



San Antonio River Oversight Committee

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DECEMBER 17, 2007

100 E. GUENTHER

5:00 P.M.

SARA BOARD ROOM

MEETING NOTES

ATTENDING: ROC members and alternates-Bob Buchanan, Tony Cantu, Susan Chandoha, Joan Gaither, Curtis Gunn, Jr., Irby Hightower, Glenn Huddleston, Richard Moore, Jeff Neathery, Albert Valle **STAFF AND CONSULTANTS** –Kim Abernethy, Kim Boenig, Sonny Collins, Richard Grochowski, Claude Harding, Addison Looney, Mark Sorenson, Steve Whitesell, Sonia Jimenez and six members of the public

1. Welcome and Introductions- Irby Hightower, Co-chair welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.
2. Approval of Meeting Notes – October and November 2007 – approved as written.
3. Update on Mission Reach Activities- Jeff Neathery
 - SARA, COSA, and Bexar County have approved the 100 percent plans.

Addison Looney presented information related to the vegetation test area, the demonstration riffle, utility relocation, and real estate acquisition.

- The vegetation is thriving. There are 70 test plats of native plants and grasses. The LBJ Center is very pleased with results.
- SARA has finished reviewing 100 percent drawings and documents for the demonstration riffle and is sending their comments to the Corps. The Corps will issue a notice to proceed at the end of January with a completion date of late April 2008. The demonstration will be constructed in the main channel just south of Loop 410 near Mission Espada.
- The utility relocation at the confluence of San Pedro Creek and the River is progressing and is on schedule. TxDOT has a Trans Guide fiber optic line at IH-10 and the River that needs to be relocated. SARA will coordinate the effort and TxDOT will fund it.

- Condemnation proceedings are set for January 3. There is a total of five parcels and none of the proceedings are adversarial. The proceedings are necessary to set a price for acquiring the parcels. Newell Recycling has donated one parcel and CPS will convey possession of the Mitchell Street property in mid-January.
- Phase 2 of the real estate acquisition has begun with surveying to ensure “smart” acquisitions (no partial pieces of property.)

4. Update on Eagleland Activities

Jim Boenig reported:

- Revised tree planting plan will be done in January. The revised plan will be submitted to the contractor this week. The plan consists of at least 175 trees not including the trees being provided from the COSA. All the trees will be 1-5 gallon size.
- The contractors will do the erosion control work in January. The work is located east of the crib structure and the concrete debris will be removed and the area cleaned up.
- Constance Street Park 95 percent plans are complete. The project will be funded by COSA (\$100K) and the King William Neighborhood Association (\$50K.) The final plans have to be coordinated with COSA Public Works for drainage and curb revision and require final approval by COSA Parks and Recreation Department.

Richard Grochowski reported:

- The hike and bike contractor has completed most items and is finishing the planting. The bridge is being stored at Brooks City Base and cannot be installed until the Big Tex clean-up occurs. The graffiti in the area will be removed by COSA crews by Wednesday.
- The City is still waiting for the 404 Permit from the Corps to move forward on the Pedestrian Phase. The Corps indicated the review would be complete and the comments would be returned by the end of 2007. Eagleland committee members requested the Corps staff person’s contact information to put pressure on them to approve. If the permit is received by the end of 2007, then the project will be advertised in March and the bid opening will occur in April.
- The pre-construction meeting for the Mission Trails Package 4A occurred and construction should begin on December 26, 2007
 - There are two issues remaining
 - Union Pacific has not approved the railroad canopy concept. The construction will proceed without it and warning signs will be posted in the meantime.

- Bridge handrails have been discussed with the consultant and the City is aware of the sensitivity of the issue and is working to get it resolved.

5. Update on Museum Reach Activities

Tony Cantu reported:

- Committee met on December 6, 2007 to receive a project update and was presented the San Antonio River Foundation's concept for the grotto.
- The Park Segment was discussed and the Avenue A concept is being reviewed. There is concern that Golf USA is going to be using Avenue A as a construction road but this matter has not been confirmed.

