

Griffith Park Master Plan – Working Group Meeting Summary – March 5, 2007

The Griffith Park Master Plan Working Group convened their meeting on Monday, March 5, 2007, at 6:40 p.m. at the Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium.

Present: Working Group: Bernadette Soter, Clare Darden, George Grace, Gerry Hans, Jeff Gardner, Lynn Brown, Valerie Vanaman, and Lucinda Phillips (alternate for Susan Swan)

Council District 4: Rory Fitzpatrick and Patricia Malone

Recreation and Parks: Mark Mariscal, Tom McCall, Michael Shull, Tom Gibson, and Craig Raines

Absent: Craig Kessler, Jose Sigala, Louis Alvarado, Richard Bogy, and Susan Swan

Facilitator: Kevin Regan, Assistant General Manager, Department of Recreation and Parks

The meeting opened with Mr. Regan calling the roll of Working Group members. He informed the Working Group the status of the pending summaries. Meeting summaries for January and February, both revised on March 5, 2007 have been presented to the Working Group for review. Ms. Bernadette Soter requested the members to review and e-mail revisions and changes to Ms. Christina Iwata (christina.iwata@lacity.org) by Friday, March 9, 2007. Ms. Iwata will incorporate the changes will have the summaries posted on the website by Monday, March 11, 2007. Mr. Regan informed the Working Group that the drafts for November and December 2006 summaries have been received from Ms. Sue Aarii. Both summaries will be provided by next meeting.

Mr. Regan announced that there will be a Commonwealth Nursery Open House on Saturday, March 17th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., flyers available. The history and general information of the Commonwealth Nursery was given by Mr. Regan. Years ago, this nursery was fully operational with green house, propagated plants, trees and plants for City parks. It was used as a learning center to increase Department gardeners' expertise on horticultural. Due to budget cuts in the late 80's and early 90's the program was disbanded. Currently, the Department purchases plants and trees from commercial nurseries. RAP is interested in restoring this facility. This proposed restoration will support the Mayor's Million Trees Initiative Program.

A presentation regarding the proposed Recreation and Parks (RAP) Horticultural Learning Center was conducted by Mr. Tom Gibson and Mr. Craig Raines, Landscape Architects of Planning and Construction. Before the presentation began, Mr. Regan reminded the Working Group that the presentation is only a conceptual design and no current funding has been set.

Mr. Gibson hopes this project will be funded by Prop 84. The center will promote water and environmental conservation, and nature education. The proposed restoration of the facility will include 30x96 green houses, learning area for children, shade structure for growing plants, indoor and outdoor classroom areas, new potting sheds, modular offices and ADA restrooms.

Ms. Valerie Vanaman expressed her discouragement and concerns on keeping the park's urban wilderness identity before planning the restoration of the nursery to be consistent with Griffith Park's history. She was concerned that the modular offices will take the wilderness identity from the park. Mr. Gibson noted her suggestions. Additional comments from the other Working Group members were made regarding the urban design of the proposed nursery.

Griffith Park Master Plan – Working Group Meeting Summary – March 5, 2007

This site will be utilized as housing for the trees purchased from commercial nurseries, DWP's tree program, and the Mayor's Million Trees project. It will also be a functional service yard, nursery and learning center. The nursery will also help the Department's Gardener Caretakers learn more about horticulture and propagation, not just park maintenance.

Guideline for Prop 84 has not been written, thus, it is too early to tell as to how many years it can provide funding. The nursery would normally not be open to the public however; tours would be available to accommodate them. Ms. Bernadette Soter mentioned that Vista Del Valle is a route for runners, hikers and stroller moms and this area looks down to the nursery. She requested to have tranquility in this area and to keep the urban wilderness identity, perhaps by adding a native garden or native landscape.

Public comments and questions included plants to be drought resistant, number of employees to be relocated, and the possibility for community members to obtain plants from the nursery for their own landscaping. According to Mr. McCall and Mr. Regan, no more than six employees will be relocated to the site and no more than groups of 20 per week would take the training on site. Mr. Mark Mariscal informed the audience that trimmings are currently available at the Rose Garden. This concluded the nursery presentation.

