



**Minutes of the
Westside Creeks Restoration
Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting
February 11, 2014**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm in the San Antonio River Authority’s Boardroom, 100 East Guenther Street, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Committee Members Present:

Olga Lizcano, Co-Chair	Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair
Skye Curd, West San Antonio Chamber of Commerce	Evelynn Mitchell, St. Mary's University
Erwin DeLuna, United San Antonio Pow-Wow, Inc.	Theodore Ozuna, Donaldson Terrace NA
Janet Dietel, San Antonio Conservation Society	Abel Ramirez, San Antonio Wheelman
Cary Guffey, Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU)	Martin Herrera, Westside Development Corporation (WDC)
Ashley Hernandez, Woodlawn Lake NA	Roberto Rodriguez, Texas Tejano.com
Charlie Mata, Prospect Hill NA	Jude Valdez, University of Texas at San Antonio
Joanne Walsh, Downtown Residents Association	Gabriel Velasquez, Avenida Guadalupe

Staff and Members of the Public Present:

Lourdes Galvan, SARA Board Member	Russell Persyn, SARA
Rudy R. Farias, SARA	Roy Pachecano
Jesse De los Santos	Gloria Rivera Rodriguez, SARA
John Dean	Elginio Rodriguez
James Ford	Al Salgado, UTSA-DT, representing Dr. Valdez
David D. Garza, COSA	Suzanne Scott, SARA
Walter Heard, Terra Design	Jeff Tyler, SARA
Mark Judson	Linda Whitaker, SARA
Teri Kilmer	Brice Moczygemba, Pape Dawson
Brian Mast, SARA	

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Welcome

Co-Chair Robert Ramirez called the meeting to order. He called on SARA Board Member Lourdes Galvan who welcomed those in attendance and expressed gratitude for Bexar County Commissioners Court approval of \$7 million for Elmendorf Lake improvements.

Co-Chair Olga Lizcano greeted the group. Mr. Ramirez welcomed everyone, noting that the educational component of the Committee was strongly represented. Evelynn Mitchell, Associate Professor at St. Mary’s University was introduced. Being the creator of the Environmental

Science Program at the University, she is very interested in the Committee. Skye Curd was introduced as a new member of the Committee representing the West San Antonio Chamber of Commerce. Suzanne Scott, General Manager of the San Antonio River Authority was introduced.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Approval of Minutes for December 10, 2013

Mr. Ramirez presented the minutes to the Committee and asked if there were any corrections. Roberto Rodriguez asked for "Westside" to be changed to "Westside Creeks" and Gabriel Velasquez noted that the hike and bike trail wall design discussion was to discourage graffiti and not solely based upon aesthetics. With those corrections noted the minutes were approved.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Update on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Feasibility Study

Rudy Farias gave a brief background of the Project for the benefit of several new people attending the meeting. He explained that the Project involves a Corps Feasibility Study focusing on the restoration of the creeks. This study began in 2011 and is nearing completion. The national significance requirement by the federal government was achieved by virtue of benefiting migratory bird patterns. The study supports the following:

- Alazan Creek – full restoration. The channel will be lowered allowing for woody vegetation, and channel improvements.
- Apache Creek – partial restoration. Removal of the concrete in the upper 2/3s of Apache Creek will cause an increase in flood elevations as depicted in the model. Therefore, the concrete has to remain in place resulting in a compromise of native grasses instead of the existing Bermuda. The lower 1/3 of Apache Creek would be fully restored.
- Martinez Creek – will only receive restoration of the native grasses due to utility line conflicts along a majority of the sections.
- San Pedro Creek – full restoration from Camp Street south of downtown to the confluence of the San Antonio River.

If the \$67.5 million Project is approved, the Corps will pay 65% and a local entity will pay 35%. Presently, the Project Team is preparing for the Senior Leader's Meeting scheduled for March 7. Suzanne Scott will be in Washington DC to make the presentation along with other Senior Leaders of the Corps. Following the Senior Leaders Meeting, the tentative plan is to receive an approved Director's Report supporting the project by April 10. The report will then advance to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for final review with the goal of obtaining federal funds for the preliminary engineering design work to commence during fiscal year 2016 (October 2015 – September 2016 which is the Federal Government's fiscal year).

Mr. Ramirez emphasized that this study pertains only to the work within the creeks and not to be confused with the Hike and Bike Trails Project. Mr. Ramirez invited questions and comments. Being none, they moved to Item 4.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: Update and Discussion on San Pedro Creek

Suzanne Scott gave the update on the San Pedro Creek Project. The Cooperative Agreement between Bexar County and SARA is being finalized and scheduled for presentation to Commissioners Court on March 18. Once approved, the Design Contract with the HDR team will be executed enabling the Project to move into the design phase. SARA is currently working on the real estate transactions regarding rights of entries from all the property owners adjacent to the creek for surveying and any other work necessary to finalize the types of properties necessary to implement the Project designs.

