



**Westside Creeks Restoration  
Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting  
San Antonio River Authority  
100 E. Guenther  
Tuesday, June 9, 2015  
Notes**

**Committee Members Present:**

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair	Abel Ramirez, San Antonio Wheelman
Olga Lizcano, Co-Chair	Evelynn Mitchell, St. Mary's University
Gabriel Velasquez, Avenida Guadalupe Assn.	Kamala Platt, TexasTejano.Com
Theodore Ozuna, Donaldson Terrace NA	Jude Valdez, UTSA
Joanne Walsh, Downtown Residents Assoc.	Erwin DeLuna, United San Antonio Pow Wow, Inc.
Dave Stafford, Downtown Residents Assoc. (alt)	Skye Curd, West SA Chamber of Commerce
Jason Martina, Our Lady of the Lake University (alt)	Martin Herrera, Westside Development Corp.

**Staff and Public Present:**

Suzanne Scott, SARA	Sonia Jimenez, Ximenes & Assoc.
Rudy Farias, SARA	Tomas Guadiano, Westend Hope in Action
Bridget Hinze, SARA	Rick Hernandez, Highway Marketing
Natalie Garza, COSA District 5	Mark Judson, Union Stockyards
David Garza, COSA CCDO	

**I. Welcome**

Mr. Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair called the meeting to order. Ms. Olga Lizcano, Co-Chair, welcomed everyone and asked anyone new to the meeting to introduce him/herself. Mr. Rick Hernandez introduced himself as a concerned resident.

**II. Calendar Items**

- San Pedro Creek Subcommittee Meeting – June 11, 2015 at 8:30 a.m. at 100 E. Guenther, Board Room
- Apache/San Pedro Linear Creekways Trail Groundbreaking – June 16, at 10:30 a.m. at Amistad Park, 1600 Tampico Street
- Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee Meeting – August 11, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at 100 E. Guenther, Board Room

**III. Approval of Meeting Minutes for April 14, 2014**

Mr. Ramirez asked if the committee had time to review the notes and for any corrections or modifications. It was noted that Evelynn Mitchell's name is misspelled and should be corrected. Other than this one correction, there were no objectives to approve them. The minutes were approved by summary procedure.

**IV. Update on San Pedro Creek Improvements Project**

Bridget Hinze, San Antonio River Authority, briefed the committee on the public involvement effort. She also reminded the group that the 40% design plans on

the San Pedro Creek website and they were briefed at the April meeting. Ms. Hinze reported that on May 9<sup>th</sup> there was a community lecture held at the San Antonio Museum of Art. The Robert Hammond, Co-Founder of Friends of Highline Park in NYC, was the guest speaker. There was also a panel who conducted a question and answer session. Approximately 150 people were in attendance. On May 28<sup>th</sup>, the Rivard Report hosted SATX Next at the Southwest School of Art. There were a little over 200 people in attendance. The event included a panel discussion and a question and answer session. The intent was to reach a younger audience and the event was considered a success. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, a public meeting was held to formally present the 40 percent design. Desired outcomes included bringing the public up to date on the design and gather feedback. There approximately 90 people in attendance including District 5 Councilwoman Gonzales. The meeting included a presentation, a question and answer session, an open house to view the plans and get more information, and the launch of the survey. The survey was an online survey developed to gather opinions on the design. A videographer was also available to capture first impressions of the 40 percent design. The survey has been concluded and approximately 115 participated. The survey results will be presented to this committee at the August meeting.

Questions and comments included the following:

- Were any efforts made to include anyone from the WCROC on the panels, especially Roberto Rodriguez – he was key to getting this project identified. If not, someone who is grassroots should be included in the future. Someone with knowledge of how this project got started. Suzanne Scott, San Antonio River Authority GM, explained that Henry Muñoz organized the panel discussion and the public meeting included the co-chairs and members of the WCROC who attended were recognized.
- There was a long discussion of Roberto Rodriguez's legacy and connection to San Pedro Creek. It was suggested that someone videotape his stories to document the history and evolution of how he contributed to the current effort. It was also suggested that Gabriel Velasquez document the history as well. Ms. Scott agreed.
- Another suggestion included running a loop of the interviews during community events to spread awareness of the history.

Ms. Hinze then presented the next steps. Significant dates include July 2015 for the 70 percent plans to be finalized, August for City to convey parcels and reuse water as well as securing real estate acquisitions. In February 2016, the final design is slated for completion with construction starting in May 2016 and completion of the first phases in May 2018.

Questions and comments included the following:

- What happens if the property owners [with parcels needed for the project] do not or will not cooperate? It varies with each property owner. There are 19 parcels needed from the City of San Antonio and 15 needed from private landowners. One-on-one meetings are occurring with the private owners. Ms. Scott added that the lines on the map keep moving and being solidified as the

design is being finalized. Some adjustments are being made to mitigate impacts (i.e. parking). There are no property owners who don't support it and it is now a matter of negotiating.

