, we'd be happy to look at that at the council.

[2:40:37 PM]

>> Okay. >> Pool: And I'm curious, are you also looking at time frames if you're going to recommend the shifting of events, like from park a to park Q, for example, will you maybe offer suggested time frames for -- that would happen over a period of years or think it would be next year or -- >> I can tell you as we look at all of these potential alternative venue, none of them can be moved into next year. I mean, they all need some sort of infrastructure to be able to support. >> Pool: Uh-huh. >> Looking at it realistically, I can't even guess what that would look like. But that can certainly be part of our recommendation once we have new information to actually -- >> Pool: Yeah, that might be enough phase but you can take a crack at it and just mention that some of the recommendations might be complicated by the fact that we would then have to have some specific infrastructure, you know, if it's toilet or parking or whatever, I don't have any idea. It would be really helpful to have that. >> Absolutely. >> And we might -- speaking of that, the -- you know, once our recommendations about the alternative parks and what upgrades might be necessary once that vetted and the council decided what it would like to do with that, that might help to envelope a potential -- inform a potential bond, 2017 or 2018 if we needed bond money to help some of those parks. >> Pool: I have this -- this history but side to my nature. And -- history bff side to my -- buff side, I would be interested how the different things developed over times. And we used to have and it

[2:42:43 PM]

started off small and then did away with it and it would be interesting to have Austin history to be memorialized in one place and the timelines how they've ebbed and flowed with the city. >> I have a question, sorry. >> Pool: Yes. >> The presentation, is there a matrix or something that you're creating that weighs impacts that the different events have. There's soldier restricted to auditorium shores. And then there's others one that is close six other roads and I don't know on the scale when we're deciding to prioritize which events -- because this is premium area to have the events but Walter long is a good venue for those events too because of the different impact it would have in that area. I don't know if you thought about it --

probably have -- a score that says, you know, an event that has this little impact will get higher on that list. An event that has this impact you're going to -- you know. >> So I can answer that a couple of different ways. One is there's no doubt that the event that is happen in park, especially the parks that we are focused on, which is the pro- the Premo real estate down downtown impact roads and other things and ties to the special events ordinance living in space right now. So bill mano has come and talked to us about that but there's a bit of a complexity in it because they're separate, but they are very grated. So if -- if -- integrated. If something is adopted with a

[2:44:44 PM]

special events ordinance, it could have an impact in the recommendations we make for the parks events. So it's kind of a weird -- you know, do we wait and see what happens with the special events ordinance before we make a recommendation on that or maybe make a recommendation to bill who has this special events ordinance because they're very much intertwined so -- and to your point, there are a lot of triathlon type of events that currently happen at Walter long because it's easier to have them out there. That being said, we -- I sound like that -- [laughter] >> No, you don't. That's a totally different noise. >> That being said, there are undoubtedly these world-class triathlons that happen and they happen downtown because it's downtown and it's close to these hotels that people come from all over the country, if not the world, to participate in. So it's -- you know, it's almost like drawing straws to see who goes where and when and why. >> When we look at the special events ordinance, we looked at the events happening at these park, the three we've been discussing and try to fit each of those events into the tier, one, two, three, four in there and went through a attempt to see how they match up and learned so much those events don't fit into any of those tiers and that can help to inform the special events ordinance and we provided that feedback and certainly part of that -- we will have a chart that shows the events and the impacts. Not just the number of attendees and all that. But the type of impacts they have. S thatless information that the public needs -- that's the information that the public needs and the council needs in terms of making any changes to

[2:46:46 PM]

our event policies on park land and that's going to -- that's information you need, and also the neighbors need in trying to make those decisions. >> Those number also include the revenue and also the cost to rehabilitate the property or how much the users of the venue put into it? >> It will include the cost information, historical information we've seen from previous events, that the parks department provided us with that information in terms of the costs -- that's part of the cost of the city to repair and remediate or update or maintain the property after the event. So, yes, that information will be provided for each event and to other -- and other impacts as well we mentioned. The great lawn is brown after acl, it needs a couple of weeks of recovery. So -- and also auditorium shores. Things like that. Yes, that will be part of the information as well. >> Pool: Anyone have any other questions? I know the one piece of action that you need from us today is for us to move to give you the additional time that if you think it's necessary in order to complete the tasks and I'm very comfortable doing that. Does someone want to make a motion to allow the parklands events taskforce into August of this year in order to -- >> So moved. >> Pool: Okay. Councilmember Zimmerman has moved and vice chair Garza seconded that motion. Any conversation about that? >> May I ask, is that through August 31st? >> Yes. Would you rather us say September 1? >> David and I just love spending time together. >> I can tell. >> The longer the better. >> Let's talk about the

[2:48:46 PM]

deadline. The August 31st would be for you to have your last meeting or wrap up your report or -- I think sometimes that causes a little bit of a confusion. We should be clear what we expect. Do you think you can finish the report by then or need more time than that. >> I'm confident we can finish the report by then. >> Super. >> If we get a lot of feedback from the public that we did not consider despite our outreach effort, it might inform us that we might want to do more digging. I want to let that thought out there once we get the feedback from the public about our recommendations. But right now, it looks like August 31st we'll have it done by then. >> I'm looking at a calendar, so that's -- that means -- and then we would want you all to come and report to us -- [inaudible] >> One thing I was going to add on that, it just means you missed this upcoming fiscal year to get your input into the cip. >> We discussed that. We -- had we gotten going on March 5th when we -- you know, of 2015 we would have had a good chance of at least getting to a point of having good recommendation that could have been included in the budget, the next budget cycle. >> Pool: It looks like it's going to be a good recommendation and you don't have a full sense about it because you haven't finished the report, you could always ask for a proxy or a placeholder and the parks department would be willing to work with you on that. >> Okay. >> Pool: September 28 is a meeting of this committee so we can tentatively plan it hear from you all with the final report on September 28th. >> That would be great. >> Pool: We have a motion --

[2:50:50 PM]

yes, vice chair Garza. >> Garza: I'm assuming you make public comment at your meetings so it informs the decisions you're making. >> Yes. >> Pool: So we have a motion. Any other discussion on it? Yes, mayor pro tem. >> No. >>> You're identifying things that are going to have a budgetary impact even if it's pretty big, I would say the sooner the better for that. If there's an opportunity to include it in the budget which is finished and presented to council by the end of July, that would be great. Even if this changes and might look different by the time the facility report is there, I think making that deadline would be a good goal. >> All right. >> Pool: Anything else? All in favor of the motion? Looks like that's unanimous. Thank you, gentlemen, for coming and the good are report and the excellent efforts you're putting forth. We appreciate it. >> Thank you. >> Thank you. >> Pool: Let's go back to item 3. This is an item that councilmember Garza brought. A briefing and possible action on what other cities have done to implement neighborhood food bank co-ops and mobile farmers market as recommendation on what the city of Austin can do. We have an presentation by Edwin Marty. And a little bird told me today is your birthday. Are you guilty as charged? You're lucky we're not going to sing to you. You're lucky. >> I was kind of expecting [inaudible] >> Pool: You know what, we definitely fell down on the job. Welcome, we're really glad you're here. >> I'm going to give a quick summary of -- updates on our healthy food access initiatives spearheaded through the health

[2:52:50 PM]

department and the office of sustainability and a couple of other city of Austin departments. We have an quick presentation, you can see the slides. We have allocated -- allocated funding in the 2015-2016 budget to support a continuum of efforts to improve access to healthy food. Box stores and grocery store provide important and critical access to fresh healthy food but often don't provide everything at that -- that a

community could use. And research supporting the development of a continuum of options. So what working on is writing rfps currently to support a healthy food retail. Otherwise known as healthy corner stores. That effort is underway, if the funding from the city would reengage and expand that met. We're in the midst of negotiating contract with a local non-profit so that later we'll have definitive information about the impact of the funding of accesses healthy food and we're in the middle of expansion of pilot community and school-based farmers marketers markets and we have multiple farmers marketers markets throughout Austin and southeast Austin and east Austin, these farm stands are embedded in communities and schools and shown to be effective in terms of providing very good access to a fresh and affordable food product. We're hoping to expand this initiative. These contracts would, hopefully, executed no later than April for the expansion of those programs and lastly working on a rfp to support the development of a pilot farmers

[2:54:52 PM]

marketers market and go to a nonprofit that would develop a module farm stand that would go from location to location throughout south Austin and a feasibility study from Texas tech that's looking at where the best locations or for that mobile farmers marketers market and doing research on what other cities have done to support local farmers' market and the -- it would be implemented next summer -- this summer or next summer. Questions? In addition to those programs, also asked to give a quick summary of what -- neighborhood food buying co-ops is an old idea that's at some level being reengaged as the modern local stannel sustainable food movement takes shape. What's fantastic about it is it's terrific about a community and responsive to community values and what's interesting about this model, a nonprofit organization simply responds to a community's desire to get access to fresh healthy affordable food and serves as a broker between a group of farmers or wholesale farmers markets and the key to this thought is an average low-income community member is often not going to have the capacity to take advantage of bulk buying especially around fresh fruits and vegetables and allows low-income community members to access the best possible ideally organic and local food but at bulk rates. That said, some of the advantages to that strategy are it's a micro of local focus and responds to communities -- each community could develop their own type of neighborhood food

