

**COMMITTEE ON OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY  
MEETING MINUTES**

April 27, 2016

THE AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY CONVENED IN A REGULAR MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 2016 AT 2PM IN THE BOARDS & COMMISSIONS ROOM, FIRST FLOOR, ROOM 1101, CITY HALL 301 W. 2<sup>ND</sup> STREET.

**Chair Leslie Pool called the committee meeting to order at 2:06 p.m.**

**Committee Members in Attendance:**

Chair Leslie Pool  
Vice Chair Delia Garza  
Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo  
Council Member Don Zimmerman

**Committee Members Absent:** Ex-officio Member Jane Rivera, Ex-officio Member William Moriarty

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

An amendment was made on the minutes from February 24, 2016 on item 7 to change the vote from 3-1 to 3-0-1, as CM Zimmerman was not on the dais for the vote. Approval of the amended minutes was made on CM Garza's motion, and on MPT Tovo's second on a 4-0 vote.

**2. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION GENERAL**

Mary Engel

**ITEMS FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION**

- 3.** Briefing and discussion regarding the Cities Connecting Children to Nature planning grant.

No action taken.

- 4.** Briefing and discussion regarding the Travis County Expo Center Market Study.

No action taken.

**8. FUTURE ITEMS**

Discussion of future Items.

**ADJOURN**

Chair Leslie Pool adjourned the meeting at 3:20 PM.

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## **COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **COMMITTEE ON OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

**Date:** April 27, 2016

**Agenda Item #:** 3

**Agenda Item:** Briefing and discussion regarding the Cities Connecting Children to Nature planning grant.

**Vote** No vote was taken.

**Sponsors/Department:** Parks and Recreation Department (PARC)

**Presenters:** Margaret Russell, Parks and Recreation Department, Julia Campbell, Parks and Recreation Department, Molly Stevens, Executive Director of West Cave Outdoor Discovery Center, Hayden Brooks, Co-founder of the Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin, Patrick Beyer, Parks and Recreation Department

#### **Summary of Discussion**

- Margaret Russell, Project Manager with PARC, introduced the grant. The City of Austin is one of six cities nationwide who has received a \$25,000 planning grant from the project partners for Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) that will help fund an implementation plan to increase equitable and abundant connections between children and nature. The Parks and Recreation Department has dedicated an additional \$25,000 in capital planning funding to assist in the planning effort.
- Julia Campbell, Project Coordinator with PARC explained that PARC will lead the planning process in partnership with 10 other City of Austin departments that have pledged support. Local partners include Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center, Children in Nature Collaborative Austin, YMCA Austin, University of Texas Health and Science Center, Austin ISD, and community stakeholders.
- Molly Stevens, Executive Director of West Cave Outdoor Discovery Center, explained the role of the Children in Nature Collaborative in Austin (CINCA). CINCA has more than 30 formal partner organizations. Ms. Stevens emphasized the importance of identifying gaps in needs across Austin and looking at key policy program partnerships and leadership opportunities.
- Hayden Brooks, Co-founder of the Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin outlined the next steps for the planning process. Next steps include 1) Gap Analysis and Needs Assessment (in progress), 2) Community Engagement, 3) Identify a Common Agenda, 4)

Establish Shared Metrics, and 5) Draft Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan is due to the National League of Cities and Cities Connecting Children to Nature in August.

- Patrick Beyer, a Landscape Architect with PARD, explained the methodology and results of the Geographic Information Systems-based gap analysis, which produces a “Nature Score” that measures access to nature for all parks across the City. This interactive web-based map will be available to the public upon its completion.
- CM Zimmerman asked what the upper limit on funding that would be required to implement the plan. Mr. Brooks and Chair Pool explained that the Implementation Plan will enter Austin into the running for a competitive grant of \$50,000 from the National League of Cities for implementation. If Austin were to win the grant, the funds would go towards augmenting current programs and initiatives.
- CM Zimmerman commented that numerous non-governmental groups serve the function of connecting children to nature, and that public funds should not be dedicated to this purpose.
- The presenters asked for guidance on how to update the Committee and how to best connect to interested constituents. Chair Pool offered to send ideas for interested constituents by email and directed staff to send updates regarding the grant by email. Chair Pool also commented that if Austin were to win the implementation grant, the item should be brought before the entire council to discuss how it could play out in the larger fabric of the City.

