



Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting June 08, 2010 – 6:00 PM

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Members and Alternates – Robert Ramirez (WCROC Co-Chair), Olga Lizcano (WCROC Co-Chair), Abigail Kinnison (Beacon Hill N.A.), Thomas Lopez (SAISD), Joanne Walsh (Downtown Residents Association), Ashley Hernandez (Student Representative), Jude Valdez (UTSA), Theodore Ozuna (Donaldson Terrace N.A.), Dr. Catherine Rainwater (Our Lady of the Lake University), Barbara Hall (San Antonio Conservation Society), Lourdes Galvan (West San Antonio Chamber).

Staff and Consultants – Jim Boenig (SARA), Steve Graham (SARA), Rudy Farias (SARA), Gloria Rodriguez (SARA), Robert Browning (COSA - Public Works), Jeremy Hanzlik (AECOM), David Parkhill (AECOM), William Long (RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc.).

Members of the Public – J.R. Carmona, Narcisso Cano (San Pedro Subcommittee Co-Chair), Garri Dryden (SEL), Kevin Connor (Jacobs), Charlotte Kahl (Old Spanish Trail), Bud Abbott.

I. Welcome & Introductions

Robert Ramirez (WCROC Co-Chair) called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for their attendance. He asked if there was anyone at a Westside Creeks meeting for the first time. David Parkhill (AECOM) raised his hand and introduced himself. Jim Boenig (SARA) announced that William Marmet (Baker) was in attendance and was with Baker Engineers. Mr. Boenig added that Mr. Marmet was on-site to train SARA staff in stream restoration and he stayed an extra hour to attend the Oversight Committee Meeting. Mr. Ramirez welcomed both newcomers and then asked Olga Lizcano (WCROC Co-Chair) if she wanted to say anything. Ms. Lizcano welcomed everyone and added that Mr. Parkhill was visiting the committee from the Austin area.

II. Approval of the Meeting Minutes (April 2010)

Mr. Ramirez then asked everyone to review the minutes. He asked if there were any changes or additions. Abigail Kinnison (Beacon Hill N.A.) asked that the following information be reflected under the Martínez Creek report out session from the last Oversight Committee meeting regarding the draft report:

- Under partnership opportunities, categorize each based on their interest and how each partner will be engaged in implementation.
- Concern was expressed that expectations are unrealistic and too amenity heavy, instead of flood control and restoration which was original focus of the project.
- A suggestion that there be more discussion of connections to on-street existing transportation networks (bike, pedestrian, bus)

- Expansion of financing options, discuss upcoming elections, as well as continued public and committee involvement.
- Since additional hydraulic modeling was performed only on Martínez Creek, should there be information providing some expanded recommendations associated with Martínez?
- Expand discussion on areas of creek that are not within catalyst sites, specifically the on street connection under IH-10.
- Include discussion of what a catalyst site is and what it means.
- Discussion of connection to Mission Reach
- Discussion of federal requirements and flood control goals.

Mr. Ramirez asked if there were any other additions or amendments to the minutes. Hearing none, he said the minutes would then be approved including Ms. Kinnison's additions.

III. Update on the Concept Plan

Mr. Ramirez then asked Rudy Farias (SARA) to discuss the update on the concept plan. Mr. Farias started by saying that back in April, the project team was nearing the completion of the final concept plan. He added that after the committees reviewed the draft document, it became clear that there were some deficiencies in the report. He mentioned that the scope has been revised to allow for a deliverable that will be in line with the comments received by the committee members. Mr. Farias then discussed a revised schedule including:

- July 13: Status update to WCROC
- August 2-5: Present draft report to the Subcommittees
- August 10: Present draft report to the WCROC
- August 17: Receive comments from the WCROC
- August 24 or September 14: Present the Final report to the Oversight Committee

Mr. Farias then asked the committee members to discuss whether they would want the August 24th or September 14th date for when the final report is delivered to the Oversight Committee. He added that some of the deliverables presented at that time would be stream restoration concepts, additional graphics along with the catalyst site graphics, a phasing portion that would include other projects that would have some impact on these creeks, cost estimates will be included that are specific to the Westside Creeks. Mr. Farias said the end goal is to have a final report to present to the Oversight Committee on August 24th or September 14th. Mr. Ramirez asked if the committee did not meet until September 14th, would the report still be done by August 24th and be available to those who wish to view it before September. Mr. Farias said it would be available by August 24th, but comments would need to be received by August 17, 2010.

