



**PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION**  
**City of Oakland**  
**Wednesday, October 22, 2014**  
**Lake Merritt Garden, 666 Bellevue Avenue**  
**4:30pm**  
**\*\*\*\*\*SPECIAL MEETING\*\*\*\*\***

**Minutes**

1. CALL TO ORDER: 4:40pm

2. ROLL CALL:

BELCHER, DU BOIS, FLORES, KADERA-REDMOND, MARSHALL, MILLER, PETERSON, ROSENBLOOM, SELNA, WU

Present: Du Bois, Flores, Kadera-Redmond, Marshall, Miller, Selna

Arrivals: Belcher (4:43pm)

Excused: Peterson, Rosenbloom, Wu

Staff: **Parks and Recreation - Audree V. Jones-Taylor, Dana Riley, Diane Boyd, Zermaine Thomas, Karis Griffin; Planning and Building, Darin Ranelletti**

3. DISPOSITION OF MINUTES:

September 10, 2014 meeting minutes

**Motion:** Commissioner Miller entertained a motion to approve the September 10, 2014 meeting minutes. **Moved by:** Commissioner Kadera-Redmond **Second by:** Commissioner Flores **Motion Passed –Yes:** Du Bois, Flores, Kadera-Redmond, Marshall, Miller and Selna

4. SPECIAL ORDERS:

5. PRAC PENDING LIST:

6. MODIFICATIONS TO THE AGENDA:

7. CONSENT NEW BUSINESS:

8. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. **REQUEST THAT THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION APPROVE THE HENRY J. KAISER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PTA'S REQUEST TO COLLECT ENTRY FEES, SELL ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, AND HOST A LIVE AND SILENT AUCTION, AND TO ACCEPT DONATIONS AT THEIR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2014 AT THE JACK LONDON AQUATIC CENTER:** The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission reviewed the staff report for Item 8A presented by Zermaine Thomas. Parents and friends will be able to support the event by purchasing tickets, auctions on the day of the event. All funds raised will support the 300 children who attend Kaiser Elementary School.

Arrival: Commissioner Belcher

**Motion:** Commissioner Miller entertained a motion to approve the staff recommendation to grant the Henry J. Kaiser Jr. Elementary School's PTA request to host a live and silent auction and sell alcoholic beverages and collect entry fees at their annual fundraiser on Saturday, November 8, 2014, at the Jack London Aquatic Center. **Moved by:** Commissioner Selna **Second by:** Commissioner Du Bois. **Motion:** Passed **Vote:** 6 Yes Du Bois, Flores, Kadera-Redmond, Marshall, Miller and Selna: 1 **Abstained:** Belcher

B. **THE FAMILY OF THE LATE ARTIST, DELORES WILLIAMS IS REQUESTING PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION (PRAC) TO APPROVE OF 'MEMORIAL ART EXHIBIT & SALE' WHICH WOULD ALLOW FOR ON-SITE SALE OF THE LATE ARTISTS' ART COLLECTION WITH PROCEEDS GOING TO COACH ART NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION:**

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission reviewed the staff report for Item 8B presented by Karis Griffin. The family of the late Artist, Delores Williams requested that Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) approve on-site collection of money for art items sold for the benefit of Coach Art, nonprofit organization. The 'Memorial Art Exhibit & Sale' is scheduled for November 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> at Studio One Art Center. Delores Williams was born & raised in Oakland and spent her entire career in Oakland. As an artist, Delores Williams was very prolific, having had 3 one-woman exhibits in the Bay Area, as well as showings of her work in Norway. The event was expected to attract audiences from Oakland, San Francisco, and Sacramento and across the Bay Area.

**Motion:** Commissioner Miller entertained a motion to support the staff recommendation and approve the application for the Memorial Art Exhibit and sale of art by the late Delores Williams. **Moved by:** Commissioner Kadera-Redmond **Second by:** Commissioner Belcher. **Motion** Passed **Vote:** All Yes: Belcher, Du Bois, Flores, Kadera-Redmond, Marshall, Miller, Selna

C. **PARKLET PILOT PROGRAM EXTENSION, INFORMATIONAL REPORT:**

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission reviewed the informational staff report for Item 8C presented by Laura Kaminski from the Planning and Building Department. This is an informational report regarding the extension of the Pilot Program for Parklets in Oakland. A Parklet is the temporary use of space in the dedicated public right-of-way (parking spaces, unused bus stops, and other types of vehicular and non-vehicular zones) for public uses such as seating or bicycle racks. Staff will continue to gather information and use lessons learned to propose changes in the municipal code to govern Parklets in Oakland for a permanent program. For the purposes of the Pilot Program, Parklets are being processed as a Minor Encroachment Permit in accordance with Oakland Municipal Code Chapter 12.08, and will be subject to all requirements applicable to Minor Encroachment Permits.

