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PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING OF: September 08, 2020

UNAPPROVED DRAFT MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF September 08, 2020

PLANNING COMMISSION:

The notice of the meeting was posted on September 03, 2020.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Fernandez called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and read an opening statement.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present:	Chair Fernandez, Vice Chair Fritz, and Commissioners Douch, Oetinger, Wilson, Lindenbusch and Haug
Absent:	Commissioner Kelley (excused)
Staff:	Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

3. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA:

Director Svanstrom noted that staff has not received public comment on items not on the agenda.

While members of the public were in attendance, there was no public comment on items not on the agenda.

4. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: There were none.

5. REGULAR AGENDA:

A. PRESENTATION ON PARK FOUNDATIONS AND DISCUSSION ON A POTENTIAL SEBASTOPOL PARK FOUNDATION

Chair Fernandez introduced this item and thanked Melissa Kelley, Executive Director, Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation for being present.

Director Svanstrom provided a brief introduction.

Ms. Kelley presented.

Commissioner Douch commented:
- Thanked Ms. Kelley for her informative presentation.
- Asked how typical it is for a small municipality to have such a foundation in her experience.
- Asked if Ms. Kelley has worked with smaller cities or municipalities who have set up foundations like this.

Ms. Kelley responded:
- Not an expert on cities setting up foundations.
- The City of Santa Rosa did go through this process a couple of years ago.
  - They chose to set up a foundation to raise money for the train at Howarth Park because the train was reaching the end of its useful life and they needed to raise a large sum of money.
  - The City of Sebastopol may want to reach out to the Santa Rosa Parks Foundation during their course of exploration on this to hear about their experience.
- Much more familiar with county agencies setting up non-profits to support their parks which is very, very common through California and countrywide.

Commissioner Douch commented:
- Has some experience with non-profits and boards.
- Agrees on the potential for them being expensive and burdensome.
- The idea of fiscal sponsorship, which he is less familiar with, is quite intriguing.
- Asked if there are examples of counties and/or cities working together to adopt a fiscal sponsorship arrangement which would allow smaller municipalities the opportunity to piggyback off the expertise of a larger organization.

Ms. Kelley responded:
- Knows of examples of fiscal sponsorships outside of the park world.
- Would not be able to give an example of fiscal sponsorships within the park world.
- It could exist, but she is not personally aware of it.

Commissioner Douch reiterated his appreciation for Ms. Kelley and her informative presentation.

Commissioner Oetinger asked if most of their contributions come in as specifically allocated to a particular project?

Ms. Kelley responded:
- That is a very good question.
- They have a lot of restricted accounts.
- Some of the time, when they are fundraising, they are specifically fundraising for a particular project.
- They sometimes have donors approach them with something they are very passionate about.

- When they are lucky, those two things dovetail.
- Gave an example of their fundraising effort for Helen Putnam Regional Park in Petaluma.
- Last year they raised about $400,000 in unrestricted funding and about $500,000 in restricted funding.
- Those numbers will vary from year to year depending on what their major campaigns are and what is really inspiring to the donors that they are reaching out to.
- Their foundation partners with Regional Parks whenever they are reaching out to donors for renewals or new memberships and they get a lot of donations at that point in time and those donations are typically unrestricted.
- Unrestricted funds are clearly really important to them because they have staff salaries to pay, which is pretty much their only expense outside mailing, supplies for fundraising, and insurance.
- Other than that, they are really focused on raising money for grant making to Regional Parks.
- Their foundation does not have any programs or infrastructure of their own.

Commissioner Oetinger asked if they hold fundraising events.

Ms. Kelley responded in the affirmative and commented:
- They hold events under normal circumstances.
- A useful thing to know about events is that it is very easy to lose money on events.
- Used 2019 as an example and stated that they ran a summer concert series called, "Funky Fridays" out in the Sonoma valley which was a significant fundraiser for them.
- They also had a regular event called the "Spring Lake Water Bark" which was a lot of fun.
- They would periodically organize special outings like a hike for donors with interpretation at Tolay Park followed by lunch or wine and cheese.

Commissioner Oetinger asked what percentage of funds raised are allocated towards administration versus granting.

