

MINUTES
PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD
August 10, 1993

The regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Board was held on August 10, 1993 at 6:30 p.m. at the Parks and Recreation Department Main Office Board Room, 200 South Lamar Blvd. Board members present were Ricardo Rocky Medrano, Ron Cartlidge, Marianne S. Dwight, Eleanor McKinney, Phil Friday, Doug Johnston, ErmaLinda Cruz-Torres, and Sterling Lands.

Staff members present were Michael J. Heitz, Director, Carolyn Nelson, Deputy Director, Jesus Olivares, Deputy Director, Sarah Campbell, Robert Sopronyi, Tana Goodwill, Heather Griffith Peterson, LaVerne Edwards, Valleri Edelbrock, Randy Russell, Jody Hamilton, and Dolores Posada.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was call to order at 6:35 p.m. by Sterling Lands, Chair.

CITIZEN'S COMMUNICATION

Joe Fisher, President of the Austin Area Garden Council, addressed the Board and asked them to consider the location of the security fence around the Garden Area recommended by staff and the Long Range Planning Committee of the Austin Area Garden Council. Mr. Fisher stated the Austin Area Garden Council was opposed to the location that was being recommended by Mr. Johnston and the Town Lake Association in order to accommodate the Zilker Park Loop bicycle path.

C.O. Smith, ex-Director Parks and Recreation Department, addressed the Board and asked them to consider the recommended security fence location due to the vandalism that has been done to the Garden Area recently. Mr. Smith also stated he was opposed to the location that was being recommended by Mr. Johnston and the Town Lake Association in order to accommodate the Zilker Park Loop bicycle path.

Reverend Lands stated for the record that the following people had sent letters supporting the Long Range Planning Committee recommendation:

- Mrs. Jack Fisher
- Faye Raschke, President, Violet Crown Garden Club
- Bette Millis, member, Ikebana Study Group
- Shawn Jordan
- Tom Kemp, Volunteer Coordinator, Floral Test Gardens

Michael J. Heitz gave a description of the Zilker Loop route and stated that the issue in front of the Board was the interest of some people who would like the trail to be located at a specific site and that is in conflict with where the Garden Center and staff have identified the fence should be. The Department would like to see a compromise.

Doug Johnston stated to the Board he has been working on the Zilker Loop project since it began and he feels there can be a compromise.

Reverend Lands asked that staff submit their recommendation and at that time the Board can decide on the issue.

ITEMS FOR ACTION

ITEMS FOR CONSENT

Approve construction of single slip boat dock at "Cliffs over Lake Austin" (4809 Palisade Drive).

Ron Cartlidge, Navigation Committee Chairman, recommended approval of the above item.

The vote was 8-0.

Approve the negotiation and execution of an "Agreement for the Donation of Artwork" between the City and the Stevie Ray Vaughan Memorial Fund, Inc. for the installation and maintenance of a new statue in Town Lake Park.

Phil Friday recommended approval of the above item. Eleanor McKinney seconded the motion.

The vote was 8-0.

Make recommendation to Council regarding approval of naming approximately 2 acres of land along East Bouldin Creek, adjacent to the existing greenbelt, Dawson Park.

Phil Friday recommended approval of the above item. ErmaLinda Cruz-Torres seconded the motion.

The vote was 8-0.

ITEMS PULLED FOR DISCUSSION

ITEMS FOR INITIAL CONSIDERATION

Make recommendation to Council to approve proposed ordinance change regarding Chapter 14-2-2, the exemption process for boats on Town Lake, to allow the Director rather than the City Manager to approve exemptions.

Ron Cartlidge recommended approval of the above item. Phil Friday seconded the motion.

The vote was 8-0.

Make recommendation to Council to approve proposed ordinance change regarding Chapter 3-3-3, regarding designation of areas for dog owners to allow their dogs to be without direct physical control (leash), to allow the Director rather than City Council to designate such areas.

Rocky Medrano recommended approval of the above item. Doug Johnston seconded the motion.

The vote was 8-0.

Make recommendation to Council regarding authorization of an exchange of land to convey a portion of Water and Wastewater Utility land on Williamson Creek (approximately 420 acres) to the General Fund in exchange for land under the Waller Creek Center Office Building for construction of an 18-hole addition to Jimmy Clay Golf Course and a public library.

Ron Cartlidge recommended approval of the above item. Eleanor McKinney seconded the motion.