The pilot program will be in effect until the City changes the Ordinance.

**Motion:** Commissioner Miller entertained a motion to accept the informational report. **Moved by:** Commissioner Selna **Second by:** Commissioner Belcher. **Motion** Passed **Vote:** All Yes: Belcher, Du Bois, Flores, Kadera-Redmond, Marshall, Miller, Selna

- D. **PUBLIC HEARING ON (A) STATUS OF THE OAKLAND ZOO'S PREVIOUSLY APPROVED CALIFORNIA EXHIBIT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND (B) RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL OF A 53-ACRE CONSERVATION EASEMENT IN KNOWLAND PARK TO PROTECT THE ALAMEDA WHIPSNAKE, WHICH FURTHER IMPLEMENTS THE JUNE 2011 PROJECT APPROVALS, CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL AND MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE PROJECT. (CEQA DETERMINATION: RELIANCE ON PREVIOUSLY APPROVED 2011 SUBSEQUENT MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION/ ADDENDUM):** The Park and Recreation Advisory Commission reviewed the staff report for Item 8D presented by Darin Ranelletti from Planning and Building. In 2011 the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) recommended approval of an amendment to the Oakland Zoo Master Plan involving the expansion of the Zoo and construction of a new California Exhibit (Project) which included the potential for a conservation easement in Knowland Park to protect the Alameda Whipsnake. The amendment was ultimately approved by the City Planning Commission and the City Council.

**Presentation:** City of Oakland Planning and Building Department  
Darin Ranelletti, Deputy Director provided a 10 minute verbal presentation

The Oakland Zoo proposed a conservation easement in Knowland Park in conjunction with the approved Oakland Zoo Expansion Project. In 1998 the City Council approved the Master Plan for the expansion of the Oakland Zoo, and in 2011 approved an amendment to the Master Plan after the PRAC voted to recommend approval of the project. The Master Plan included a new California exhibit located on approximately 56 acres in Knowland Park. The expansion area is located in the habitat for the Alameda Whipsnake, which is a state and federally protected species. The mitigation for the project requires the Zoo to compensate for impacts to the Whipsnake's habitat. In addition, the Zoo needs approval from state and federal agencies in order to implement the required mitigations. To obtain the approvals, the Zoo has proposed the conservation easement in Knowland Park. The Item before the Commission was the conservation easement and not the Zoo expansion project. The proposed conservation easement requires the City Council's approval. The PRAC was asked to advise the City Council on the conservation easement.

State and federal agencies have required that 3 acres be set aside for every 1 acre of impact. This resulted in the current total size of 53 acres. Approximately 31 acres of the conservation easement will be located inside the perimeter fence and approximately 22 acres will be located outside the perimeter fence. In 2011 it was estimated that approximately 14 acres would be located outside the fence. This has increased from 14 acres to 22 acres for an increase of approximately 8 acres outside the Zoo's perimeter fence. The conservation easement would protect the Whipsnake by permanently prohibiting future development and other activities that could have a negative impact on the species. Public access would be restricted in the conservation area. There will be no fence around the conservation area, but

signs will be posted to identify the area as restricted. The conservation easement will be paired with a long term management plan implemented by the Zoo to protect the Whipsnake habitat. In addition, there will be a financial endowment made by the Zoo to implement the management activities.

Members of the public believed there was not sufficient or thorough discussion of the conservation easement in 2011. The Conservation easement was discussed in the environmental document that was reviewed by the PRAC, the Planning Commission, and the City Council and was further discussed in the staff report for the City Council.

The Commission was asked to consider whether or not the proposed conservation easement is an appropriate approach to meet the Zoo's mitigation requirements.

**Presentation:** Oakland Knowland Park Zoo:  
Dr. Joel Parrott, President and CEO of the Oakland Zoo

Three fifths of the conservation easement is within the expanded Zoo's foot print. Some benefits of the conservation easement are that it will:

- Protect the Alameda Whipsnake
- Minimize the impact on important resources
- Provide funding for the habitat enhancement plan to address habitat improvements throughout Knowland Park
- Increase the educational opportunities for the schools of Oakland

The Oakland Zoo is the number one employer of youth in Oakland. It will improve Oakland's profile as a premier educational, cultural and educational destination. At its completion, the Oakland Knowland Park Zoo will be one of the premier zoological facilities in the United States.