- Are any of the expenses used for San Pedro Creek impacting the playground funding for Elmendorf Lake Park? No – they are completely different pots of money.
- Are the [acquisition] challenges from COSA or mainly private property owners? The City has a process that takes time and Council has a break in July. August will be the formal approval for the conveyance of the City parcels.
- Out of the 15 private property owners, where are we? Only one remains that is considered a big challenge.
- What are the options for the County? County could decide to pay for it but it is a big decision if the rest of the parcels are donated. The project costs can't be increased. Many understand value project is bringing to their property and have therefore donated the needed parcels.
- Are easements [being created] on private property? There are some easements in some locations that public has access and there will be construction easements.
- Phase 1 will be constructed in the near term? Yes. Phase 1 extends from the tunnel inlet to Cesar Chavez and Phase 2 runs from Guadalupe Street to S. Alamo. Phase 1 will be complete in May 2018 with Phase 2 slated for completion shortly thereafter.

In closing, Ms. Hinze informed the group that the presentation, videos, and subcommittee notes are available on the San Pedro Creek website. The 40 percent plan views are also on website showing the project boundaries and existing properties.

#### **V. Status Report on Westside Creeks Improvements Projects**

Rudy Farias, San Antonio River Authority, provided the update on City of San Antonio's and Bexar County's Elmendorf Lake Park and trails improvement projects. Ruben Bazan, SARA, will be at the next meeting. Elmendorf Lake Park is currently under construction. Mr. Farias showed the improvements along with images. A pedestrian bridge is being constructed to connect the trails to the retail center by Commerce near 24<sup>th</sup> Street. Another bridge will help pedestrians cross Commerce instead of using Commerce Street. There will be a trail on both sides when it is complete. On the south bank, there is silt fencing and contractors are currently removing invasive plants. The parking lot off of 19<sup>th</sup> Street will be replaced with a pervious parking lot to filter storm water runoff. The existing playground will stay. Siphons will be placed to allow for lowering the lake after a rain event. The construction of the piers has commenced. They have been drilled and are ready to pour. Additionally, the fence wrap was put up to let the community know of the effort and to cover the construction zone.

Comments and Questions included the following:

- The signs and fence wrap are a beautiful touch and tells the community who is doing the project. It brings hope to the neighborhood. We can feel the buzz. It's a phenomenal idea.
- Is there a virtual way to keep up to date? Photos on the Internet? Monthly updates are posted on the website. There is a camera icon that shows progress photos.
- Is there a plan to do a site visit when some more progress is made? Have not talked about it yet but can talk to construction project manager to see what can be arranged.
- Does the invasive plant removal include replacing it with something else so they don't come back? The Cattails on the shoreline are being removed and will be replaced with rain gardens that have native plantings.
- Since construction is during the summer time, is there an alternative place for swimming? As part of the updates, there is a calendar of events for other summer activities in the vicinity.
- It would be good to have signage on-site to advertise the alternative summer activities while the park is closed. Signage could be at the triangle and/or on 24<sup>th</sup> Street. Do not assume all are connected to the website or have smart phones.
- The fence wrap does not have a date for reopening and it should be added. Mr. Farias replied that the City of San Antonio asked that the date not be included. However, there will be a media construction tour with a press conference. The tour is slated at the midpoint. The media, elected officials, and committee members will be invited.
- The art that is going to be placed at the triangle needs to reflect the community. Make sure the artists have an understanding of the community and/or is from the geographic area. Mr. Farias added that the existing structure at the triangle will be demolished later this month. SARA will monitor the loitering. The public art will be coordinated through the City's Cultural and Creative Public Art San Antonio Department.
- The large trucks hauling materials late at night are loud and should be cognizant of residents on Shore Drive. Please inform the construction project manager.

Mr. Farias went on to provide the update for the Westside Creeks Linear Greenway Trails. He gave a recap of the sales tax proposition for the linear greenway trails throughout the city. With the current voter approval, the City will fund up to \$80 million toward completing the citywide greenway loop and including watershed protections where feasible.

Apache/San Pedro, Alazan, and Martinez Creeks are included in the voter approved funding package. The package includes full funding for San Pedro Creek and Apache Creek trails. The Apache/San Pedro Creekways Trail from Cassiano Park located at Zarazamora and Potosi Streets to the confluence of the San Antonio River near Conception Park. The Alazan Creek trail will begin at Josephine Tobin and connect to Lombrano. The Martinez Creek trail will begin at Fredericksburg Road and extend to Cincinnati. The total cost is \$7.65 million for a total of 4.5 linear miles. The Linear Creekway Parks Advisory Board will make

these recommendations to the San Antonio City Council for formal funding approval.

