



San Antonio River Oversight Committee

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JUNE 18, 2007
100 E. GUENTHER
5:00 P.M.

MEETING NOTES

ATTENDING: Members and Alternates- Roberto Anguiano, Bob Buchanan, Nathan Campbell, Tony Cantu, Edward R. Day, Tom DeBrooke, Joan Gaither, Curtis C. Gunn, Jr., Irby Hightower, Glenn Huddleston, Mike Lance, Marise McDermott, Richard Moore, Jeff Neathery and Albert Valle.
Staff and Consultants- Jim Boenig, Richard Grochowski, Lori Houston, Addison Looney, Mark Sorenson and Linda Ximenes and **two members of the public.**

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Lila Cockrell called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF APRIL 9, 2007

The minutes were approved as written, with the stipulation that people who attended, but were not present would notify Linda Ximenes so she could add their for names for attendance.

BRIEFING ON RIVER NORTH PROJECT

This item was moved up to the first item in order for Lori Houston to attend another meeting to which she was committed.

Ms. Houston reported the following:

- TIF—Tax Increment Financing is being used to fund this plan.
- A Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) was created for the River North area on December 14, 2006.
- The boundaries are roughly St. Mary's on east, and north at IH37/IH35, making it an area of about 194 acres.

- The Downtown Alliance is the collaborator and helps bring in stakeholders..
- The City froze the base value at \$124 million and the assessed value will be several billion dollars. There has already been an increase in the assessed value.
- There are infrastructure needs in the area so the TIF dollars will be used for \$67.5 million to fix the streets and make it a more pedestrian friendly and put utilities underground.
- The estimated value is \$116 million and proposed projects include 5,775 residential units, 7200 parking spaces and hotels, a total investment of about \$780 million.
- COSA will allocate 100 percent of their taxes to this area and SARA also. Bexar County will participate on a project-by-project basis. ACCD's participation is pending.
- They are getting a master planner involved with projects and priorities.
- There are a lot of developers calling with proposed projects along the River that will go to the HDRC because they are in the RIO district.
- Some of the work has already started and the City is waiting for approval of the infrastructure. They estimate a full build out in 15 years.

A Committee member commented that it was good to hear about pedestrian access increasing, but he expressed concern about narrowing the streets. Ms. Houston responded that the master planning team will have a traffic engineering firm on their team to address those traffic issues.

Mr. Cantu asked about the role of the Downtown Alliance. Ms. Houston explained that the DTA is funding it and the TIRZ will reimburse them.

UPDATE ON MUSEUM REACH ACTIVITIES

Tony Cantu announced that there is a lot of construction on St. Mary's Street and thanked the Museum Reach Subcommittee for the work they have done over the years.

He pointed out that the subcommittee had met monthly. Since construction began, they have integrated the Museum Reach Subcommittee and Stakeholder meetings to allow for comments and progress reports together and not added another set of meetings for everyone.

Mark Sorenson reported the following regarding Museum Reach activities:

- He showed a map of the construction site at the old SAHA Rex Apartments site. They have constructed a ramp into the channel and created haul roads on the east and west banks.
- The dewatering process has started with pumping out the pooled area with well points about every 10 feet to draw water from the channel itself to keep from the equipment from getting bogged down as it works in the River. The dewatering process will not affect the aquifer levels.
- The contractor is concentrating on clearing and grubbing a little upstream of the Lexington Ave. bridge to 9th Street, downstream of the San Antonio Museum of Art.
- As they find them, fish are being moved downstream and to other locations.
- There is an archeological person on site to monitor the site as required. Most of the channel is man-made, so there is little expectation of finding anything of historical significance.
- SARA issued the first change order to add concrete caps on the retaining walls, pavers and the Roy Smith Bridge for a little less than \$1 million. This is added to the original \$49.8 million, so it still well below the \$60 million allocated. The San Antonio River Foundation is adding to the money.
- An update on the anticipated costs of the Park Segment have been requested by the River Oversight Committee (ROC) Co-chairs that needs to be brought to the ROC. Suzanne Scott reported that they have some information they want to pass by the Co-chairs before going to the ROC. This item should be added to the next agenda after being reviewed by the Museum Reach subcommittee. Ms. Scott added that they were asked to do a display that would show the coordination of the bridges in Brackenridge Park, the Witte and the City's bridges for a discussion with the County's venue tax committee.

