



San Antonio River Oversight Committee

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MEETING NOTES FEBRUARY 13, 2006

ATTENDING: ROC Members and Alternates: Joe Alderete, Roberto Anguiano, Tony Cantu, Susan Chandoha, Lila Cockrell, Edward R. Day, Tom DeBrooke, Curtis C. Gunn, Jr., Bob Harris, Irby Hightower, Mike Lance, Marion Oettinger, Jr., Jon Thompson, Albert F. Valle. **Staff and Consultants:** Dean Bayer, Joseph Cruz, Aaron Forland, Claude Harding, Kerim Jacaman, John Mize, Steve Ramsey, Mark Sorenson, Gayle Brennan Spencer, Steve Whitesell, Ted Popp, Stephen Lusk, Larry Clark, Sally Buchanan, and five members of the public.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Lila Cockrell, as Chairperson of the meeting, welcomed Tom DeBrooke as new member of the River Oversight Committee.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 12, 2005

The minutes were approved as written.

UPDATE ON WATERSHED PROTECTION PLAN

Steve Lusk of the San Antonio River Authority (SARA), began his update by saying that Mike Gonzalez spoke to the Committee in December about the Watershed Protection Plan and he was doing a follow-up briefing with the committee. He reported that SARA has produced a Quality Assurance Protection Plan. They have identified 15 routine sites where they collect samples, including baseline sites, which are at the two main outfalls just outside the zoo. They will take samples two or three hours before and after the zoo opens to see how the routine activities affect the bacteria count in the river.

They have also identified a site at Woodlawn and Elmendorf Lakes for sampling storm water runoff. He announced that there would be a second public meeting on March 29 at SARA board room. Linda Ximenes will notify the ROC members when the meeting notice is sent out. The first public meeting was an introduction to the Watershed Protection Plan. SARA had produced some aerial photos and asked those present to place dots on the aerial photos to show where they thought

there might be situations that could introduce bacteria and asked them to complete a questionnaire.

At this next meeting SARA will report on the sites they had on the maps, ask participants to complete another questionnaire to see what they remember and then the consultant will talk about what will need to be done to reduce the bacteria load. Mr. Lusk commented that people will not like some of the recommendations the consultants will be making.

Mr. Lusk pointed out that the zoo is the largest point source and there may need to be an “end-of-the-pipe” treatment. In the plan, they are also looking at best management practices to reduce the bacterial loading coming from the zoo.

In response to a question from one of the Committee members, Mr. Lusk agreed that if the zoo were being developed as a new facility, it would need to have a way to handle the run-off.

BRIEFING ON BROOKS CITY-BASE TRAIL CONNECTION

Keith Muelstein and Greg Hammer of Brooks City-Base introduced the multi-use path they are hoping to construct using TxDOT funding (SAFETEA-LU) in a way that is similar to the Mission Trails funding. City-Base will fund the first phase in early 2007.

They have been talking to the possible stakeholders who have a piece of the puzzle and have come to the ROC because SARA and the City have right of way on the west end of where they want to construct the path, from the west boundary to the river, about one quarter mile. Phase I of the path will extend from Sidney Brooks Road (on Brooks City-Base) and form a loop that goes into the drainage area and continues to the San Antonio River. They would like to connect their trail to the Mission Trails, and in order to do that, they have to go on SARA and City property to be able to reach the River.

Mr. Muelstein added that the potential for doing it exists now with the funding at an 80 percent match, so this is a good time to do a project there.

He showed a slide of the Mission Trails paths and the Medina Natural Area trails that will connect to the San Antonio River, pointing out that their trail will be able to connect from the Medina Natural Area up to the South Side Lions Park.

Bob Harris asked who was building the Medina Natural Area and Mr. Muelstein responded that it is part of Proposition 2 of the Tax Initiative that covered the linear park system. Jon Thompson asked about if Brook City-Base was coordinating with the Parks and Recreation Department of the City.

Irby Hightower asked if they needed anything from the ROC. He said they would like a letter to Howard Peak in support of the project. Ms. Cockrell said they would take it under advisement.

Mr. Muelstein explained the process for submitting the proposal. It will need to go TxDOT on April 28 and to the MPO before that. The City of San Antonio (COSA) has to nominate the project since it is in the city limits. He pointed out that the letter of support can be submitted before the April 28th proposal deadline.

