



**Westside Creeks Restoration
Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting
San Antonio River Authority
100 E. Guenther
Tuesday, October 13, 2015
Notes**

Committee Members Present

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair
Olga Lizcano, Co-Chair
Abigail Rodriguez, Beacon Hill NA
Dave Stafford, Downtown Residents Assoc.
Roger Muniz, Prospect Hill NA
Abel Ramirez, San Antonio Wheelman
Evelynn Mitchell, St. Mary's University

Kamala Platt, TexasTejano.com
Albert Salgado, UTSA
Erwin DeLuna, United SA Pow Wow Inc.
Skye Curd, West SA Chamber of Commerce
Jocelyn Van Coney, Westside Development Corp.
Karen Weehler, Woodlawn Lake NA

Staff and Public Present

Lourdes Galvan, SARA Board Member
Jeff Tyler, SARA
Rudy Farias, SARA
Kerry Averyt, SARA
Brian Mast, SARA
Sonia Jimenez, Ximenes & Assoc.
Bridget Hinze, SARA

Don Mathis, Rivard Report
Gloria Almarez, Freelance Reporter
Alan Neff, Resident
Martha Banda, Metro Health
Therese Kenner, SARA
Michael Arrington, Resident

I. Welcome

Mr. Ramirez, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order. Ms. Olga Lizcano, Co-Chair, welcomed everyone and asked all to introduce themselves.

Lourdes Galvan reminded the group that she is the sponsoring board member for this committee. Ms. Galvan expressed her gratitude for the committee member's participation. She noted the success of the World Heritage celebration held over the weekend and looks forward to the Westside Creeks connecting in the near future to the Mission Reach.

Mr. Ramirez expressed appreciation to the media representatives for their timely and accurate coverage of the San Pedro Creek improvements. He also reminded the committee that they are charged with overseeing all four creeks, San Pedro, Alazan, Apache, and Martinez.

II. Calendar Items

Mr. Ramirez announced the following meetings:

- San Pedro Creek Subcommittee Meeting – November 12, 2015 at 8:30 a.m. at 100 E. Guenther, Boardroom
- Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee Meeting – December 8, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at 100 E. Guenther, Boardroom

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes for August 11, 2015

Mr. Ramirez mentioned an omission on page 4, second to the last paragraph beginning with "Mr. Velasquez" should have a fourth motion listed. The motion, made by Gabriel Velasquez, was to have the art reflect the culture and history of the area. Skye Curd seconded the motion. The committee accepted the notes with the recommended revision. Mr. Ramirez informed the committee that the motions from the August meeting have been shared with the San Pedro Subcommittee and the letters of support are forthcoming.

IV. Status Report on Westside Creeks Improvements Projects

Westside Creeks Linear Creekway Trails

Jeff Tyler, San Antonio River Authority, provided the update. Mr. Tyler reminded the committee the progress is posted on the project website. The website shows construction progress and photos.

The Apache Creek trail beginning at S. Zarzamora is complete. At Navidad, the concrete work is complete and the sod is ready to be installed. Moving downstream, the Trinity Street area is complete and working toward Potosi. The entire effort should be completed on schedule by February 2016. From Cassiano Park to the confluence with San Pedro Creek under I-35, all trails will be ADA compliant. The area from Cassiano to 19th Street is going to be joint bid with SAWS as a separate effort.

The Alazan Creek trail (.47 miles) is estimated for completion in April instead of February. The 10-foot hike and bike trail is going in as well as the retaining walls. The segment runs from the Woodlawn Lake Casting Pond south to Lombrano, near West End Park. A trailhead will be located adjacent to the casting pond.

The Martinez Creek trail (.61 miles), is being constructed from Fredericksburg Road south to Cincinnati Street. East Street will remain closed once construction is complete. It is still scheduled for completion in January 2016.

Mr. Ramirez noted the funding to complete the remainder of the trail system is being requested from the sales tax proposition that past in May 2015.

Elmendorf Lake Park

Jeff Tyler continued with an update on Elmendorf Lake Park. There are three contractors constructing the improvements. The estimated completion date is June 2016. Mr. Tyler showed progress photos. The trail on the island is formed and invasive vegetation has been removed. The pedestrian bridge has been assembled and trail is ready to form up to the bridge. A large landing is complete. The retaining walls, by the bridge and floating dock area, are being completed. The lake water level will remain down two-feet throughout construction. The final bridge color is graphite with blue accent. The 24th Street area trail has been poured to the north behind the thrift store. Working toward Commerce Street, the trail is being constructed from 24th Street.