[2:56:57 PM]

co-op and driven by community needs and as research has shown, one of the most cost effective strategies for increasing affordable healthy food in a community. The challenges, current, for us, as a city to understand how to move forward is to prioritize where these things can be most effective and ensures that any efforts we undertook would be sustainable and continue throughout time and lastly, ensuring they can be integrated into the existing snap and wic benefit programs. We also don't have any resource in the city currently to assist in the development of that program. >> The challenge of prioritizing communities to serve -- I guess, could you explain that one a little. Because I mean, I have the most food deserts in my district and seems those would be a priority. What is the challenge? >> Yeah, I mean, specifically you're absolutely correct and I spend a lot of time looking at that data and the data is often zip code based or census tract based. This is a collection of 10 neighbors on a single street. My family participated in a neighborhood food buying co-op with the six neighbors on my street and trying to understand where the pockets of support for that kind of initiative and us to support that kind of interest to drill down at that level would take work and we know from the great work of go Austin, and the other local based nonprofits there's information there but trying to

identify where the highest need is and the responding interest would be or conversely, where the interest is and overlapping the highest

[2:58:58 PM]

needs, we have that information and takes time once we identify this is a strategy we want to do to tease those things out good. >> And the resources exist? I'm assuming you are talk being budget resources? >> Time and money. >> Garza: Time and money, okay. Do you know of any examples of, like, public-private grocery store partnership? Like a grocery store co-op. Examples of that working in other -- I thought Philadelphia was doing some kind of -- >> There's an impressive spectrum of things tried and some very, very successfully. The challenge that -- especially with Austin, Austin is a really unique community and what works in Philadelphia probably won't work as it does there here in Austin. One of the challenges we have is taking the we need to understand what are the actual barriers, what are the assets, and how do we build on those assets to make sure the barriers are overcome. The research has been done but not locally to understand that connects. >> Garza: Okay. All right. Thank you. Questions? >> Pool: Thanks. Any other questions for Mr. Marty? I was happy to work on the healthy corner stores initiative during the current budget process last July, and would be happy to continue that work going forward, and I think maybe am partnership with my vice chair here, so if there are things you need as far as the budget resource, let us know and I'm sure we can funnel it through the budget process, through the office of sustainability. >> Thank you very much. We'll certainly have lots to say shortly. Thank you. >> Did you want to bring

[3:01:00 PM]

this up? >> Garza: I guess just as a matter of discussion I will be bringing forward an ifc. I believe councilmember pool is the sponsor on it. >> Pool: Yep. I am on there with you. >> Garza: We're talking to other offices, but it will be directing the city manager basically to try to -- to give us a report on these different options and how to address these issues, these food desert issues, as well as an update on the snap enrollment and how we can increase snap enrollment. My understanding is, there's a lot of snap funding that goes unused because it's -- families just don't know that it's available. And so we'll be bringing that, I believe this coming Thursday. So I look forward to continuing to work with your office and trying to -- trying to solve this issue, you know, access to healthy food is a -- you know, a very basic quality of life issue that -- it's definitely a challenge for my district, but I think we can -- I think we can solve it. So thank you for your work understand a your presentation. >> Pool: I like what this says on here, a collaborative working group would include representation from the sustainable food policy board, the sustainable food center, area partners, staff from the city's economic development partners, the health and human services department, and the sustainability office to develop recommendations regarding improving access to food and considering full service grocery stores, wholesale produce markets, increasing fresh food choices at existing stores, the impact of incorporating educational components into efforts to expand food access, non-profit and co-op models for grocery stores, and the expansion of community gardens. This is all really good stuff. I appreciate you bringing this forward. Happy to partner with you on

[3:03:01 PM]

this. Does anybody need -- I guess you'll be sending this around to the different folks you want to have --

okay. All right. Thank you all. I appreciate your work. Is there any other action we needed to take on this item? >> Nope. >> Pool: Okay. All right. We're up to item 5: Briefing on measures to improve the care, maintenance, and planning of public trees. I see Michael Ambesi is here. He's our forest, tree, and city arborist. I have one person who wishes to speak. Russ Smith. Russ, do you want to speak before or after the presentation in thank you. Welcome, Michael, I'm glad you're here. >> Thank you. I'm glad to be here. I'm division manager for the community forestry division within development services department. We have 12 slides for you today to update this committee on events that have occurred over the past year to improve the care and maintenance of our trees on our public property. With me today is Emily King, our acting urban forester, and we were going to present with Ed, but he is not feeling well so he's not going to make it today. >> Pool: I'm sure he's watching. >> Hi, Mike. I was fortunate enough -- I was fortunate enough to be able to present to you guys in August of last year to talk about the truly uniqueness that trees play in Austin. We are recognized nationally for recognizing the tremendous value that trees bring our city, all of our citizens. We recognize trees far beyond just their aesthetic beauty. We recognize all the benefits that they provide us, the services that they provide citizens.

[3:05:01 PM]

And not just trees that are within our parks, and not just trees in our creeks. We recognize trees, we really take our community effort and rerecognize trees across the board throughout the city. So much, so we've been recognized also by the USDA. They've completed their first urban forest electricity analysis and they chose Austin, and we're very fortunate that they chose Austin and provided us some great data associated with all of our trees. And we were also recognized as the top -- having one of the top ten urban forests by American Forest. So we're very excited to be able to provide you some information today pertaining to a council resolution that came out in 2013. We'll also brief you briefly on the code mandated positions of the urban forester and the city arborist, and then updates on Austin's comprehensive urban forest plan. Specifically with the council resolution, this effort began from city council that directed staff to look into various aspects of our public urban forest. It was authored by Mayor Pro Tem Tovo, and specifically directed the city manager to assess the values and the benefits of public trees. Two, to evaluate the current level of care for the public trees that we provide. Consider tree-related services delivery. Basically, we are looking at how staff is aligned throughout the city. And then lastly, of course, report our findings back to you. Those findings included the value of our public trees. Roughly, our public trees include about 15% of our total urban forest, and we collected that data by using industry standards and analyzed that data using a federal government model.

[3:07:02 PM]

called I-tree-eco, that allowed us to identify that we have -- that those trees provide over \$8 million of annual benefits to our citizens and have a replacement cost of over \$4 billion. Again, this assessment went well beyond just how nice or pretty trees may be or the aesthetic value. It actually assessed the cleaning air and the cleaning water and the flood abatement -- or flood mitigation that actually occurs with each and every tree. Secondly, we determined a level of care for public trees and identified a gap in funding that's associated with many of our small -- of our small groups throughout the city that actually have maintenance and operations. Those groups within the parks department that handle our trees and our parks. Our public works department that handles trees in -- near our streets. Watershed protection department, that group that

handles tree in our creeks. So we assessed the funding gap associated with those departments in order to bring the most optimum care for all of those trees. And, again, this is -- we are currently on a reactionary base. Many times we are forced to respond to emergencies when trees are failing, and we wanted to acknowledge the -- that not only trees are bringing these benefits, that we needed to look at how do we care for these trees to lengthen their lives, to enhance the benefits that they're providing our community, far beyond just what it takes just to take a tree down when a tree is failing. And the recommendations. Who -- roughly, the three recommendation insist front --S in frontof you, recommendations to

[3:09:05 PM]

combine certain programs within the city which we'll expand on in just a sec, to include an alignment of interdepartmental, coordinated events that pertain to all of our tree-related issues, and then a plan to close the gap at a level of service that is needed to care for our trees. When the resolution was drafted, we have two -- we had two specific programs in the city that were co-mandated. In August I talked to you about the city arborist program that related to the regulations of our trees, how we administer the tree preservation ordinance across the board. At that time as well -- by the way, the city arborist program at that time was in the planning and development review department. The assessment of those programs was performed by executives at the city. They also identified the urban forestry program. It was it was in the parks department. And the urban forestry department was creating standards of care, how we care for trees across the board, complimenting the urban forest plan, and really coordinating our maintenance and operation crews, making sure they're all working in unison. This has pretty much been in place since the early 1980s. They were both formalized in the early '80s, both programs, and ever since then, we have been basically untouched, but in 2013 the assessment derived from the council resolution, we looked at advancing our programs by actually combining them. And in this slide, we have a

[3:11:05 PM]

new combination -- or our combination is now we're both the city arborist and urban forester are working together so that we can consolidate our efforts, we can share resources, we -- many tasks are now being unified, and of course we can coalesce our messaging to the public. Our small team of employees, about 15 employees, work in administering the regulations of the city and also implementing the comprehensive urban forest plan. The urban forestry section again works very closely with multiple departments. It's very important that they collaborate with our parks department, with public works, watershed, and even Austin energy to ensure that when we are working with trees, when we're pruning trees, maintaining trees, planting trees, that we're doing that consistently. Next, I have the acting urban forest -- the acting urban forester to present a few slides. >> Pool: Emily, before you start, really quick, Michael, you might have said this and I just didn't hear it, the community forestry division would be in what? Where would that hang down? >> I didn't say it. That's right. I mentioned where we came from, multiple departments. Now, the community forestry division is located within the development services department. >> Pool: Uh-huh. And are you anticipating continuing it there, or are you making a recommendation for it -- >> The recommendation was to move it from the two previous departments into the development service department, so that task has been completed. >> Pool: Okay. Thanks. >> So we have unified efforts.