Joanne Walsh (Downtown Residents Association) asked if the final report could be viewed after the comments are made, but prior to the Oversight Committee adopting it. Mr. Farias said that might be possible, but that he would need to discuss that with the consultant team. Mr. Parkhill said that it would be possible, but that it might mean another meeting would need to be added. Mr. Ramirez asked for clarification from Ms. Walsh about her question. He asked if she wanted to get another look at the final product after the comments were made. Ms. Walsh said that she wanted to see how the comments were used and to ensure nothing was missing before finalizing the document. Ms. Kinnison asked if that final

review could be done electronically without the committee reconvening. Mr. Ramirez mentioned there might be an issue with sending out an unfinished document. Mr. Farias said that the project team could put the word "DRAFT" on all pages of the document so whoever views it would know that it is a work in progress.

Ms. Kinnison then asked who would review the final document after it is adopted by the Oversight Committee. She then specifically asked about it going to the SARA Board for approval and then to the City Council. Mr. Farias said that once the committee has approved the concept plan, then it would go to the SARA Board for approval. He added that once they approve it, then they would contact Commissioner's Court to get it on their agenda, followed by the City Council. Lourdes Galvan (West San Antonio Chamber) asked when the document would be presented to the City Council. Mr. Farias said it would be towards the end of the year and possibly early into 2011. Ms. Lizcano asked if the City Council budget ends in October 2010. Mr. Farias said it does. Ms. Lizcano asked if there was any way to get the information sooner. Mr. Farias said it was already a tight schedule.

Ms. Kinnison brought up the sales tax initiative for the linear creeks project that mentions the Westside Creeks. She asked if the report could be completed and given to the City Council prior to the budget vote. Mr. Farias said that whatever we have by August 24th will be shared with Howard Peak, who chairs the Linear Creeks Trail Initiative. He added that Mr. Peak is interested in cost estimates and would like to know what trails can be implemented first. Mr. Farias said that Mr. Peak does not want trails to be constructed and then torn out when the other restoration improvements are implemented. Ms. Galvan added that getting the document to the City Council in time for the budget is not necessary because we will not be asking them for any money to fund the project at that time. Mr. Farias said that they need to see the information so that they can be approached at a later date as a possible funding source. He said the SARA funding for this project is limited to planning and so other funding partners will need to be identified.

Ms. Galvan asked for a specific dollar amount that will be asked for to fund the project. Mr. Farias said that number will be available within the final report. He said the current estimate was based on similar projects, but the report numbers will be modeled closer to what will actually occur on the Westside Creeks.

Mr. Valdez asked if the City Council or any other government organization has the power to veto any of this information. He also asked who the report will be presented to once it is completed. Mr. Farias said that the project team has been meeting with various council members and members of Commissioners' Court. Mr. Valdez asked if the report would be simply for information purposes. Mr. Farias said it is for informational purposes and they are familiar with the process because they went through a similar process with the River Improvements Project.

Barbara Hall (San Antonio Conservation Society) asked if the report will need to go through any commissions that need to go through the report prior to it being given to the City Council. She specifically asked about commissions such as DSDB or HDRC zoning infrastructure and growth. Mr. Farias said that there is the potential that it might need to go through other commissions to get their approval. He specifically mentioned that the downtown associations might need to be consulted regarding San Pedro

Creek and since there was a historical portion to the project, there might be other issues to discuss in regards to sensitive historical areas.

Ms. Kinnison mentioned that there had been discussion of adding the project into the city's master plan. She added that it is a discussion that needs to be had with the city to determine what needs to be done. Mr. Farias said the work that would be focused on is the restoration of the creeks. He added that the catalyst sites that were identified would need to be created by working with other agencies, such as the Westside Development Corporation to make those happen. He said if the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is involved, then their involvement ends at the top of bank of each creek. Mr. Farias added that they would not be involved with the economic development opportunities on top of the banks.

