

## Griffith Park Master Plan – Working Group Meeting Summary – December 4, 2006

The Griffith Park Master Plan Working Group convened their meeting on Monday, December 4, 2006, at 6:30 p.m. at the Griffith Park Ranger Station Auditorium.

Present: Working Group – Bernadette Soter, Clare Darden, Craig Kessler, George Grace, Gerry Hans, Jeff Gardner, Jose Sigala, Louis Alvarado, Lynn Brown, Richard Bogy, Susan Swan, and Valerie Vanaman  
Mark Mariscal, Recreation and Parks  
Vicki Israel, Recreation and Parks

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

The meeting opened with Mr. Regan calling the roll of Working Group members. A question and answer period regarding park management then began with a panel of Department employees:

- Tom McCall, Griffith Region Maintenance
- Michael Honan, Administrative Resources
- Robert Morales, Administrative Resources
- Darryl Ford, Planning Section
- Mark Mariscal, Metro Region
- Laura Bauernfeind, Forestry Division

A map of Griffith Park was given to Working Group members. In response to a question from Ms. Vanaman about “white spots” on the map, Darryl Ford explained the “white spots” indicate areas in Griffith Park not owned by the Department. The three “white spots” indicate property that is owned by the Department of Water and Power (DWP) where there is a pumping station, property owned by the Sunset Stables, and property owned by RKO. Ms. Soter asked about the acreage of CSY and Mr. Ford stated CSY is 27.55 acres, which does not include North Atwater Park, which is another 5.3 acres. Mr. Alvarado asked about the actual acreage of Griffith Park owned by the City and Ms. Vanaman responded that according the map, it is 4,417 acres. Mr. Ford agreed that this number is accurate. He explained that the grey marks on the map represented zoo buildings and the equestrian center.

Mr. Hans inquired if the City was trading land with Forest Lawn due to large amounts of grading being done. Mr. Ford responded that he was not aware of anything. Tom McCall, the Senior Park Maintenance Supervisor in Griffith Region explained that he has met with representatives from Forest Lawn regarding erosion issues and mitigation for oak trees, but was not aware of any issues of encroachment.

Mr. Alvarado stated that Sierra Club members are very familiar with trails in the Park and asked about the map’s accuracy as compared to a map prepared by the Fire Department. Mr. Regan responded that this map accurately depicts property lines, but does not depict every trail or fire hydrant in the Park.

Ms. Soter stated that the food concession by Wolfgang Puck was not an issue, but that their ability to hold special events seems to contradict a Department policy that was adopted on August 9, 2006. Michael Honan, from the Concessions Division, explained that any new policies had to be approved by the Recreation and Park Board of Commissioners. Operationally, any special events would have to be approved and

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scheduled with Department staff. He explained that Wolfgang Puck does not have the authority to approve any events. Mr. Regan further explained that many Department concessions offer the ability for contracts that include hosting special events if the venue is available and rates and fees are paid as outlined in the Department's policy. Ms. Soter asked if staff permission is required to follow policy documents adopted by the commission. Vicki Israel, Griffith Region Superintendent, stated that it is.

Ms. Vanaman asked if the Department's commission sets policies that are universal or specific. Mr. Regan explained that the commission sets policies for rates and fees, in terms of the rental of facilities. Some facilities are specifically designed for rental, such as Friendship Hall. The Observatory has the ability to hold events.

Ms. Vanaman asked about park management in a master plan. Mr. Regan stated that the Melendrez draft included this in their report and that the Working Group could address this issue in broad terms. An example would be to have revenue generated in Griffith Park remain in the Park. Ms. Vanaman asked if personnel costs were factored into the setting of rates. Mr. Regan explained that the City does not set out to make a profit but that the facility can charge a small percentage of overhead so that monies can be put back into the facility for maintenance and upgrades.

Ms. Vanaman asked for an explanation of how Griffith Park is managed and gave the example of a large rock needing to be moved. Mr. Regan explained that there is a variety of maintenance employees assigned to work in Griffith Park. If a large rock needed to be moved, it would be handled amongst themselves. If the rock was too large for them to move it, they would involve employees from the Citywide Division who have the ability to bring in heavy equipment. Mr. Hans asked about the checks and balances in place as the use of heavy equipment can damage the environment. Mr. Regan stated that public health and safety issues must always be the priority. He stated that the least invasive methods to address slope stabilization would be used to address erosion issues on sloping hillsides, but in an emergency, slope cutting could occur. Mr. Alvarado stated that the Sierra Club is usually notified about any work that would affect the landscape and trails.

