



**Westside Creeks Restoration
Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting
San Antonio River Authority
100 E. Guenther
Tuesday, August 11, 2015
Notes**

Committee Members Present:

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair
Olga Lizcano, Co-Chair
Gabriel Velasquez, Avenida Guadalupe Assn.
Abigail Rodriguez, Beacon Hill NA
Theodore Ozuna, Donaldson Terrace NA
Joanne Walsh, Downtown Residents Assoc.
Cary Guffey, Our Lady of the Lake University

Stella De La Garza, SA Conservation Society
Carmen Vazquez-Gonzalez, SAISD
Evelynn Mitchell, St. Mary's University
Albert Salgado, UTSA
Skye Curd, West SA Chamber of Commerce
Leonard Rodriguez, Westside Development Corp.
Karen Wheeler, Woodlawn Lake NA

Staff and Public Present:

Bridget Hinze, SARA
Rueben Bazan, SARA
Jeff Tyler, SARA
Marianne Kumley, SARA
David Garza, COSA CCDO
Cosima Colvin, COSA LCPAB

Sonia Jimenez, Ximenes & Assoc.
Gary Courtney, Homeowner - Martinez Creek
John Steward, Homeowner – Martinez Creek
Elizabeth Palasota, Pape-Dawson
Tomas Guadiano, Westend Hope in Action

I. Welcome

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

II. Calendar Items

- San Pedro Creek Subcommittee Meeting – September 10, 2015 at 8:30 a.m. at 100 E. Guenther, Board Room
- Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee Meeting – October 13, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at 100 E. Guenther, Board Room

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes for June 9, 2015

Mr. Ramirez asked if there were any changes or additions to the minutes. The committee requested that comments be attributed in future notes. The only noted correction was on the first page, first paragraph under agenda item III, third sentence, “objections” needs to be corrected it was misspelled. With no other corrections, the minutes were approved.

IV. Update on San Pedro Creek Improvements Project

Bridget Hinze, San Antonio River Authority, provided the update. Ms. Hinze informed the committee that her briefing is an abbreviated version of the presentation given to Bexar County Commissioner’s Court earlier in the day. The full presentation can be viewed on the San Pedro Creek website. The project received approval to proceed to 90 percent design. The presentation outlines the design changes and progress since the 40 percent design and the status of the 70 percent design. Ms. Hinze

stated the technical team has documented the existing structures with the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and utility coordination continues. The team is also reconciling the project funding.

With regard to community input, three events were held in May along with a community survey to collect feedback on the 40 percent design. The planning team continues to coordinate with property owners. Media coverage continues and the website is being updated on a regular basis.

Ms. Hinze presented the results of the community 40 percent survey. The majority of the 114 respondents had not been involved in the project and never attended a meeting. They generally support the walking trails, accessibility, and the general improvements but the Tree of Life concept scored the lowest. Ms. Hinze stated the community had concerns about gentrification and flood control.

Gabriel Velasquez and Leonard Rodriguez were critical of the terms used and the form in which the questions were posed respectively. The presentation included three possible responses with two being positive and one being negative. Mr. Velasquez was not content with the use of "accessibility" and understood it to mean ADA accessibility. He argued that ADA accessibility is the law. He continued his comments suggesting that flood control should not be listed as an objective since it is the purpose of the project. Mr. Ramirez offered that the survey focused mostly on aesthetics to garner the community's opinion about the design. Mr. Velasquez countered that the presentation needs more explanation and the language to explain it needs to be clearer. He also disapproved of using percentage to explain the results since the sample was so small. Mr. Ramirez reminded the committee that the presentation is to keep the committee informed of the San Pedro Creek progress and no action will be taken by this committee. He suggested that next time a survey is developed, it be reviewed by others to avoid this type of criticism. Mr. Velasquez inquired about the gentrification plan. Ms. Hinze informed him that the plan has yet to be developed.

Returning to the presentation, Ms. Hinze stated that the next steps will be the art curating process. She also presented the new design renderings for the Tree of Life area, the Salinas Street Bridge, and the amphitheater. Ms. Hinze and Jeff Tyler explained the changes are based on the public criticism as well as funding constraints. Phase 1, from the tunnel inlet (Tree of Life) to Cesar Chavez Boulevard, will be completely designed and constructed for the city's 300th anniversary. Phase 2, from Cesar Chavez to South Alamo, will be fully designed but only basically constructed to allow for flood control benefits – there will be no amenities.