Ms. Kinnison said she could see pieces of the plan being removed from the report and presented to individual organizations to gain their support. Mr. Farias said that is an option. Ms. Hall said that the commissions can change a plan. Mr. Farias mentioned that there is still a lot of work after the report is completed. He said the report is just the concept plan that will generate the interest in the project. Mr. Farias said that once it goes into design, that is where all the engineering begins and it becomes more of what we expect to see on the ground. Mr. Ramirez said that another contract would have to be let in order to focus on the more specific designs aspects. Ms. Lizcano said that then that means we are looking at 2012 before any presentations to the city are made. Mr. Farias said that he does not think there would be a delay in presenting to the city. Ms. Lizcano said by the time this report is completed and presented to the public, it would be 2012. Ms. Kinnison stated that if this agenda item passes in October, then it will be on the ballot in November 2010. She added that the money could be used to build trails, but as was mentioned earlier, construction may be delayed until after the restoration work. Otherwise the trails would have to be torn out and replaced as the restoration aspects are implemented.

Ms. Walsh asked where the funding will come for the detailed design and how long would the design take. Jim Boenig (SARA) said that with the San Antonio River Improvements Project, once the conceptual study was completed, then there were City Council and Commissioner's Court actions taken. Mr. Boenig said the SARA involvement was purely for planning. He added that they have asked the Corps of Engineers to give them a design. Then he said it would take them about three years to complete the design.

Steve Graham (SARA) added that the concept plan is a starting point, but not a final document so the City and County can understand their final costs. Mr. Boenig added that the Corps of Engineers will be involved and those conversations with the officials will need to be made.

Mr. Ramirez then asked if anyone else, other than the Oversight Committee, had any comments. Charlotte Kahl (Old Spanish Trail) said she attends the Linear Creeks Board Meetings and Mr. Peak asked the Board to bring their plans to promote the tax increase for the linear creeks at the next board meeting. She said that having the report done by August 24th would be preferred in order to get the message out to the voters in time. Mr. Graham said the information needed for marketing will be available. Mr. Boenig said that information is being shared with the Linear Creeks Board.

Mr. Ramirez then asked Mr. Farias if there was anything else to discuss before the vote was taken. Mr. Farias mentioned that after this meeting there would be walking tour of the Mission Reach. He said that he brought excerpts from the Mission Reach concept plan and those taking the walking tour will be able to

see what is actually being built compared to the concept plan. Mr. Ramirez asked when the SARA Board will meet after September 14, 2010. Mr. Farias said they meet on the third Wednesday of every month. Gloria Rodriguez (SARA) mentioned that the third Wednesday that month would be September 15, 2010. Mr. Farias added that if the Oversight Committee approves the document on September 14th, then he would have the document to present to the board the next day. Mr. Ramirez asked for clarification on what SARA wants from the Oversight Committee. He asked if it was just an endorsement of the concept plan that was needed. Mr. Farias said that is what they are looking for so they can show it to the SARA Board members. Mr. Ramirez asked if any comments could be added after they approve of the report. Mr. Graham mentioned that the co-chairs of the Oversight Committee would be welcome to come to the board meeting to give their comments on how the community felt about the project.

Ms. Galvan said that regarding the tax money gained by the Linear Creekways initiative, she wanted to make sure that there is a line item for each of the four creeks, specifically naming each one of them. Mr. Graham then reminded the committee that Roberto Rodriguez sits on both the WCROC and the Linear Creeks Board, which he said means there is a voice there for the Westside Creeks. Ms. Walsh said she thought that when Howard Peak came to discuss the Linear Creekways project he mentioned that the other linear creeks would get the money first and whatever was leftover would be available for the Westside Creeks. Mr. Farias said that was correct.

Mr. Ramirez then asked the committee to vote on the date for the final report to be delivered. 10 members out of 12 voted for August 24, 2010 instead of September 14, 2010.