The vote was 8-0.

Approve extension of ban on glass containers as specified in Ordinance 11-1-9 to all City of Austin parks.

Ron Cartlidge recommended approval of the above item. Marianne Dwight seconded the motion.

Ron Cartlidge recommended that the ban should include Lake Walter E. Long, Lake Austin, and Town Lake.

Phil Friday recommended educating the public on the ban and enforcement procedures.

The vote was 8-0.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Make recommendation to the Department regarding terms for Request for Proposals (RFP) for renewal of above listed concessions.

Doug Johnston volunteered to sit on the evaluation team for submitted proposals. Mr. Johnston expressed his concern about the erosion damage by the Zilker Canoe Rental.

ErmaLinda Cruz-Torres expressed her concern regarding designated parking for the concessionaire which spaces are not used and, therefore, wasted.

Louise Nivison expressed her approval of the Zilker Eagle Train to convert to LP gas.

Eleanor McKinney expressed her concerns regarding the safety of the Zilker Eagle Train's equipment and the rerouting of the track. Another concern was the low percentage of revenue the Lone Star Riverboat concession was paying the City.

Marianne Dwight expressed her concerns regarding the percentage of revenue each concession pays to the City. Ms. Dwight recommended all RFP's contain basic guidelines such as an environmental impact study and equipment and operational safety regulations controlled by the Department. If concessionaires do not follow the guidelines, the Department will have the authority to take action against the owners. In case the concession is to be relocated, give the concessionaire proper notice and the Department and the owner should approve of

the new site.

Mr. Friday asked staff if the relocation issue was actually concessionaire wishing to move or the concessionaire being forced to move. Mr. Heitz stated the example for this issue is the concession that was under the South First St. bridge and how the construction that was done on the bridge affected the concession, without any warning to the concessionaire. Mr. Friday asked in regards to operations, if any of the present contracts have performance standards that are stated in terms of hours of operation or levels of service. Ms. Griffith Peterson stated the current contracts did not have any and that this issue needed to be addressed because consistently complaints are about performance. Mr. Friday asked if any of the present contracts have maintenance standards. Ms. Griffith Peterson stated she was not sure, but maintenance standards could be added to include the area and the adjoining area as well. Mr. Friday suggested that there be a minimum of 10% of revenue shared, all contracts have performance standards in terms of service and operation hours, and that all contracts have a maintenance of grounds clause.

Ron Cartlidge agreed that the percentage of revenue received by the City for the Lone Star River Boat concession should be 10% or higher. In regards to citizen input, there were no negative comments made about the Texas Rowing Center and the Lone Star Riverboat. However, concerns were stated about the Zilker Canoe Rental in regards to the use of glass containers and another on the erosion the concession has caused. Mr. Cartlidge would like to have staff look into that issue. In regards to the Zilker Eagle Train, his observation is most citizens agree that the concession should remain, but needs to address safety issues, relocation, and the conversion to cleaner burning fuel. He also asked what other problems had been discussed.

Mr. Heitz stated the Zilker Eagle Train had had problems with brake failure. The problem with the bridge underneath Barton Springs Road is being solved by widening it to accommodate both the train and pedestrians. Ms. Dwight also mentioned there was no rail to keep children from reaching and touching the outside. Mr. Heitz mentioned that the location of the Zilker Eagle Train station and railroad track was considered a safety hazard since it was right next to the playscape and the track was running through the playscape.

Doug Johnston stated that whether the equipment is working properly is more of a safety concern that should be addressed than the relocation of the train track.

Eleanor McKinney stated the safety of the children was the first concern and the Department should avoid a problem by rerouting the track and not wait until an accident occurs.

Reverend Lands suggested that the Department Safety Officer inspect all of the concessions and give a report to the Board on his recommendations to attach to the RFP and have all concessionaires abide by them.

Mr. Heitz, at the request of Mr. Friday, stated he prefers to relocate the portion of the train track and the train station to a location that would steer it from the going through the playscape before an accident occurs. Mr. Cartlidge asked how much of the track was he referring to and if there was any possibility of placing a barrier between the playscape and the track. Mr.

Johnston stated it might not be feasible to place a barrier. He does support moving the station to the other side of the maintenance area and not changing the impact on the park. Mr. Heitz stated he did not want the train to become a commuter, but only making some minor re-adjustments as it pertains to the playscape area. He agreed with the suggestion by Reverend Lands to have the safety officer do a report and and if they respond to that, have the concessionaires present their own plan. If the train concession is to be relocated, the Department may not receive the 10% revenue share due to construction and equipment cost.

