



**Westside Creeks Restoration
Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting
San Antonio River Authority
100 E. Guenther
Tuesday, April 14, 2015
Notes**

Committee Members Present:

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair
Olga Lizcano, Co-Chair
Abigail Rodriguez, Beacon Hill NA
Theodore Ozuna, Donaldson Terrace NA
Joanne Walsh, Downtown Residents Assoc.
Jason Martina, Our Lady of the Lake University (alt)

Abel Ramirez, San Antonio Wheelman
Evelynn Mitchell, St. Mary's University
Kamala Platt, TexasTejano.com (alt)
Beth Harmon, UTSA (alt)
Skye Curd, West SA Chamber of Commerce

Staff and Public Present:

Russell Persyn, SARA
Rudy Farias, SARA
Bridget Hinze, SARA
Brandon Ross, City of San Antonio
Sonia Jimenez, Ximenes & Assoc.

Jerry Geyer, San Pedro Creek Subcommittee
Rosemary Geyer, San Pedro Creek
Robert Lingo
Manuel Lizcano
Tomas Guadiano, WEHA

I. Welcome

Mrs. Olga Lizcano, Committee Co-Chair, convened the meeting.

Mr. Robert Ramirez, Committee Co-Chair, introduced Dr. Jude Valdez's alternate, Belinda Harmon, UTSA Director of Communications and Outreach. He also welcomed back Abigail Rodriguez with Beacon Hill Neighborhood Association.

II. Calendar Items

- Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee Meeting – June 9, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at 100 E. Guenther, Board Room
- San Pedro Creek Subcommittee Meeting – May 14, 2015 at 8:30 a.m. at 100 E. Guenther, Board Room

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes for February 10, 2015

The motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The motion passed and the minutes were approved as presented.

IV. Update on San Pedro Creek Improvements Project - Russell Persyn, San Antonio River Authority

Dr. Persyn provided the committee with the update. He reported the 40% design plans were approved by Commissioner's Court earlier today and the team will now move forward to 70% design. The focus moving forward will be Phase 1, from the tunnel inlet to Cesar Chavez Boulevard. This Phase will be fully constructed for May 5, 2018, the city's 300th anniversary. The 70% design plans are due in June with the final plans slated for completion in January/February 2016 timeframe. It will take a few months to

complete the bidding process. The two-year Phase 1 construction process will begin in May 2016. The complete presentation was handed out at the meeting and can be found on the San Pedro Creek website.

Dr. Persyn then presented the elements of the 40% design. The presentation included concepts for each of the character areas along with the inspirations for the various themes. The project is being billed as a new urban park to western downtown. The goals include flood control as well as economic development. For the flood control component, there is a flood control gate plan that includes three new crest gates strategically located along the creek. The entire project will be ADA accessible.

Beginning at the tunnel inlet, the design is based on the Tree of Life concept near the Italian Society site across from Fox Tech. It will include a plaza area with other amenities that will draw visitors to the inlet area. Moving down the creek, there will be a town lake and improvements in the Alameda area to include the creation of a small (300 capacity) amphitheater. The first floodgate will be installed at Travis Street to impound water to create the lake effect. This same area is home to the historic Salinas Street Bridge, which will be refurbished.

Dr. Persyn continued explaining that the creek from Santa Rosa to Cesar Chavez Boulevard has a number of historic walls along the banks and three more bridges that are eligible for historic designation. The team is working with the Texas Historic Commission to mitigate impacts in these areas. The second floodgate will be installed at Nueva Street. The concept for the Merodeo area from Dolorosa to Cesar Chavez will include a mural at Dolorosa Street representing the tragedy associated with the historic battle. Moving further south, near the Navarro House, the concept is to have an area with a lawn for respite and perhaps incorporating the significance of Jose Navarro and his contributions to the Texas Declaration of Independence. Just past Nueva Street, the channel will be hardened but surrounded by natural area with faux wood structures (similar to Carlos Cortez) with a new pedestrian bridge.

