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Parks and Recreation Commission
Sacramento, California

Honorable Members in Session:

SUBJECT: Long Term Planning for the Future of the Sacramento Zoo

LOCATION AND COUNCIL DISTRICT: Sutter's Landing Park, Land Park and other parks in various Community Plan Areas & Council Districts

RECOMMENDATION: Review and comment on the Zoo Feasibility Study at Sutter's Landing Park Report.

CONTACT PERSONS: Scot Mende, New Growth & Infill Manager, 808-4756
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FOR COMMISSION MEETING: July 1, 2010

SUMMARY: This meeting will be an overview of two years of work by the City and Zoological Society studying future opportunities for the Sutter's Landing Park site and the Sacramento Zoo. The purpose is to receive Commission and public feedback on work done to date. The City Parks & Recreation and Community Development Departments and Sacramento Zoological Society staff are gathering information to guide development of recommendations based on: 1) Zoo consultant report; 2) Zoo staff expertise; and, 3) stakeholder / public input.



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The feasibility study and public presentations materials are available on the City New Growth – Sutter's Landing website:

www.cityofsacramento.org/dsd/planning/new-growth/SuttersLanding.cfm. Of particular interest on this website, including maps, are:

- Feasibility Study Section A: Introduction & Overview
- Feasibility Study Section E: Alternative Site Locations for a future zoo
- Feasibility Study Section F: Alternative Uses for Sutter's Landing Park
- Materials & Comments from April 21 & 28, 2010 community meetings

For the past 2-3 years, the City Planning Department has been studying Sutter's Landing Park in terms of its potential long term uses. The Sacramento Zoological Society Long Range Planning Committee had identified Sutter's Landing Park as their preferred site for an expanded zoo of the future.

Two community workshops were held in April 2010 to present staff's findings and to solicit public feedback on the technical products prepared to date. The public comments from the community meetings are available on the website shown above. Staff intends to use the information from the technical reports as well as feedback from the public meetings to formulate recommendations to be presented to City Council for their direction. These meetings were held on April 21, 2010 at Belle Cooledge Community Center and on April 28, 2010 at Hart Multipurpose Senior Center. Each was attended by an estimated 70 people.

It should be emphasized that:

- The decision and actions to move forward with a zoo of the future are long range planning activities (a 20 year timeframe).
- There are no imminent plans to move or expand the zoo; options are provided for preliminary consideration.
- The community and PRC workshops are an important step in exploring those options for the long term future of the zoo.

The Feasibility Study concluded that:

- The current 14 acre site of the Land Park zoo is not sustainable for the future. The changing exhibit requirements, increasing operating costs, and stagnant revenues, are resulting in a zoo that offers fewer exhibits. Parking is limited and cannot fully accommodate visitors on weekends or during busy seasons.
- The Sutter's Landing Park site is not well suited for a zoo. The site poses a number of tough challenges (i.e. building new access roads and constructing zoo facilities on a former landfill).
- Initial findings are that other sites are potentially better suited for a future zoo.
- Physically, Land Park could potentially accommodate a modest expansion.

Current 14 Acre Zoo Site Not Sustainable

- Much of the current 14-acre site in Land Park is either built out or has mature tree growth that must be protected.
- Land Park site is land locked (i.e. surrounded by existing development).
- Parking is limited and cannot fully accommodate visitors on weekends or during busy seasons.
- The Association of Zoos & Aquariums (the accrediting association) sets forth animal husbandry guidelines which are constantly evolving but almost always require more space.
- With the Zoo limited to the current footprint, husbandry guidelines have resulted in a shrinking animal collection.
- With fewer animals on display, it is difficult to justify increases in admission prices that are necessary to meet higher operating costs.
- City revenue support is diminishing in the current budget climate.
- There is no room for high-end premium experiences (e.g. restaurant, conference, hotel facilities, entertainment venues, fee-based animal encounters).

Evaluation Criteria for a New Zoo

The consultant study was prepared under the following Strategic Assumptions:

- City will provide at no cost:
 - Zoo site at 50-100 acres
 - Access road capable of serving the zoo
- Funding for the relocation/expansion will be supported primarily through a regional funding initiative (public/private partnership)
- Facility improvements could be phased in over a number of years

Sutter's Landing Park Suitability for Zoo

- Access
 - Sutter's Landing Park is currently served only by 28th Street, over the railroad tracks. This route is neither clear nor safe for the increased volume of traffic that a zoo would generate.
 - The City has proposed a new roadway, the Sutter's Landing Parkway, to connect Hwy. 160 to Business 80; the cost of this roadway is at least \$17 million; with a fully improved roadway, at least \$40 million.
- Assembly of Parcels
 - The City owns the former landfill site, but does not yet own surrounding properties, including the Harbor Sand & Gravel operation which creates dust, noise, and heavy truck traffic incompatible with a zoo.
- Cost Premium of Construction on former landfill
 - Construction costs will be significantly higher (to account for ground settling and special drainage treatment); thus, it is expected that construction of a zoo on this site would cost \$625K/acre (\$30 million total for a 50 acre zoo) above the "normal" costs of constructing a zoo on a site without landfill issues.