The Cooperative Agreement should be executed by next week at which time the San Pedro Creek Subcommittee meeting can be scheduled. The County had requested the Subcommittee not meet until the Agreement was executed. Jerry Geyer and Michael Cortez will continue to serve as co-chairs and hopefully the other members as well. The SARA Project Manager on the Subcommittee is Mark Sorenson. He will be the point of contact from a technical perspective. Mr. Sorenson is very familiar with the expectations of the County regarding delivering on projects and the reports required since he worked on the SARA Mission Reach Project. Mr. Sorenson will be attending both the Oversight Committee and Subcommittee meetings.

The design phase on the Project is going to move very quickly. Bexar County would like the construction to begin as soon as possible so that one aspect of the Project will be completed by May 5, 2018, the 300th anniversary of the City. It is anticipated that the design work on the Project will take 18 to 24 months. This will cause the Subcommittee to meet more frequently which may alter the meeting schedule of the Oversight Committee, depending on the decisions that need to be made. Once the design schedule is set with the design team, they will be able to determine when the Subcommittee will meet and how those meetings will dovetail with the Oversight Committee meeting schedule.

Mr. Ramirez asked whether or not it was too late for the public to contribute ideas regarding design. Ms. Scott said absolutely not, public input during this process is critical. The aesthetics, operations, and functionality of the Project need to be reviewed while making sure it can be maintained long term while being cost effective.

Ms. Scott said SARA will be directly responsible for the public outreach on the Project and has contracted with Ximenes & Associates for facilitation services. Ms. Scott stressed the importance of engaging the public throughout the process. There will be a website for the San Pedro Creek Project similar to the one for the Westside Creeks Project where the public can view the design documents and watch the development of the Project. Mr. Ramirez encouraged the Committee to attend and also to invite members of their own organizations to attend the Subcommittee meetings. Ms. Scott said all of the property owners directly involved with the San Pedro Creek Project will be notified of the Subcommittee meetings.

Mr. Ramirez invited questions. Skye Curd asked if a Facebook link could be created for San Pedro Creek Project to connect with people and also for them to provide feedback and suggestions. Ms. Scott said that was a good idea and would look into it.

Ms. Lizcano asked who was responsible for the maintenance of the trails and creeks. Ms. Scott said a Letter Agreement between the County, City, and SARA state SARA will work together with the County and City to determine the operation and maintenance requirements and costs.

Ms. Lizcano asked if there had been any discussion regarding extending the sales tax revenue for the Project. Ms. Scott said there are conversations going on currently concerning the use of the sales tax but nothing has been determined. Ms. Scott said the issue of the operation and maintenance of San Pedro Creek is very timely along with other trails requiring maintenance. Ms. Lizcano asked if the decision to extend the sales tax was decided by a public vote. Ms. Scott said it required approval by the voters.

Mr. Ramirez invited questions or comments.

Erwin DeLuna asked if the completed concepts would support the design phase. Ms. Scott said the design team has been requested to build on the designs from the concepts presented to the public and approved by Commissioners Court.

Mr. Ramirez said he wanted the minutes to reflect the Committee's thanks to Russell Persyn for all his work as the Project Manager.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5: Update and Discussion on Elmendorf Lake Park and Westside Creeks Hike and Bike Trails

Ms. Lizcano introduced Jeff Tyler. Mr. Tyler said this month they are at a critical part of the design phase. Bexar County Commissioners Court approved funds for Elmendorf Lake. As presented at Commissioners Court, the items that may be included are additional pedestrian bridges, stream bank restoration on the north shore, additional water quality fountains to aerate the lake, pervious parking areas, Low Impact Development (LID) features, and a wetland.

The project limits with the County's participation extended from 24th Street to Commerce Street. These additions will improve flood prevention and add components which will complement the City's 2012 vision.

Ms. Lizcano asked for clarification regarding improved conveyance of floodwaters. Mr. Tyler said any excavation in the park area will improve flood conveyance since the park is in the flood plain. He said it was not the same as de-silting the Lake.

The goal for completion of the design is July 2014. Mr. Tyler said this is an aggressive goal since they are maintaining the original design schedule while including the County's additional components. The goal to begin construction is September 2014 with completion in January 2016.