In the Canal Principal area from Cesar Chavez to Guadalupe Street, the portion of the creek that is currently underground, the design includes uncovering the box culverts with high and low bank paseos. The design draws on the MKT railroad history and on the highline in NYC (old rail line converted into a linear park). For the area past El Paso Street, there will be a play system with cages (inspired by railroad cars) to allow for placement over the water. Finally, the design includes aesthetic improvements to the tunnel outlet in the Campo Abajo area. The design will be such that the area will be inviting day and night. Dr. Persyn concluded the presentation with a flyover video of the creek with the various design concepts interspersed.

Questions from the committee included the following:

- Will Campo Abajo name remain – there were some comments at the public meeting about it having a negative connotation? At this time, it is not clear if the name will remain or change. The San Pedro Creek Committee is divided on the name and some other suggestions have been made. The character names as a whole will be reevaluated and determined at a later time.
- The concept drawings show developed trees with some sections having larger specimen and others showing fledging; will the plant life be native and culturally

significant? The team is starting to work through it now but not to a level of having a final plant list or where they will be planted. They are also working on a maintenance access plan.

- Will the walls be repaired and cleaned? The concrete poured walls will be demolished and replaced to expand the channel. The older (some historic) walls will be refurbished and may be lowered. The team is working with the Texas Historic Commission on walls and several of the bridges that were built before 1900. Some walls will be free standing with reinforcements. A comment was made that some people would consider the aged look of the walls as patina and not want it cleaned.
- How did the information from the community meetings get incorporated and the concerns addresses – Ecological and eco-cultural issues? What is the process? The list of public input and how it was considered was presented at the second workshop. At the third public meeting, slated for May, these 40% designs will be presented for additional public comment and the San Pedro Creek Subcommittee provided the check and balance. The formal public input process will get to be less and less as the design evolves but the subcommittee will continue through final design and construction.
- The presentation included four segments and the fifth segment was not addressed; what is happening to this fifth section? Phase 1 is the inlet to Cesar Chavez Boulevard and will be completed by May 5, 2018. Phase 2 is from Guadalupe to Alamo Street and involves a significant flood control element with 23 acres being removed from the floodplain. The remaining phases are further off in terms of financing and property acquisition. There will be a trail section but not a formal restoration as part of this initial effort. The fifth segment is part of the US Army Corps of Engineers Westside Creeks Feasibility Study.
- What about the segment from Cevallos to I-35 – what kind of thought has gone into the design for this area? Jerry Geyer, SPC Co-Chair, explained that there has been a lot of emphasis on this area with regard to engineering challenges. It is being designed but there is no intention to have extensive construction like the other parts of the creek. It will be more of a riparian area. The San Pedro Creek Preliminary Engineering Report ended at Alamo so this area has had to catch up and transition. It will be more like the Mission Reach.
- Mr. Ramirez commented that the subcommittee needs to be sure this area does not drop off the radar.
- Mr. Geyer also responded that while WOAI introduced the concept as a second River Walk, it is not what the committee desires. The creek restoration will be a linear park and the messaging will be improved. Dr. Persyn noted that Commissioner's Court mentioned the River Walk as an example of flood control innovation and the media likely picked up on that comment and ran with it.
- Will the creek be open for recreational water activity? It is too soon to make this determination. It will be tough in some areas as the channel is narrow. The gates will keep it ponding but it may not be deep enough for paddling. First and foremost is flood control and handling surface run-off. It's also important to note that it will not be bikeable in some areas because of the mix of upper and lower walkways. The project currently is projected to need an additional 300 acre-feet of water per year. The additional water will come from the San Antonio Water System's reuse water system. Reuse water will be supplied to the San Antonio River and diverted

at Arsenal into the creek. The flood tunnel system will be used to re-circulate the water.