[3:13:08 PM]

>> Thanks. So I'm glad to be here today to talk to y'all some about what -- is that better? Thank you. Thanks for y'all's time, and both Michael and I are tickled to be here to come and tell y'all about some of the good things that we're working on, about some of the good things that have been done, and that we're planning to do. One of the huge things that has been done that's a very significant milestone for the city of Austin is having created and adopted our Austin urban forest plan. So I've brought y'all copies in case you didn't already have your own. It is a comprehensive urban forest plan for the city of Austin, and its significance as an achievement, as this is a project that was well over 20 years in the making, that has been created and it has been adopted by council, and I wanted to take a minute to just relate to you what the overarching vision of this plan is for the city of Austin. It's that Austin's urban forest is a healthy and sustainable MIX of trees, vegetation, and other components that comprise a contiguous and thriving ecosystem, valued, protected, and cared for by the city and all of its citizens as an essential environmental, economic, and community assets. As you can see, this is a great vision. It is a comprehensive vision, and this plan has -- has many, many components to it. It relies heavily on engagements with the community. It relies heavily on partnerships. It speaks to protection of trees. It speaks to the planting,

[3:15:09 PM]

maintenance, and care of trees. And our team is now in the position of being able to implement this plan that we have since adopted. So implementation is another reason why I do believe that this is a significant plan. It's a plan that includes implementation in it, and it gives us pretty good roadmaps for how this plan should be implemented. We are, as a theme, as an urban forestry team, working to coordinate with many other stakeholders within the city of Austin and with other partners. Which one forwards that? Thank you. So one of the primary ways that we're going about implementing this plan is by having established a forestry leadership theme within the city. As Michael had mentioned, we have now realigned the city's urban forester with the city arborist's program, and we are -- we're located in one central location within development services. However, we do have many other programs within the city that directly touch trees, that work with trees on a regular, daily basis. And this forest electricity leadership team was established in order to ensure that we are all speaking with one another on a regular basis, that we're all in communication. So we have representation from the parks department, urban forestry, we have representation from public works department, urban forestry, Austin energy, with their utility forestry group, and watershed protection. We additionally reach out to other groups that touch trees within the city, such as the fire department on an as-needed basis. This is a team that has been chartered over the last year. We've developed an annual

[3:17:09 PM]

work plan, and again, we do have representation from the primary players within the city of Austin forest forestry operations. Some of the tasks that respond directly to implementing the urban forest plan include updating the analysis that was done that pertains to the level of service provided for public trees in the city of Austin. We have developed recommendations for what that might look like if we were on a proactive cycle prune schedule, for example, for our park and street trees, what kind of planting goals we might have to maintain and increase our canopy cover. We have additionally been working on standardizing metrics for reporting out forestry related activities within the city. Additionally, we have a group that has been meeting well over ten years. This is an interdepartmental tree working group, so again, this really speaks to, in terms

of the resolution that Michael relayed, this speaks to the coordinated efforts within the city that we have to - to try to dissolve silos and really work together so we know what each other are doing. This is a great platform for that. This working group comes together on a monthly basis and is primarily used as a communication tool for boots on the ground people, managers of those people, to get together and talk about issues that are affecting them right here and now. Finally, another -- another key way that staff has come together over the last couple of years to work in coordination is through the implementation of imagine

[3:19:11 PM]

Austin. So imagine Austin implementation consists of several different priority areas. The green infrastructure is an overarching tenant in imagine Austin, and there is a team of public land managers that meets, and their mission is to develop and implement unified comprehensive management of all city of Austin lands. We have, as an urban forestry team, been able to work within this green infrastructure environment that is much bigger than just the trees and the vegetation. It is a group that has a much broader spectrum to it. And we have been able to work with our counterparts in our departments to not only move forward the goals and visions that we have within our urban forest plan, but this is another way that we work with other adopted plans within the city, such as the invasive species management plan and the community wildfire protection plan. So there are a number of activities that are coordinated through this working group. And, again, this ties back to what we, as a city, hope to achieve through imagine Austin. And that's our overview. Thank you. >> Pool: Questions? Any questions? Yes. Dr. Maxwell. >> Mr. Ambisi, did you say that the usda had chosen Austin to do a survey? Can you say that again? >> Yes. In 2013, about the same time the resolution came out, the usda worked with the Texas forest service to determine that Austin was going to be the first city to have a -- an urban forest assessment

[3:21:14 PM]

performed. >> And so has that been done? >> It has been completed. >> And when you say the urban forest, you mean the entire urban forest? >> The entire urban forest. That's correct. Well beyond just our public urban forest. >> Yes. That was a question I had because the environmental commission at one point had made a recommendation to the former council that there be a survey done of the private trees of the city to determine how our canopy looks as an entire city, and that there be a consultant hired to do that because the urban forestry board had been the group that had to do this public tree comprehensive urban forest plan. And we thought it was too much to put on a citizen board to do that, that understand we really need to have a fuller understanding of the complete urban forest. And we were suggesting that there be a consultant hired to do that larger survey. Now, if the usda, in cooperation with the Texas forest service, has done this survey, we would really like to be able to see that. As you may or may not know, the urban forestry board has been combined with the environmental commission, and we now have a tree -- an urban forest committee in the commission, and we're going to be looking at the trees from now on as a commission. We've always had the authority to recommend or deny application for the removal of heritage trees, but beyond that, we really -- now we're looking at the whole picture that the urban forestry board did before. So I'm really still trying to make sure that we get a good understanding of what the true urban forest is. And I don't know where we are with all that.

[3:23:14 PM]

I don't know if it's necessary, if the survey has been done. I just wanted you all to know that we're going to be looking at all these things from our commission, and hopefully, passing information on to you all that's pretty vital for the maintenance and the health of our urban forest. And I would really support greatly the new division, and their getting more funding for the care and maintenance of trees that we need so desperately in this part of the country. >> Pool: You know, I'm trying to remember, and I don't want to put mayor pro tem on the spot, but remember in audit and finance, I think we were looking at a contract for the inventorying of trees on private land. We had something along those lines. Maybe it wasn't in audit and finance, but I seem to remember a conversation that one of our colleagues, yeah, was involved in, and there was some question about private property and walking on -- you know, and what are you doing, and, well, we're just assessing the trees, and that sort of thing. Do you remember that? >> Tovo: I remember, and I think it was maybe a week ago, but it seems like -- >> Pool: Seems like a year ago. >> Tovo: I can't quite pull together all the details. But I will say, one, I really appreciate all the work you all have done and presented here today. I'll just say that part of what I can recall of part of the impetus for the resolution that gave rise to some of this conversation was about, you know, we were in the middle of a drought, there was a lot of discussion about the care of our trees. I think we had an audit, actually, of tree maintenance that was done, and it indicated a real need for some more resources in that area. And then at the same time, the parks department, I think, was and is still maintaining public trees in a lot of areas, and so we

[3:25:15 PM]

had tried through the budget or I had tried unsuccessfully through the budget to get a little more money through some other means, and what we could all agree on was maybe looking at it more holistically and looking at trees and the benefits they bring to the city from a better perspective, and then of course the staff have found some great ways to really streamline our operations to make our dollars stretch as far as possible. So thank you all for the work that you're doing. And I'll try to -- if I come up with any more details about the conversation you're talking about, I'll -- >> Pool: Yeah. It seems to me there was a contract and that portion of it was moving forward, in answer to Dr. Maxwell's question about where is that, with the assessment -- >> Yeah, I've not had erred that there's anything happening like that. I think Mr. Ambisi might know if there is something like that. >> Pool: Well, we will figure it out. I did have a couple of questions for y'all. Looking through the lovely book that you've given us here, on page 45 you talk about a focus point on cemetery trees, and this has been a concern, I know when we were looking at the cemetery master plan, the state of many of the trees in at least two or three of our historical cemeteries, and I notice that you have a focus point on them, and properly so, and that it says that pard will soon address long-term -- oh, that's the planning of the cemetery, so that piece has already been put into place. So I guess my question would be, where are we with moving forward on our assessment of the trees that have died and their replacement? Is there anyone who can speak for that? Oh, here comes Marty. Hi, folks. Thanks for being here today. >> Okay. I think I'm on. I'm laura Shoeman. I'm program manager with

