

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

The Griffith Park Master Plan Working Group convened their meeting on Monday, November 5, 2007 at the Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium.

Present: Working Group: Bernadette Soter, Clare Darden, Craig Kessler, George Grace,
Gerry Hans, Jeff Gardner, Jose Sigala, Louis Alvarado,
Lynn Brown, Richard Bogy, Susan Swan and Valerie Vanaman

Council District 4: Jullian Calvin-Harris

Recreation and Parks: Kevin Regan, Marilyn J. White, James Ward, Noel Williams
and Robert Morales

Absent: None

Facilitator: Vicki Israel, Assistant General Manager, Department of Recreation and Parks

Ms. Israel opened the meeting by informing the Working Group members and the public that Ms. Iwata was on vacation and no one was present to take notes for the meeting summary. She requested that each one state his/her name prior to speaking. This was followed by calling the roll of the Working Group members and introducing Recreation and Parks (RAP) and Council District 4 (CD 4) staff.

Mr. Kevin Regan, Assistant General Manager for Operations West, Ms. Noel William of RAP Finance and Budget Division, and Mr. Robert Morales of RAP Administrative Resources, Concessions Section were present to talk about the October 16, 2007 golf concession incident that happened at Wilson-Harding Golf Course. Mr. Regan started off by complimenting the Working Group for their steadfast commitment. Wilson-Harding Golf Course has the Monterey Concessions Group (Monterey) on site. Monterey has been with RAP for a number of years. They have a contract with RAP which allows them to book the designated areas of the facility for banquets, weddings, dinners, etc. However, in this particular situation, they utilized the indoor space and the outside deck that are under contract. Monterey requested permission to build a stage, which was granted by RAP Golf Division. The Golf Division did not communicate this with the Concessions Section. Monterey followed the proper steps in contacting RAP for additional Ranger patrol, having RAP maintenance staff and having a fire marshall during the event. As soon as the RAP management was informed of the problem internally, Mr. Regan called a meeting to ensure that safeguards were in place for any future events. Questions from the Working Group members took place. Mr. Regan and Mr. Morales were unaware of who the caterer was when asked by Ms. Soter. Mr. Hans commented that sound, noise, and traffic at these hours of the night is harmful to wildlife, especially in light of the limited habitat animals have during this post-fire period. Ms. Soter commented that it was interesting that Golf Division issued the permit rather than Griffith Park. The concessionaire profited from the event, but the City got percentage of the income. It is not common to have an event of 1,000 people at the Golf Course. Ms. Soter asked and commented regarding having a “concession creep”, getting off the ground with this type of occurrence. Mr. Regan said she was right and has made it crystal clear to the concessionaire that this sort of events will not be allowed to happen again.

All concessions within the RAP are managed by the Concessions Unit. On behalf of RAP, Mr. Regan admitted the mistakes made by staff and lack of internal communication. RAP management made it crystal clear to Monterey that this will not be allowed and cannot happen again. Monterey was asked to follow the guidelines in the contract and RAP should be involved in the permitting of any event that would require more than stated in the contract. Per, Ms. Williams, a notification system is being set up within RAP in order for management to have time to review permits prior to special events.

The October 1, 2007 meeting summary, though listed on the agenda, was not available. Ms. Israel extended her apologies in behalf of Ms. Iwata. She then opened the discussion of the Park Management Chapter. Ms. Vanaman stated that the available draft incorporates the vote from the October meeting and the changes she received from the Working Group members. She then clarified that this draft was not written by an individual person but by several members of the Working Group. Sections of the draft were assigned to different members. Ms. Israel reminded the Working Group that the master plan is a democratic process and that questions and

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comments be heard from the Working Group members and the person assigned to the particular topic could address the issue.

