



**OTAY VALLEY REGIONAL PARK (OVRP)  
CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)**

**July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**2:00pm**

**Meeting Minutes**

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**CALL TO ORDER** – 2:07pm by CAC Chair, John Zarem

**APPROVAL OF MAY 13, 2021 MEETING MINUTES**

MOTION to APPROVE – CAC Member Rick Richardson, 2<sup>nd</sup> CAC Member Mark Kukuchek

ALL IN FAVOR – 11-0-0

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

- No Public Comments

**AGENDA ITEMS**

1. CAC SUB-COMMITTEES

- Joint Staff Member Kiran Kaur mentioned that in response to CAC Chair John Zarem's request, Joint Staff are revisiting sub-committee assignments. Each CAC member should have received an email requesting their top sub-committee preference. Several members responded with their preferences and all others were assigned a committee. Joint Staff Member Kaur shared a list of final sub-committee assignments with the group and recommended that members of each sub-committee meet to nominate a chair if one has not already been selected.
- CAC Member Jose Galaz mentioned he will be setting up a meeting for the Trails sub-committee and will send out an email with details.
- CAC Member Joan Schneider stated that the Adjacent Development Review sub-committee has not met in over a year.
- CAC Chair John Zarem asked that everyone re-introduce themselves since some time has passed since the last in-person meeting.

## 2. COMMUNITY GARDEN (COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO)

- County Staff Member Emily Hubbard reported that the Community Garden project is in the planning stage. After the County identified a site in Chula Vista as a potential location for the garden, the City of Chula Vista recommended the site would better serve the community as an emergency shelter. The County will evaluate several alternative locations and review areas identified in the OVRP Concept Plan as active recreation areas for potential locations for the Community Garden project. Emily Hubbard outlined the evaluation process. Emily Hubbard also requested input from the committee regarding potential locations for the project.
- CAC Member Holly Richardson asked what size the community garden is anticipated to be. Emily Hubbard responded that it will be a minimum of one acre.
- Several CAC members requested information on the public outreach strategy for the project. Emily Hubbard and Joint Staff Member Kaur explained the various public outreach efforts over the last few years and outlined upcoming efforts. The County will come back to the CAC with a few options for the community garden and solicit feedback.
- CAC Member Mark Kukuchek suggested the County review the community garden located at Tijuana River Valley Regional Park and requested that any research be presented to the committee when it becomes available.
- CAC Chair John Zarem confirmed that County Staff Member Josh Bugiel provided information on the Sweetwater community garden and requested the link be sent to the CAC before the next update.
- CAC Vice Chair Susie Murphy shared that she had visited the community garden in Tijuana River Valley Regional Park and emphasized how impressive the amenity is. She suggested providing community tours at both community gardens.

## 3. OTAY SEWER (COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO)

- Emily Hubbard reported that the County has been pursuing a replacement of the septic system at Otay Lakes County Park. Emily Hubbard updated the CAC with the proposed alignment of the sewer system and mentioned the County is still working with local agencies to finalize details.
- CAC Member Joan Schneider asked if the water from the sewer that enters the park can be recycled and reused. Emily Hubbard mentioned she was not sure but would investigate and respond at the next meeting.

## 4. EMERGENCY SHELTER (CITY OF CHULA VISTA)

- City of Chula Vista Park Ranger Sam Alzubaidi, Sergeant Ernesto Pinedo, and Lieutenant Henry Martin jointed reported that Angelica could not attend the meeting and would report out on her behalf. There has been a change to the emergency shelter design from a single sprung structure to a pallet setting which is similar to a village with several small homes. This type of

emergency shelter is being used in cities such as Riverside, Los Angeles, Sacramento.

- CAC Member Mark Kukuchek asked if this change would affect the timeline and if completion is still projected for the November/December time frame. Staff responded that the change would likely not affect the current timeline. CAC Member Mark Kukuchek asked if the transition to the pallet setting is because the sprung structure's capacity is not as high. Staff responded that the change in structure type is not due to capacity limitations. The sprung structure was originally intended to be a gift to Chula Vista. However, a decision was made to move forward with a different structure type.
- CAC Member Joan Schneider asked if the chosen platform would be similar to a tent. Staff responded that it would be similar to the site that the Alpha Project is currently operating in downtown. There was additional discussion between CAC members and staff where more details on the structure were shared.
- CAC Member Mark Kukuchek asked if committee members and attendees were aware of the term "safe haven" to give homeless individuals an open space in which they can camp and maintain their independence. Staff responded that Chula Vista has not yet explored a safe haven option.
- CAC Member Joan Schneider shared a concern regarding vegetation fires where the existing encampments are and asked if there was any laws or regulations prohibiting fires in these areas. Staff confirmed that there are rules in place that prohibit fires in parks and that law enforcement do their best to mitigate any issues.

#### 5. GRANTS UPDATE (CITY OF CHULA VISTA)

- Joint Staff Member Harold Phelps reported that, at the beginning of the year, the City of Chula Vista applied for a grant for a historical ecology investigation of the Otay River. This grant was not awarded. However, the City of Chula Vista will continue to seek grant funding for this project.
- CAC Member Rick Richardson asked if there are grant opportunities available or in process to continue the trail east of the I-805. Joint Staff Member Kaur responded that the County received funding to start environmental studies and design for trails from the I-805 to Heritage.