Ms. Kelley responded:
- It depends a lot on the year and how the fundraising goes.
- 25 to 30% of their fundraising goes towards operational expenses such as payroll, printing, and postage.
- The smaller an organization is the harder it is to get that number down.

Commissioner Lindenbusch commented:
- Thanked Ms. Kelley for her presentation.
- Most of his questions have already been answered.
- Asked about the potential of having their Parks Foundation serve as a fiscal sponsor for the City's Park Foundation and what the process for approval of that would entail.

Ms. Kelley responded:
- They are separate from the County.
- The decision would go to their staff and the Sonoma County Parks Foundation Board of Directors which is a volunteer group that oversees the Parks Foundation.

Commissioner Wilson commented:

- The benefits are, if I am a donor, that the donations to their foundation would be tax deductible?

Ms. Kelley responded that yes, if a foundation was set up to support Sebastopol's park system, the benefit to the donor is that the donations are tax deductible.

Commissioner Wilson commented:

- Somebody could also donate directly to County Regional Parks and say they want to give $50,000 to Helen Putnam Regional Park and that would be tax deductible too.

Ms. Kelley concurred and commented:

- There are a couple of reasons why it is useful to have a non-profit set up.
- For better or worse, people are sometimes prejudice against giving money to government agencies.
  - People are a little more familiar with sending money to a Parks Foundation where they know they will get a letter back that they can use for their taxes at the end of the year.
- If you donate money to a county organization, which may be different for the City of Sebastopol, if Regional Parks has more money in its accounts than was budgeted then the County can use the excess for other purposes that are unrelated to parks.
  - If that donor, by donating direct to Regional Parks, made the Parks budget bigger than was expected for the year, that funding could be used in a way for things other than parks.
- The Foundation can roll funds over from year to year.

Commissioner Wilson asked if the funds they raise are all distributed for County Regional Parks purposes?

Ms. Kelley responded in the affirmative and commented:

- It is their mission to raise money for county parks.
- It is not their mission to raise money for city parks.
- Does not have any idea what her boards opinion would be when it comes to the question of being a fiscal sponsor for a Sebastopol Parks Foundation.
- If they were to set up a fiscal sponsorship relationship, there would be a restricted account for the parks in Sebastopol and funds that we raise (not funds that they raise) would go into that restricted account.
- There are also many very worthy non-profits in Sebastopol that could be worth looking into.

Director Svanstrom commented:

- The City of Sebastopol does not have a Parks Department.
- The Planning Department and Planning Commission deal with the parks planning part of it.
- Operations are handled by non-profits, such as the pool at Ives, the Senior Center, the Sebastopol Community Cultural Center, etc.
- The Sebastopol Community Cultural Center acted as the fiscal sponsor for Cittaslow.
- There are some options out there.

Commissioner Haug commented:

- Thanked Ms. Kelley for the excellent presentation.

- The presentation was clear and easy to comprehend.
- The questions that she had have already been asked and answered.
- Thanked Ms. Kelley for her work on behalf of the park system.

Vice Chair Fritz commented:
- Expressed having no questions that were not already answered at this time.
- Thanked Ms. Kelley for her time.

Chair Fernandez asked about the make-up of their Parks Foundation Board of Directors and how that was determined.

Ms. Kelley responded:
- Their Parks Foundation is a special type of non-profit called a supporting organization which is not a structure she would recommend at this point.
- The IRS rules were quite a bit different than they are now when their Foundation was founded in 1998.
- Various changes to the tax code over the years have made the structure that they have now very undesirable.
- Their board is overseen by the Board of Supervisors.
- The Board of Supervisors appoints the majority of their board.
  - They have 10 individuals that are appointed by the Board of Supervisors, 2 individuals from each district, and 9 individuals who are at-large.
- Would not recommend a board size of 19 individuals as it can be unwieldy.
- Is fortunate to have a really great board and a lot of very capable people.
- They are very concerned with geographic representation, so they have representation from throughout the county.
- In terms of what types of people are on the board, it is useful to have people from different kinds of industries, different professions.
- Their board includes a lawyer, people from the wine industry, real estate agents, educators, and people from a variety of different backgrounds.

Chair Fernandez asked if the Board of Supervisors has input, or gives direction on their board, goals, or missions, as they are the ones that appoint the Parks Foundation Board of Directors.