Mr. Rodriguez inquired about the update with the connection to the Italian Society's Little Italy effort. Ms. Hinze informed him that the team would be meeting with them next week.

Ms. Hinze continued with the landscape features and noted the acreage of landscaping would be similar to the Museum Reach landscaping. With regard to the public art process, there will be an advisory committee consisting of professional art curators including Felix Padron with the City's Public Art Department, landscape architect and San Pedro Committee member Caleb Etheredge, Betty Bueche with

Bexar County, and Eduardo Garcia, Public Art Vice Chair for the San Antonio Arts Commission. The committee will meet bi-weekly starting next week. Invitations to be considered for selection will be sent at the end of August with the selection recommendation in the September/October timeframe. The final selection is expected in November.

The other piece to the art component is the storytelling. Ms. Hinze explained that two storytelling meetings have been held and one more is expected. Steve Tillotson with Muñoz and John Phillip Santos with UTSA are leading the effort.

Questions and comments, at this point in the conversation, are as follows:

- Skye Curd stated the public should have an opportunity to be included in the invitation to artists. She would like to see an open call to students and universities to have a better selection. Ms. Hinze indicated she would let the team know about her suggestion.
- Joanne Walsh asked what kinds of artists will be invited and locals should be considered in light of the downscoping that is occurring. Ms. Hinze replied local, national and international artists.
- Mr. Velasquez asked about percentages and requested that Ms. Hinze tell the public art team that national or international art does not always mean good art and the art needs to reflect the local culture and community. He also wants them encouraged to designate a good percentage to local artists.
- Ms. Curd wants a local elementary children's art incorporated so they can see it when they are grown.
- Ms. Walsh wants the committee to make sure the call for artists is very open to local artists and the more local the art, the greater the community ownership is in the project. She also wants to know if the art committee meetings are open to the public. Ms. Hinze will ask Steve Tillotson and let this committee know.
- Mr. Rodriguez stated a concern that the majority of the art committee are not from San Antonio.

Ms. Hinze concluded her presentation by stating the projects costs have increased from \$175 million in the preliminary engineering report (PER) to \$206 million with the 70 percent design complete. The design team has been directed to go back to the design and look at different options to reduce it. Bexar County Commissioner's Court, with the stipulations noted above, approved the design to go forward to the 90 percent milestone. The 90 percent plans are due in November.

Questions and comments upon conclusion of the presentation were as follows:

- Mr. Velasquez indicated he had a discussion with the owners of Piedras Negras Restaurant. The project is not reaching their area and SARA is asking for property. Mr. Tyler informed him that the River Authority is in talks with them. He also explained there are hydraulic constraints due to the structured gates getting bigger the further downstream they are located. This area, by their restaurant, will be more like the Mission Reach.
- Mr. Velasquez asked how this project relates to the USACE effort. Mr. Tyler reminded the committee that the USACE effort is an ecosystem restoration effort and it begins at Cevallos and goes downstream to the confluence.

- Mr. Velasquez then inquired if Public Art San Antonio is looking to fund the public art. Ms. Hinze replied that Bexar County will seek private funding for the public art.
- Abigail Rodriguez asked is there is any discussion to include the needs in the 2017 bond. Ms. Hinze replied not yet.
- David Garza with the City of San Antonio added that Felix Padron (COSA Director of Culture and Creative Development) will be a good resource as he serves on the committee.
- Mr. Velazquez asked about gaps in the [walking/biking] trails. Mr. Tyler replied that trails from Cevallos to the confluence are part of Phase 3.
- Ms. Rodriguez asked why the trail is not connecting. Mr. Tyler reminded the group that only Phase 1 and Phase 2 (from Guadalupe to the railroad bridge) is currently funded. Value engineering may eliminate some amenities and only fund flood control. Phase 1 and 2 will have trails and the new trails from Apache creek will connect to the confluence.
- Ms. Rodriguez asked if trails are considered amenities. Mr. Tyler replied in the affirmative.
- Evelynn Mitchell suggested the committee needs some indication of when the trails would be complete. She suggested the 2017 bond or another ballot measure to seek funding.