Mr. Sigala had a question regarding who the decision makers are in choosing the members of the advisory committee. He also wanted to know the reason why the neighborhood councils were not listed on the document. As discussed at previous meetings, the neighborhood councils could change or divide in time. Not listing the specific neighborhood councils opens the door to other neighborhood councils that may evolve in the future. Mr. Sigala expressed his happiness to see the commitment to transparency and openness embodied by the Brown Act. In the draft, the Los Feliz Improvement Association (LFIA) and The Oaks Homeowners Association (The Oaks) will be given the opportunity to choose four people to be part of the advisory committee. He has concerns about diversity of the group. Mr. Sigala suggested that the draft be amended to state that these particular groups not have majority of the appointment powers. The Working Group cannot control decisions of these organizations. However, Mr. Sigala suggested that the Working Group should empower them regarding giving others the opportunity to serve in the advisory committee and the appointment process. One does not have to be a member of these organizations to be appointed. Mr. Sigala's goal is to inform the community that they can serve on the committee through these organizations without being members. Ms. Soter distributed a syllabus that should be part of the draft's index. This syllabus is a recap of the following Los Angeles City Regional Park Community Advisory Committees and contains information discussed at the last meeting regarding inclusiveness. Hansen Dam, Elysian Park, Debs Park, Harbor Regional Park and O'Melveny Park all have community advisory committees with members from the community surrounding each individual park. Sepulveda Basin has no official advisory committee but it has an existing user's group. The citizens are more like to set up the meetings and more people would attend. Currently in Griffith Park, there are two groups the community can provide input through regarding the facility-wide policies and operations. One is the Park, Rivers, Open Space (PROS) Committee which in addition to all the various organizations involved in the committee, the self-defined stakeholders come from Atwater Village, Beachwood Canyon, Burbank, Eagle Rock, Franklin Hills, Glendale, Hollywood, Lake View Terrace, Los Feliz, Mid-Wilshire, North Hollywood, Silverlake, Virgil Village, Wilshire District and West Los Angeles. The second group is the Griffith Park Master Plan (GPMP) Committee with members from various communities such as Atwater Village, Echo Park, Franklin Hills, Hollywood, Los Feliz, Sherman Oaks, Sunland, Toluca Lake, Valley Village and West Hollywood. Both PROS and GPMP committees show diversity and inclusiveness. Griffith Park has broad-based users.

The Working Group is a community advisory panel and not a resource board. The goal is not to be under RAP or the council office but to be an independent community body. Ms. Vanaman read a statement on the document: "The park's interest and protection is an urban wilderness identity can best be protected by a citizen advisory board. Such a board should, if required by law, be established by the Recreation and Park Board of Commissioners, it leaves open the question of whether or not in the final analysis it would require a vote by the Board of Commissioners to say that this organization can exist but it does not give them a power to appoint."

The Golf Advisory Committee (GAC) and the Golf Division do not report to the Operations East, where Griffith Park is located and managed. The body governs 9% of Griffith Park as golf land. Ms. Soter questioned why Mr. Kessler is not under Griffith Park with the rest of the Working Group members. Mr. Kessler reminded the Working Group members that if a committee is created by the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners, the organization would have a right to present reports directly to the Commissioners and get on the agenda at a public meeting to be heard. Otherwise, it goes under the Various Communications section of the meeting. The Golf Master Plan that Ms. Soter mentioned does not exist. Mr. Regan thought that Ms. Soter was referring to the five-year plan developed by Golf Manager James Ward for the golf revenue that goes into a golf surcharge account. The monies in this account are primarily for capital improvements for golf courses throughout the City. This five-year plan is only a vision and has not gone through any formal process. The decisions of what capital improvements will take place are discussed at the GAC meetings. GAC Board advises RAP on where upgrades are needed and where to spend the monies.

The committees Ms. Soter provided on the syllabus are different types of board. Hansen Dam for example is a Park Advisory Board (PAB). Mr. Regan created this particular board and started the board meetings. Hansen Dam PAB has been meeting for about four years with good attendance and participation from surrounding communities. Their board was chosen by RAP representative but is not influenced by RAP. RAP wanted to create a board that would have the official title of advisory board to RAP. The Board of Commissioners created the process of initiating a PAB as stated under Brown Act. Elysian Park's group is more of a non-profit

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organization that created itself under its own leadership. RAP allowed to meet at a City facility but is not subject to Brown Act. This group is not an official advisory board to RAP. As clarification, the Board of Commissioners does not appoint the members to these committees.

Mr. Kessler clarified that not one of the GAC board was appointed by RAP or the Board of Commissioners. The members are from various parts of the City and a quarter of the body comes from the Southern California regional organizations.

The Working Group was reminded that they are not writing the draft to micro-manage RAP and/or Griffith Park but to provide an overview of things to take into consideration and how the park should function in the future. For the record, Mr. Sigala clarified that he is in fact a Council Aide but in a council district 20 miles away from Griffith Park. Mr. Kessler stated that this chapter is probably a consensus among the Working Group members in exception of tow. When asked if he had any other suggestions, he answered with saying he has had many suggestions that were laid on the table but all were rejected by vote.

Currently, RAP is organized where all the golf courses are under the Golf Division, which is housed within Griffith Park. Mr. Ward is responsible for all golf courses Citywide. RAP has been reorganized several times. In the past, each region managed the golf courses within their area. However, a few years ago, a Golf Division was created to centralize all golf courses. A past suggestion was to have a Regional Park Division for all regional parks, including golf courses in these regional parks. RAP has not discouraged this idea nor have they discouraged the Working Group's ideas on how to manage RAP. Having the Golf Division in place has helped RAP. Funds are not available to support a new division as the newspaper stated, there would be an 8% budget cut throughout the City.

Mr. Hans suggested that the Working Group discuss certain issues such as, high-risk maintenance activities, non-native gardens and noise pollution within Griffith Park. The correct name for the trust is Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust, not the Griffith Family Trust. This has to be changed on the draft. Another change to be made is instead of the Autry, it should state Autry National Center.

Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 53.06.2 prohibits off-leash dogs except in areas specifically designated as off-leash areas, often referred to dog-friendly areas. RAP refers to these designated areas as "off-leash dog parks". The term "dog-friendly areas" will be changed to "off-leash dog park". It is important to add a statement/code for cleaning up after dogs since dog feces are being washed by the rain into the ocean. Due to concerns of safety and environment, the equestrian areas should be mentioned as off-limits for dogs. There was a discussion on where this will be inserted in the document. It is RAP's intent to enforce the law by educating the patrons and posting signs. Park Rangers give patrons warnings before giving citations and hope that they get cooperation from the community. It is not one of the top priorities of the Rangers but they do enforce the law.

The document does not reflect the new no smoking ordinance and should be added. Some people are still baffled that there are still areas in Griffith Park where smoking is permitted. There were two ordinances that were approved due to the May 2007 fire. After the fire broke out, there was a movement to enact an emergency no smoking and no open flame ordinance. The committee should include under lesson learned from the fire that smoking within the mountain fire areas is a huge impact and potential disaster in Griffith Park. It was suggested that RAP should look into allocating resources to be able to consistently deal with enforcing the current City ordinances. Open fires, primarily barbeques, have designated areas.

Mr. Hans proposed a motion that the Working Group members accept the chapter with changes as discussed. All voted to accept the chapter changes, except for one member. The Park Management Chapter has been passed with a few minor changes. Additional change to be made is for current staff structure on RAP, the part-time employees are 10,000, not 6,000. Ms. Calvin-Harris stated that Councilmember Tom LaBonge is working with RAP in looking into funding sources, distribution and who would finalize the document. As soon as the Councilmember gets a funding source, the Working Group will be informed. What the Working Group would like to have is for someone who would do the grammatical errors and not for someone to take the document and change it. The Working Group members would like to complete their own document.

The Environmental Chapter needs to be done. Before the May 2007 fire, Mr. Regan, Ms. Israel and Planning and Development Superintendent Mike Shull had originally said they would help the Working Group with this chapter.

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RAP acknowledged that indexing, cross-referencing, incorporation of graphic, etc, are needed to finalize the document. RAP presented Councilmember LaBonge with a few options of how everyone can achieve what the Working Group has asked RAP to achieve within the environmental and total clean up. The Working Group members were reminded that it is a public funding which falls under all of the bureaucratic regulations in terms of contracting and gift of public funds. One of the options presented to Councilmember LaBonge is to couple the environmental work with someone who can also finalize the document. The intent is to do the best thing that would work for the Working Group and for the City. There are no intentions of changing what the Working Group has prepared.

Ms. Vanaman asked not to have a December meeting due to the busy holiday schedule. It was suggested that the Working Group should re-group and determine exactly what the next steps are for the master plan to be finalized, accepted and adopted. An estimate on the environmental report from one of our as-needed consultants would have to be checked on. The environmental review section should hold things off as pointed out by one of the Working Group members. The document is needed in order for the environmental review to be in process. It should at least be put in a final draft form. Mr. Regan will try to get some estimates in terms of how much the environmental might cost to present in the meeting. Mr. Shull was about to work on it however, the May 8, 2007 fire has changed many of the focuses of Mr. Shull and his staff.

The next Working Group meeting will be held Monday, January 8, 2008. This concluded the November 5, 2007 meeting.

Public Comments include the following:

- A suggestion was given not to hire someone with just computer skills but to hire a copy editor. Copy editors are trained in all aspect of formatting and proof reading.
- The Working Group was asked if they have a list of things they would like to see happening in Griffith Park in 25 years.
- Not comfortable with completely controlled either by council office or RAP and not comfortable with the vote at this meeting. It does not address the concerns. There are problems in terms of notifications, format and approval process for anything that is proposed. The way of allotting this and trying to control who appoints the people that should go on as an advisory panel. It is a steady march toward dominating the group meaning the people sitting here have assured that they and their group will carry forward and other people are written into this but doesn't mean they will ever have a voice. It will be dominated by the same people dominating right now.
- Mr. Regan informed everyone that there was a fire in Griffith Park on Saturday night and that the fire was suspected arson. The Park Rangers apprehended the suspect and made an arrest. Mr. Regan commended and thanked Chief Park Ranger Torres and his staff for quick response.
- The Working Group has worked long hours and has worked hard on this project. There have been opportunities to speak up and share inputs.
- When people get involved in neighborhood councils and other residential organizations, their presence and continued learning that they are concerned with Griffith Park. It shows their long-term commitment and interest. These people are middle aged and primarily middle class who are active in the Park. A question was raised if there are any reasons why the residents outside the Griffith Park area would be better than those who live in the community? They will be guided by the master plan, which already states that Griffith Park will keep the urban wilderness identity.