

DRAFT

Parks and Recreation Board Minutes
August 11, 1998

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Parks and Recreation Board was held on Tuesday, August 11, 1998, at 200 South Lamar Blvd. Board Members present: Mary Ruth Holder, Elaine Carter, Secretary, Rosemary Castleberry, Chair, Mike Librik, Rocky Medrano, Vice-Chair, Jeff Francell, Carol Kim, Louise Nivison, Member Emeritus.

Staff members present: Jesus M. Olivares, Director, Kim Jamail Mitchell, Randy Scott, Jay Stone, Stuart Strong, Leon Barba, Mary Ybarbo.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Rosemary Castleberry called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m..

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of July 28, 1998 were approved.

CITIZEN COMMUNICATION

Bobbie Barker, Chairperson of the Downtown Austin Alliance, approached the board to thank the Parks Department, particularly Public Service Manager Reuben Olivo, for his efforts in maintaining the pocket parks located downtown.

Jimmy Castro, Member of the Urban Transportation Commission, invited all board members to attend a public hearing on September 30th regarding the Quarries development that is proposed by Hyde Park Baptist Church. Also invited will be the Environmental Board and Planning Commission.

Karen Bauer, President of Northwest Austin Neighborhood Alliance, also urged members to attend the Hyde Park Baptist Church Public Hearing.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Dewayne Naumann, former board member, was presented a plaque which reads 'The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department extends its appreciation for the outstanding contributions of Dewayne Naumann for his commitment to the quality of life in Austin through service on the Parks and Recreation Board – July 1996 to June 1998.' Mr. Naumann thanked the board for this recognition.

ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. Make a Recommendation for the Construction of Simons Boat Dock at 2311 River Hills Road, File No. SP-98-0294DS.

Mary Ruth Holder informed the board this is an existing boat dock since 1959 and the owner wants to add a screen porch on the top and the Navigation Committee recommends approval. Rocky Medrano seconded. The vote in favor was 6-0-0 (Librik, Holder, Carter, Medrano, Francell, Kim)

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2. Make a Recommendation to Council that Parks Board Adopt the Guiding Principles of the Town Lake Advisory Group.

There was general discussion among members particularly regarding the need to develop a transit plan before any development could be considered. Adjoining neighborhoods have expressed concerns about traffic plans because of the increased traffic that would occur. There are two public hearings scheduled in October to discuss the issue. Jeff Francell made a motion to support the Guiding Principles as developed by the Town Lake Comprehensive Roundtable Advisory Group with traffic and transportation being a major focus of this issue. Mary Ruth Holder seconded. The vote in favor was 5-1-0 (Holder, Carter, Medrano, Francell, Kim) (Librik)

3. Make a Recommendation to Council on the Lamar Pedestrian Bridge.

Elaine Carter informed the board the Land and Facilities Committee recommends approval of option 4, also known as the double-curve solution, be used in the construction of the bridge. This option allows access to the south shore trails by way of a helix. Drainage would go back onto the land and not the lake. Ms. Carter made a motion to approve option 4 with drainage grates to be on land and grates be placed so as not to be a hazard. Rocky Medrano seconded. The vote in favor was 6-0-0 (Librik, Holder, Carter, Medrano, Francell, Kim)

4. Make a Recommendation on Barton Springs Road as it goes Through Zilker Park.

It was clarified that this item deals with the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Stratford Drive and Barton Springs Road. There was discussion among members that the drawing does not address a pedestrian crossing or include any bicycle lanes. Tom Kinnerly with the Public Works and Transportation Department gave a brief background on roundabouts after stating that that intersection does warrant a traffic signal. However, Council has endorsed this location for a roundabout. Public Works feels that a roundabout will reduce speed of traffic. This is a test location. There are 25,000 cars a day that pass this intersection. The cost is estimated at \$85-90,000. Allen Raines with GSG, Inc., Engineers, Planners and Regulatory Consultants, informed the board that Stratford Drive would be realigned and an embankment would be built by the soccer fields and three large trees and several smaller one would be removed. Jeff Francell made a recommendation that council consider a master plan for transportation plans on Barton Springs Road through Zilker Park that would address bicycle and pedestrian issues prior to construction and consideration of a roundabout at Stratford Drive. Elaine Carter seconded. The vote in favor was 5-1-0 (Librik, Holder, Carter, Francell, Kim) (Medrano)

There was a short recess.

