

Griffith Park Master Plan – Working Group

Summary of Ninth Meeting held March 6, 2006

The Griffith Park Master Plan Working Group convened their ninth meeting on Monday, March 6, 2006, at 6:30 p.m. at the Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium.

Present: Working Group – Bernadette Soter, Clare Darden, George Grace, Gerry Hans, Jeff Gardner, Jose Sigala, Lynn Brown, Richard Bogy, Susan Swan and Valerie Vanaman
Rory Fitzpatrick, Council District 4
Steve Davis, Bureau of Engineering
Mark Mariscal, Recreation and Parks
Vicki Israel, Recreation and Parks
Mike Shull, Recreation and Parks

Absent: Craig Kessler, Louis Alvarado

Facilitator: Kevin Regan, Assistant General Manager, Department of Recreation and Parks

Mr. Regan opened the meeting and called the role of Working Group members and Department personnel. He then called the meeting to order and asked if there was any discussion regarding the meeting summary of January 9. Mr. Gardner asked if it was possible to obtain the tape recording made at the meeting as his notes were incomplete and there were several critical things that were not reflected in the minutes. Mr. Regan said he would be happy to incorporate any recommendations and that in his opinion, the January 9th summary contained more detail than in previous summaries. However, he has no problem providing the Working Group with a copy of the tape recordings. Mr. Gardner asked that the minutes for January be deferred as he would prefer to review the tape recordings prior to any recommendations being made. Working Group members then discussed the possibility of a transcription being standard operating procedure for every meeting. Mr. Regan said that while transcripts would not be standard operating procedure, if the Working Group preferred, they could receive summaries via e-mail, review the tape recordings, and send comments to the Department prior to the next meeting. Department staff would then provide the summary at the next meeting and it could then be posted on the web site after the Working Group's approval. The Working Group members agreed with this arrangement and discussion moved to the next agenda item.

Mr. Regan stated that the latest version of answers to questions posed by the Working Group was in the handouts. Ms. Soter began the discussion by stating that an inventory of meeting spaces in Griffith Park was requested in response to a recommendation in the Draft Master Plan that the Ranger Station be demolished to create a meeting room. She indicated that the zoo has meeting rooms for rent with a capacity of 20 to 2000 and that there are two additional areas that are actually special event lawns she would like added to the list of available meeting "rooms." She also pointed out that the Equestrian Center was not listed in the inventory and wanted to add their facilities to make the inventory more complete. Mr. Hans asked for more elaboration on the use of Friendship Hall by private parties on a repeat basis.

Ms. Vanaman inquired who has the authority to designate a lay down area in Griffith Park and wanted clarification if "a" Superintendent had that authority or if it was "the" Superintendent of

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Griffith Region. Mr. Regan stated that the authority resided with "the" Superintendent of Griffith Region and that a Superintendent from another region could not designate a lay down area in Griffith Park. Ms. Soter inquired about an area on Riverside Drive just past the Pony Ride overflow parking lot that contained a great deal of debris. Mr. Mariscal stated that the area in question is not a lay down area but is an area used as a transfer site. Debris is brought to the location and 40 yard bins are brought in to haul the debris to the dump. Mr. Hans opined that if non-visibility is one of the criteria for deciding on lay down areas, then this area is not a good site because it is very visible. Ms. Vanaman asked how the area came to be used in this manner, and Mr. Mariscal explained that a transfer area needed to be large enough for 10 yard trucks to enter and exit with relative ease and that the ground must be able to sustain 20,000 pounds of weight. There are not a whole lot of areas in Griffith Park that fit this requirement.

Mr. Gardner asked if the woodshed area at CSY (Chevy Chase Yard) had been turned into a baseball field and Mr. Mariscal explained that it had not. If anything, that area would become a park along the river. Mr. Regan stated that the area in question is still being used to store logs. Mr. Gardner then asked if Central Service Yard was 31 acres large and if it was a part of Griffith Park. A short discussion ensued on whether or not Central Service Yard was a part of Griffith Park. When the 5 Freeway came through Griffith Park, some land was given back to Griffith Park and it is unclear if CSY is that part of that land exchange in question. Mr. Regan asked Mr. Shull to research the boundaries to verify if CSY is part of Griffith Park and whether or not it is part of dedicated parkland.