Questions on the improvements included the following. Jeff Tyler answered the question unless otherwise noted.

- Will the lake be restocked with bass? Bass restocking is not part of this project.
- Is the wildlife area being mitigated? Mitigation includes tree protection and limited disturbance with the rest coming in the form of stormwater runoff management. The project had a waiting period (delayed start) to allow for the birds to roost.
- What is the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program (DBE) and local contractor plan? The River Authority entered into an inter-local agreement with the City of San Antonio that established a goal of 30% small business and 20% overall for DBE goals. UTSA would like to track the participation for federal, state, and local governments.
- The trail at Nelson Elementary – will the school crossing be on the trail or on the street? Nelson is now a private school. The trail goes under Waverly.

Next on the agenda was Abigail Rodriguez, WCROC Beacon Hill Neighborhood Association representative, giving a presentation on the public art at Elmendorf Lake Park. The Public Art San Antonio (PASA) City Department handles the public art element for bond projects and asked Ms. Rodriguez to represent the WCROC on a panel for Elmendorf Lake. Ms. Rodriguez explained the public art location is in a triangular shaped property where Commerce and Buena Vista Streets split. This is the property that was acquired, formerly a restaurant, and referred to as the “triangle”. This location is the only area for public art in this project. The idea is the art will form a gateway to the park area. It will be something vibrant and iconic that represents the natural environment and the community.

The timeline is aggressive. There were meetings on August 28, September 11, and September 25. The panel reviewed a short list of 14 artists and scored them, evaluated the scores, and at the third meeting, interviewed the top two artists and selected one for recommendation to the SA Arts Commission Public Art Committee. The Commission will consider the recommendation at their October 6 meeting. If the recommendation is approved, it will be sent to the full SA Arts Commission on October 20. If the full commission approves, the artist will be placed under contract. The artist will then work with the community as part of the design development. Ms. Rodriguez is not allowed to share the short list but she was able to say that half of the artists were local. She also noted that she offered the WCROC as a resource to the artist and that the community involvement has not been outlined. The committee is hoping to get community consensus on the design and the medium.

The following questions and comments were noted upon conclusion of the presentation.

- Mr. Ramirez stated that San Pedro Creek public art may consider rotating art installations.
- Don Stafford mentioned that the art on San Pedro Creek will be Indian themed. Suzanne Scott added that the art has been removed from the current scope and the County is now exploring private funding methods for the public art.
- Erwin DeLuna suggested if the art is great, it should be permanent.

- Ms. Rodriguez added that safe pedestrian crossing to and from the triangle was important to the panel. They also want the art piece scaled in a way that it can be appreciated up close as well as from a passing vehicle.
- Kamala Platt inquired about safety. Mr. Tyler replied that a “HAWK” crossing, pedestrian activated stop light, will be placed just west of the triangle. Sonia Jimenez reminded the committee that part of their role as community liaisons is to help spread the word about the changes so drivers are aware of the coming changes.
- Roger Muniz asked about the methadone clinic. Mr. Tyler replied there was lots of discussion about it during the design phase but there has not been any movement. It is a private facility.
- Karen Weehler asked about traffic slowing elements. Mr. Tyler replied the park improvements will make the traffic go slower.
- Dr. Platt stated concern about increased traffic and a new way to travel along a busy street, particularly in a community with limited English readers.
- Ms. Scott added that safety improvements will be visually incorporated and traffic flow changes were due to public sentiment as well as a more natural and park like environment when the work is complete.
- Mr. DeLuna added Woodlawn Lake improvements included lowering the speed limit to 25 mph on Josephine Tobin and would like the City to consider the same in the Elmendorf Lake Park area.
- A member of the public stated that the intersection at 24th Street and Commerce needs to be more pedestrian friendly and could be a good alternative entrance to the park.
- The 24th Street reconstruction project in front of the Our Lady of the Lake University is a good example of how to improve pedestrian safety by slowing traffic.

Mr. Ramirez wrapped up the discussion noting the public art is still in progress. He thanked Ms. Rodriguez for being the voice for the committee on the art selection panel.

V. Update on San Pedro Creek Improvements Project

Kerry Averyt, San Antonio River Authority Project Manager and Lead Engineer, presented the update. (For details, please see the powerpoint presentation.) The design team presented the 70% plans to Bexar County Commissioner’s Court on August 11. While the Court approved the design to go forward to the 90% phase, several items were reevaluated including the overall budget and scope. Phases 1 and 2 are fully funded at \$98 million through design and construction. The decision was made to delay full design and construction for Phases 3 and 4. Additional changes include integrating the Tree of Life design with the Christopher Columbus Society’s Little Italy effort, the Salinas Bridge art element and all other public art has been removed from the current effort. The County is exploring private funding for art, similar to the San Antonio River Improvements Project.