[3:27:16 PM]

parks and Rex urban forestry. So we're currently charged with taking care of those cemetery trees. The cemetery master plan has been adopted. We have yet to begin implementation, as far as the tree goes --

trees go. However, as part of that plan, we did have a full survey of the trees in the cemeteries, completed. The only parts that were not surveyed were the wooded areas that are pretty much unused at this point. But we do have a very comprehensive inventory of trees in the cemeteries now, which is wonderful for planning and making some long-term changes to how we manage them. Most of -- very high level of care was recommended in the master plan. However, that is not currently funded. Right now, we have about \$50,000 in our budget that's earmarked towards cemetery tree care, which is well under what is actually needed. >> Pool: Is that something that you'll take up with the city manager when you put the pard budget together for fiscal '17? >> Yes. >> Pool: Okay. Good. Keep me apprised of that, and if the funds fall short and you need some additional assistance, let me know through the council efforts. It's definitely something that deserves the attention and the support and the funding so that we don't lose any more trees. >> I agree. >> Pool: I remember the drought back in 2011, it was so severe, I think I called up the city manager's office and -- just as a citizen, said, would you please send the water trucks and put water on the trees downtown, the ones that are growing out of the sidewalks. >> Yeah. >> Pool: The other question -- so thank you. Thank you for those efforts. The other question I had, and I don't know if this -- pard may want to stay there, too. This is on page 54, the decker Indian grass management plan. There's been a lot of interest in doing some development out at decker

[3:29:17 PM]

lake and lawn park. When we have those conversations -- and right now mostly it's coming from citizen-initiated interest in things to happen out at lake lawn, things like the decker Indian grass management plan, I -- this is -- I don't know much, if anything, about this, but it goes to the fact that this is a remnant of black land prairie, and we want to preserve the wild land and grasses that grow out there. Is this information that we have on this something that is communicated when people, you know, talk about developing our parks or come in with big plans on how to monetize the parks? >> I'll try to answer that one. Marty stump, assistant director with the parks & recreation department. You're absolutely right, when we look at parks like Walter E. Long, decker lake, we need to look at them comprehensively, look at the entire ecosystem there, and we do have areas that are part of a preserve area on the prairie, grass lines and so forth, so we've seen some proposals come through from the outside community of ideas for that park. We do have the intent and funding in place in this year's budget to begin a city-driven master plan for that park, and so certainly the knowledge that we have these, you know, very special and sensitive landscapes within the park need to be front and center in our thinking, particularly as we're looking at things like events and, you know, active recreation and other improvements on a site like that is to, first and foremost, protect what we have, and that includes the grass lands, as well as the trees. >> Pool: Okay. Thanks. Any other questions? Yes, ma'am. >> Chair pool, I just

[3:31:17 PM]

want -- I didn't want to leave what I said out there without making it clear that it's not about having more control over private trees. What it's about is at least getting some understanding of the level of urban forest that we have in the city in its entirety because I do think there's a way -- you mentioned something in this presentation, and then I think when our -- when we had a meeting earlier you mentioned something about how you established a value on trees that's just beyond the cost of that tree. I'm not familiar with that, but to me it would be really, really helpful to all of us if we got a really good understanding of the value and put

dollars to it, not just what we have here, but the larger picture of the value of the canopy of this city. Because it goes beyond just the dollar replacement value or whatever loss we have when a tree dies because of lack of care. It's a larger understanding of the value. And I think that would be so helpful, that, plus knowing how much -- I mean, I think you said that the public trees are only 15% of the urban forest? That's 15%. What does the 85% look like? And it's not trying to get more control over private property. It's about valuing what our asset is, as the city of Austin. Because this is one of the biggest assets we have. So I just wanted to be real clear about that. >> Pool: Yeah. >> Okay. Thank you. >> Pool: Points well taken. Thank you. All right. Is there anything else you all wanted to tell us or -- yeah. >> Okay. I did want to do a shout ever out again about the publication that's just come

[3:33:17 PM]

out, that we've literally just learned that it was released yesterday or else it would have been included as backup material. And it's -- we're in a really unique and fortunate position to have this. What this project is actually -- it's going to be a reoccurring inventory on an annual basis of trees on fixed sample plots throughout -- throughout the Austin city limits, so we will not only be able to learn a lot more about what we currently have, but we will be able to find trends in that data in the future. So the publication is up on the U.S. Forest service website now, and I definitely encourage everyone to take the time to look at it. I haven't even had a chance to read the whole thing yet, but we are in a very unique position. As Michael mentioned, Austin and Baltimore are the first urban areas to have received this analysis, and we are somewhat of a pilot-run project in that the data for Austin, rather than being collected over the span of five to ten years of just typical, it was collected all in one haul, in one year. So we have not only all of that data now, we have the report right now, and the data is being recollected every year. >> Well, you can always -- we'll request that you give a report to the environmental commission, too, on that, so that we can get that more widely -- the knowledge more widespread in the city, and perhaps it can come onto the city's website under your division at some point so that we can access it through the city of Austin as well. I'm just trying to make it more accessible, more available, and more -- so more of the public is aware of it. And I'm glad it's just been done. I'm not faulting anybody for not doing anything. Excuse me. I'm not faulting you all. I'm just saying that I'm

[3:35:19 PM]

really glad that it's happened, and I hope we're going to get more information on it, and I'll make sure that the environmental commission requests a report from you all on that so that we can at least get involved in it, since we're going to be dealing with trees. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. >> Pool: And I just echo what Dr. Maxwell said. Could you send us the link to the site for the federal report, to members of the committee here, plus Dr. Maxwell? >> Absolutely. >> Pool: And councilmember Zimmerman, did you have something? >> Zimmerman: I do. In this -- I've been going through the forest plan, and there's a photo in here that shows the bastrop fire. Terrible disaster. There are some issues we have, especially with the bcp, which I consider as nonexistent management and wildfire danger that's building here in our backyard. It seems that the bcp management focuses on acquiring property and fencing it off. And they're ignoring the terrible wildfire danger that the city has and the land that's not owned by private persons. And so that would be my recommendation, instead of talking about the 85% of the trees or the so-called forest that is not owned by the city, I think we need to get real serious about the property that the city or the bcp controls because this is where we're headed, under the current management. >> Pool: Appreciate your comments. Of course the bcp

isn't the topic that we're talking about here today, but -- >> Zimmerman: We're talking about trees, and we're talking about so-called urban forest, and I was just told that the city considers all this private land that it doesn't own as part of the forest. >> Pool: Okay. Thank you very much. >> Zimmerman: That would have to include the bcp. >> Pool: So just one last comment on that, we did have

[3:37:20 PM]

I think two presentations on the bcp and the relative flammability of the healthy forest, in my understanding, is that it actually is not very much at risk because they are -- that is healthy forest out there. But I'd be happy to bring a representative from the preserve staff in one more time to talk about that if that's something that you'd like, or I'm sure we could set up a meeting for you to have with them individually. >> Zimmerman: Well, the point is, if you're going to talk about a community or talk about the city area, urban forest, here's a map of it, too, and this is showing, you know, private property areas intermixed with city areas, including bcp areas. So if we're going to consider it together, we consider it together. We don't exempt bcp land when we're talking about the canopy. >> Pool: Okay. I don't think you all have any jurisdiction or authority over the balcones preserves; is that correct? Those lands? >> No. The project managers or the property managers are not here. Obviously, wildfire is a real issue and our wildfire division in AFD is staffing up to address those concerns. But it is an issue that we address when we look at management of our urban forest. >> Zimmerman: Okay. So I don't see them stepping up. I see a lot of talk. I live probably closer to these bcp open areas than anybody in here. It's literally, you know, connected to my backyard. And I don't see the management. And so I would be a powerful opponent of efforts to manage, you know, private property, private trees while ignoring the government's obligation, the danger we have in the bcp areas. If those things are going to be considered together, they need to be all considered together. It's very important. >> Pool: So I think we have

[3:39:22 PM]

a citizen communication. Ross Smith. Welcome, Mr. Smith. You have three minutes. And thank you, Laura and Marty, and Michael and Emily. Appreciate it. >> Yes. Hi. I noticed in the report from 2014 that Austin Energy was not included in the people that were part of the report, in generating the report, and I'm glad to hear that they are now covered in some way as part of this, because they have -- they have a shaky track record as far as the landscaping choices that they make on their facilities. If you ever drive past the substation on South Fifth Street, you'll notice that when they rebuilt it a few years ago, someone at Austin Energy decided that cedar trees as junipers were a good choice of screening the perimeter of the site. And so I'm glad to hear that they are now -- that you are working with them, but I'm kind of wondering, does anyone have a veto, if a department comes up with a truly cockamamie landscaping idea? >> So the city departments are all -- the tree regulations apply to all the city departments. If it's a code mandated requirement, they must comply just like any other applicant. Many times tree planting is not a code mandated requirement. The example used, I'm not sure if that was a requirement to plant trees there. >> I think they just wanted it to look pretty. >> That sure could have been. And there's -- so there's not - there's no type of veto that would be associated with a landscaping project that's not tied to a code requirement. >> Okay. Just wondering. >> Pool: Thanks, Mr. Smith. And thanks again to Mr. Ambisi and Mr. King. Looks like we have Marty Stump coming back up to make a presentation so item