Mr. Tyler said due to discussions and comments regarding trail components, challenges and design at the last meeting, Walter Heard will be addressing those issues at tonight's meeting. Mr. Tyler then invited questions.

Roberto Rodriguez asked how soon the public will be notified of the changes in the design, especially the park property acquisitions. Mr. Tyler said the property acquisition was only

included because the Agreement was made with the County before the acquisition of the property with the restaurant which is the only property acquisition.

Mr. Rodriguez asked if the stream bank restoration included the entire lake or just a certain area. Mr. Tyler said there are only pieces around the lake that will be restored.

Mr. Rodriguez asked about water pollution. Mr. Tyler said another recirculating feature near the wetland and additional aerators were both proposed in the agreement with the County.

Mr. Rodriguez asked that the community and this Committee be provided details on the \$15 million dollars as soon as it was available. He said there should be a public meeting to make the community aware of the \$7 million dollars provided in addition to the original \$7 million dollars and how it will be incorporated into the Project. Mr. Tyler said they are reviewing the suggestions and feedback from the original workshops to possibly expand on elements they were unable to incorporate into the design due to lack of funding. He said there are public meetings scheduled in the future. Mr. Rodriguez asked if he knew the schedule of these public meetings. Mr. Tyler said he should have the schedule by the next meeting. Mr. Rodriguez also asked about the open house. Mr. Tyler said there was not a confirmed date for the open house at the moment.

Skye Curd asked if the additional funds will cover the widening of the parking spaces at the entrance as requested in previous public meetings and also additional seating which was in the original design concept. Mr. Tyler said he would check to see if those entry locations were relocated for the parking lot. Regarding the seating, he said there was already a large number of seating areas and picnic areas planned in the design. In answer to Ms. Curd's question about the number of seating areas, Mr. Tyler said he would research that number and get back with her.

Mr. DeLuna stated even though there is an additional \$7 million to augment some of the things that previously could not be done, does not necessarily mean they will be done now. Mr. Tyler said yes, this is flood control money which will determine what components can be done.

Regarding a question concerning how they are going to limit the flow of litter into the lake, Mr. Tyler said there are three trash booms planned.

Ms. Lizcano asked specifically about the property with the methadone clinic for sale. Mr. Tyler said they could not verify that it was for sale. Ms. Lizcano said this could be an opportunity to get rid of the clinic by purchasing the land since the public did not want it there. Mr. Farias said he met with Sister Jane Ann Slater of OLLU regarding the methadone clinic. She is going to meet with Councilwoman Shirley Gonzales to see what can be started at a grass roots level to find a solution. A solution might involve working with the clinic to see if there is a potential for relocating it. Mr. Farias said that it could not be purchased with the funds made available from City and the County for this Project.

Mr. Velasquez said it is very critical that when they talk about the possibility of using funds to purchase other properties, that it is discussed in the most precise context as possible. He said he doesn't think there should be general discussions among the community concerning land acquisition because of the fear of eminent domain. He said they need to clarify there are no

plans to take anyone's land. He feels the community should be reassured that this Committee takes no position on land acquisition, eminent domain nor has requested either, but it is ultimately the will of the property owner to get out of the flood plain. Mr. Tyler agreed with Mr. Velasquez and expounded the point saying because of this very reason, the idea of realigning Buena Vista Street did not happen.

Mr. Velasquez suggested public documents such as the slide presentation currently being viewed, be made less ambiguous by including a precise explanation of what it is depicting. He said it is worth SARA's effort to present their ideas directly to the community, reassuring the property owner that things will only be done if the property owner wants them to be done.

Mr. Tyler gave a review of lakeshore restoration and an explanation of low impact development at Mr. Herrera's request.

Mr. Charlie Mata asked if there had been discussions concerning the improvement of safety and security at Elmendorf Lake Park. Mr. Tyler said those issues had been discussed at the public workshops. Some of the ideas generated where increased frequency of park police patrol, park lighting, and increased traffic and use of the park facilities will help curtail illegal behavior. Mr. Mata asked if increasing security at Elmendorf Park would decrease the security at other parks. Mr. Tyler said he would contact the City's Parks Department for an answer.

Ms. Lizcano asked what the projected amount of population would be using the park so they could inform security. Mr. Farias said David Garza with the City is in attendance and could provide assistance in answering some of the Committee's questions.