Ms. Vanaman asked if there was a regular pick up schedule for lay down areas. Mr. Regan replied that landfill is a big issue in Los Angeles and the Department waits until there is a sizeable load, 10 yards or larger, before hauling debris to the dump. He also explained that there were budgetary considerations and sometimes, the Department must wait for available funding before going to the dump. He also stated that the Department recycles as much as possible. Much of the debris at lay down areas is due to natural disasters (ie: trees down, mudslides, windstorms, etc.) and special projects (ie: a road gets washed out and the asphalt is then broken up). Mr. Regan noted that 100% of the City's green waste is recycled. He also explained that lay down areas are sometimes provided to contractors or other agencies such as Cal Trans or DWP in exchange for additional services. One such example occurred in North Hollywood while the Metrolink was under construction by MTA. The Department provided a lay down area in North Weddington Park and the State and MTA then constructed a sound wall free of charge. This was a project wanted by both the residents and the Department. Mr. Regan explained that it is never a bad idea to address the lay down concept in the community process of construction projects to ensure that things are done for the benefit of the park.

Ms. Vanaman asked if the superintendent has the authority to deny a lay down area. Mr. Regan replied that they did, however, a project has a life of its own and decisions are made at upper levels that the Department must sometimes accept. Mr. Shull further explained that the Department has to weigh budgetary costs with job schedules in determining the location of lay down areas. For example, if a lay down area is provided in close proximity to a job site, then the work would be completed sooner. If the project could be made less expensive by providing a lay down area, then that would be another factor to consider. Ms. Soter interjected that there are

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more than 50 acres in Griffith Park being used as lay down areas. She also stated that temporary lay down areas obliterate native plant communities and restoration has never been a consideration; thus the reason for questions regarding lay down areas. Ms. Brown expressed sympathy for the necessity of lay down areas, but questioned the practicality of their location, ie: moving a lay down area 400 yards off to the side of the entrance to a major trail would be more practical than having it located adjacent to the trail.

The discussion then turned to the existing water tanks in Griffith Park. Ms. Vanaman asked if the water tanks supplied water only for Griffith Park. Mr. Mariscal explained that in years past, this was probably true but that all of the DWP systems are currently connected. Ms. Vanaman then asked if the MOU between RAP and DWP existed so that the water system in the park could be maintained without DWP billing the Department for water. Mr. Mariscal explained that the issue boiled down to the provider of water for the City of Los Angeles. He explained that it was impractical for the Department to try and maintain water quality and that it made more logical sense for the purveyor of water to be DWP. Ms. Vanaman asked if the MOU gave DWP the right to place equipment anywhere they wanted when installing tanks. Mr. Mariscal explained that when DWP needs to do a project and we provide them with 2500 square feet of space, we do not send LAPD to arrest them when they take 10,000 square feet. Mr. Regan informed the group that the Department would verify if the MOU grants DWP the ability to do construction work on the tanks. Ms. Soter explained that nine tanks are scheduled to be abandoned and that it would be nice if the tanks were removed. Mr. Regan stated that current DWP plans did not include for the removal of the tanks. The community and Department need to work as a team, as the Department has no funding to remove the tanks and the obvious group to help would be DWP.

Ms. Soter then inquired about the gravel pit and asked if the Department was mining granite from the hillside. Mr. Regan explained that equipment is used to bring decomposed granite from the hillside in a technique called benching. For many years, the granite has been taken in little bits at a time. It is brought down with a truck and put through a soil sifter. The finer product is then mixed with other material but is also sometimes used as straight “DG” (decomposed granite). Ms. Soter asked if this was destroying the park and whether or not this custom needed to be phased out. Mr. Regan explained that the park is not being destroyed and that the benching technique prevents collapse. He verified that material is being removed from the park but that it is not done on a daily basis. The granite is removed on an “as needed” basis and Griffith Park has provided this resource for the past 25 years. Ms. Vanaman asked if any studies have been done on the amount of granite in the hillside. Mr. Gardner replied that the entire hillside is composed of DG. Mr. Regan stated that the entire hillside would not be removed because if it was, the granite operation would find itself in the zoo. Ms. Brown stated that although DG was necessary for the maintenance of equestrian trails and ball fields, at some point the mining would have to stop. Mr. Hans opined that reclamation would also have to be done.