In June 2011 the City Council Unanimously approved the Zoo's Master Plan and California Trail Exhibit. Opponents of the project sued the city and Oakland Zoo in July/August of 2011 by filing a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) against the Veterinary Hospital. The TRO was rejected by the courts and ruled in favor of the City and the Zoo. As directed by the City Council, the Zoo went to the Federal and State agencies to acquire the appropriate permits for the project. During the summer of 2014, the US Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Biological Opinion and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife completed the draft Incidental Take Permit that will allow the California Trail Exhibit to move forward with the resource agencies assuming the conservation easement is secured.

The seven acre differential is the issue before the Commission.

**Note:** Dr. Parrot turned the presentation over to Biologist Jim Martin to on the biology of Knowland Park and the conservation easement. Mr. Martin served as the City's CEQA review biologist in 2011 and then retained by the Oakland Zoo to complete Resource Agency's consultation and permit authorization.

The Conservation easement fulfills the City Council's imposed requirements of the 1998 and 2011 Master Plan and Amended Master Plan approvals and was developed in consultation with the state and federal resource agencies initially in 2010 to the present. Conservation easement encompasses 52 acres collectively, with 30 acres within the perimeter fence and 22 acres outside the fence.

The purpose and benefits of the conservation easement is to provide compensatory mitigation for impact on the CA Trail Exhibit; it will permanently protect the conservation easement area from any additional Zoo expansion and it defines and provides for long-term management funded by the Zoo. Habitat Enhancement in the conservation easement area includes removal of invasive species, selective removal of oak and bay saplings and providing long-term, annual monitoring of the habitat conditions and management of activities to verify effectiveness and require corrective treatments and actions if issues are identified.

Invasive species present a major management challenge. French broom is invading the habitat and replaces native groundcover species, and increases fire risks and degrades resource values. Invasive species removal requires eliminating seedlings. Habitat management will help prevent further habitat conversion through selective sapling tree and major limb removals. Long term treatment management plans will define treatment practices to protect essential grassland cover. The installation of the project will protect the essential habitat and will address threats from invasive species, fire suppression and focused fire fuel management objectives and meets the City's requirement of the project to establish the conservation easement.

**Presentation:** California Native Plant Society East Bay Chapter also speaking on behalf of the Knowland Park Coalition: Mack Casterman, Conservation Analyst

Knowland Park is unique resource and provides shelter to diverse and rare plant communities and animals, including the federally threaten Alameda Whipsnake. The park is free and open to Oakland and regional residents to enjoy. In a one hour hike, anyone can visit all the rare plant communities and get a sense of what old California used to be.

A recent study showed that child directed nature play in what is most important in developing an environmental ethic growing into adulthood. Knowland Park is providing that for residents of the region for free.

Oakland open space is a hot topic. This commission recently published a report announcing the City of Oakland has only met 25% of its open space goals.

This is a major issue since the community is faced with dealing with an organization that proposes to eliminate 77 acres of prime open space from open access. This is a net loss for the public and the species sheltered there. There is mitigation, but that mitigation still comes at a net loss.

The proposed zoo expansion is more of a subdivision for animals than a conservation exhibit. It will host 40 buildings, a restaurant, interpretive center and offices. This will be a net loss

wild life species and to the public because this is an area most used by the public. It has the best views and hiking trails and is a great resource.

This expansion is not what was promised. It was sold to the PRAC, Planning Commission, and the City Council as having no significant impacts to the park. As the process moves, it has been learned the wildlife agencies disagree with this statement. The only way out of these impacts is to work with the proposed massive mitigation in the form of the conservation easement. Zoo management has chosen to build the expansion on the most ecologically sensitive site, and refused to move the expansion when the wildlife agencies objected. The damage is avoidable. The solution is to avoid the impact which will also preserve the public access.

A recent poll conducted by a national polling firm found that 75% of Oakland residents do not want the expansion on the ridgeline. They find that open space is important to their quality of life and that Knowland Park should be preserved. A super majority feel that the expansion is in the wrong place. Opposition to this expansion project includes organizations at the grassroots level up to national groups. Conservation groups throughout the region and the East Bay are against the project. The Zoo can accomplish all of its goals for the expansion by building below the ridgeline this would also assist with reducing the cost of the project. The Zoo has developed less than half its land under its current footprint. And also has land that is adjacent to the current footprint that can be developed or used as parking. The community is faced with an organization that has proposed a development in the wrong area resulting in this conservation easement and loss of public land. Request that the PRAC reject the proposed easement. This is an opportunity to hear the voice of the public and to hear the concerns of the environmental organizations and to require some alternative considerations. A no vote says yes to open space, yes to wildlife of the region, and yes to future generations to have a place to recreate for free. The Zoo had a chance to consider alternatives but refused the opportunity. Request that the Commission makes a recommendation that sends a message to the City Council that shows what the Oakland public wants. No true alternatives analysis has been conducted and they avoided a complete EIR. A true alternatives analysis is needed to determine if they are viable.

