

**PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1999**

1. CALL TO ORDER:

A special meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission was held in the conference room of the Office of Parks and Recreation (OPR), 1520 Lakeside Drive, Oakland, California. The meeting was convened at 12:15pm. Antonio Acosta, Secretary, conducted roll call; a quorum was present.

2. ROLL CALL: (one vacancy)

Present: Raymond Bobbitt, Joe Guzman, Yvonne Myers, Theresa Nelson, William Patterson,
Dr. William Riley, Cookie Robles, Matt Webb, Jeffery Wong, Anne Woodell
Staff Present: Antonio Acosta, Mary Perisic
Visitors: (see below)

3. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Status Report of Rodeo Practice Activities and Maintenance of Steers at City Stables: Chairperson Woodell introduced the item and provided brief background information for the benefit of the visitors. Mr. Acosta, Secretary to the Commission, made a statement of clarification about the purpose of the meeting. There are two issues: whether or not steers should be boarded and maintained at City Stables; and whether or not there should be a Request for Proposals (RFP) prepared and distributed nation-wide prior to the expiration of the agreement with Wildcat Canyon Ranch Youth Program () on October 1, 2000. This item will be heard at the City Council Life Enrichment Committee on September 14, 1:00 p.m., City Hall, Hearing Room #1.

Staff is supportive of boarding steers at City Stables only if a suitable and acceptable management plan can be developed for their maintenance. The steers offer an educational role to the programs that offers to 3,000 Oakland and East Bay youth every year. However, there are serious concerns, and the prerequisite is that a management plan, reviewed by the Commission and City Council, would have to be in place before the plan could be implemented.

The steers arrived at the City Stables last summer. The concession agreement does not permit the presence of the steers, and they are not authorized in the City Stables Master Plan. The steers were allowed to remain in an attempt to work out a viable solution between the nearby residents and WCRYP. In response to a legal challenge from neighbors, in July 1999, the OPR Interim Director issued a letter to WCRYP mandating that the steers be removed by August 27, 1999; the steers were removed on August 24.

Commissioner Patterson stated that there was a sub-committee prepared to review this item and come back to the full Commission with a recommendation, but the committee was waiting for the WCRYP audit, which has not been completed.

Chairperson Woodell announced that speakers could come to the podium, but that due to the number of speakers there would be a limit of two minutes. Speakers had filled out "Request to Speak" forms; Chairperson Woodell called for each speaker by name.

(Note from the Recorder: Due to the number of speakers at this special meeting, the speakers are listed in two categories, "pro" and "con", and the comments are summarized for each category.)

PRO – In favor of Rodeo Practice Activities and the Maintenance of Steers at WCRYP

Harvey Smith, Director WCRYP; Libby Schaaf representing City Council President De La Fuente; Lonnie Gordon, horse boarder and WCRYP Advisory Committee member; Jeff Douvel, parent, boarder, Bill Pickett Rodeo; Glennisha White, WCRYP employee; Dana Gerstein, teacher, Calvin Simmons Middle School; Tom Meyer, WCRYP; Peter Flores, parent; Maliaka Fisher; Nestor Gonzalez, teacher, Calvin Simmons Middle School; Bill Eddings, professional cowboy; Versall Henderson, WCRYP; Marsha Martin, WCRYP, parent.

Summary of Comments:

- Youth involved in WCRYP programs have requested rodeo practice activities to enable them to compete in Junior Rodeo. Along with rodeo practice, caring for the steers is an integral part of the program. The rodeo practice activities involve steer riding, roping, bull-dogging.
- WCRYP offers a valuable educational experience for youth; steers should remain at the stables, and a solution needs to be worked out so that they can be good neighbors, such as limiting the number of steers, placing them in the least offensive place, as well as insuring the safety of the youth and the animals.
- Parents of youth in the rodeo activities program are supportive of keeping cattle at City Stables.
- The rodeo practice activities provide valuable learning experiences and enables youth to participate in the Junior Rodeo competition.
- The youth had requested that this program be provided at WCRYP.
- There are very few activities for youth in Oakland. It would be a shame to lose the WCRYP rodeo practice activities program.
- It is very important for children to be able to have a variety of activities. The WCRYP is like a sanctuary. The problems can be worked out.
- A professional cowboy is for having steers at the ranch. Rodeos were at City Stables many years ago, before the homes were built.