UPDATE ON MISSION REACH ACTIVITIES

Jeff Neathery reported that at the last subcommittee meeting they reviewed the 95 percent plans and found that they could not approve the drawings as they were presented. There was a list of eight items that were of concern with the main one being the riffle structures. Subcommittee members were not convinced they would work.

In the meantime a meeting has been set up with the Corps on July 6 to give everyone the opportunity to work through the issues to resolve them.

He went on to add that the subcommittee had asked for clarification at 60 percent drawings and did not get it, which led to the current situation. The situation will play havoc with the schedule, but the subcommittee believes the project should be loyal to the original plans and desires.

Ms. Cockrell commented that the subcommittee had worked hard and it was appropriate to raise the issues. They have worked cooperatively with the Corps so far.

A/E Status Update

Addison Looney reported that the real estate acquisition is progressing nicely. Appraisers are on board and as soon as the appraisals are submitted the acquisition will be approved.

The National Park Service mitigation is in Phase 3, so there is plenty of time to work with the property owners.

Riffle Structure Design Adjustments

Mr. Looney reported that the Corps has requested a proposal for alternatives to the planned riffle structures and the consultants have found that there are low impact riffle structures and high habitat structures that are necessary for habitat points. The consultant team will work on three options and have 30 percent design plans in three months. The alternatives will be prepared without the cost considerations. When they present the plans at the 30 percent level, they will include the cost estimates and the amount to be done by the Corps.

Phase I Utility Relocation

SARA is working with SAWS to be able to get the bid for the relocation “on the street” as soon as possible, once the 98 percent plans have been approved.

Phase II Redesign and Phase III

Jim Boenig asked the Corps for a detailed list of activities that need to be done before turning dirt. That will help him to see how the riffle structures will affect the schedule. The Corps project should start in December or January. They hope to start the utility reconstruction in September, which should take two to three months.

Phase II is from the confluence of San Pedro Creek to the San Juan diversion, \$37 million project. Our credit provision with the Water

Resource Development Act (WRDA) may have the \$17 million for the construction design. It may be appropriated into the amount that would be done for Phase I. SARA is considering dividing the phases into smaller phases to be able to match the federal funding more closely

Phase III includes Symphony Lane. SARA needs to determine what the floodplain would be in that area. The General Reevaluation Report (GRR) indicated a good floodplain since it accepted the channel configuration that was close to the big water concept. This project is not authorized for floodplain improvements, so SARA cannot go in that direction.

UPDATE ON EAGLELAND ACTIVITIES

Crofton Street Park

Jim reported that in late April SARA was authorized for \$100,000 for final design and construction. Plans are at the final design stage and meetings with the King William Association (KWA) and Brackenridge school kicked off activities. Final design will be presented on August 6 to the Eagleland Subcommittee. Construction is planned to occur in time with the March planting of grasses.

Corps Project

Jim Boenig showed photos of the effects of the rain on the spring plantings, highlighting the 20 different kinds of wild flowers and native grasses on the west bank, just south of Blue Star. He also reported the following:

- Cereal rye grain planted as a cover crop that was cut and baled later. Crews were weed eating and spot treating with herbicides. Tall grasses in the area will be mowed away from the walkways.
- There are still erosion problems in Eagleland area that will be addressed in September.
- Gate 6 modifications are currently being manufactured and should be installed by July 14. It is water dependent since the gates will be in manual mode only to do the testing. Testing will need to be coordinated with COSA and the weather forecast.

Ms. Cockrell suggested having some of the photos in the newspaper. It was pointed out that there had been an article in the website for the King William Association newsletter. Mr. Boenig said they will bring in irrigation pipes in that portion to assure continued success.