[3:41:22 PM]

number 6, which is our last item. I have -- oh, no, we have 7. Okay. So I have a couple of speakers here, and Angela Robles, is Monica here? Is Cynthia Rodriguez here? Cynthia Rodriguez? >> I'm here. >> Pool: Hi. So Angelica, do you want to speak now or do you want to wait until after the presentation? After? Okay, great. We'll call you up then. All right. Mr. Stump. Briefing and possible action on parks & rec department's revised proposal for expenditure of fiscal 16 block grant funding and funding options for park improvement projects. And I think if I'm remembering right, this was a little over a million dollars that was put in the budget last year to address the top items from your -- the internal projects list that parks & rec wanted to move forward on, primarily I think we were looking at playgrounds? >> Uh-huh. >> Pool: And we put the money in the budget and asked you all to put it to good use. And so I guess what you're doing today is coming back to tell us the good use that you plan to put it to. >> Yes. Hello again. Marty stump, assistant director with the parks & recreation department. You are correct, madam chair. The funding we're talking about here is the block funding that was provided through the council process, fiscal year 2016. The total amount that was kind of in play, 1.15 million. The directive at the time back in October was for the

[3:43:24 PM]

department to consider that funding really a supplement to our ongoing capital program. It's within our budget now to begin to put into motion to make improvements on parkland. And I think the intent was that this funding have a citywide application, but that the department was asked to really look at where our needs existed. We understand and acknowledge and respect that the gave group in zip codes 44 and 45 likewise have a list of projects that they have promoted and done a lot of leg work and community-based advocacy, and so we want to acknowledge those projects as well. When we presented in December of 2015 our initial recommendations, we were asked to return, and we are here today as a return visit to come back with a revised proposal that may show a little bit of a different spending breakdown than we had initially shown that would acknowledge the hard work done by the folks in 44 and 45. So one thing I do want to point out is, in addition to the presentation that you have, as part of the backup, we provided a spreadsheet. And that spreadsheet represents, again, the project list within the gave group, a lot of work done with neighborhood park adopters to come up with a list of improvements that they are seeking and we are very supportive of, on their specific parks. Brian block, who's with me here today, and myself have spent considerable amount of time with the park adopters over the last two months, visiting the sites, looking at their wants and aspirations, and have built

[3:45:24 PM]

that into our proposal. One of the things I do want to say is that the improvements that the parks department is recommending do focus on playgrounds, and we'll talk about that here in a little bit as to why. Not all of the projects proposed by gave are playground projects. There are other projects including lighting and trails, drinking fountains, really in the spirit of community building and public safety and extending the hours of use within the park. And, again, our department supports that list very much. And we are committed to following through on those projects in terms of reviewing them, meeting with aisd, going through our feasibility phase so we can truly understand how we can achieve those projects in the future. From a department's perspective, we wanted to remain focused and targeted on the playground improvement

projects, and I'll talk about those a little bit now, but I do want to certainly acknowledge the hard work that the gave group has put in, and for everyone to understand that we ultimately want to get to the same finish line here together. So, again, just a general outline here. I did give a broad summary of why we're here. Project was initiated again through the fy16 budget process. Parks department is following through on the request to come back with a recommended set of projects. We had recommended the playground projects in part due to a couple of things. One is some emerging trends in playground design, and that this department and the city has embraced and is moving forward with. There's a lot of anyways-based play and very site-integrated play opportunities that not only benefit children, but families as well, and it really is part of a growing attention to public health and community that playgrounds can provide. We have a playground assessment document that was completed in 2015 that really has become a guiding set of projects for us as we

[3:47:25 PM]

move forward. The playground work as well that I'm talking about here, specifically as it relates to community health, really supported by the imagine Austin, as well as a report that was delivered in 2011 from a work group, a citizen work group, the urban parks work group that really, likewise, featured children's play as an opportunity to create stronger communities and healthier communities. This slide here, just some visuals representing the sorts of things I'm talking about when you envision a children's play area, traditional metal and brightly colored metal and plastic playgrounds are sort of what we've seen over the past 12, 15, 20 years. The types of images here that integrate stone work, landscaping, and natural materials are the type of projects we're talking about. And very quickly, some examples of projects that we've done here in the past three to five years that represent this type of improvement. At the lower left there, that's dove springs district park and it's a playground that's been, I think, transformative to that park, and I think the community feels likewise. The playground was completed here a year ago, versus, I think, increase that park, there's families and kids enjoying that park and it's a catalyst for other park improvement. We installed fitness equipment along the perimeter trail that then views the playground area. We've just launched a sports field renovation project through a grant project there, likewise at dove springs district park, which really is an outcome of the forward momentum that that playground provided. So when we -- if you may recall back in December, we came forward with a list of project -- potential projects that were playgrounds, 15 to 16 projects, based upon a set of evaluation criteria again that we look for the highest and best opportunities from the playgrounds that have been identified in our

[3:49:27 PM]

primary program. You know, leveraging opportunities, the context of the playground, is it a good site for it, the permitting track. We've revised that list, we've narrowed it down. The master list which we brought in December was a broader list and exceeded the available funding. So what we did, we narrowed down that list to a set of what we consider the most easily achievable outcomes here. And so those projects are listed there. It's Odom school park, Lucy read school park, Keeling, east woods neighborhood park, Zaragoza, Perry, and mountain view. We did not attempt to have a playground in every council district, but rather to address what we felt to be the most implement able projects. Odom school park is one that is on the gava list, and we have met with the sponsors of that park and the adopters of that park, talking about the needs of that park overall. We feel that this program can address the critical need there at the playground. It's been

communicated to us that there are other needs in terms of site drainage and trail improvements, lighting drinking fountains and those sort of things that we want to continue to keep on the radar and move forward with, but we do see this as an opportunity to address that sizable playground in the area. And the reason it's really the largest playground here is there's some significant site and contextual things that we can address at the same time as far as site drainage and some other adult gathering spaces associated with it. So this was our initial list, and it adds up to that 1.15. With that list, we then thought of leveraging opportunities, how can we extend the effectiveness of this program. We approached our partners in the Austin parks foundation to see if they would, likewise, like to participate in this process as they did dove springs

[3:51:30 PM]

district park. I saw -- is she here? Yeah, she's here. Their board votes in March to approve funding, but there's a strong feeling that this \$200,000 is at least a verbal commitment from apf. Just kind of due to the financial mechanisms, we decided to have apf sponsor one of the projects from our original list, and, therefore, we can extend the project list, in this case by three project sites, Jocelyn, Norman, and onion creek. Joslin would be a playground that's on gava's list, a priority project for that park sponsor, would be a small nature-based play area. At Norman school park, that would be the installation cost for equipment that we were an to purchase at the end of last fiscal year, but we did not have the installation budget, so it's waiting for the installation. And then at onion creek metro park, and this is also from the gava list, this is to complete a project, playground replacement project that was done here in the past year and a half. This would complete the Ada satisfactorily route that would provide the installation of a drinking fountain which are on the gava list. With that, that's our proposal. We would love to be able to move forward with the final design and construction of these projects. It was really our goal early on to get this money put to work for us during the fiscal year. You know, we've spent a couple months here fine tuning our list. We need to launch forward and address the improvements. I do respect and understand that our neighbors and a broader wish list and may speak about our improvements beyond or instead of the playground improvements, but again, we want to be attentive to those requests, but this is our proposal as

[3:53:31 PM]

it stands. And I'm happy to entertain any questions. >> Pool: That's great. Thank you so much and especially thanks for continuing to meet with folks from gave and Austin interfaith and working so closely with them. I see we have a good representation from both groups here today. I think -- is Brian here too? Brian blocker, are you here? Thank you also for all of the work. Any -- any particular questions? >> Garza: I have a question. >> Pool: Yes. >> Garza: So the recommendations, both the first and this list, do they -- did they come specifically from the findings from the playground assessment? >> Yes, they did, with the exception of Joslin, I believe all of the other playgrounds are what we would consider priority projects in the playground assessment. I think as we discussed in December, we had critical playgrounds, then we had those that were in poor condition and needing replacement, so we're beginning to chip away at those that are listed as poor. I do believe that all of the projects on this list were poor or moderate within our playground replacement program. Joslin is a little bit of an outlier. It's a playground that doesn't exist today. It's on a school park. The school playground is existing but it's behind a fence and not available to public use. And so another thing our department is really trying to focus on, on our school parks, is to have a children's play area that's available during the school human resource. Hours. >> Garza: Okay. So in your presentation, it says that from the 2012

bond program, the playground replacement program, that's where it was prioritized. I guess my question is, the money that came out of the block funding for this -- for the additional improvements, I'm just curious why there was such a concentration on the playground assessment plan. I don't remember that being