Mark Sorenson presented a PowerPoint for the project update. The highlights were:

- The contractor was behind by one week and has recouped the week and is now a week ahead of schedule. The completion date is set for May 2009.
- Grubbing is complete up to Jones; the access point is located just past Jones near the VFW and at Grayson Street. Dewatering is on-going between the Hugman dam and Ninth Street. Soil netting and excavation is continuing and there are still fish in the channel.
- The east portion of the lock and dam slab is in place with steel and concrete work on-going through the second week in January.
- The funds spent to date account for 20 percent of the total project budget of \$12M.
- Project photos and the lock and dam webcam can be viewed on the River Improvements website at <http://sanantonioriver.org>. The photos are updated bi-weekly and are taken at each bridge crossing.
- Bi-weekly still photos at each bridge crossing

6. Update on Visitors Tax Status

Irby Hightower reported:

- The committee continues to meet. There was a public meeting presentation last week and this Wednesday at 9am it will be discussed at Commissioners Court following an 8:30 rally/media event in front of the courthouse.
- A quick run through of the public meeting presentation was shown. The presentation highlighted the River Venue Tax committee members and their charge, the River's history, economic benefits

from the River, completed and current projects as well as the vision to connect the 13-mile stretch of the River. There is a 55 percent shortfall on the budget to complete the Eagleland, Mission Reach and Park Reach. Thirty-nine percent (\$124.9M) is being requested from the Venue Tax revenues. Funding for priority items amounts to \$75M (94 percent of that amount to goes to the Mission Reach with six percent to the Park Segment) and the additional \$49M of the amount requested will fund enhancements.

- Milton Guess will make a presentation to Commissioners Court on Wednesday and committee members were asked to assist in the effort to persuade Commissioners Court and the community in order for this funding to be realized. Committee members were directed to the Commissioners Court Website in order to e-mail county commissioners to show their support.
- January 3 and January 11 are future meeting dates for public comment on the proposed venue tax projects.
- Comment: The River project is going to be competing with the amateur sports complex for the funds. However, the Mission Concepción Sports Complex will compliment our project. We should invite them to present to our group and we should support this project.
- Comment: The use of the Venue Tax revenues for our project will enhance San Antonio in the long run with increased property values, sales tax and the sports venues will continue to cost money after they are built but the River improvements will generate revenue for the city.

7. Update on Federal Funding

Suzanne Scott reported:

- Great news today! Confirmation from Congressmen Rodriguez and Gonzales that the omnibus bill has allotted \$9.8 M for the River improvements and should be voted on tonight in the Senate and tomorrow in the House. This is great timing and thank you to all for support and reaching out to congressmen.
- The funds will be applied to Phase 1 with less of the authorized COSA and Bexar County being used for this phase. The COSA and Bexar County funds may be put in escrow but not until the slope stability issues and a few others are resolved.

8. San Antonio River Foundation Update

Kim Abernathy reported:

- End of year report shows the first phase of fundraising amounted to \$13M with corporate donations and Board Foundation support.
- Tom Stephenson, President and Publisher of the San Antonio Express-News, will take the lead on phase 2 of the fundraising efforts. His goal is to raise \$20M by mid-2008.
- The Foundation has authorized spending for enhanced sidewalks, restoration at the Roy Smith footbridge, and the grotto.
- The grotto concept proposed by Lorna Jordan was not feasible from an engineering standpoint. Carlos Cortez has developed another concept, which was presented to the committee, and he has been hired to design the project. The grotto will be located at Camden and Newell. Ford Powell and Carson will do the cost estimate for the project.
- Tony Cantu, Museum Reach chairman, lauded the grotto concept and expressed his excitement and appreciation.

9. 2008 ROC Meeting Schedule – Ximenes & Associates distributed the schedule. Committee members were asked to look at their calendars to make sure there were not any significant conflicts.

10. Comments from the Public

Mark Kellmann, chair of the AIA committee that participated in the Museum Reach Study, which is now called River North, commented that the original Hugman channel is too narrow for pedestrians to be comfortable and did not promote the commercial aspect of the River. The improvements copy the original Hugman channel and will not allow for enough space for people.

Georgina Schwarz – congratulations on the success of this project. At the last ROC meeting, Milton Guess stated that no particular alignment for the Park Segment trail would be stated in the request for the Venue Tax funding. The update today stated no detail included in the Venue Tax request but that the Commissioners Court would come back later to make that decision. Commissioners Court coming back later sounds painful and hopefully this committee will uphold the original thought to have the trail follow Avenue B (as opposed to Avenue A). Ms. Schwarz vowed to be around to make sure the Avenue B decision is maintained by the ROC.

11. Adjourn