Other Potential Zoo Sites

In addition to Sutter's Landing Park, the consultant conducted preliminary evaluations of other potential sites:

- Natomas Joint Vision * (however, this land area has no land use entitlements or habitat conservation permits)
- Arco Arena area * (however, this site is part of the Convergence proposal)
- Job Corps / Delta Shores Regional Park * (however, the southern portion of the Job Corps site has not yet been surplus by the federal government)
- North Natomas Regional Park (however, already programmed for other uses)
- Haggin Oaks Golf Course (however, would require reconfiguration of existing golf course and there may be competition from other potential users)
- Cal Expo (however, this site is part of the Convergence proposal)
- Granite Regional Park – east basin (however, difficult to evacuate in the event of drainage pump failure)
- Bartley Cavanaugh Golf Course (however, would require reconfiguration or elimination of existing golf course)

*The 3 top sites that surfaced from this initial assessment were Natomas Joint Vision, Arco Arena, and Job Corps, though each of these has some challenges of its own.

Additional Option: Enhancement of Existing Land Park Site

Staff also asked the consultant to comment on the relative opportunities and constraints of expanding the existing zoo. The consultant concluded that a physical expansion could focus on providing additional parking, improving traffic flow and school bus drop-off, improving the front entrance, and providing new exhibits, including animal interaction. The zoo could potentially expand beyond the current zoo fence as follows:

- “Spaghetti” roads in Land Park may provide an opportunity to eliminate some asphalt in exchange for space
- If Funderland closes
- Without violating the integrity of Fairytale Town, ballfields or golf course

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Today's traditional nonprofit zoos are not financially self-sustaining without significant influx of outside funding. Funding for a relocation/expansion would need to be supported primarily through a regional funding initiative (public/private partnership). No specific financial information is available at this time. Funding for the consultant services to complete the Feasibility Study Report was provided from Sutter's Landing Park billboard revenues.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): Not applicable; this presentation is for review and comment only.

Sustainability Considerations: The Zoo Feasibility Study is preliminary; as more specific recommendations and projects are approved, their consistency with existing City policies and plans for Sustainability and Climate Action will be analyzed, including the region's

Greenprint. Interest has been expressed that the Zoo's future needs to exemplify Best Practices for Sustainable design and management, and environmental stewardship education.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:

Consistency with Goals of City of Sacramento General Plan

The City's adopted General Plan, Education, Recreation and Culture Element, identifies an overarching theme: "The City of Sacramento recognizes the importance of providing quality education, cultural services, and recreation and parks in making Sacramento a great place to live and do business. Access to education, good jobs, active recreational opportunities, and participation in the arts enhances the city's livability for residents. In addition, a skilled workforce and an engaging cultural environment are important in attracting new industries to the community to keep the city's economy healthy."

Section ERC-5 (Museums, Zoo, and Other Major Destination Attractions) identifies: "Policies in this section facilitate the continued operation and new development of diverse facilities and programs that are accessible to residents and visitors alike and maintain and strengthen Sacramento's role as the primary center of culture in the region. These major destination attractions provide important local opportunities for residents and school children to learn about history, science, art, culture, wildlife species, and the environment."

- Policy ERC 5.1.1 Development and Expansion of Attractions. The City shall support the development and expansion of worldclass destination attractions throughout Sacramento including museums, zoos, and the Sacramento River and American River waterfronts.
- ERC 5.1.2 New Zoo. The City shall support the relocation of the existing Sacramento Zoo to facilitate its expansion.
- ERC 5.1.3 Educational Activities. The City shall support expanded educational activities at the city's cultural facilities (e.g., Fairytale Town, Sacramento Zoo, Discovery Museum Gold Rush History Center, Crocker Art Museum, Discovery Museum Science & Space Center, and performing arts venues).

ESBD CONSIDERATIONS: Not Applicable

Recommendation Approved:

J.P. Tindell, M.S.

Park Planning & Development Manager