UPDATE ON MISSION REACH ACTIVITIES

Jim Boenig announced that Greg Schwarz resigned in December to go back to school for his PhD. Mark Sorenson will be handling the Mission Reach as well as the Museum Reach now.

Disposal Site Update

Mark Sorenson reported that the appraisal on the disposal site has been done and the SARA appraisal person will evaluate it.

A/E status Update

The Phase I 30 percent plans are completed.

FAA Status Update

The Federal Aviation Agency agreed to substitute a bottomland hardwood forest in place of the wetlands close to Stinson Field. The change will require an amendment to the General Reevaluation Report (GRR). Once the amendment is complete, the GRR can be sent to the Assistant Secretary of the Army, which is the next step up the approval ladder. There is no schedule for when that will happen, but Todd Smith of the Corps of Engineers (CoE) thought it was close at hand.

The National Park Service cultural mitigation was tied to the GRR, but it no longer is. Once it is resolved, it will be sent forward and because the solution will not impact the budget, it will not require an amendment to the GRR.

EAGLELAND PROJECTS UPDATE

CoE Project

Jim reported that the contractor for Phase II will start bringing materials to the site to repair the riffle structure on Wednesday. The Corps has agreed to provide the additional funds and the County money for the repair falls within the contingency available.

Mr. Boenig has been talking to the contractor about a spring planting schedule and an irrigation system to establish the grass in the event it does not rain. He is looking at a March-April timeframe to get it done.

River Walk Link

Dean Bayer reported that the Eagleland hike and bike path from Eagleland to Alamo Street got bids and it was on budget. The Eagleland pedestrian phase from Alamo to Guenther is under final design and waiting for approval of the 404 permit. The time to get the permit is not certain, but the project is scheduled for a September letting.

Amenities Master Plan

Larry Clark presented the information on the master plan saying that it takes into account a number of projects including the costs. The prioritization of the projects was determined with public input. He commented that the citizens expressed a strong desire to have a beautiful setting in this section of the River.

He listed all the different projects – six in all— happening in the Eagleland section and explained that the Amenities Master plan coordinates all of these projects and acts as a guide. He pointed that there had been significant public input and coordination during the development of the plan, which consists of an inventory of existing conditions and general recommendations including paving updates, signing and graphics, drinking fountains, and other amenities.

The plan includes recommendations for four sites:

1. The Alamo Street Bridge and the plunge pool -- The suggestion is to remove the dead end at Crofton Street. There are mixed opinions if access should be allowed at this area. The plunge pool wall recommendation is to create a cast-in-place limestone wall with pilasters that extend into the river. Pilings will be removed to allow for better visibility of the river. The edge of the wall will tie into the limestone rocks that continue to the end of this section, creating a ribbed limestone wall that will match the detail on the other side of the river.
2. Crofton Street pocket park—creates an amenity by removing some of the existing pavement, adding a walkway and an ADA accessible path. New paving would be added at the raised overlook and bollards would restrict access to the maintenance road. Two new light poles would be installed and the riverbank would be terraced using wild flower planting and butterfly garden conditions.
3. Big Tex Grain site. At this site, the plan includes a picnic area with an overlook shelter and seating for three picnic tables with shade trees. The shelter overlook would emulate the style of the silos. The rest of the work in this area is part of the Mission Trails Project.
4. Eagleland Street end. This site got the most discussion. A pedestrian bridge is proposed as part of the Mission Trails and a circular roundabout would

connect to the trail south to Espada. They will create a plaza at the street end by modifying the existing pavement. Mr. Clark showed three alternatives. A turnabout is proposed now in the City's plans.

Mr. Boenig pointed out that the plunge pool wall is funded 100 percent by the County, and SARA wants to do a joint bid on this with the pedestrian walkway of the City.

Mr. Clark also presented the estimated costs for each item. He pointed out that the costs for the Eagleland Street end were for the low-end plan.

The priorities for construction were: Crofton Street end park was first; second was the Eagleland street end, which could be integrated into Package 4A of the Mission Trails Project; the S. Alamo street project with the possibility to phase it was third; and the Big-Tex picnic site was last priority.

Mr. Boenig asked the Committee members for feedback on the plunge pool wall, so Mr. Clark went back and gave more detail to the project.

Ms. Cockrell asked if Mr. Bayer had any comments. Mr. Bayer responded that it was a good opportunity to tie the County's flood project to the City's amenities project.