- What about during draught conditions – is there flexibility? The base flow conditions will not change. Evaporation and other calculations are based on the worst times for irrigation and loss from evaporation; the 300 acre-foot estimate accounts for worse case scenarios. The team will be applying for a bed and banks transfer permit to move water from the San Antonio River to San Pedro Creek. So, as much as possible it will be draught resistant to ensure viability of this area.
- Please be sure the tree roots are not going to destroy pipes or sidewalks.
- The lower area will basically be untouched? It will have trails with instream structures but below S. Alamo, it will be more like the Mission Reach and above S. Alamo, it will be more of an urban design with hardened walls and formal structures. The KIPP Academy will contribute to this area and possibly some parking.
- A concern was voiced regarding the bike connection and the expectation that the bike network will be integrated and coordinated with the City Bike Plan and B-Cycle stations. Maintenance and security needs to also be addressed as part of this effort. Dr. Persyn replied that there are many different agencies involved that bring their own specialized skill set. They are working together to address these concerns.

V. Briefing on the City of San Antonio's 2015 Sales Tax Propositions - *Brandon Ross, City of San Antonio*

Brandon Ross, Greenways Special Projects Manager, presented information related to the upcoming sales tax proposition and the history of the trails and aquifer protection initiatives. Mr. Ross also provided the committee with the *Guide to 2015 Sales Tax Propositions*.

In 2008, the first section of trail was built using bond money. Thereafter, the aquifer protection and the trails split the revenues from the 1/8-cent sales tax initiative passed in 2010. The 2010 sales tax is set to sunset (expire) in February/March of 2016. The Sales Tax Propositions 1 and 2, if approved by voters on May 9th, will continue the 1/8 sales tax split until the not exceed amounts are met. For aquifer protection, the limit is \$100 million and for the trails, the limit is \$80 million.

To date, 47 miles of hike and bike trail has been completed, 15 miles is currently under construction with another 23 in development. There will be a total of 60 miles completed by this time next year. The Linear Parks Proposition 2 was previously limited to \$45 million. If this one, for \$80 million, passes more trails and watershed protection features will be added. There are two goals the City would like to accomplish with this additional revenue – 1) complete the citywide hike and bike loop and 2) connect to other creek tributaries and into more neighborhoods.

The Edwards Aquifer Protection Program Proposition 1 is to buy conservation easements over the aquifer recharge zone to protect it from future development and preserve the water quality.

Questions from the committee included the following:

- Will the Westside Creeks trails be included on the list of trails? Yes – Alazan and Martinez are likely logical connections.
- Who do we approach for additional suggestion about new trail connections? Talk to staff and/or to the Linear Creekways Advisory Board. The Board meets the last Tuesday of each month (not April but May) at 6:00 p.m. in the Media Briefing Room at City Hall. City Council, ultimately, is the approving body for any new trails to get funded, designed, and constructed.
- A suggestion to highlight San Pedro Creek on the map was made.
- Will the Martinez Creek trail continue south past Cincinnati? It is only currently funded to Cincinnati but that would be another logical connection moving forward.

VI. Status Report on Westside Creeks' Improvements Projects – Walter Heard, Terra Design

– Elmendorf Lake Park

Mr. Heard briefed the committee on the park improvements effort. The project was re-bid in three parts to include 1) bridges at Commerce Street and within the lake to connect the island and Our Lady of the Lake University, 2) 24th Street improvements, and 3) park improvements including best management practices for low impact development and storm water runoff, parking, overlooks, a floating t-dock, aeration and underwater fountains to help water quality. The schedule allows for 400-day duration with completion in May 2016. There will be two VIA bus stops – 1) Commerce and 22nd Street and 2) 24th Street – with shade structures that tie into the park design. The piece of the trail at 19th Street and Saunders will be completed at a later date to coordinate with SAWS' sewer line work.