Mr. Regan introduced Ms. Carol Armstrong from the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering (BOE) to talk about the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan. Ms. Armstrong started by informing the Working Group and the public that the LA River Revitalization Master Plan is available online at www.lariver.org. The public review and comments were open and extended until Tuesday, March 27, 2007. She handed out business cards, print outs and CD's of the PowerPoint presentation, and maps.

A PowerPoint presentation was provided to the Working Group. The presentation showed the background, timeline, community outreach, planning for revitalization, goals (enhance flood storage and water quality, enable safe public access, restore a functioning riparian ecosystem, create a continuous river greenway, connect neighborhoods to the river, extend open space and water quality features into the neighborhoods, enhance river identity, and incorporate public art along the river), capture community opportunities, referred alternatives such as River Glen and Taylor Yard, and the implementation.

Comments and suggestions regarding the place of wildlife, the head works project, equestrian access, additional bike trails, and additional dirt trails were discussed.

Public comments and questions were heard. BOE has been working with Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles Police Department and Los Angeles Fire Department on the security and safety. Federal, City and County are not arguing as to who would be in-charge of the LA River. The bird sanctuary in the Sepulveda Basin, which was part of the Sepulveda Basin Master Plan was complimented by a community member.

One of the public concerns was the feasibility to maintain the non-native green grass showed on the presentation. Eighty percent of the water comes from the Tillman Reclamation Plant and they are designing a project to maintain water for plants. Mr. Regan thanked Ms. Armstrong for the presentation and this concluded the LA River discussion.

The Working Group proceeded with the Management Chapter draft. Mr. Regan advised the Working Group to revise the draft and add more recommendations instead of a lot of philosophy and background. This will clarify what the Working Group's ideas are. After a short discussion regarding this draft, the Working Group came to a conclusion that it needs more research and agreed to discuss it

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at a sub-committee meeting. The draft will be ready for the next Master Plan meeting. The document regarding Dante's View, which was brought by Ms. Lynn Brown, was asked to be brought to the sub-committee meeting.

Ms. Vanaman took the meeting back to the proposed nursery project and the management aspect of it. She was very discouraged after seeing the nursery presentation. Ms. Mike Shull advised everyone not to be discouraged since the nursery presentation was just an initial phase. As the proposed project develops the presentation would change as well. The Department is trying to keep the Working Group updated on this proposed project.

Given the historical pieces of the Griffith Park, Ms. Vanaman asked how can the management structure work and control the diverse interests throughout the park. Mr. Regan reminded the group to make strong recommendations and write the stipulations on the Management Chapter draft. This would be the guiding principles that the members believe in.

A sentence on the Melendrez Draft stated that the revenue from the park is not sufficient to support the park. Ms. Vanaman wanted to know where the information came from.

According to Ms. Soter, the only document they have showing the fees and revenue was from 2001-2002 with a \$9.5 million in collected fees and concessions. She added that the new Department Concessions manager informed her of most updated concession financial report as having a lump sum amount for the Department and not broken down for Griffith Park.

It was suggested that concession revenue within Griffith Park should be kept just for the park. This recommendation can be made but the Working Group should remember that concession revenue goes into the Department's general fund. A concession improvement account exists for the upkeep and improvements for concessions. The Department is not completely funded through collected property tax increments. According to Mr. Mariscal, an average park does not collect enough revenue to pay for its own regular recreation programs. There were talks of separating Golf revenue. Golf and golf concession revenues are handled like the rest of the concessions in the Department. Every General Manager educates the public and the employees that the revenue serves the Department's operations.

Mr. Hans inquired about the letters RAP used to receive from the community regarding Griffith Park. Ms. Iwata informed him that RAP has not received any letters in the mail other than the Griffith Park Master Plan petitions, which are listed on the matrix provided to them at every meeting.

The next Working Group meeting will be held Monday, April 2, 2007. The March 5, 2007 Working Group meeting concluded at 9:01 p.m.

Public Comments include the following:

- A question on how the Working Group got to the recommendations
- Finances – Mayor said every department must generate revenue. RAP charges kids to play soccer at the parks
- A community member sent a letter to RAP three weeks prior, which has not been received.