Marion Oettinger asked why a staircase is needed there. Mr. Clark explained that it was to give both alternatives—the ramp and the stairs. It is a more interesting condition and allows for you to look at the river from another angle. It would all be cast as one element. The stair gets more use since the ramp is longer and more circuitous and it creates a second ability to get out.

Bob Harris pointed out that the elimination of the stairs on another project he knew had created a nice touch.

Mr. Thompson asked about the concrete and suggested using something that would make it look more like limestone.

Ms. Cockrell asked if there were any concerns. **The design of the plunge pool wall and the Amenities Master Plan were approved by consensus since there were no concerns expressed.**

UPDATE ON MUSEUM REACH ACTIVITIES

Tony Cantu reported that the subcommittee met on February 2 and dealt with three major items. They got a detailed briefing from Boone Powell, which generated a lot of interest by the members. Then they reviewed the 30 percent design plans

and the third topic was the acceleration of the channel work. Mr. Cantu had requested a review of Scenario G to be sure they were reminded of what they had agreed on months ago. The cobblestone bottom and the safe harbor were pointed out as elements of that scenario. He said there were only a few members in attendance at the meeting and encouraged the members to attend.

FPC Design Status

John Mize of Ford Powell Carson (FPC) said they have been working on the cost estimates for review by the City and SARA. He met with the architectural barriers people in Austin for a preliminary review of the concerns and to brief them.

Review of 30 Percent Design Plans

Boone Powell gave a detailed review of the design at this stage. He pointed out that the Urban Segment of the Museum Reach extends from Lexington to Josephine, and that he was showing the actual drawings with the focus on the boat landing, the access to Jones Ave at 12th Street, the Roy Smith Street Bridge, the grotto and a new project at Schiller and Quincy, which would create a small park unlike any in this stretch of the river. The Myrtle Street outfall and the turning basin at Pearl are also in the Urban Segment.

He reviewed all the major elements of the design:

1. Lexington Ave. Dam—This is a special interpretive area requiring a cut through the existing dam to allow for the barges to pass through. Interpretive information will be available on both banks. Rockwork will maintain and stabilize the banks and lichen will be used to soften the look. There will be a high retaining wall against the parking lot.
2. Lock and dam at Brooklyn Ave— It will have an overlook with a major overlook feature and a stair that leads to the upper level and a handicapped accessible path that does the same thing. A control building with two small restrooms and the operations facilities are included. The ramp that goes down the west bank is now an accessible path. In the original plan it was going to be a challenge path. It has less access, but they working on improving it.
3. Overlook at 8th Street – includes a trellis garden and “look back” to the lock and dam. This is the last vestige of the “downtown look.”
4. Above 9th Street— a marsh that will be enhanced with additional water and a boat dock that is a little more special than the others.
5. Jones Ave ramp and stair— A long ramp is needed there so they chose to ramp up the main path a little higher, which will require hand rails. The ramp will swing back in such a way that will allow it to create a covered boat dock. There is a stair as part of the path that continues up to Jones Ave. At this point, the theme of brick is introduced to reinforce the brick look of the San Antonio Museum of Art (SAMoA).

6. Staying on the east bank across from the museum at 12th St and Ave B in the public right of way, the design shows an area with a small pool and waterfall that will go back to the river under a footbridge. The ramp is made so that you can sit on it. They will remove one of the stairs in this area.
7. Roy Smith Street Bridge—This is the old Lone Star bridge that is being renovated using the same brick to match SAMoA. The design consultants are looking at possibly getting more land and forming a powerful anchor for the northern end of this area.
8. Camden and Newell Streets Safe Harbor— This location needs to have a handicapped access and it is different from the ramps in other locations because of the huge pecan tree there. The barges need a safe harbor where it would be possible to pull a boat out of the river to allow a space for management and maintenance. A cradle sling will be used to put them onto a trailer. It would also allow heavy vehicles to get into the river itself. It would include facilities for employees and four boats and parking for employees. It is on the other side of the grotto.
9. Schiller St. Park— the design suggests sandblasting and concrete to match the theme at the Rio Perla development. The land is purchased so there is a great opportunity to use public land that opens out to the river. There is a slight hill that accommodates an overlook and the creation of a small park with pedestals to for sitting. It would be on the opposite side of a major boat dock for Rio Perla. The Myrtle Street outfall is in this area and dissipating elements will need to be placed there to handle the huge flow that goes through it at times.
10. Turning basin at the Pearl property— At this location there will be elements that connect to a boat dock or a performance area with an excellent little theater built from “found” materials. Further down is the scrub water element that will allow for the first flush of storm water to go into the pond and then into the River. The headwaters will look like the pond at Woodlawn Lake. There will be another boat dock on the other side to the north.
11. Street markers that are back-lit, triangular metal elements of powder-coated aluminum will be used. The design team is considering maybe sandblasting or carving something into the concrete to get away from the ordinary graphics. They will use pylon-like elements for way finding that can identify who did the work, give directions and tell the history of an area. Metal signs at the bridges made of weathered painted steel that will allow you to see through to the bridge are also part of the way finding system. At the Lexington Ave. Dam signage would be similar to the others, made to obscure as little as possible. One side of the triangular signs would be in Spanish.