### **Commission's Points of Clarification:**

The Commission inquired if the Zoo had obtained all required approvals and learned that applications were submitted to California Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Regional Water Quality Control Board and the US Army Corp of Engineers.

The age and geographical reach of Zoo patrons includes:

60K students participate in Zoo programs

730K guests in 2013

15% -18% Oakland residents

38%-45% Alameda County residents - including Oakland at 65%

25% Contra Costa County

Tourism – San Jose, Napa and beyond

Ages range from infants to seniors.

The number of persons who visited Knowland Park per the 2011 CEQA Study listed in the hundreds compared to those who visit the Zoo.

Clarification of the status of the staff report was requested. Staff confirmed that the Planning Department was not legally required to seek approval of the PRAC on the item since the matter had already considered by the PRAC, however, given the public interest in the project, the Department decided to seek Commission's advice.

EMC Research conducted a polled of 400 Oakland residents. 75% voted against the proposed conservation easement.

The Commission confirmed that neither the Knowland Park Coalition nor the Friends of Knowland Park had ties with the Oakland Unified School District.

The mitigation ratio would not change if the project was to move. Mitigation would still be required.

Signs will be put in place to announce the protected status of the site and will be visible from one to the next.

**Public Comments:** There were 55 speakers for Item 8D. Each speaker was given 1 minute to address the Commission.

**Opponents: Summary**

Knowland Park was not listed on the City's website for many years. The conservation easement is an encroachment tragedy, and the Zoo should develop its existing undeveloped land and build the project below the ridgeline to preserve the view and public enjoyment of the open space. This is not an argument against the Zoo, but a request to preserve the legacy gifted to the public by Joseph Knowland. The project should go back the City Planning and stakeholders should stay open to compromise. Parks are free. The expansion would exclude the people the Zoo currently represents. Access would be prohibited to the average visitor. The conservative easement will present traffic and noise issues.

**Proponents: Summary**

The Oakland Zoo and its staff are committed to conservation, and have done a thoughtful job of moving the project forward. Staff works with conservation partners and volunteers to promote local conservation. The California Trail Exhibit is an important world class project with long term viability. The conservation project will benefit all of California and will restore previous animal populations.

### **Commission Comments:**

The State and Federal governments have determined that the Whipsnake is a protected species. The same agencies agree upon the way the Zoo has decided to protect the Whipsnake.

The Chair reminded the Commission that the body was not voting on the Zoo's expansion project, but that they were tasked with providing the City Council with guidance on the conservation easement.

**Motion:** Commissioner Miller entertained a motion to approve the Zoo's conservation easement. **Moved by:** Commissioner Selna **Second by:** Commissioner Du Bois. **Motion Failed. Vote: Yes:** Du Bois, Flores, Marshall, Miller, Selna - **No:** Belcher, Kadera-Redmond

### 9. CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS:

### 10. COMMUNICATIONS:

Commissioner Du Bois visited Dunsmuir Hellman Historic Estate as the designated liaison from the Commission. The program has declined over the year and hopes the City will allot funds to revitalize the site.

She also visited Lincoln Recreation Center. The program is very busy and thriving.

Commissioner Belcher requested Recreational Advisory Council manuals for Studio One and sought clarification on whether or not fees were waived at the 2014 Mini Maker's Fair for the Park Day School.

Commissioner Flores: The Carmen Flores Recreation Advisory Council has found funding for the Women's and Children's Soccer Leagues. The purchase of uniforms and T-shirts will be purchased by local community members. The summer music festival raised \$3,000K. Next year's organizers plan to book Pete Escovedo and War.

### 11. PRAC COMMITTEE REPORT:

### 12. ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORTS:

### 13. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

### 14. COUNCIL REFERRALS:

### 15. OPEN FORUM:

### 16. DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

- OPR will be hosting its annual Trick or Treat – Ghostly Challenge on 10/31
- The Department's focus groups will start the first week of November. In formation will be provided.
- The budget process is starting. OPR needs PRAC's support.

### 17. ADJOURNMENT: 8:20pm



This meeting is wheelchair accessible. To request materials in alternative formats, or to request an ASL interpreter, or assistive listening device, please call ***Oakland Parks and Recreation at (510) 238-7532*** or **TDD (510) 615-5883** at least three working days before the meeting. Please refrain from wearing scented products to this meeting so attendees who may experience chemical sensitivities may attend. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Audree V. Jones-Taylor  
Secretary

Diane Boyd  
Recording Secretary

***Next Meeting:***                    ***Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 4:30 p.m.***  
   ***Lakeside Garden Center***  
   ***666 Bellevue Ave, Oakland, CA***