At this point, Mr. Velasquez made a motion to strongly urge the San Pedro Creek Committee to mandate that not less than 75% of the art allocation go to local public art amenities. Ms. Walsh seconded the motion. Discussion following the motion included the following:

- Karen Wheeler said San Pedro Creek should be much like the reason people come to San Antonio; for the culture, missions, and the river. The art shown [from the design presentation] does not go with idea of San Antonio.
- Mr. Velasquez added that local art is us and will create a stronger connection. It is the best starting point. The content is a separate conversation and our first goal should be using local craftspeople.
- Mr. Ramirez reiterated that culture is very much a part of it. Steve Tillotson with Muñoz has demonstrated it throughout the process.

With no more discussion, Mr. Ramirez called for a vote. The motion passed with 13 in favor, none opposed, and one abstained.

Ms. Walsh then made another motion [for the San Pedro Creek Committee] to emphasize the importance of opening up the selection process to ensure more locals and a true open call for artists. Ms. Rodriguez seconded the motion. Mr. Ramirez called for a vote subsequent to asking for any discussion and there was none. The motion passed with 14 in favor, none opposed, and none abstaining.

Mr. Velasquez stressed that the San Pedro Creek Committee needs to look at the history and culture of the area as well as the archaeology and have the art be complimentary. The project art needs to be sensitive and respect South Texas and San Antonio culture and history.

Ms. Rodriguez then made a motion to recommend to the San Pedro Creek Committee to consider funding from the City of San Antonio's 2017 Bond to include complete trail connectivity and other non-flood control components. Dr. Mitchell seconded the motion.

There was no discussion. The motion passed with 14 in favor, none opposed, and none abstaining.

The River Authority will convey these items to the San Pedro Subcommittee at the next meeting on September 10, 2015.

V. Status Report on Westside Creeks Improvements Projects

Elmendorf Lake Park

Jeff Tyler provided the update to the committee. He introduced Ruben Bazan from the River Authority and informed the group that Mr. Bazan is in the field everyday at the construction sites for Elmendorf Lake Park as well as the trail areas.

Mr. Tyler continued by reminding the committee the improvement process began in 2012. The improvements are funded through a number of funding sources at a cost of \$14.25 million. Improvements included pedestrian connectivity to Commerce, shoreline access (no water contact will be allowed), bioswales to help treat first flush of stormwater runoff before it enters the lake, and way finding signage. Additional improvements include the park plaza, and three free span pedestrian bridges. The bridges will be graphite with polymer blue accents. The contractors doing the work are Jerdon, Mac, and Journeyman. The project is slated for completion in June 2016. The website's capital projects section has photos and regular updates. Mr. Tyler concluded by showing progress photos of the island, a bridge, the floating dock, and the area where the new trails are being constructed. Please refer to the presentation for more details and visuals.

Westside Creeks Linear Creekway Trails **Apache Creek and San Pedro Creek**

Mr. Tyler continued with an update on the trail improvements. The Apache Creek trail improvements run from Cassiano Park to the San Antonio River totaling 1.49 miles. There is an ongoing effort to construct the rest of the trail to connect up to Elmendorf Lake Park. The City of San Antonio is funding the wider trail as part of a joint-bid effort with the San Antonio Water System. Mr. Tyler reminded the committee that the US Army Corps of Engineers ecosystem restoration initiative includes all four westside creeks, including San Pedro from Cevallos to the San Antonio River confluence where they join with the Apache and Alazan Creeks. The San Pedro Creek trail will be 2.01 miles.

Mr. Tyler continued by explaining the improvements. The Apache Creek starting at Zarzamora Street has replaced 5-foot sidewalks with a 10-foot trail. The 10-foot trail will continue to the San Antonio River. February 2016 is the expected completion date. Please refer to the presentation for more details and visuals.

Martinez Creek and Alazán Creek

For Martinez Creek and Alazán Creek, the completion date is January 2016. The Alazán Creek trails will be .47 miles and run from Lombrano to S. Josephine Tobin Drive by the Woodlawn Lake Casting Pond. The Martinez Creek improvements are .61 miles and run from Fredericksburg Road to Cincinnati Avenue. Both projects are in similar status with trails being formed now. Next steps will be pouring the concrete and finishing up. There will be some walls formed under bridges. Please refer to the presentation for more details and visuals.