Mr. Mize noted that the planting palette has been chosen based on its heartiness. In some places it will be used to soften the edge and provide color, using as many indigenous elements as possible.

Mr. Hightower asked that the graphics information be given to the Mission Reach to see how they can integrate the look, although it does not need to be the same. One of the issues of interest to the ROC is to have things as fluid as possible and not necessarily to have the two banks match.

Mrs. Cockrell recognized Sally Buchanan who pointed out that “River Walk” has to be two works as a result of a lawsuit by New Orleans.

Mr. Harris said he was impressed and liked the graphics, although he would like for the star motif to be given a second thought and replaced with something that is more like San Antonio.

He also asked if it would be possible to soften the surface materials at Myrtle Street. Mr. Powell responded that they will plant reeds and other elements in the River there and hope they will stay. They will also sprig stuff into the rocks. Mr. Harris suggested they use some of the elements of European towns with rivers.

Mr. Mize remarked that they do not know how this area will react. The tunnel should allow for more to be done, but they cannot be sure since the Myrtle Street outfall carries the water independent of the tunnel.

Mr. Boenig said there is a review meeting with the City and the County this week.

Update on Accelerating the Channel Work

Mr. Boenig reported that discussions were still ongoing and the deadline for a decision is March 2nd or 9th in order to still meet the proposed accelerated schedule. He emphasized that everything is still going according to the baseline schedule. SARA is working on the 404 permit for that section and securing pumps for the care of water plan, using the tunnel as a bypass channel.

PUBLIC ART MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Sorenson reported that a draft Public Art Master Plan is due on March 15, so there will be a chance for the Public Art Master Plan Advisory (PAMPA) Subcommittee to review the plan.

The draft plan will be presented to the ROC on March 20th and on the 21st Lorna Jordan will meet with the consultants to see how to coordinate it with their plans.

The final plan will be presented at the April ROC meeting.

FEDERAL FUNDING UPDATE

Suzanne Scott announced that the project was not in the President’s Budget for 2007. The Corps did release their capability figures and that is set at \$17.3

million. About \$275,00 is for a flood study in the Woodlawn Lake area. That amount will fund completion of final design for Sections 1 and 2 and all construction for Section 1.

She explained that in the past, the Corps could only enter into contract for the money they have. They would contract for the whole amount, but would authorize only what they had. If they did not have the money, they stopped the contract or canceled it.

Now they go after the full amount in the appropriation and it will carry over. This is better for the project, but makes it necessary to ask for a large amount of money at one time. This year the City and County's support is stronger than in the past. The City is going to Washington on March 6-8 and then the County goes up March 13-15. Ms. Scott will go as part of the County group to meet with the Office of Management and Budget and the delegation. SARA will go back again the first week of April.

She told the group that should would be asking for all to write their letters of support that will be due the first of March. She emphasized that although there is a lot of work, there is a great level of support.

She noted that only four construction projects in Texas were included in the President's Budget so there will be lots of others asking for additional money. In the past, the President's Budget tended to dictate how Congress would fund, but not any more.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF DATE CHANGES

Ms. Cockrell pointed out the changes in the dates for the ROC meetings:

- March 20, 2006
- June 19 instead of June 12
- December 18 instead of December 11, 2006

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Joan Korte of the Downtown Residents Association pointed out that she hoped we were still considering the lighting along the River.

Santiago Escobedo commented that the first use of the star was on the de la Garza coins.

Roberto Anguiano announced that the Basura Bash is on March 25 and invited them all to come and join the activities to clean up the San Antonio River.