Ms. Cruz-Torres suggested contacting the San Antonio Zoo train concession. Ms. Griffith Peterson has already done so and is waiting for their response. Mr. Heitz stated that the San Antonio train was on a bigger gauge, but he has seen new trains the same gauge as the Zilker Eagle that are handicapped accessible. Mr. Johnston asked how would the new bridge under the Barton Springs Rd. be routed. Mr. Heitz stated there would be two separate bridges. Reverend Lands recommended the Board look into the location aspect with more of a technological view in regards to such items as compatible use, safety, environmental impact. He requested the Land and Facilities committee to review the location. Ms. McKinney stated when the committee had reviewed concession contracts in the past they had come under Purchasing and contracts from the City Manager's office. When the committee had concerns such as safety, operations, environmental impact, and location concerns, they were never addressed separately from the contract, revenues, percentages paid to the City, and items like that. She indicated that the problem is that the Board is limited in what they can do.

Mr. Friday stated the majority of the speakers liked the train, its recreational purpose and in general were satisfied with its use. Secondly, it had a 20 year track record with no major accidents, and thirdly how safe is something worth making? Mr. Heitz stated there had been an unfortunate article in the Austin American-Statesman where they quoted an individual as saying that there was a task force that had a comprehensive plan in which the Zilker Eagle was to be taken away and be used as a shuttle service for parking. He feels that everyone who spoke at the public hearing and stated they liked the train just as it is; the real message was they did not want what had been recorded in the paper, which represented the vision of only one member of the self-appointed task force. Mr. Johnston stated even though that was also the case, he agreed with Mr. Friday's earlier statement.

Mr. Friday recommended the Board build a consensus on the Request for Proposal being for the same basic services as are now provided. He recommended the Board draft a policy statement to support that the concessions are going to remain in their same basic form because that was the overwhelming expression from the public and those are his feelings also.

Mr. Johnston recommended the staff bullets should also include rehabilitation of the area.

Ms. Griffith-Peterson read the Board's recommendations. They are as follows:

- * parking for the concession
- * performance standards
- * erosion control for the canoe rental
- * conversion of the train to natural gas
- * removal of safety hazards

- * safety record as part of the criteria
- * safety assessment on a concession by the Department
- * the existing location of the train as it relates to the playscape
- * at least a 10% return on all the contracts
- * environmental impact assessment of the proposed concession
- * enforcement
- * maintenance of equipment and maintenance of the grounds
- * incompatible use
- * relocation with prior approval

Ms. McKinney supported the staff concern in terms of the Americans with Disabilities Act compliance. Texas Rowing, for instance, has no access for the disabled. There are some issues concerning Town Lake; for example, how does a person in a wheelchair get down to the dock. Even though it will be difficult when looking at a shoreline to make it accessible, those are the types of issues that need to be addressed.

Reverend Lands stated for the record that if you can identify potential safety hazards in a design, then you have the responsibility to the best of your ability to write a specification or design premise that precludes as best as humanly possible that hazard or to minimize the potential before the accident occurs. He recommended the Board go on record as being in favor of the Safety Officer and those having expertise in that area writing specifications in such a way that the concessionaires must respond to the safety concern.

Phil Friday moved the Board recommend staff issue Request for Proposals (RFPs) for these four concessions to provide the same basic service they are now providing and that the RFPs should address all of the concerns raised by staff in the memo and summarized by Ms. Griffith Peterson. Doug Johnston seconded the motion.

The vote was 8-0.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Michael J. Heitz, Director, stated he did not have any items for Director's Report.

ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

ErmaLinda Cruz-Torres stated to the Board that they need to focus on parks other than Zilker.

Reverend Lands asked staff who is responsible for maintaining creeks. Carolyn Nelson replied staff cleaned the creeks once a year and the Department was responsible only for the creek area inside of the parkland. Ms. Nelson asked the Reverend to specify any problems so staff may begin to work on them.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ron Cartlidge recommended the approval of the minutes of July 13 and of July 27. ErmaLinda Cruz-Torres seconded the motion.

The vote was 8-0.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Audio tapes of the Parks and Recreation Board meetings are available through the Director of Parks and Recreation, 499-6717.