IV. Update on the Elmendorf Lake Dredging

Mr. Ramirez then asked Mr. Graham to discuss the update on the Elmendorf Lake dredging. Mr. Graham started by discussing the agenda from the May 26th Public Meeting. He said they covered the options and recommendations on the dredging of the lake, modification options to the labyrinth weir dam, how water quality and general habitats around the lake can be improved, and next steps and schedules. He mentioned that the Elmendorf Lake project limits are from the dam all the way to 19th Street. Mr. Graham said the scope of Elmendorf Lake Project included \$3 million for the dredging activity with \$500,000 for the design and study effort. He said the \$3 million is a starting point that will probably grow. He mentioned that Bexar County has initiated a project to improve water quality and general aquatic health of Elmendorf Lake.

Mr. Graham said the lake was built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1974. He said dredging will eliminate the sediment and its accumulated pollutants. He added that after a sediment analysis was done, it was determined that most of the sediment will need to be relocated to a landfill. Mr. Graham said the removal would be done properly and every attempt will be made to preserve the local environment. He said the method they are proposing is called wet dredging, which is when you have a boat out on the lake and it vacuums the sediment from the bottom of the lake. He said there were four options that were looked at, but the wet dredging using the boat was found to be the best option. Mr. Graham added that this option leaves the lake undisturbed other than where the sediment that is collected will be stored prior to being removed from the premises. He said the lake will be full of water during the process and recreational activities can still occur.

Mr. Graham then discussed the labyrinth weir dam. He said the dam itself is not very attractive and fish tend to get caught on the concrete slab. He mentioned that the concrete blocks on the dam are designed to dissipate energy of the water coming off the dam. Mr. Graham mentioned different types of gates that are being considered for the dam enhancements. He added that the dredging option has already been chosen so they can move forward once it is approved, but options for the dam modifications are still being considered.

Mr. Graham then discussed the public comments received. He said the number one comment was that nothing be done to make the problems worse. He added that attendees at the meeting were concerned about the birds and the environment, especially on the island. He mentioned other concerns were about obtaining the proper permits for the habitat and environment. Mr. Graham said other comments pertained to coordinating with Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU). He said that Dr. Rainwater was in attendance at the meeting and that they have been working closely with OLLU.

Mr. Graham said that attendees did not receive a strong preference regarding the Barometric Pressure (BMP) options, which he said meant that they need to educate the public more as to what BMP's are and how they can affect water quality. He mentioned that a future meeting will be in September and they plan to bring back solutions to the concerns raised. Then he discussed the next steps, which included answers to questions about dredging and permit issues. Mr. Graham said that if there are no more concerns after the next meeting then they will be able to take the information to Commissioner's Court for construction authorization. He mentioned that based on permits, dredging might start in November, but the permit process could cause the start to be delayed possibly to April 2011. Mr. Graham said once it starts, it will be about six months till the dredging is completed. Regarding the dam modifications, he mentioned that they hope to get authorization to go into a final design in the Fall of 2010.

Mr. Graham asked if there were any questions or comments about the Elmendorf Lake Project. Dr. Catherine Rainwater said that the meeting was very good and that there was very good attendance. She added that she felt the attendees did not understand the dredging options and possible problems with each option. She mentioned that there was an overwhelming response in support of taking all of the water out of the lake and then replacing it once the dredging is completed. Mr. Graham said that his job is to make sure the community understands that SARA will give their community the best possible project.

Mr. Ramirez said that there is the island project that should be consulted with. Mr. Graham said they are talking to the City of San Antonio Parks Department to ensure things run smoothly between the two projects. Mr. Ramirez asked if there were any other comments. Hearing none, he thanked Mr. Graham on his presentation and asked Ms. Lizcano to discuss the next agenda item.

V. Miscellaneous Items

Ms. Lizcano said they were adding Miscellaneous Items to the agenda and then asked if there were any miscellaneous items to discuss. Hearing none, she then discussed the next agenda item.

VI. Next Meeting

Ms. Lizcano said the next meeting would be July 13, 2010. She added that there would not be any subcommittee meetings, but they are all welcome to come to the Oversight Committee meeting.

VIII. Adjourn

Ms. Lizcano then thanked everyone for their attendance and adjourned the meeting.

Action Items

- Add the comments from Ms. Kinnison to the previous Oversight Committee meeting minutes, under the Martínez Creek Subcommittee report.
- Note that the Oversight Committee voted to meet on August 24, 2010 as the date they would like to have the final report presented to them.

Distribution

- WCROC
- SARA Staff
- Consultant Team