CON – Against Rodeo Practice Activities and the Maintenance of Steers at WCRYP

Donald Binggel, President, Parkridge Estates Improvement Association (PEIA); Austra Gauger, PEIA; Susan Burnett, Clairepopinte Way, Angie Binggeli, PEIA; Don McConnell, Chair, Animal Shelter Advisory Commission; Richard Elliot, PEIA; Polly Strand; Eric Mills, Action for Animals; Margaret Wehinger, Animal Shelter Volunteers; Harlan Kessell, Citizens for Oakland Open Space; Vicki Woodhead, realtor, Parkridge Estates; Wayne Goodroe, attorney, PEIA; Gloria Fong-Ma, PEIA; Pat Maginnis, Action for Animals; Linda Olvera, Merrilee Harter Mitchell, Clairepointe Way; Gary Templin, President, Oakland SPCA; Richard Hansen; GGRW and 50 Plus; Lise Stampfli Torme, Citizens for Oakland's Open Space; Marjorie Saunders; Randy Hassell, Metropolitan Horsemen's Assoc.; Virginia Handley, The Fund for Animals

Summary of Comments:

- The City Stables was not meant to be a rodeo or cattle ranch. Local residents have been supportive of City Stables being an equestrian center.
- With the steers, manure and dust, people in the neighborhood are unable to use their backyards.

- A large pile of manure was allowed to remain at WCRYP for over a year, prompting the residents to call the County Health Dept.
- The residents are concerned that it takes over a year for the City to enforce its contract with WCRYP, and had to hire an attorney to get the City to remove the steers.
- An attorney brought forth some concerns of the residents which included violation of contract, zoning issue (unauthorized use for Zone 4), health of the residents and the children in the rodeo activities programs, and environmental concerns. WCRYP does not conform to the Oakland General Plan.
- A member of the City Stables Advisory Council commented that they have been backing the original plan of having horses and youth programs but are opposed to the cattle. The cattle are of limited value to a limited number of youth.
- Oakland has all the stables in northern Alameda County; what we have is very precious and must be protected. Measure K, the bond that provided funding to purchase City Stables, called for an equestrian center, not a rodeo/cattle ranch; it's what was promised the voters.
- Safety of the youth participating in the rodeo practice activities, and the dangers, including goring and kicking, is a major concern.
- The decision to consider either an RFP or amendment is premature in light of the fact that last year there were many serious complaints that were brought to you, including eye-witness testimony of violated agreement and master plan, reports of abuse, reports of inadequate supervision of youth, numerous reports of verbal abuse, retaliatory measures taken toward board who complained, facility being left unattended on weekends.
- Don't approve and then figure everything out later.
- Cattle carry a type of e-coli bacteria that can make people sick.
- Rodeo activities are abusive to animals.
- Rodeo activities teach violence. There are plenty of activities for youth in Oakland, such as sports and cultural programs that teach teamwork and self esteem.
- There is a lot of research that suggests that animal abuse is a forerunner to other acts of violence.

Commissioners expressed concern over voting on an item before the particulars are in place, without an audit, without due diligence. Mr. Acosta advised that the outcome of the Commission's vote would not be to allow steers to be at City Stables. The program needs to be defined. Mitigation measures that the community and staff have identified and due diligence regarding zoning, CEQA, etc., would have to be done before the proposal would be up for approval. This is a policy call, not an implementation decision at this point.

Commissioner Patterson stated that this public hearing should have taken place earlier. He continued that the WCRYP rodeo practice activities program has violated many laws including City, educational, and probably public health and safety laws. He does not support any activity that has occurred illegally. We need to teach our youth the correct process. Also, the concessionaire should be able to make the City Stables a showcase facility, and should not require City support first. There should be a viable business plan. Non-profits such as the East Bay Zoological Society and Children Fairyland, Inc. are examples of concessionaires that have business plans and are developing showcase facilities.

Commissioners Bobbitt and Riley left the meeting at this point.

MOTION: Commissioner Guzman moved to not approve an amendment to the agreement with WCRYP to include the maintenance of steers at City Stables. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Patterson and approved by seven ayes with one abstention (Robles).

Before this motion was voted on, each Commissioner was asked if they wanted to speak. Commissioner Robles had listened to both sides very carefully, and asked them to go back to the table and try to come to some agreement before going to the City Council. Other Commissioners comments were that steers and horses are incompatible. The Steers were put at the stables without the Commission's knowledge or permission. It is very important that facilities be used for their intended purpose. It is important that we support the Master Plan, which does not allow steers. Commissioner Patterson would like to look at alternatives to help the youth in regard to some of their desires, if not in Oakland then in other existing facilities.

MOTION: Commissioner Nelson moved approval to prepare an RFP during the spring of 2000 for the next contract phase to start in October 2000. Commissioner Patterson seconded the motion which passed unanimously with eight Commissioners present.

4. **OPEN FORUM:**

The question was raised as to the next step in the process. Mr. Acosta will give a verbal report with the Commission's actions at the Life Enrichment Committee on 9/14/99, 1:00pm.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Antonio E. Acosta
Secretary

Mary Perisic
Recording Secretary

Tapes, which are the official record of this meeting, are available upon request.