#### 6. NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE (CITY OF SAN DIEGO)

- Joint Staff Member Laura Ball provided updates on the Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) update. The biological surveys are complete, and the NRMP first draft is also nearing completion. Joint Staff Member Ball shared several slides to demonstrate which flora and fauna are present in the OVRP and to highlight the data collection methodology used for the NRMP. Joint Staff Member Ball also provided a summary list of the 607 different species present in the area.
- CAC Chair John Zarem asked if information presented regarding plant and

animal species had been published or if it was accessible on the City or County websites. Joint Staff Member Ball responded that data had not been published yet, but that she will be able to share a list of species with the CAC.

#### 7. LATINO CONSERVATION WEEK (CAC)

- CAC Member Cristina Santa Maria shared that she is on the Conservation Committee for the San Diego Audubon Society and asked if any CAC members would be interested in signing proclamations to celebrate Earth Week and Latino Conservation Week. CAC Member Cristina Santa Maria added that the intent of the Latino Conservation week proclamation is to encourage Latinos to be involved and join conservation efforts in OVRP. Drafts of the two proclamations were shared.
- CAC Vice Chair Susie Murphy suggested that various groups be invited to sign the proclamation and show their support, rather than just the CAC. CAC Member Cristina Santa Maria said that some groups have sent letters of support.
- CAC Chair John Zarem asked that members of the committee send their recommendations directly to him.
- CAC Member Rick Richardson suggested various local activities and encouraged those in attendance to join each event.

#### 8. HOMELESS ENCAMPMENTS – (ALL)

- Park Ranger Mansour Habis reported on homeless encampments in Western OVRP. Information was shared regarding the unsheltered population and vegetation fire concerns. Clean-up efforts have been more coordinated and successful this year than years past. These efforts involve multiple jurisdictions and typically take place in several phases.
- CAC Member Cristina Santa Maria asked if volunteers will be recruited to assist with the removal. Park Ranger Habis responded that due to safety concerns, there is no current plan to recruit volunteers.
- CAC Member Joan Schneider asked if federal support was available for removal efforts. Park Ranger Habis was not sure.
- There was a discussion regarding safety issues in and around the park.
- CAC Member Ben Vallejos asked Park Ranger Habis how the committee can provide support. Park Ranger Habis advised that the committee continue reporting on the two applications the City of San Diego uses to collect data.
- There was a discussion about additional efforts including the Work for Hope program. Work for Hope is a program based out of the McAlister Institute, which involves a team of people cleaning the debris left by homeless individuals in parks. The program has been launched in many Chula Vista parks and has helped a total of 52 people find the resources they need.
- CAC Member Joan Schneider asked if other parks in the county also struggle

with the unsheltered population and vegetation fires and how those areas handle these challenges. CAC Chair John Zarem responded that law enforcement and the Homeless Outreach Team are involved.

### **RANGER REPORT**

1. Western OVRP, Ranger Mansour Habis
  - Ranger reported his updates during item number eight.
2. Eastern OVRP, Ranger Lauren Raduc.
  - County of San Diego Joint Staff Member Kiran Kaur provided a brief update that the Park is doing very well, especially during the last couple months of the summer season. Joint Staff Member Kaur added that the County currently has a bouldering project ongoing at the Otay Lakes County Park which is slated to begin construction soon.
  - CAC Chair John Zarem commented that he visited the Otay Lakes County Park, and the improvements look great with the new plants and campground. Joint Staff Member Kaur mentioned there will be an opening celebration for Camp Bashor on September 25<sup>th</sup>. The CAC will receive additional information in the coming weeks.

### **CAC CHAIR COMMENTS**

- CAC Chair John Zarem had no additional comments.

### **CAC VICE CHAIR COMMENTS**

- CAC Vice Chair Susie Murphy mentioned that Bike the Bay is August 22, 2021, and volunteers are still needed. CAC Chair John Zarem asked if there were paper flyers available for information on the event. CAC Vice Chair Susie Murphy responded to explain that there are no paper flyers, but that the San Diego Bike coalition has information available on their web site.

### **SUB COMMITTEE REPORTS**

1. Adjacent Development Review Subcommittee – None
2. Trails Subcommittee – None
3. COYIS – None
4. Economic/Habitat Restoration Subcommittee -None

**ADJOURNMENT** – 3:59PM

NEXT MEETING IS OCTOBER 28, 2021

CAC MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

John Zarem	Carlos Sanchez	Joan Schneider
Susie Murphy	Jose Galaz	
Ben McCue	Mark Kukuchek	
Rick Richardson	Carrie Schneider	
Lisa Cumper	Cristina Santa Maria	

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Kiran Kaur	Harold Phelps	Henry Martin
Emily Hubbard	Laura Ball	Sam Alzubaidi
Blanca Castillo	Gabriel Innocenzi	
David Suls	Ernesto Pinedo	

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

None