### **Speakers**

Verlin Callahan

### **Direction**

Chair Pool directed PARD staff to keep the Committee updated on the progress of the Implementation Plan via email.

### **Recommendation**

There was no recommendation to the full Council



**COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORT**  
**COMMITTEE ON OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

**Date:** April 27, 2016

**Agenda Item #:** 4

**Agenda Item:** Briefing and discussion regarding the Travis County Expo Center Market Study.

**Vote** No vote was taken.

**Sponsors/Department:** Parks and Recreation Department (PARC)

**Presenters:** Brian Block, Development Administrator, Parks and Recreation Department

**Summary of Discussion**

- Brian Block, Development Administrator with PARC, explained that the City of Austin partnered with Travis County to initiate and manage the market study, along with a funding contribution from Rodeo Austin. The draft study has been completed, and is currently being reviewed by the various stakeholders. The study looks at the market for such facilities in Austin and identifies gaps that could potentially be filled by a remodeled or renovated facility.
- The consultant was asked to review the facility conditions, site location, and any plans for the area. The consultant also held stakeholder meetings and gathered input from City and County elected leaders, neighbors, local businesses, and the current users of the facility. The consultant looked at industry trends, comparable cities, comparable facilities, and the market demand in Austin to identify gaps and make recommendations to meet those gaps. Finally, the consultant estimated the cost of the recommended facility, how it would be used, and how much income and expenses would be realized.
- The study is meant to get the policy makers information and data in order to make long-range decisions. The study estimates how much it would cost to build what is recommended, but it does not outline a financing plan for how to pay for it.
- The Expo Center is located at the southwestern portion of Water E. Long Metropolitan Park. The facility was built in 1983, and is leased as part of a 50-year lease that goes to Travis County. This lease of parkland was authorized by the voters in 1982. Going beyond the 50-year lease (2033) would require reauthorization by the voters.

- Travis County manages and operates the facility. Rodeo Austin is the primary tenant, but the facility also hosts the Star of Texas Fair, the Republic of Texas Biker Rally, and various livestock shows, auto shows, and triathlons.
- The facility is aging and the County has had limited funds to invest in it. Existing facilities are obsolete, in poor condition, and too small.
- The consultant recommends a replacement of all the existing facilities with a high-quality exhibit and expo space, along with a flex hall/ballroom and meeting rooms. The consultant recommends a mid to large size multipurpose arena.
- The market needs for this facility are different than the Austin Convention Center and Palmer Events Center. The consultant noted that a downtown convention center focuses on multi-night conventions, whereas this facility would focus on sports, entertainment, large trade shows, and consumer shows that are typically one or two days.
- Phase I of the project would cost \$470 million, comprising the arena and primary expo ballroom and meeting rooms. Phase II and III would cost another \$150 million.
- The consultant estimated that the facility would generate \$2.9 million in the first year, going up to \$5 million in the 10<sup>th</sup> year. The estimation of economic impact over 30 years is \$110 million in new taxes, 5,200 temporary jobs, and 1,200 ongoing full-time jobs.
- Vice Chair Garza asked if the study took into account all of the existing venues in Austin, particularly the Circuit of the Americas. Mr. Block explained that there is a different market for outdoor amphitheater venues and indoor concert venues because they peak at different times of the year. The proposed facility is also multipurpose, and can host large trade shows and consumer shows that the Circuit of the American cannot accommodate.
- Mayor Pro Tem Tovo asked whether the consultant had examined if some groups might not be able to afford to use the new facility. Mr. Block acknowledged that the rental rates would likely go up, and that any implementation plan would have to include a discussion of potential discounts, scholarships, reduced rates, or alternative venues for groups that cannot afford the new rates.
- Vice Chair Garza asked whether the consultant had examined the potential jobs in more detail, specifically what kinds of jobs and what the jobs pay. Mr. Block said that he would relay this question to the consultant, who would come back prepared to give more details regarding the potential jobs.

### **Speakers**

None.

### **Direction**

### **Recommendation**

There was no recommendation to the full Council