Ms. Kelley responded:
- The Board of Supervisors does not really provide input or give direction to the Parks Foundation Board of Directors.
- The Foundation does their goal setting in tandem with Regional Parks.
- Whatever the Foundation is putting their time and energy into needs to be something that Regional Parks wants.
- The Foundation understands what Regional Parks expectations and needs are, and Regional Parks understands what the Foundations expectations are in terms of what they think they are capable of raising funds for.

Chair Fernandez asked how projects come to fruition.

Ms. Kelley responded:
- That is a very good question.
- The Foundation is working with Regional Parks on projects so they will say what they want to do and provide a cost estimate.

- From the Foundation side, to fulfill their end they need to write a grant for the requested amount and give it to Regional Parks so they may proceed with the project.
- Who Regional Parks hires to do the work (staff, youth group, or contractor) is up to them.
- If the foundation pays the contractor directly, rather than giving the funds directly to Regional Parks, it does not show up as a grant in their IRS documents.

Chair Fernandez asked members of the public if they wished to speak on this item.

Kyle Falbo commented:

- For Ms. Kelley:
  - Measure M passed in 2018 and generates an estimated 11.5 million dollars annually.
  - How has this money made it through the pipeline for the funding of our county parks?
  - Part of Measure M includes a citizen oversight committee, what involvement if any has the Foundation had with the citizen oversight committee?
  - What kinds of political actions, if any, does the Foundation partake in?
- For the Commission:
  - As part of Measure M, 1/3 of the estimated 11.5 million dollars annually is directed towards city parks.
  - How much of the 3.8 million dollars has been directed to Sebastopol and what involvement has this body had with that funding?
  - What level of involvement can the Commission foresee some hypothetical foundation having with the decision-making process regarding the allocation of these Measure M funds?

Hearing nothing further, Chair Fernandez closed public comment.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- The City of Sebastopol receives funding from Measure M based on its population.
- With a population of 7,700, Sebastopol is the second smallest in the county.
- Last year the City received somewhere between $87,000 and $90,000 from Measure M.
- That money is placed in a restricted park improvement fund that is specifically for Measure M stuff.
- The City has another restricted park fund for impact fees and things like that.
- Those two funds are kept separate because the impact fees are more restricted in that they can only be used, in some cases, for new park acquisition and things like that, not maintenance.
- Measure M funds can be used for maintenance.
- This year the City has spent about $15,000 from the last fiscal year.
- A lot of that was tree replanting and maintenance in the parks.
- The City is holding a budget meeting with the Council which will be open to the public, on the City's overall budget tomorrow morning.
- Budget hearings will take place in a couple months.
- The other Measure M funding, both from what the City did not use last year, as well as this next year, was brought to the Commission for discussion of the proposed projects and budgets. Those projects included things like a restroom at the Luther Burbank Experiment Farm which did not have a restroom prior, as well as a few projects at Ives Park.

- Is part of the technical advisory committee for Measure M funds, which is a staff level group, who reports to the citizen oversight committee.
- Believes the citizen oversight committee meets quarterly.
- Half of the cities, including Sebastopol, reported to the citizen oversight committee a few months ago.
- The other half of the cities reported to the citizen oversight committee a couple weeks ago.

Ms. Kelley responded:

- While she has a reasonable amount of familiarity with it, she is not an expert on Measure M.
- The Sonoma County Regional Parks website (sonomacountyparks.org) has very detailed information about Measure M, about how funds will be spent, and the entire funding plan.
- In terms of how the Foundation interfaces with the Measure M citizen oversight committee, they don't have an official relationship with the committee, however, her board chair happens to be a representative on the committee so they do have a connection there.
- In terms of how the funds are used, the county has a 55+ parks system, which is enormous.
- Millions of dollars sounds like a huge amount of money, but when you start dividing that by 55 parks plus divisions like a natural resource division, fire resiliency, community engagement, and environmental education and programs, the funds get distributed out to very worthy aspects of Regional Parks.
- The Foundation does collaborate with those Measure M funds.
- A good example is the natural play area at Taylor Mountain which would not have been able to be completed without Measure M funds.
- Reiterated her suggestion to check the Sonoma County Regional Parks website for more information.

