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**Westside Creeks Restoration Project  
Apache Creek Subcommittee Meeting  
Guadalupe Cultural Arts Theatre – 1301 Guadalupe St.  
July 7, 2009 – 6:00 PM**

## **Meeting Notes**

**Attendees:** Albert Esquivel; J.R. Carmona; Jesse H. Valdez; Dr. Catherine Rainwater, OLLU; Robert Ramirez, WCROC Co-Chair; Roberto Rodriguez, SARA Board Member; Officer James Shirley, SAPD; Ed Garza, AECOM; Andy Rooke, AECOM; Rudy Farias, SARA; Gloria Rodriguez, SARA; William Long, RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc.; and Rudy Rivera, RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc.

### **1.0 Welcome & Introductions**

Robert Ramirez called the meeting to order. He mentioned that he would act as chair person in place of Henry Rodriguez who was not present. He also thanked the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Theatre manager, Pedro Ramirez, for allowing the subcommittee to use his facility for the meeting.

### **2.0 Approval of the Meeting Minutes (May/June 2009)**

Mr. Ramirez said that the minutes would be approved unless someone had any changes. There were no changes mentioned, so the minutes were approved.

### **3.0 Safety and Security Workshop**

Mr. Ramirez then asked Rudy Farias, with SARA, to start the next agenda item. Mr. Farias said that Officer James Shirley was at the meeting to address any safety concerns the subcommittee might have. He then opened the meeting up for the subcommittee to ask questions.

Mr. Ramirez said that the community loves to use the creeks and asked what is being done to secure the creek areas as far as technology goes. Officer Shirley said that cameras are being used to watch for graffiti and other crimes in certain areas. He added that there is not enough man-power to patrol all the creek areas. He mentioned that Chief McManus is open to ideas and suggestion, but is limited by budget and man power. Mr. Ramirez followed up his question by asking if there would be a decrease in crime with more cameras, possibly with motion sensors. Officer Shirley said the main problems are prostitution and drug attics. He said they will go to the places that are closest to where they buy drugs. He added that if they know they are being watched, then they might go elsewhere. He said that motion sensors might do more to stop some of the crime if people know they are being watched.

Roberto Rodriguez, a SARA Board Member, asked if there would be cameras to help crime at the 19<sup>th</sup> Street Dam. Officer Shirley said there is a camera out there and no one has been caught yet. Albert Esquivel said that there really does not seem to be an effort that is deterring the crime from happening. Officer Shirley responded by saying that if

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the criminals do not feel threatened by the consequences, then they will continue to do what they want. He added that education is the best deterrent in the long run. He said in the long run, things tend to change. He mentioned that teen pregnancy has gone down because of the education over the past 20 years. Officer Shirley said that if even one kid stops their criminal activity, then that is a good thing. He said he thinks more people need to get involved, like what the members of this subcommittee are doing.

Gloria Rodriguez, with SARA, asked Officer Shirley to elaborate on a comment he made prior to the meeting about shrubs and effective landscaping safety features. Officer Shirley said that the homeless people will take baths in water fountains. He said kids will break statues and put graffiti on walls. He recommended making as few hiding areas as possible. He said zero-scaping is best remedy because nice plants will be uprooted and taken if they are easily available. He added that they could be sold at the local flea markets.

Mr. Farias asked if there are any flood problems around the creeks. Officer Shirley said that most people that live around the creeks know that there is danger in the rising flood waters and stay away. Mr. Farias then asked if homelessness was a problem. Officer Shirley said it was a major problem and he expects the Haven for Hope to help the situation. Mr. Rodriguez asked what the total capacity will be at the Haven for Hope. Officer Shirley said that it will be the largest homeless facility in the nation. He mentioned that other cities and states are telling people about the Haven for Hope.

Officer Shirley then said that there is a major problem under the Commerce and Buena Vista Bridges. Mr. Farias asked if the narcotics and prostitution was out of control. Officer Shirley said that you hear nothing but bad things on the news about this area and never hear the good things. He added that when he joined the SAFFE unit he met lots of good people and only saw the bad people when he responded to calls as a regular SAPD officer.