Some of the items advanced for Phase 1 and 2 include the amphitheater being relocated and Dollar General being acquired and demolished to increase the creek area and include a pavilion. The project costs have been scaled back from a \$31

million funding gap to just below \$400,000. The decrease came with value engineering to include the modifications previously listed above as well as changes to the Tree of Life and other architectural adjustments including the walls. The utility relocations will be partially reimbursed. The cost estimate may be revised again but overall the original budget of \$125 million will be maintained.

Questions that followed the presentation are listed below. Mr. Averyt answered them unless otherwise noted.

- Dr. Platt asked why the art elements are being eliminated or deferred. The art is very expensive and the County felt it was better to go through a full curating process and have it privately funded.
- Ms. Weehler asked if the glowing bricks are still going to be incorporated. The glowing pavement will still be incorporated into the design. Ms. Weehler expressed a concern that this type of treatment will date the project and may not be worth the expense. She compared it to the River Walk and how the art elements there will only get more beautiful over time.
- Mr. Muniz asked if the wildlife will be preserved. The hope is to create opportunities for more wildlife in the areas that are natural.
- Jocelyn Van Coney stated that the Tree of Life element is part of the Westside Development Corporation's effort with the Columbus Society. She wanted to know if the colors are going to be the same. Mr. Averyt replied that the color palette is being revisited as well as looking at ways to address the pedestrian access along Santa Rosa Street near the creek and the Italian area.
- Ms. Rodriguez inquired about the bridge reconstruction. Mr. Averyt clarified the bridge reconstruction is part of the flood control improvements and remains in the plans. Ms. Rodriguez works for VIA Transit and mentioned the agency would like concrete pads installed at the bridge.
- Ms. Rodriguez also asked if the project, with the new budget, will be only flood control improvements between S. Alamo and the railroad bridge just downstream of Alamo Street. Phase 2 was extended to include the railroad bridge to achieve the flood control portion. The full build out of the flood component will be part of the Phase 3 and 4 efforts. The trails are now part of the project design from Guadalupe Street to S. Alamo.
- Ms. Scott informed the committee that the City is submitting a bond request (2017) to fund Phase 3 from S. Alamo to the confluence, as requested by this committee.
- Dr. Mitchell asked how confident the design team is in the revised cost estimates. The 70% estimate was completed by an independent estimator and spent several weeks putting it together. Once the 90% design is complete, the same independent estimator will reevaluate the estimate. At this time, we cannot guarantee the estimates but we know with the available funding, we must maintain the character. Dr. Mitchell added that getting it right is very important considering the Elmendorf Lake Park experience.

Mr. Averyt went on to inform the group that an independent landscape architect was added to the design team. The firm is Grupo de Diseño Urbano (GDU) and they have a wide range of international landscape projects with similar characteristics as San Pedro Creek. The lead landscape architect is Mario Schjetnan. He is

internationally renowned as well as a professor and has been published on the subject matter. Mr. Schjetnan will be in town tomorrow and visiting with elected officials and SPC subcommittee members, property owners, and others. He will review what is designed thus far and help meet community goals. Mr. Schjetnan will be at City Council on Thursday when the City conveys City owned parcels to the project.

The following questions were asked upon conclusion of this portion of the presentation. Mr. Averyt responded unless otherwise noted.

- Ms. Weehler asked if native plants will be used. Yes, native plants will be used.
- Mr. Muniz inquired about the cost of adding the landscape architect. Mr. Averyt did not have a cost estimate.
- Ms. Weehler asked how the landscape would be watered and who did the landscape work in the Museum Reach. The landscaping will be watered using San Antonio River water. The Museum Reach landscape architect was Rialto; they are local and had others contribute to the plant selection.
- Ms. Van Coney inquired about the level of participation from GDU considering they are not local. Mr. Averyt will get some more information and stated that GDU is known internationally for their landscape work. Mr. Ramirez added that GDU is acting as a consultant so the level of participation will not be as much as Rialto's involvement.

Time ran short and Mr. Averyt was unable to get to the San Pedro Creek storytelling update.

VI. Citizens to be Heard

None.

VII. Miscellaneous Items

None.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.