Pedestrian Phase

Richard Grochowski reported that a site visit was conducted with TxDOT Environmental and the Texas Historical Commission, as required by the National Environmental Protections Act (NEPA). Unfortunately, they got Eagleland confused with the Mission Trails and even though only City funds, not federal funds, are being used for the hike and bike, but since the other trail is connected to a federally funded trail that makes it federal. That means they need to determine that there will be a minimal impact on the Blue Star property, which should take about 30 days. TxDOT Environmental is including the whole project, which includes the Corps 404 permit also. The project was split in two to be able to do the part without the 404 permit first, since it was anticipated that the Corps permit would take longer. The City is still working through it all. There were a number of concerns expressed about the delay and what the ROC could do to expedite things.

Mr. Grochowski was asked to send Ms. Ximenes an email at the end of the week regarding the status of the situation.

Mr. Neathery commented that it was supposed to be a six-to-eight-month process and it took six months to get the consultant to get the application out, which is waiting for approval now at the Corps. He added that his firm had been able to secure two 404 permits in the time it has taken this one to get this far. There was general agreement that something must be going on to impede its approval; more than just the Corps's high work load.

In response to a question about Phase 4 of Mission Trails, Mr. Grochowski indicated that they will go to construction in August 2007 for Phase 4A, using 2003 bond money. September is the letting date for the rest of the Phase 4 construction.

Eagleland Bridge

The contractor has started fabrication of the bridge.

Mr. Hightower emphasized how much the subcommittee, SARA and the Corps have worked together on these issues. He suggested that there may be a need to get SARA to help the City with the 404 permit.

UPDATE ON FEDERAL FUNDING

Ms. Scott reported that the Democrats and Republicans have been discussing how to handle earmarks since they want to move the appropriations bills through quickly. The Energy and Water bill was approved with allocations

based on accounts, but did not list how the projects were funded in the account. Republicans did not like the lack of disclosure, so they decided to release the list of projects before the August break. so she should know soon. She will notify everyone as soon as she knows. The Senate appropriations for 2008 will go forward.

The WRDA bill is supposed to go to conference before the July 4th recess, and will be done by the August break. SARA is in discussions with the Corps to move the project forward as soon as WRDA gets passed.

Ms. Scott added that she met with Judge Wolff who is eager to get the project under construction. She pointed out that the utility relocation will allow for a groundbreaking soon. She reported that he understands about the redesign of the riffle structure and emphasized that everyone is eager to keep things moving forward.

UPDATE FROM SAN ANTONIO RIVER FOUNDATION

Catherine Cooke reported that the foundation wants to move forward on the Lorna Jordan grotto and will do so with the change order for the grotto. She added that there has been a good response to the fund raising efforts.

Mr. Cantu asked about the availability of copies of the Public Art Master Plan. She responded that Jimmy LeFlore has them and if not, she will get them out. They will need some for reference since it will be key to the venue tax and other issues.

She was asked if she had an opinion about the 404 issues. She reiterated that it may be beneficial to get SARA involved. Mr. Hightower asked if Mr. Grochowski could convey to the City that SARA should get involved to help.

DISCUSSION OF PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE RIVER

Mr. Hightower pointed out that the issue of public access to the river was raised recently regarding the restrictions to the River for the new proposed Federal Courthouse. He thought it should be reiterated that it is not a good location for something if it closes off public access to the river.

During the discussion, it was emphasized that the federal facility would interfere with pedestrian and maintenance access to the River as well as impact the existing designs for the river improvements. The specific issue is the buffer zone required around any federal facility. The site on the River

seems to be the one that would be the most easily constructed of the ones being considered by the federal officials.

It was agreed by consensus to send a letter expressing the Committee's belief in the principle of the River corridor as a public corridor that should not be impeded in any way.

Joan Gaither added that it was on the agenda for the Conservation Society and the federal courthouse on the River will be opposed by them.

Ms. Scott was asked her opinion and she concurred that it would be appropriate to declare their desire to not impede access. The letter should go to the Mayor with a copy to the Congressional Delegation. Ms. Scott and Ms. Ximenes will draft a resolution.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None