[3:55:31 PM]

the specific direction that was ever discussed when this 1.5 million was discussed. And, in fact, the -- the presentation says 1-5 block funding -- block grant for park improvements. So park improvements are such -- and, you know, speaking to the gava list, that's what a lot of their suggestions were. It was a more broad ask than such a narrowed playground. >> I can explain that a little bit. You know, we gravitated to or focused upon playgrounds because it was an identified critical need to the department and we're wanting to be strategic and thoughtful as we address park improvement needs through the playground assessment, we've had certified playground inspectors go out and assess the condition of those playgrounds, so it's a known condition that we have safety considerations. And from our perspective, when there's a decision-making point between replacing and upgrading an existing facility versus adding new components on a site, drinking fountains, benches, picnic tables and so forth, we tend to look for favorably upon taking care of or replacing those that have deferred maintenance or safety concerns and considerations, as a first priority for the department. And it's not to say that other improvements like lighting and picnic tables and trails wouldn't be valuable in many of the cases identified by gave, but from a -- from the standpoint of the department, in terms of prioritization, that's what we chose to come back with as our recommendation, and that's what we felt was our charge at that point. >> Pool: And my memory of it, too, because I think I was, I guess, the main person who was organizing the funding through budget for parks, was a conversation I had with the mayor pro tem about playgrounds in particular, and there was a concern

[3:57:33 PM]

about the pebbles, I remember just -- >> Pea gravel. >> Pool: Just pea gravel, even that one thing was talked about pretty extensively, that there was a lot of rehabilitation and different sorts of materials to be used that would be maybe harder and also not harm children if they were to fall on it. So I know from my perspective, actually, the playgrounds were a fairly -- a high priority, and I believe the mayor pro tem shared that interest as well, though she's not here right now. Director Hensley, did you want to weigh? >> Sarah Hensley, director of parks & recreation. That's correct. I remember when I was asked -- councilmember Garza is absolutely right. There was no direction specifically, but I know I talked about specifically that the 1.150, from a staff perspective, one of our highest priorities was playgrounds. And that all over the city, we have playgrounds, some that have been -- a couple that have been closed, two on school property, one we just opened, cook, that was fenced, but the others are in such a state of disrepair or not accessible through pea gravel or even access from a parking lot, as well as the infrastructure is outdated and unsafe, that we're at a point of needing to either replace or repair certain parts of it. So, you know, I wish we had more money because I think -- you know, every item on that list that our friends from gave have, many of those are important, and we'd love to see funding to be able to do them, but a lot of those are new, and my only other comment with that is, with a new water fountain, with new lights come bills that we do not have general funding for, and so we look at this as one-time funding, meaning what could get us the biggest bang for the buck. And that's why we went with this. But we also understand

[3:59:33 PM]

there's a plethora of needs that we would love to be able to take care of as well. >> Pool: Right. Well, and with all our city projects, we keep whittling at the list, and I think everyone understands that we can't make all of the improvements and the repairs in one fiscal year, but we do -- that's why we have prioritizations and why we have list of projects that are shovel-ready and we work really hard to move through them and also to bring new projects onto the list. I did want to ask, Marty, do you could come back in in April and gives a presentation on park lighting. I also recognize that back in the day we shared open space and parkland with the school district deliberately, it was an agreement to have that parkland. I know the schools close. They use the property up until certain hours and the parks may be alert, and I don't know myself what our policy is on park lighting but is that something y'all could do for news April? >> Absolutely. Very glad to do so. It is a complicated issue and different on every site, particularly with school campuses and where the power supply comes from, what is lit today, what is the intent of the lighting, because lighting, if not done properly, can become an attractive nuisance, we can create more problems than solve. There's a cost, not only a capital cost but ongoing utility bill and maintenance cost in keeping the lights burning. On sites, typically on parkland, we have lighting to extend the hours of play and recreation but we have a 10:00 P.M. Curfew so the decision there is the lights go down at 10:00 P.M. Or the security lights intended to burn through the light and each site has a different nuance and we have to be sensitive to adjoining land

[4:01:34 PM]

users, dark sky ordinance. It is something that we want to address. It's a specific request within the gava list. There are some sites like franklin park that do have some lighting in place but need a couple of addition. That's low-hanging fruit, we could probably do that relatively easy. If it's a site not currently lit or part of a school campus, aisd may have a different idea about when the lights burn and don't, those need to be coordinated but I do think it would be a good idea to collectively along at it and say what is our overall poll is weaver making a shift toward energy conservation measures so there maybe opportunity to get funding through other departments, sustainability office and others who may be able to say, hey, we'll partner with you to get all of those lights in led and take out the old incandescent fixtures. Yeah, we'll be happy to come back. >> Pool: April, is that a good time frame for you? >> Animal. >> Pool: All right. Any other oxygens I'll go ahead and take the speaker. >> Garza: I do. >> Pool: Yes, vice chair Garza. >> Garza: I guess the play scape at odd openly, is that city -- Odom, is that and I-owned. >> Odom is a school park and the playground is that which is the parks and requisition department's responsibility. There's also play equipment on the site that falls under the school district's responsibility. Oftentimes it's hard to tell on the site which is which and I think we have new signage at Odom that delineates that but from the standpoint of the playground we're looking at it is that which is our responsibility as a city. >> Pool: I also wanted to mention I know that the city just won a planning grant from the national league of cities for the children and nature network, and I'm really pleased about that. Is that something that you folks are going to be involved with? >> Absolutely. Actually, we'll be kicking that off first week of March and the goal is to identify,

[4:03:34 PM]

through not just the city stakeholders but other stakeholders outside of the city, gaps in services, programmatically and otherwise, to make sure that we are making sure to expose children and families,

particularly in underserved areas, contact with nature, which could be in the form of playscapes, programs, staff-led or self-led efforts. So we're partnering with west cav discovery center, the office of sustainability, public works, library, you name it. We'll audibly working as a city team, a technical group, to work with someone to do a gaps analysis and then come back with recommendations. Our hope is we'll actually have recommendations in time for this budget year. >> Pool: I submitted a name from the national wildlife federation to the mayor's office for someone from outside the city. >> Good. >> Pool: To work with y'all on that, Mary fowler. She's a senior educator at nwf and it was when I worked at national wildlife federation in Austin that I learned about Richard and the natural play scape movement and I'm a keen, keen supporter as you know and cheerleader for that whole approach and really look forward to the planning grant that that may have, give the foothold for us to make real significant changes and find ways to make playground equipment that's cheaper and lasts longer than the plastic stuff out there. >> Yes. >> Pool: My understanding, depending on how the planning grant goes, there's an additional grant, 50,000 for implementation. >> Yes. >> Pool: And there's only half a dozen cities around the nation that were granted. >> Eight cities now and it will be narrowed down to -- >> Three, I believe. >> Three. >> Three capital grants. >> And we're bound and determined we're going to be one of those three. >> Pool: I hope so. I think maybe our friends who are sitting out in the audience with us here today with interfaith and go Austin

[4:05:37 PM]

bama Austin would also maybe be a helpful support group to hope we get that additional grant money. >> Garza: Can I add a comment real quick? >> Pool: You bet. >> Garza: I voiced this concern I think when we first had this presentation, but I had concerns about block grant funding precisely for the -- the issue that we're faced with here, and I think I might have said it during budget too. Because when we have these -- and at no fault to councilmembers or staff, a vague indication of what the money is going to be used for and then there's expectations set by the community and then when those expectations aren't met -- I don't know what the speakers are going to say but I'm assuming they're going to say something to the effect that we had different expectations. So I think that's something we really need to think about during this next budget session, is we really need to be specific about the things that we're -- I know that, you know, for some folks it turns into a -- some might be concerned about ward politics but, you know, that's our job as councilmembers, to fight for things in our district that we feel are necessary or in other people's districts that we feel are necessary. Anyway, I gist hope, moving forward, that we have -- we give more specific direction so there's not this leaving room for interception of what was intended. >> Councilmember, I will tell you Marty has agreed and we will certainly want to continue to work with interfaith and gave and bamas Austin to keep going through this list and find ways to do these things. And to fine-tune this so that when we prepare our capital budget and others to ask for dollars, we'll have specific items that we know we need to get funded.