Mr. Velasquez asked if they had considered building security features into the park amenities. He asked if there had been any discussions concerning the police department or parks department having a substation designed as a park amenity for them to use rent free. He also mentioned emergency telephones. Mr. Farias said a substation had not come up during any of the meetings with the City; however there is an existing substation a few blocks away from the park. Mr. Farias said that Walter Heard has looked into design elements pertaining to safety. He said that Woodlawn Lake is the model for Elmendorf Lake Park. Woodlawn Lake was once considered a dangerous place but now is a thriving park enjoyed by families and the community. Ms. Curd said Woodlawn Lake does not have a methadone clinic across the street and her concern was that people from the clinic possibly coming into the park area inebriated.

Mr. Ramirez said after all the improvements by the City and the County, the community has a responsibility of stewardship for the park. He mentioned how Neighborhood Associations could help with the security. Mr. Mata said that was too much for the neighborhood associations to handle.

Mr. Ramirez said the possibility of a perpetual vigil at the Veterans Monument could also help by being a presence there. He said they need to be creative in resolving the safety issue. Ashley Hernandez representing Woodlawn Lake Association spoke of ways their Association addressed safety concerns.

Mr. DeLuna said he was familiar with the Woodlawn Lake area and witnessed after the improvements were made and once the people began utilizing it, no longer were there issues of trash or crime as before. He believes the same will happen for Elmendorf Lake.

Elginio Rodriguez asked Mr. Tyler about the SARA June 12, 2012 final report from the Westside Creeks website which gave a breakdown of everything that needed to be done at Elmendorf Lake. He mentioned side stream super saturation and how both dredging and aeration need to be done together. He said the last time the lake was dredged was in 1974. Mr. Rodriguez asked if there was side stream super saturation for this Project. Mr. Tyler said there is not one being designed for this Project because it is upstream of the outfall on the tributary that would drain into it. They are treating the runoff that falls in the park and on the park area and collecting the floatables that come down the side stream because they are going to be able to treat them within the footprint of the park. Mr. Rodriguez asked if a comparison analysis was done for the June 2012 Report to see if items in the BMP are being covered. Mr. Tyler said for this Project they selected the same consultant who did the preliminary plan so the implementation of those components would be directly related to this Project. He said he would look into presenting a correlation at the next meeting.

Teri Kilmer said she was very familiar with the area since she spent 25 years at Rodriguez Elementary. Mr. Tyler answered her question concerning the limits of the project being Our Lady of the Lake University on the South, Commerce St.-Buena Vista-Shore Drive on the North, and 19th Street on the East. He also answered her question concerning the triangle at Buena Vista and Commerce by saying it is mostly City property and the location for the park monument. She asked if any property at Rodriguez Elementary was going to be used in the Project. Mr. Tyler said no because it was outside the scope of the Project. She said some people had expressed concern regarding their property being taken for the Project and not being able to relocate. Mr. Tyler said their property would not be acquired and if it was, legally they are required to help them relocate. He also clarified the location of the walking trail connection from Commerce St.

Joanne Walsh commented that her neighborhood also has a methadone clinic and the main thing that has helped her neighborhood regarding safety is that all of the residents contribute to their own safety by being vigilant.

Mr. Velasquez said he wants an opportunity for the Committee to give input to Public Art San Antonio (PASA) on the monument planned for the entrance. He suggested possibly using an artist from the community or an art student from OLLU. He said he knows the Committee needs to work within a budget but the Committee should also remember their ability to convene and ask for more money if available from the City and County. Mr. Velasquez said one of the most encouraging things that has ever happened to him in his life in San Antonio has been being a member of this Committee because SARA, the Corps, the County and City have put their money where their mouth is. He said the designers, architects and engineers take into consideration the concerns and special issues particular to the west side community when drafting ideas.

Walter Heard President of TDG and Lead Architect on the Project reaffirmed that they do listen and he appreciated the comments and suggestions at tonight's meeting. Mr. Heard gave a presentation on the Trails Project. He said Martinez and Alazan Creeks had a Hike and Bike trails open house. TDG delivered the 95% construction documents to SARA and the City. They are

attempting to use the property bought out several years ago in the flood plain to create a more park-like atmosphere. At the open house, they presented the architectural components and other components that reflected the art deco look. There are shade structures, a main entry sign, interpretative signs, and way-finding maps along the trail. The City has some standard items to keep the trails similar; however they are allowed to take liberties with the designs. Alazan reflects the architectural style of Woodlawn Park with the same style of stonework. Apache and San Pedro Creek are at 70% design. The open house is tentatively scheduled the first couple of weeks in March. Mr. Heard said at the last meeting a question was asked regarding treatment of the bank. When the trail goes under the streets, they cut into the slope which requires some type of treatment, wall or riprap. The walls are generally 2 ½ to 3 ½ feet high.