Questions and comments included the following:

- What are the next steps? Should we be dialoging with the Linear Creekway Parks Advisory Board now? Lourdes Galvan is going to organize a group to lobby the Linear Creekway Parks Advisory Board .
- The portion that crosses Guadalupe Street is critical to the Avenida Guadalupe Association and the Westside connection as users cross the bridge. Anything we can do to get in front of anyone toward this end? Ms. Galvan responded that District 5 Council Member Gonzales has already approached her and a meeting will be called to organize.
- We need a good cost benefit analysis to show how much impact for not much money, how it will serve the underserved community, provide connectivity, and contribute to the Decade of Downtown.
- The Apache Creek trail should be connected to St. Mary's University and into the neighborhood. Ms. Scott replied the trail currently ends where exists and the scope was set by an old USACE project. If there is an opportunity to connect to Rosedale and Navarro Parks, the committee can look at connectivity to the neighborhoods and go outside of the original boundaries. The councilwoman has expressed the desire to look at the system holistically.

Gabriel Velasquez made a motion to write a letter to the Linear Creekway Parks Advisory Board communicating the expectation to complete the trails outlined in red on the presentation and language to explore a connection into St. Mary's and other college campuses. Discussion revolved around the letter's content and not limiting the request, stating the benefits, and understanding that the \$80 million will be not be received overnight. There was also a suggestion to find out how the Linear Creekway Parks Advisory Board prioritizes projects so the letter can be modeled on that process. A new motion was made by Co-Chair Mr. Ramirez, with permission from Mr. Velasquez, supporting Lourdes Galvan to establish a committee and to include a letter to Linear Creekway Parks Advisory Board expecting completion of the existing trails and encouraging connections to community assets such as St. Mary's University. The new motion was seconded by Erwin DeLuna representing San Antonio Pow Wow Inc. The motion passed with 13 in favor, none opposed, and none abstaining.

The committee was encouraged to contact their City Council representatives and other elected officials to let them know you want the trails completed.

Mr. Farias went on to inform the committee that the Martinez Creek and Alazan Creek trails are joint bid and Martinez will be completed first. The site is currently being prepared and city permits are being obtained. The Apache/San Pedro Creeks groundbreaking was held and the trail will extend for 3.5 miles from Cassiano Park to the San Antonio River. It is slated for completion in March 2016. Monthly updates, with photos and community events, will be sent via email to the WCROC database and posted online at the project website.

Questions and Comments included:

- Will this trail connect to the Fredericksburg detention pond? No. This trail is closer to I-10 and Fredericksburg at Huisache.
- Will the role of San Antonio River Foundation (SARF) expand to include San Pedro Creek and into the other Westside Creeks? It definitely could. The SARF is a private foundation established to pay for public art along the newly improved Museum and Mission Reaches. They are building an educational park at the confluence and it will have a SARA classroom. There certainly could be future opportunities to identify needs for a privately funded project or public art effort.
- What is the official name of all the Westside Creeks? Why not introduce the idea of naming it the Roberto Rodriguez Restoration Project? David Garza, COSA Center City Development, suggested the committee think broader and bigger. He reminded the group that the history is bigger than one person and they may want to consider education and the community – a name that indicates where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going. Mr. Garza went on to state that September 7<sup>th</sup> will be the 94<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1921 flood where 51 people died. Sixteen years later in 1937, the San Antonio River Authority was established. He encouraged the committee to think about it carefully and put it in a historic perspective. Mr. Garza will take the request to the City, find out the process for this type of naming and let the committee know at a future meeting.
- Good point - an individual is just a spoke in the wheel and even more people can relate if it is broader.
- On the website, there needs to be an “about” tab to show how it started and why with 1921, 1937, up to now with key leaders noted, and why the committee was formed in 2008.
- Another way to honor Roberto Rodriguez is to consult him and ask what he would like. He may have an idea that is more inclusive.
- About a month ago there was a contest for naming parks, can this committee entertain re-naming the park after Roberto Rodriguez?
- Please look into how this really got started. Patti Radle was a key player and Roberto Rodriguez, as a SARA Board Member, pushed for the Westside Creeks to be on the ballot.
- Roberto Rodriguez was the one who stood forward to make it happen and took on the political battle.
- We need to investigate naming one of the Elmendorf Lake Park bridges, with a plaque, after Roberto Rodriguez.

Erwin DeLuna made a motion to create an “about” tab on the westsidecreeks.com website to include the history (as far back as the indigenous people) and key players. Evelyn Mitchell seconded it. The motion passed with 13 in favor, none opposed, and none abstained.

## **VI. Citizens to be Heard**

None.

**VII. Miscellaneous Items**

Skye Curd asked everyone to take a moment of silence to recognize those who lost their lives to floods.

**VIII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:01 p.m.