Questions and comments upon conclusion of the presentation were as follows:

- Mr. Rodriguez asked how the trails that cross major intersections will be developed. Mr. Tyler replied if there is space to go under the intersection, then the trail will be under the bridge. If there is not space, the crossing will be at grade, on street level.
- Mr. Rodriguez then asked about lighting. Mr. Tyler replied that lighting will not be added so it is available only where it currently exists.
- Ms. Lizcano requested that the project progress website links be added to the agenda for easy reference.
- Mr. Rodriguez asked if the contractor would be working north to south or hop over some areas? Mr. Tyler explained that lump sum contracts, such as this one, are dictated by end cost, product, and date so there may resource sharing to meet demands. Therefore, it will be the contractor's decision.
- Mr. Rodriguez asked if there would be anything on the concrete walls. Mr. Tyler informed the committee that Public Art San Antonio (PASA) is engaged but to the extent of developing a project, that remains to be determined. PASA's only commitment at this point is to place a public art feature at the [Buena Vista/Commerce] triangle island near Elemendorf Lake Park.
- Mr. Velasquez suggested a request be made to PASA to solicit an artist from the community. Mr. Tyler indicated that a selection had not been made and the project is just now getting started.
- Ms. Rodriguez requested a map of the four creeks be developed that illustrates where the trail gaps are located. She would like the map for the next meeting and also have it posted to the website. Mr. Tyler said it could be done.
- Mr. Velasquez commented that ballot language in the past specifically mentioned the Westside Creeks for funding. Mr. Tyler indicated he will find out how much was actually allocated, if the ballot language said it specifically. He also mentioned the letter requesting that the funds be used to close the gaps on the trails was sent to the City's Linear Creekway.
- Ms. Lizcano introduced Gary Courtney, a Magnolia Avenue homeowner who is directly impacted by the Martinez Creek construction. Mr. Courtney explained that his fence is about 10 feet from the new trail. He was concerned and upset that there is no way in or out on East Drive and access in and out on Magnolia is difficult. Mr. Courtney recently learned that East Drive was being eliminated for the trail improvements. He believes this will create a dangerous situation in the event emergency vehicles need to access his house. He also stated that turning onto Fredericksburg Road from Magnolia is very dangerous. Furthermore, East Drive is the street trash trucks used in the past and now they are having to back up to Fredericksburg. He complained about graffiti, dirt bikes and go-carts being on the trail as well as the contractor's signage impeding access to his property. Mr. Courtney said he supports the project and has maintained the right-of-way behind his fence since the 1998 flood and recently mowed it. He also mentioned he has several elderly neighbors who are afraid to use Fredericksburg Road. He has contacted his council representative, left messages, but has not yet had a response. Mr. Tyler suggested he would set up a meeting to discuss the construction issues and ultimate access on East Drive.
- Mr. Courtney added that there are registered sex offenders and homeless in the area as well as the proximity to the bunk house on Fredericksburg Road.
- Skye Curd commented that the City is committing more park police and they will have body cams. She suggested to keep calling [the SAPD] if there are concerns

because the City logs all the calls. This is the only way to get more patrols to the area.

- Mr. Velasquez requested, for the next meeting, a list of what the River Authority is responsible for during construction and if there were any opportunities to modify the plans and look at options for staging. Mr. Tyler replied that it would be hard to modify the design since it is completed. He also noted that lighting was not included in the plans because the trails are open only from dawn to dusk.
- Mr. Courtney also mentioned that FEMA bought the property with a stipulation not to build and now there are going to be concrete trails. He feels it is a waste of money.
- Ms. Lizcano said she would like to meet with these residents, Mr. Tyler, and Councilman Treviño. Mr. Velasquez and Ms. Wheeler should also be invited. Mr. Courtney offered his home as the meeting site since his neighbors won't drive.
- Mr. Velasquez mentioned that he spoke to former SARA Board Member Roberto Rodriguez and his not opposed to having the Westside Creeks named after him.
- John Stewart, Mr. Courtney's housemate, commented that the little black plastic fence to prevent debris from getting in the creek is washed away after every rain. Mr. Tyler informed him it is called silt fencing and he would make sure TCEQ is checking it as required.
- Ms. Wheeler asked how many square miles of concrete has been added to the Westside Creek Trails with these improvements. Mr. Tyler did not know the number in terms of square feet and added that it was all funded by the City's Linear Creek improvements program and it is a complementary piece to the ecosystem restoration initiative.

Mr. Ramirez asked if there were any more questions. Being none, he went on to the next agenda item.

VI. Citizens to be Heard

None. See Gary Courtney's comments in agenda item V.

VII. Miscellaneous Items

None.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:40 p.m.