[4:07:38 PM]

Some of those -- and that's why it's so difficult for us. Some of those have the general fund implications is, and without having those dollars, which we've done before in the past, we've built things but didn't have the money to operate or maintain it, and I just don't think that's responsible until I can say, was that we need to do but this is what it's going to cost year-round. But they've been wonderful to work with, always supportive of pard and we want to continue to be supportive working with them and make sure we are trying to address

their needs because there are viable needs and we have them all over the city, but there's specific needs that need to be addressed. >> Garza: I also want to add, I went to the Houston park opening of all the work that had been done there, and they had such a wonderful things to say about our parks department and how the person that they worked with was great and they got lighting and they got a lot of great things over there. So I look forward to -- thank you for your work in working with the community, and I look forward to seeing all the -- all the additional wonderful things we can do to be responsive to community concerns. >> Pool: And don't be shy about bringing your budget needs when we convene that effort in a few months. Because it will be really important for us to know specifically what you're looking for so that we can forward those items that may be missed by the city manager with his list. Mayor pro tem. >> Tovo: I want to concur with councilmember Garza, I think there were a couple budget allocations we made and there were I believe a diversity of opinions about how that money was going to be spent on the council and I think we -- there are only four of us here but I think we need to make sure that doesn't happen again, that we have a real clear understanding of what the intent is for that -- for that funding, and I'm not speaking just about this one. There are a couple that I would put in that category. >> Zimmerman: So along those lines, what I made a big point of is entrusting our local

[4:09:38 PM]

elected councilmembers in each of the districts that know what -- more specifically what the constituents want to prioritize on the spending. So I guess that was kind of shot down with the idea, oh, that's ward politics but I hope I agree with councilmember Garza. I think the elected representatives in each of the districts, they should know the most about what constituents want. I still want to move in that direction. >> Tovo: And I just will respectfully say I don't want to move in that direction but I do think that it is absolutely reasonable to ask people to, you know, help our staff -- I mean usually -- anyway, this is a longer conversation. I think that we need to make budget allocations to identify the highest needs in the city, and that's the way that we should make those allocations. >> Pool: Let's hear from our speaker, Angelica roles and, let's see, I think -- >> [Off mic] >> Pool: Sure, Mariana [indiscernible], I think he's still here and Cynthia Rodriguez, are you still here? Yes, okay. So that's nine minutes. And it says here that Angelica is with the Odem park and go Austin bamas Austin. >> [Off mic] >> Pool: So the light is on. There you go. >> I'm the community director for go Austin bamas Austin. Thank you for having us. I'll be translating. Angelica will first read her statement in Spanish and then I'll read in English. And I do want to state that we are presenting as neutral on this item but we do want the following things to go on record. The thoughts from the 11 teams

[4:11:39 PM]

that have been convening for several years to go on record about the process. >> Pool: Thank you. And welcome to you both. >> Thank you. >> Pool: To all of y'all. >> [Speaking non-english language]

[4:15:44 PM]

>> Pool:thank you. >> Translation, my name is Angelica, I am a member of the op team and a leader with go Austin, bamas Austin, gava. The imagine Austin comprehensive plan states Austin's greatest asset is its people. Passion about their city, committed to its improvement and determined to see this vision become a reality. We are residents of 78744 and 78755 who are a passionate, committed and determined. Today we

are also disappointed. We welcome the needed investments in our parks. This is why the gave teams have organized our communities and talked in person to hundreds of our neighbors around each park. We officially adopted our parks and have leveraged hundred of thousands of dollars to realize our action plans, cooperating with the city and school district and writing grants to leverage private funds. We met with the parks department staff to price out all of the improvements desired in our parks that would eliminate the biggest barriers to physical activity in our neighborhoods. We spent countless hours talking to our councilmembers during the budget process to help create this block grant. We knew it wasn't enough for everything needed, but it was a start. Today, we are here because we know that a variety of other funding sources invest in our playscapes, including the Austin parks foundation and St. David's foundation. We also know that none of these funding sources, by their rules, will invest in lighting and tracks. So the city is a critical partner to bring about these types of improvements. Because pard plans to use this park block grant to fund the play scape package, instead of the priorities specifically identified by the community that would help people get to and use the park, we would like council and staff to

[4:17:45 PM]

identify funds and set a time line to implement the investments and improvements we have requested and that could be funded from this park block grant. We welcome the investment in ohm park but a play scape was not a high priority for this park and we know the infrastructure needs of Odom park and our other parks remain unmet, the parks will continue to be underutilized. We look forward to working with councilmembers and city staff on the improvements we need in our parks. We hope the parks and recreation department will prioritize at adequate investment during the up coming budget process to implement our park improvement plans which include lighting, tracks, trails, water mountains, physical equipment and other items that make parks accessible. We would like to see this brought forward by the parks department for the following budget process. Thank you. >> Pool: Thank you very much. Any comments or questions? Okay. Thank you. >> Thank you. >> Pool: That was the only speaker. So what I'd like to ask is our staff and gave to work together to tee up, as we mentioned before you all spoke, to tee up a select number of high-priority items, the needs that you're talking about. We'll have a presentation on lighting, best practices, in April, and I think staff can also explain how that all works. Restrooms, water fountains. And we can address them in our next budget cycle.

[4:19:48 PM]

I will caution you that with the needs that are everywhere in the city, as you acknowledge, we will put a list together. We may or may not be able to tick off every single item in fiscal '17 but it would be a good thing to have the list pulled together so that we know what we're working on and, who knows, we might be able to do it, depending on the cost and other needs throughout the city. But I think it is a good thing to integrate the items that you are concerned about into the staffing efforts that our folks will be putting together and of course our offices here too as well. Director Hensley, does that sound doable to you? Or Mr. Stump. >> We were already collaborating. >> Pool: Already planning it all out. >> Trying to figure out what it is. >> Pool: All right. And I -- and I appreciate what staff is saying about -- especially the lighting. If we put lighting in, there's the installation, there's the cost, and then there's also the dark skies ordinance that we have in the city. So -- but I think there's a way to have lighting at a certain level in certain areas at certain times that may eliminate the play scape areas in a much more accessible way for folks, and we certainly want the gray grounds to be used at the highest level possible. Are y'all interested in the natural playscapes ideas? Does that at all sound -

- if you're familiar with what they are? It's a whole different way of looking at playgrounds. >> We have not heard that interest from any of the parks teams. I think they have been talked about by staff at different times, and it has not been

[4:21:48 PM]

something that has resonated. Community has asked for the replacement in some cases of some things that are already there and are highly used, such as swings, really simple things like that, that children really want to see and some accessibility issues around the type of playscapes that are in place. >> Pool: The natural play -- >> With regard to dove springs because the dove springs district park, as, as you all know, received a heighth amount of investment and part of that was the nature-based playscape Marty showed a picture of. The community responded incredibly positively. From everything that I have seen and heard in dove springs, the [indiscernible] To that type of playscape is very positive. The issue that the residents are pointing to is the accessibility of the park it because of lighting issues, drainage issues, and in some cases Ada, which is partially addressed at onion creek and we're really glad but I think empties Robles' point here is even if you put a new playscape if the park is pitch black and you can't safely walk the trail area, for example, which is where a lot of people use for exercise every day, then the playscape itself is not going to get people out using the park. That's the concern of the community members. So there's certainly not a resistance to the nature. Based play, but it's these other sort of infrastructure eular issues, and as was mentioned it's hard to -- but it's been done at Houston park, as councilmember Garza mentioned, and it really was just a matter of bringing the department -- bringing aid, pard, A.P.D., everybody together, and we find a way to make it work. >> Pool: That sounds good. All right. Thank you all very much. >> Garza: If I can just add as the councilmember who

[4:23:48 PM]

represents this district. I agree, playscapes are great but it's almost more basic essentials that are being requested, like benches. I understand the ongoing cost of water mountains but families aren't going to use a park if they don't have a water fountain, don't have a place to sit. It's funny, after become a mother, how many I realize I want to sit sometimes and not on the floor because it's harder to get up these days. Anyway, it's really basic things that are being asked for in this area. >> If I can make one more comment, and I think we've mentioned this in previous committee meetings but there's third-party evaluation going on in these zip codes and the lighting has been in place at Houston elementary park, the use of that park area, it's a huge campus, it's gone up 30% to 40% in terms of people are obviously playing soccer but there's people out there on bikes. We're seeing the dials move on physical activity when we provide lighting and that lighting is only on until the park is closed. No neighbors have complained because they all were -- they gave input in the process. >> Pool: Well, this time of year, too, it's when you want to be outside and it also gets dark earlier. >> A.p.d. Has already reported that crime has gone down in those areas so that is very significant in the ability of the community to use the park. And not at all the situation -- I think with more light, people are less apt to commit crimes because they can be seen and that's being proven by the lights that have been installed. >> Pool: I thank you all for coming. >> Sorry. >> Tovo: Thank you for mentioning that research. That's really very interesting. Can you remind me who is doing the third-party evaluation? >> Yeah. That's coming from the UT school of public health. They are tracking utilization. They're also conducting door to door surveys and they have a cohort of 300 children and families that they're following for five years.