The discussion then turned to subject of composting. Ms. Soter stated that while she applauds the recycling of green waste, she thought the composting facility was located in a critical area that is probably interrupting wildlife corridors. Mr. Regan explained that the composting site and gravel pit work together as large grinders are situated there. Green waste from throughout

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the City is brought in and ground up, mixed with “zoo-doo” and made into compost. The Bureau of Sanitation bags this material and gives it away. There are no infrastructures at the gravel pit, except for a small office trailer. The composting facility has a built infrastructure. Beneath the compost piles are bays with fans for emission control. Ms. Soter opined that the Department was doing the zoo a favor. Mr. Regan explained that the City and City Department are one large family and it is common for departments to work together to solve a common problem.

Ms. Vanaman then inquired about the shuttle bus from the Glendale Galleria to the zoo she observes each holiday season. Mr. Regan explained that those arrangements are not with the Department but that the zoo controls their property and parking lot independently per City Ordinance.

Ms. Soter stated that the Draft Master Plan placed the number of parking spaces in Griffith Park at 9,759 but that the number of parking spaces provided by the Department is 5,683. She inquired about the discrepancy. Mr. Regan explained that the Department was not counting intermittent spaces but designated spaces only. Ms. Soter stated that the Department did not include the equestrian center in the count for parking spaces. Mr. Gardner stated that parking structures present a significant cost and that there is inconsistent data as to the number of parking spaces and that the park had not been closed once for lack of parking. Mr. Regan explained that there is no policy to close the park when parking lots are full. He informed the group that the Department would recheck and verify the number of parking spaces.

Ms. Vanaman stated that the Working Group was not trying to micro manage the park but to establish general principles to guide decisions being made about the park. The goal was a master plan based on principles that rely on good professional employees to manage a park consistent with those principles. Mr. Sigala asked for a definition of built facilities as he opined there is a difference between recreational enhancement vs. commercial development. Ms. Vanaman stated that the two could not be separated as each activity takes up space in the park. She said that everything man made is part of the definition of “built environment.”

This concluded the Subcommittee Update and it was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on Monday, April 3 at the Ranger Station at 6:30pm.

Mr. Regan indicated that handouts included a summary from Melendres of the January 9th meeting as well as answers to Mr. Grace’s questions.

Mr. Regan then reminded the audience that public comments are limited to two minutes. The following public comments were made:

- In response to a question, Mr. Regan verified that Mr. Fitzpatrick, Council District 10, told him Councilmember LaBonge was in the process of asking the City Council for \$1 million to purchase Cahuenga Peak and to provide the necessary funding to complete the master plan process.
- Thanks and appreciation for the work being done, not only for Griffith Park for all the

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parks Citywide.

- Griffith Park did not lose ball fields to the freeway, but to the maintenance yard, as Recreation and Parks chose to establish a service yard for the entire City rather than build ball fields. This matter should be taken into consideration when examining the restoration of recreation to Griffith park.
- Request to identify members of the sub-committee, as it would be helpful to know who they are as well as the size of the group.
- Parking garages are expensive and their fiscal aspect has not been discussed. Why weren't shuttles considered for this Draft Master Plan?
- How can the greater Griffith Park community be reached so that various communities using Griffith Park can be made aware of the Working Group process?
- Request that the Working Group meeting schedule be made public.
- Request for copy of handouts.
- How will the changes in Pollywog affect the Master Plan, as Pollywog is part of Griffith Park?
- A representative from the City of Burbank is in attendance and information is posted on that city's website.

This concluded the Working Group meeting for March 6.