Clarifying questions included the park entrances and connecting to the Radle Trail on the other side of Commerce Street. The park will have six entrances including one from the university campus. There will be signage and wayfinding included in the construction package. The trail connection to the Radle Trail will be on the west side bank with 8 ½ foot clearance under Commerce Street. The construction team will cut into riprap and install a wall with a tow down placed deeper into the ground to increase water flow in the channel.

– Westside Creeks Linear Creekway Trails

Mr. Heard continued by providing an update on the trails project.

Alazan Creek – the groundbreaking was held this past week and completion is slated for December 2015. A trailhead will be located at the Woodlawn Casting Pond and connect to the existing trail all the way to the new Lombardo Street trailhead. The trail will go under streets and have water fountains at the trailheads.

Martinez Creek – the trail begins at the new VIA bus rapid transit (BRT) stop on Fredericksburg and continues under Woodlawn Street and extends down to Cincinnati. The trailhead at Cincinnati will have parking, shade, and picnic tables. Construction is set to begin within the next two weeks. The groundbreaking is scheduled for next week at Magnolia and East Drive.

Apache/San Pedro Creeks – the groundbreaking will be sometime in June 2015. The trail begins with a trailhead at Cassiano Park through existing greenway with a mini-trailhead and continues under the railroad tracks to the confluence at Alazan Creek under the expressway and to the confluence at San Pedro Creek under another railroad track and overpass to the San Antonio River. The trail is a total of 3.5 miles of 10-foot trail with interpretive signs at nodes and a connection to the San Antonio River low water crossing.

There were no questions from the committee.

VII. Update on the Signage Work Group for Elmendorf Lake Park and the Linear Creekway Trails, *Rudy Farias, SARA*

Mr. Farias reported the working group met on April 10th with Walter Heard facilitating the meeting and Maria Pfeiffer and David Haynes as resources. Signage will be distributed as follows: Martinez Creek and Alazan Creek – 2 signs each; Apache Creek and San Pedro Creek – 3 signs each with possibly more later; and Elmendorf Lake Park - 16 signs. The April meeting included a presentation of examples of historic and wayfinding signage. The group will meet a couple more times before presenting to this committee and taking the proposal to the City of San Antonio for approval. At the next meeting, the language and photos will be determined with the actual proposed signage being presented at the third meeting. The signs will be static and may include QR codes (quick response for smart phones).

Questions and comments from the committee included the following:

- Suggestion to get SAWS (or some other entity) to sponsor signs for educational and interactive component. Other committee members who would like to see something more innovative than just signs supported this suggestion.
- Will the signs be in English and Spanish? The signs will be in English.
- Will there be emergency protection on the trails? There will be signage separate from these signs showing evacuation routes in the event of flooding and 911 locators.
- Will multiple designs be presented to this committee? No – only the ones being sought for approval by the City of San Antonio. The work group will make the determination of which sign designs move forward.
- Will each creek have a unique identity? That has not been determined yet. The Westside Creek logo will continue to be used but not yet sure if each of the creek motifs will be singled out for each of the creeks.
- A request was made to send the community information when the River Authority conducts tours. The tours provide a phenomenal amount of information.

VIII. Citizens to be Heard

None.

IX. Miscellaneous Items

- Basura Bash 2015 – Sonia Jimenez, Planning Chair, provided a brief summary of the event's returns. The event was held on Saturday, February

21st with portions of 18 creeks and the San Antonio River being cleared of trash, tires, and metal. Over 2,100 volunteers participated and collected 45 tons of trash, 159 tires, and almost one ton of metal. The Basura Bash is 100% volunteer driven and cash or in-kind sponsorships are always appreciated.

- Dr. Mitchell with St. Mary's University announced that Texas A&M Corpus Christi will be at the Oyster Bake this year collecting oyster shells to recycle them.
- Rudy Farias announced the Westside Creeks time capsule is receiving comments on how the trails will impact San Antonio over the next 20 years. The contents of the capsule will be revealed in 2025.

X. Adjourn

The meeting was formally adjourned at 8:12 p.m.