Ms. Soter asked that the subject of CSY be agendized and requested that the role of the park rangers be included in the Park Management Chapter.

Mr. Grace asked to review the Wolfgang Puck contract and inquired if they were applying for a permit to serve alcohol. Mr. Honan stated the contract allows for an alcohol permit and Ms. Israel added that alcohol service is for special events only, not for daily operations.

Mr. Alvarado asked if there was a way to control the number of food vendors in the Park. Mr. Honan stated that they are illegal and the park rangers are aware of the problem. The situation decreases with enforcement and then escalates when enforcement decreases. Mr. Gardner asked if they could be permitted. Mr. Honan explained that it is against City ordinance for vending trucks to be in the Park, except during special events which would require a license/permit.

Mr. Grace asked about what is being done to manage park wildlife. Mr. Regan stated that Griffith Park has never had a biologist and that there has been no data collection or

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tracking of wildlife. Mr. Grace indicated that the Melendrez draft mentioned a permanent ecologist for the Park which in his opinion was a good thing.

There was a short discussion regarding the meeting summary for May. Ms. Soter requested a change to the original summary referencing a request for funds for the working Group. It was agreed that a statement referencing Council District 4 would be removed.

The Working Group's discussion of the Mobility Chapter began with Ms. Soter reading aloud the premise for the chapter. She indicated that the pink copy was the most up-to-date and incorporated changes proposed by Mr. Kessler and Mr. Gardner. The findings and recommendations of this chapter are based on two key elements: the transition from automobiles to alternative transportation methods and mobility solutions supporting the Park's Urban Wilderness Identify. The Mobility Chapter sections included motorized vehicle access and circulation (definition; entrances and exits; roads; through auto traffic; public transit; parking; parking lots; parking structures; special event and seasonal parking; railroads, aerial tramways and funiculars; maps and information; and road maintenance) and non-motorized access and circulation (definition; entrances and exits; pedestrian and equestrian trails; trail heads; upkeep and improvements; bicycle routes and lanes; and closed interior roads.

There was some discussion about whether or not changes and recommendations had been incorporated into the chapter. Working Group members discussed at length differences in opinion on how best to present the information regarding transportation and parking issues. This included philosophical differences in presenting evidence regarding parking problems as it relates to the number of parking spaces, gridlock in the park, parking structures, and public transportation.

It was suggested by Mr. Kessler that perhaps a minority report should be included in this chapter due to a lack of consensus.

After a lengthy discussion, consensus was reached regarding parking to read:

Because records provided by the Recreation and Parks Department reveal that in 2005 Griffith Park was never closed for lack of parking, parking shortages to the extent that they exist, are transitory rather than permanent shortages and in keeping with the urban wilderness identity better alleviated through a more aggressive pursuit of park and ride utilizing shuttle systems.

After further discussion regarding parking structures, it was agreed that the matter be continued for further review.

Public comment included the following:

- ★ The City Charter states that park land shall remain forever inviolate.
- ★ The Elysian Park Master Plan Committee used language that included the word "although" and a minority perspective was not included in their plan.
- ★ The lack of an answer to a Working Group member's question to park management staff about the Observatory.
- ★ Venice Beach is crowded during the summer but the Department would not consider building a parking structure at that location.

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- ★ A 365-day needs study is necessary for Griffith Park and that any parking changes in the Park be supported by a needs study and by full public support.
- ★ The Department web-site is difficult to use.
- ★ Transportation system today will not be the same in 10 years. The way people get to the park will change and there will be the need for shuttles.
- ★ The welfare of the Park's non-human residents needs to be considered.
- ★ An editorial from the LA Times West magazine stated that a study by the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust indicated white neighborhoods have 17.4 acres of park land per 1000 residents, Latino neighborhoods had 1.6 acres, and African-American neighborhoods had 0.8 acres of green space. In New York City, 91% of the children lived within a quarter mile of a park, for San Francisco, it was 85% and in LA, it is 33%.
- ★ The number of people hiking in the "highlands" of Griffith Park has decreased since shuttle buses have been operating.
- ★ An inquiry was made regarding Toyon Canyon
- ★ Keep the community's interests in mind.
- ★ Lack of parking is a filter for keeping people from overusing the park.
- ★ This is a great dynamic process and thank you for your dedication.
- ★ Traffic has increased with the building of the Costco store and consideration should be given to the surrounding neighborhood.
- ★ Happy Holidays

This concluded the December meeting of the Griffith Park Master Plan Working Group. The next meeting will be held January 8, 2007.