[4:25:52 PM]

So that began in baseline in 2012 in dove springs and 2013 or 2015 in [indiscernible] So they've been capturing that data, specifically from the areas around Houston elementary park and we've seen similar increases in dove springs since all the investment. That's under Dr. Alexander Evans and [indiscernible] Me UT school of public health and that can be found on their public website. >> Tovo: Some of that data is already out? >> I can. We can provide you with a report for gave that actually cites some of those data and there's maps for children's optimal health that really helps visualize. >> Tovo: I'm real familiar with the children's optimal health mapping but not really with the information you just provided and it strikes me if we see a decrease in crime in particular areas as a result of lighting, to me that speaks to working with -- looking at our general fund and thinking about, you know, we invest in public safety and perhaps we invest in public safety by providing ongoing lighting costs. And so being able to quantify that I think is really critical, and I hope that we can do that before the budget process. >> Zimmerman: One question. >> Pool: Sure. >> Zimmerman: So let me ask you the question I've been asking before, is obviously you're engaged. You show up here. You're very, very knowledgeable on the subject, but as you can kind of see, there are different opinions in each community about what the priorities ought to be. Some people like more spent on parks, others on swimming pools. So there are some mutually exclusive uses for the money. So it seems to me right now we have an unelected bureaucracy and they're task with trying to sort out these conflicts between one group wants this, another group wants that. I don't feel comfortable that our appointed managers are in this position of trying to arbitrate between groups that have conflicting demands. So from your view point, wouldn't it make sense to have

[4:27:53 PM]

more of the decision-making with your elected councilmember and the councilmember directs city staff and then if the community is unhappy, they can show it by voting. If they're happy or unhappy they reflect that by voting? >> I think that there is some value to that, and specifically there has been a lot of input that has been possible to councilmembers through the new 10-1 system. We ask that we work together, the three entities, throughout processes, because in some cases there are long standing plans, master plans, that are done without input of community, per Se. They may be -- analyses, but it's not the type of analyses that comes from lived experience. I think there is a large value and that is what we are doing in these communities on an ongoing basis and the add value we bring of boots on the background, if you will, to be able to do that on an on going basis, to inform decisions in realtime. So I do think there's a lot of value and that the three entities should be in the sort of communication together. There is a need also for content expertise and the way that department staff is most posed to provide, but that needs to happen in imitation with community -- combination with community who has that lived experience about what will be useful to the barriers that are very real in the community that they live in. >> Pool: Thank you so much. >> Zimmerman: This is important. I just have -- >> One response to councilmember Zimmerman. I wanted to bring quickly a point that one of the park adopters brought up in a recent meeting with pard, which is that -- so the folks you're hearing from are representing the gave physical activity sector, 11 park and creek adoption teams. And I agree that there's value to consulting with councilmembers. I believe that pard is the -- they are the content experts on how, and in terms of, like, how do you actually get these improvements done. So we do all need to get together. But there is a tremendous

[4:29:53 PM]

resource in park adoption teams because they're the resident-led teams that live in the area and are experts in their community. And so there was a suggestion from a park adopter at Franklin Park to say when you want to make improvements to a park, why not go first to your park adopters? Bring them in from the get-go and then you have that community expertise as you're making the decision, as opposed to having input on a decision that's already made. >> Zimmerman: So the question I have is, is the question of community. This word is thrown around constantly, community, community. You would not acknowledge that I have some divergent views in a particular community -- I can have diametrically opposed points of view. It frankly happens all the time. >> Pool: Mr. Zimmerman, thank you so much. We actually have to move on. >> Zimmerman: I actually am not quite done. We need a way to measure who the community is, right? >> Pool: These two ladies don't have the ability to engage in the debate with you. >> Zimmerman: These are constituents and I want to hear from them. I've been listening to staff and you. I want to hear from the community. >> Thank you, councilmember Pool. No further comment. >> Pool: Thank you so much. So number 7 is discussion and possible action regarding a resolution directing the city manager to engage stakeholders to develop a conceptual plan that identifies a vision for the streets, parks and plaza around the metrorail downtown station. And do we have staff here for that? Or -- >> Tovo: This is an item from council. >> Pool: Okay. I see Christy here from Capital Metro. >> Tovo: And Melissa from Downtown Austin Alliance and I believe she is available as a resource if folks have questions. I appreciate you both being here and, really, we've worked very closely with both of these folks in developing the resolution. We did talk about it a little bit at work session so maybe it's most appropriate just to

[4:31:54 PM]

jump in and answer any questions but I wanted to say that after yesterday's work session, we did get some suggested language from the parks department that's a bit different. Really it's some additional information about [indiscernible] Square and historical context so I have some additional language that I'm going to, at the appropriate time, suggest we include in the resolution. >> Pool: This is in our backup? >> Tovo: Maybe if it's appropriate I could just invite Ms. Barry if they have any additional thoughts. As we talked about yesterday this is an attempt to bring together individuals and organizations that are already interested in this area to do some kind of focused discussions on the mobility issues, as well as the cultural assets in that area. >> Thank you, Mayor Pro Tem. I'd be happy to start off here. My name is Melissa Barry, vice president of planning with the Downtown Austin Alliance. And the Downtown Austin Alliance is, for those of you who aren't familiar with us, is a nonprofit funded by downtown property owners, and we engage with a variety of stakeholders and partners on quality of life issues downtown. And this is one really important project for us downtown. And I think what you heard yesterday from Mr. Derr was primarily focused on the transportation and mobility concerns relate to that area and a 2-phased approach for how we may begin to resolve some of those. Certainly the Downtown Austin Alliance is concerned about transportation and mobility concerns in the area but we would also like to begin to address the public space and public realm improvements in that area in a more comprehensive way. So looking at Brush Square is one of our three remaining historic squares and the integration of the transit

[4:33:55 PM]

plaza part of capital metro's project, waller creek, the promenade and trying to understand how all these new developments that are coming online in the area fit together in a more comprehensive approach for this quadrant of downtown is what we're looking at. And we are in support of this resolution. We pretty much all the work that's been done on this. We're in support of capital metro's proposed improvements because it's going to really use that -- the resource that exists more efficiently. And so -- and we've offered to assist in any necessary face one facilitation that might be needed to get all the partners together to understand what the scope looks like, how to phase it, what funding might be available, what funding is needed, and really what are the next steps to move forward. There's a very short time line for some of these decisions that need to be made in order to get council in a place and cap metro in a place where the interlocal agreement can go to council. And if we don't really understand the options for the public space and for the mobility concerns, we're concerned that this project will not be able to move forward and we really want to see it be able to move forward. So that -- if there's any questions, I'm happy to answer them. >> Pool: Mayor pro tem. >> Tovo: No, I don't have any. >> Pool: Openly. >> Tovo: I'm pretty familiar with the project. >> Pool: I am too. >> Garza: I have a question. We had a presentation -- I'm on the cap metro board. We had a presentation at cap metro. My understanding was this was already -- a lot of this was already happening. This -- this collaboration. >> Yes, councilmember, you're correct. A lot of stuff had gotten started, but not totally formalized. You know, we had been working through the downtown station. You got a presentation on that -- Christy willheight with cap metro public relations.

[4:35:57 PM]

Apologize. Yes, it had started but this more formalized that effort and directs staff to work with the partners already starting to work together. That's not to say, staff has already been somewhat involved but I think to take it to the next level and to invest in the analysis it requires a direction from council. >> Garza: Okay, thank you. >> Pool: Yeah, I appreciated the presentation that you came to my office to give me, Christy. It was really informative and I did pick up there was a little bit of friction or a little bit of rub with some other opinions for downtown, but so it's probably good that we have this to formalize the work going forward. Is there anything else that you wanted to add? Okay. >> Tovo: I only other thing would I just -- I think the easiest way to show the changes might be to put them up on the -- do you have like a red line? I forgot what we call that now in this high tech world. So I would ask the committee if it feels it's got enough information at this point to do so just to approve -- to recommend approval to the full council of the resolution in our backup with the changes that we're going to see here in a minute. And so if this version is approved, this would be the version that actually moves forward to council. So with apologies for the editing remarks, it just adds some historical information, some additional contextual information that I think is appropriate. I appreciate the parks

[4:37:59 PM]

department's staff additions. Actually one of those paragraphs appears later. So one is a move of a paragraph up higher, and then the other two are sort of -- >> Pool: Who all do you have as cosponsors? Does this have cosponsors? >> Tovo: It has cosponsors. >> Pool: Who all is on that? Do you remember. >> Tovo: Yes, I do. >> Pool: Am I on it? >> Tovo: I'm going to get to that in a minute. >> Pool: Okay. >> Tovo: Councilmember -- I have a few going forward. I just want to be sure I'm right. Councilmember Houston, Renteria, and kitchen. >> Pool: Can you add me? >> Tovo: Yes. Thank you for your -- and, actually, so we'll -- so I guess now I would

move approval of that. >> Pool: Is there a second? >> Tovo: Can we see the other side? I think there is some additional -- we have only just a half of that piece. Hopefully I've written nothing odd -- so that's the rest of the additional paragraph. So you can see this paragraph just moved up earlier and then the additional was added. Okay. So that's -- I move approval. >> Pool: And we have a second from vice chair Garza. Any other conversation or anything more from the good of the cause? All in favor? It's unanimous with councilmember Zimmerman having left the meeting. >> Tovo: Thank you. Thank you both so much for being here and all your work on this issue. >> Pool: And I think we are done unless there's anything else to do. We -- oh, you know what? Next month we're going to have a joint meeting with public utilities, which is kind of cool because there's so much

[4:39:59 PM]

overlap between the two and we're going to talk about the flood mitigation task force work and get a status report from them. So we weren't going to meet in March so it will be a specific called meeting but I think it's on the date that we otherwise would have met. >> [Off mic] >> Pool: Absolutely, M 5, it's my -- it's it's my park day and many of the parks around town are advertising for assistance, for volunteering, and I think the city has a sign-up on the website. And I know my staff is going to be working hard up at walnut creek district park and I assume that everybody else will be enjoying being outside and helping during it's my park day. All right. Any other announcements or anything? Thank you, everyone. Appreciate it all.