5. Make a Recommendation to Council to Support Forestry Board's Resolution for a Tree Inventory.

Rosemary Castleberry welcomed members of the Urban Forestry Board. Kevin Casey, Chair, informed the board they are the first group to receive a forestry presentation. At the request of council an Urban Forestry Management Plan is being created and the first step is to develop a tree inventory. Using a series of overheads he informed the board of several facts:

A Public Tree Inventory

The City is responsible for over 110,000 street trees and over 50,000 trees on developed parkland. A tree inventory is the foundation for building and implementing a progressive, proactive urban forestry management plan and tree maintenance program. The most important elements of a maintenance program are identifying hazardous conditions in trees, eliminating those hazards and preventing new hazards from developing. This enables city officials to identify and prioritize problems, efficiently schedule work crews and equipment, prevent and address infrastructure damage, reduce potential civil liability and more accurately prepare budgets.

Why Do An Inventory?

Management of any resource begins with an inventory of that resource: Urban Forest management is no exception. With a comprehensive understanding of the Urban Forest and a coordinated management plan to maintain and enhance it, we risk losing an enormously valuable resource, one that affects our physical, emotional and economic well-being.

What is Austin's Urban Forest?

Austin's Urban Forest consists of the sum of its street trees, residential trees, greenbelt vegetation and those trees and plants on public and private land, trees in transportation and utility corridors and trees and plants on watershed lands. Trees are an essential part of Austin's infrastructure.

A quote from James B. Hull, State Forester

"There is no question that trees are a valuable part of the city infrastructure and need to be managed as proactively as the streets and public utilities."

The Value of the Urban Forest

A \$31M per year benefit to the city in air quality improvement/CO2 reduction. A \$1.42B benefit to the city in stormwater runoff reduction/water quality. A \$6.3M per year benefit to the city in energy conservation/community cooling. Increases residential property values by as much as 21%. 68% of Austinites rate trees of great importance for Austin's quality of life.

Crisis Tree Management

Austin's current tree maintenance program is crisis driven. The city spent \$489,000 in this fiscal year on emergency responses. Currently, the city responds only to tree hazards

which have resulted in fallen limbs or trees once called in by the public. Similarly, the city only works on trees blocking traffic signs and corners when notified by the public. There is little or no coordination between those city departments which work with trees, such as PARD, Austin Energy, Planning, Public Works and Watershed Protection. City finances, personnel and equipment are not put to their best use, responding only reactively to crisis situations.

Planned Tree Management

An inventory provides the basis for a preventive tree maintenance program which, when implemented, results in decreased emergency calls allowing more money to be spent on scheduled maintenance of trees. Such a program intercepts developing tree hazards before the safety of people and property is endangered and city liability incurred. An inventory will identify those trees affecting vehicular and pedestrian traffic and provide the foundation for a scheduled maintenance plan. An effective management plan will improve the coordination among city departments that work with trees. City finances, personnel and equipment are put to their best use under a proactive tree management program.

Tree Information Collected

This would include location on geographic information system (GIS), Type (genus and species) size classification, health and condition rating, maintenance needs, interference with street signs, lights and corners, conflicts with overhead utility lines, sidewalk and roadway damage and planting sites.

An Urban Forest Management Plan

Uses tree inventory data as the basis for making recommendations for proactive trees maintenance programs. Provides basic recommendations for the immediate and long term maintenance needs of the urban forest. Provides support for the planning of budgets and use of personnel to care for the urban forest. Includes a tree inventory, urban forest maintenance and management recommendations, planting specifications, tree-related ordinances and various other materials which conveys key information to the community.

Tree Management Software

Helps urban forest managers maintain tree and plant inventories, monitor tree conditions, prioritize and schedule maintenance and budget tree care expenditures. Provides immediate access to detailed information such as species, diameter, condition and location of any tree in the inventories population. Cost of the inventory will be \$390,000 after receiving a \$10,000 Texas Forest Service grant.

Austin's Urban Forest is its crown jewel. If Austin is going to count on trees, Austin needs to count its trees.

Rocky Medrano made a motion to support the Forestry Board's Inventory Funding Resolution and that Forestry explore other sources of funding. Mike Librik seconded. The vote in favor was 6-0-0 (Librik, Holder, Carter, Medrano, Francell, Kim).

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mike Librik is still waiting to hear from the city clerk's office about his appointment to the Municipal Airport Advisory Group.

Downtown Commission continues to discuss downtown development.

ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS (not for action)

Rosemary Castleberry informed board they were invited to attend an August 14th budget presentation in council chambers.

Rocky Medrano thanked PARD for help with transportation in taking young people to a Houston Astros game recently.

Elaine Carter asked that the Taylor Slough issue be on Land and Facilities agenda.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.