

Community Advisory Committee Meeting Summary  
Benicia Urban Waterfront Enhancement & Master Plan  
April 18, 2013

Present:

**Community Advisory Committee:**

Sandy Moriarty- Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Commission  
Jon Van Landschoot – Historic Preservation Review Commission  
Elaine Eisner- Arts and Culture Commission  
Susan Cohen Grossman- Planning Commission  
Larry Lamoreux- Community Sustainability Commission  
Bonnie Silveria- Benicia Main Street  
Jean-Claude Merciere – Benicia Yacht Club  
Sue Wickham- California Native Plant Society  
Nancy Lund- Solano Transportation Authority’s Bicycle Advisory Committee

**City Staff:**

Mike Dotson- Parks & Community Services Director  
Rick Knight- Parks Superintendent  
Vic Randall- Management Analyst  
Amy Million- Principal Planner  
Mario Giuliani- Economic Development Manager  
Heather McLaughlin – City Attorney  
Debra Bray- Administrative Clerk

**The Planning Center**

David Early – Principal, The Planning Center/DC&E  
Isabelle Minn – Associate Principal, The Planning Center/DC&E

**Excused:**

Kimble Goodman – Economic Development Board  
Pete Turner- STA Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Parks and Community Services Director Mike Dotson reviewed the Agenda and began introductions.

City Attorney Heather McLaughlin reviewed Brown Act guidelines and ground rules for the Community Advisory Committee.

## **Project Background**

A slide show titled “Urban Waterfront Enhancement and Master Plan / Community Advisory Committee Meeting: April 18, 2013” served as a guide for the meeting. Mike Dotson introduced Vic Randall as the City’s project manager. Rick Knight reviewed the history of the project area. Vic Randall discussed Coastal Conservancy funding for the project area and talked about project goals such as improving public access to and along the shoreline. Other goals include improving amenities for visitors, increasing passive recreation and non-motorized boat use of the area, exploring the potential for developing a launch site for the SF Bay Area Water Trail, protecting wetlands and wildlife habitat, improving stormwater management, adapting to rising sea level, and ensuring that the plan is cost-effective and affordable. He presented details of the plans that have been developed for the site over the past twenty-two years.

Amy Million discussed the General Plan Land Use designations and zoning of the project area.

Isabelle Minn, Project Manager from The Planning Center/DC&E, presented details of the Existing Conditions Analysis that was recently completed by the consultant team.

David Early facilitated discussion, starting with Committee questions and comments.

A question was asked about zoning. Ms. Million stated that the City’s Zoning Map designates this area as open space. Mr. Early stated that he understands that the open space will be either undeveloped open space or more developed parkland.

Jon Van Landschoot asked if it would be possible to build boardwalks through the marsh areas. Mr. Early indicated that it will depend on regulatory hurdles and our available resources. If the Committee wants boardwalks, the Planning Center will offer advice.

Nancy Lund asked about a possible Ferry terminal mentioned in the Existing Conditions Memo. Mr. Early said he doesn’t believe anyone is seriously studying ferry activity at this site currently.

Elaine Eisner asked if we could arrange a field trip. Mr. Early encouraged everyone to visit the project area, but indicated there are no plans at this time for a formal field trip.

Jean-Claude Merciere asked about the Bay Water Trail map. Ms. Minn said that the Bay Water Trail shows key points where you might stop. Mr. Randall stated that the Bay Water Trail Plan shows possible launch sites, including four in Benicia and one in the project area. None of these sites have been formally designated Water Trail sites at this time.

Susan Grossman asked if Mr. Early was also talking about motorized type kayaks, and whether the Committee would be able to decide if small motor powered craft would be allowed. Mr. Early said he doesn’t believe that it will be the Committee’s job to regulate that. He explained that the Committee’s scope of responsibility will be to help formulate ideas for designs.

Jon Van Landschoot asked about when we should get BCDC (Bay Conservation and Development Commission) involved in the process. Mr. Early thinks City Staff should make contact with them, not Committee members. Isabelle Minn added that they are doing environmental review for the project, so they will have contact with BCDC.

### **Public Comment**

Susan Street invited anyone to walk with her at the park. She said the 2005 initiative (Measure C) clearly spells out what needs to be done. She thinks this will be a crown jewel for the town, as well as an economic asset. She thinks it will be good for the community and people will come to see the habitat and it will be a great teaching tool. She says she is the most ardent cheerleader of this project. She distributed copies of a handout that she had prepared.

Vicki Gallagher asked if the committee will address parking. Mr. Early said the Committee should consider parking. Ms. Gallagher said she personally wants to see improvements in the current gravel parking lot. Isabelle Minn said they have looked preliminarily at the amount of parking, and noted that the conceptual designs for the area directly south of the Depot include additional parking.