Albert Ezquivel asked what the penalties were for loitering and vagrancy. Officer Shirley said that there are no specific laws that specifically stop loitering. He mentioned that there are no real penalties for it because it is not a major crime. He said people may be arrested, and cannot afford the tickets, so they are let go. He added that judges are dealing with overcrowding in the jails and will not put a person into lock-up for loitering. He said there is a no camping law that allows the police to push people out from areas where they setup make-shift tents and camps.

Mr. Esquivel said there are a lot of prostitutes at the Lincoln Courts and the criminals even seem to have spotters to inform them of police raids. Officer Shirley agreed and said the spotters are stationed around the entire area and will alert others when police are in the area. He said that they are somewhat organized and make it difficult to catch people in the act. Mr. Rodriguez said that a friend of his called the SAPD as he witnessed someone tagging a wall, but that the response time was very slow. He added that by the time the police arrived the person tagging was already gone. Officer Shirley said that calls that come into 911 are prioritized in order of importance. He said

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sometimes there are major crimes happening that are more importance than small disturbances and until officers get off of a call, they cannot move on to other emergency calls that come in.

Mr. Rodriguez said that safety has been a recurring theme at each of the subcommittee meetings. He said that he hopes that the lighting and visible areas that are part of the proposed improvements for the Westside Creeks will make the area safer. He asked if there is anything that this committee should suggest to the oversight committee that we have not covered. Officer Shirley said that lighting is the most important addition that he can think of. He added that they are trying to get more park police activated as well.

Mr. Farias then thanked Officer Shirley for attending and for putting things in proper context to give the subcommittee a better idea of what is happening. Mr. Ramirez would like to add that solar power should be explored when thinking of lighting along the creek developments. He also said that some sort of robotics could be used to help alert the police of crimes.

## **4.0 September Work Sessions**

Mr. Ramirez then introduced Ed Garza, with AECOM. Mr. Garza said that at the oversight committee meeting, they will be discussing safety and security further. He said safety landscaping will be discussed and will be part of the recommendations in the report. He announced that there will be no meetings in August, but that the September work sessions will be a week of full day meetings. He then discussed that the catalyst areas will be the focus of the September meetings. He added that the focus will be on what sections of each creek should be the start points. He said that the Alazán subcommittee picked breakfast as a more agreeable time to meet for the work sessions and asked if there was a preference for this subcommittee. Dr. Catherine Rainwater, with OLLU, said that 6:00 p.m. would be better for her. Mr. Ramirez said that Wednesdays would not work for him, but that evenings are better. Mr. Garza said that he will then try to schedule this subcommittee for an evening. Mr. Esquivel added that the evening would probably be the best time for most people.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if Howard Peak will be at the July oversight committee meeting. Mr. Garza said that he is slated to appear, but that he has yet to confirm that he will be there. Mr. Farias added that he believes that there was a confirmation that Howard Peak will be at the oversight committee meeting.

## **5.0 Additional Items to Report to Oversight Committee**

Mr. Ramirez thanked Mr. Garza and asked if there were any items to announce to the oversight committee. Mr. Ramirez said he wants invitations to be targeted to businesses along the creeks for the upcoming workshop.

## **6.0 Miscellaneous Items**

Mr. Ramirez said that former Councilwoman Lourdes Galvan intends to stay active and will be working with city officials to continue her efforts.

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## **7.0 Next Meeting**

Mr. Ramirez added that Mr. Garza mentioned changes regarding the postponement of the August meetings and the September work sessions.

## **8.0 Adjourn**

Mr. Ramirez then adjourned the meeting.

## **Action Items**

- Inform the subcommittee of when they are expected to meet.
- Inform businesses of October workshop

## **Distribution**

- WCROC
- Apache Creek Subcommittee Members
- SARA Staff
- Consultant Team