Ms. Galvan suggested engaging the City regarding the concerns the community has about safety and lighting for the trails.

Mr. Velasquez asked about opportunities for possible solar power lighting grants. He mentioned that South Side Lyons Park/Pecan Valley Park has some solar power lights.

Jesse De los Santos asked questions about the names of the creeks. He also asked where he can park since the closure of Mission Park Road. Ms. Scott explained the location to him. She said White Road is now VFW Road and there is ample parking there.

Teri Kilmer said she has a big problem in her area. Since 1990 she has been trying to get an answer concerning the money allocated for Zarzamora Creek and why nothing has been done to improve the creek. Mr. Farias said the restoration of the creeks only covers the creeks that the Corps originally channelized. She is meeting with her Councilwoman tomorrow and Ms. Lizcano said that was a good idea.

Mr. DeLuna thanked Mr. Heard for all the effort he put into the presentation. He said it was very well thought out and answered many of their questions. Mr. Farias will provide him with a copy of the presentation.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6: Discussion and Action Regarding Oversight Committee Workshop

Mr. Ramirez said the Committee needs to set up a workshop to address issues regarding the internal workings of this Committee such as function, purpose, mission statement, goals, processes, and protocol. He said there will probably be about three vacancies on the Committee and there are also dormant entities who have not been attending. They need to discuss what type of entities they want to invite to fill those slots. He mentioned that there were six members, representatives of member organizations, who were hearing about the various projects for the first time. Part of the workshop's goal is to bring everybody up to speed and ensure all members are on the same page so they can move forward as a cohesive group.

Mr. Ramirez asked the Committee if they were in agreement on the need for this type of workshop. Mr. Ramirez said it is going to be a work session where they look at themselves and how they do what they are supposed to do and what it is they do. Also they are going to discuss

their relationship with the Board because there is some confusion regarding this Committee's authority.

Ms. Hernandez asked about the formation of the subcommittees. Mr. Ramirez said there would be discussion about mustering the subcommittees again. He said in the past, all four of them were operating at the same time. Ms. Hernandez asked if the workshop was only for Committee members or could anyone attend. Mr. Ramirez answered that it is intended just for the Committee Members, Ms. Galvan and any other SARA Board Member and possibly some SARA staff. It would not be open to the public because the discussions will not generate public input but discuss how the Committee operates internally.

Mr. Farias suggested having the workshop on a Saturday morning with breakfast provided. He said since there are new Committee members, he would like to take a two hour tour of the Creeks. He said they could reacquaint themselves with the Project limits, the creeks, and the conditions and then return to SARA where they could continue the discussions about the roles and responsibilities of this Oversight Committee.

Mr. Rodriguez said it is important to notify the public who faithfully attend the Oversight Committee meeting to inform them that their input and concerns are very valuable to this Committee and that they understand their role as taxpayers who fund this operation.

Mr. Velasquez said due to the intricacies of the Project, there should be an orientation for the public so they can understand the Committee's boundaries along with the history of the Project.

Mr. Rodriguez voiced his concern that the public might perceive this workshop as a form of exclusion. Mr. Ramirez replied that it is not excluding them since they will only be discussing the internal workings of the Committee.

Ms. Curd suggested that information concerning the roles, responsibility and authority of the Oversight Committee be posted on the website for the public's information.

Mr. Velasquez said discussions about new Committee members should be done in a public forum.

After much discussion it was decided any recommendations that developed could be brought to the Oversight Committee meeting for decision. The Committee voted to have the workshop on March 22, 2014 at the SARA headquarters beginning at 8:30am, breakfast provided, with discussions until 12:00 pm. A bus tour of the creeks would follow for those that wanted to attend.

There was also discussion about follow-up meetings among various Committee members and the public with concerns that are not able to be fully addressed during the Committee meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: Citizens to be Heard

Elginio Rodriguez spoke about water quality and the presence of E. coli in the lake and creeks. He also expressed his concern the San Pedro Creek Project might not be sturdy because the

County is rushing the process with their completion date of May 5, 2018. He is concerned about the security issue and thinks an entire meeting should be dedicated to that issue.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8: Miscellaneous Items

Mr. Farias asked if anyone had pictures of the creeks before they were channelized for a presentation to the Corps of Engineers. Mr. Farias also informed the Committee he is working on the SAWS update regarding Martinez Creek and the sewer lines for the April 8th meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9: Next Meeting – Tuesday, April 8, 2014

Ms. Lizcano announced the next meeting will be Tuesday, April 8, 2014, at 6:00 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10: Adjourn

Since there were no other comments or statements, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.