HR Autz said that he believes the gravel parking lot should be a City budget item. Mr. Autz said that the parking lot should be paved, and also that he thinks there needs to be a permanent restroom facility. He thinks we need to move down toward Depot to find a spot for restrooms.

Margaret Spalding stated that she thinks the restrooms should not be as large as the ones at the end of First Street pier, and would like them to be as small as possible.

As there was no more public comment, David Early steered the discussion back to the Committee for questions and comments. He said the Committee should focus on articulating wants/needs at this point in the process.

Nancy Lund said that B Street parking lot is sinking and the City needs to deal with it.

Bonnie Silveria said that she knows from experience that you can formulate plans only to find out there is no money. She thinks it is important to have a budget and look at where funding will come from. Ms. Silveria said they need to have reasonable plans so people will want to fund the project, not make things so extravagant that people won't want to provide funding.

Susan Grossman said that she understands it is an 18 month process and wants to understand funding and the plan timeline. Mr. Early talked about funding processes and where we might qualify for funding, including grants.

Bonnie Silveria asked if we can implement the plan in phases. Mr. Early said that it is possible to implement the plan in phases.

Isabelle Minn then discussed what's next and went over the Project schedule. Mr. Early stated that two design options will be developed based on input received from the community at the June Community Workshop. The Planning Center/DC&E will then ask the Committee if these ideas seem to be going in the right direction, at a second CAC meeting planned for July 2013. If the committee agrees that they are, the consultant team will study the options and their outcomes. He discussed the upcoming meeting and workshop schedules.

David Early asked the Committee members if they had additional ideas or comments they would like to share at this time.

Larry Lamoreux stated that he is very excited about the possibility of restoration of the salt marsh. He thinks an elevated viewing area will be important.

Jean-Claude Merciere asked if we can remove any vegetation, citing the reeds to the south of the Depot as an example. Mr. Early said that we may be able to remove in some areas, though in other areas it may be harder. If a species is invasive, we should be able to remove it.

Elaine Eisner expressed her strong support for public art, and asked how ideas for public art could be integrated into the plans. Mr. Early said things such as drawings and pictures of other places are a good idea. He explained that they will not be looking for specific artistic proposals for artwork, but will be looking for suggestions for areas that would be appropriate for art. For example, they may designate a certain area they feel might be good for a piece of artwork.

Bonnie Silveria said that she was representing Benicia Main Street. She stated that the car show is the largest event in the project area, and they want to make sure that as the area is developed it is still be useable for events like the car show.

Sandy Moriarty asked whether we will have continuity at the waterfront with the benches made by Middle School students. Mike Dotson said not necessarily, as the school made benches on a limited basis. We will also need to make sure materials used there will be suitable for the weather conditions in the project area.

Nancy Lund asked whether lights will be included in the plan. She noted that the current lights in the area are industrial, and stated that she believes this will need to be addressed. Mr. Early indicated that lighting can and should be considered in the plan.

Jean-Claude Merciere asked what the large utility box at the foot of East Second Street is, and whether it could be removed. Rick Knight stated that the box is a sewer lift station, and that it would be very expensive to move.

Sue Wickham stated that she would like to see a bridge across the marsh at the foot of East Second Street. She noted that the 1991 plan had islands in the marsh, which can help protect wildlife and sensitive habitat from the impact of dogs. Ms. Wickham also stated that the marsh restoration near the foot of East 5<sup>th</sup> Street had been done well and provides a good model.

Susan Grossman asked how marsh restoration will be defined, and said that we need a connection to the history of the site.

Jean-Claude Merciere asked if any of our boundaries extend over or into the water and whether we would be able to build something that goes over the water. Mr. Early said there are a lot of regulatory and engineering hurdles that would need to be addressed.

Nancy Lund requested that some drawings or images of what might be done to accommodate sea level rise be available at the public forum. Isabelle Minn indicated that designs might provide for passive accommodation of increased flooding.

Jean-Claude Merciere asked for information regarding public outreach for the June 5<sup>th</sup> Community Workshop. A flyer will be provided to the CAC for distribution via email. Outreach will be through flyers posted at the Main Street Office, Farmers Market, library, and in sign boards surrounding the Project Area. There will also be print ads and social media outreach.

Rick Knight suggested everyone should be familiar with the Waterfront Park Initiative (Measure C) before the public forum on June 5<sup>th</sup>.

Vic Randall and Isabelle Minn encouraged Committee members to share any additional feedback on the Existing Conditions Memo or thoughts regarding the project area by email by April 26<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting was adjourned.