Chair Fernandez asked Director Svanstrom if she is looking for specific feedback from the Commission at this time.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- In terms of items the Commission may want to discuss, this is an item that was requested by a couple members of the Commission.
- This is not in the current Planning Commission Work Plan which is coordinated by staff.
- Several other projects from their work plan are currently underway.
- As a non-profit, a Parks Foundation could have a staff liaison, but staff would not be heavily involved with getting it started.
- If there is interest by the Commission, or a subset of Commissioners, in moving forward on this, it would be great to have some discussion on that tonight.
- If there is a desire to do that, a subcommittee could be formed. The subcommittee could consist of up to 3 members without being a quorum of the Commission.

Chair Fernandez asked for comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Lindenbusch commented:

- Would be interested in serving on that subcommittee.
- It is really important for us to be looking at alternate forms of revenue for our parks, especially as we go farther into this recession.

- We are not going to be able to accomplish all of the projects that we really want to to get our parks to where we want them to be and this is one way we can do it.
- Appreciates the presentation from Ms. Kelley.
- Appreciates the discussion and believes it is something that should be pursued.

Chair Fernandez asked if other members would be interested in serving on the subcommittee.

Commissioner Oetinger commented:
- At the present time she is not interested in serving.
- Has been on a lot of committees and non-profits and has been involved in the formation of them.
- It is really important to narrow the list down and know what projects you want to support.
- A community survey to find out what interest there is and to try to get some commitments from major people might be a good first step.
- It is helpful when the board represents 30% of the money that is raised or brings in that percentage of it.
- It is important to have people on the board or committee that really have access to funds.
- The survey would help to identify that.
- When the Center for the Arts was first forming, the major first step was a community survey.
- There are a lot of things that can be learned from doing this kind of a survey first, before you even get organized.
- It does take some expertise to get a good survey going, to know what questions to ask, and what questions to leave open in terms of community response.
- Everyone hates to do a survey where they do not get to say what they really think so it is important to do that part.
- Would encourage any board or committee that is formed take a community survey as their first step looking at who might be a potential board member and trying to figure out what kind of money could be raised within the community through people's hearts and goodwill.

Chair Fernandez commented:
- Ives Park is such a central park in our city.
- Concurred with Commissioner Oetinger on the need to focus on a specific project with a vision for people to get excited about and know will happen.
- Suggested that the subcommittee talk to other members and the community and return to the Commission with a specific project that they would want to focus on and raise funds for.

Commissioner Oetinger commented:
- A lot of that will depend on what is learned when surveying the community.
- It is important to know where the community is leaning in terms of priorities, which will also show where the money is leaning.

Chair Fernandez thanked Commissioner Oetinger for her comments and stated that he would be interested in knowing if any surveys have been done, or other information available that could be used for this purpose.

Director Svanstrom asked Ms. Kelley for suggestions on community outreach for building a core group to push creation of a foundation forward.

Ms. Kelley responded:

- Two types of people are needed; people to serve on the board, and donors.
- Commissioner Oetinger's suggestion of doing a community survey is a good one.
- These types of questions can be asked in the survey as well.
- This will be a challenge because Sebastopol is not a big town and there are not a lot of people.
- Sebastopol already has non-profits in town, so the same people are probably being asked over and over again.
- Whether this is a need could be asked in the survey because the community might not see it as one like the Commission does.
- In terms of Board members, the Parks Foundation started with 7 and now has 19.
  - 7 was not enough and 19 is too many.
  - It is good to have an odd number.

Chair Fernandez asked Ms. Kelley for ideas on assembling an exploratory subcommittee which would include members of the Commission and the community at large.

Ms. Kelley responded:

- Assembling an exploratory subcommittee with members of the Commission and people from the community at large is a good idea.
- Encouraged members of the Commission to think about people they know that would be interested in this and have the experience and resources to be an informed and helpful committee member and then reach out to them.
- When reaching out to those people, be sure to ask them who they know who may be a good committee member too.
- People will generally give you an hour of their time, even if they will not sign up for your committee.

Commissioner Lindenbusch commented:

- Agrees with a lot of what Commissioner Oetinger had to say about some of the challenges and also the importance of making sure that we get a lot of strong community feedback about the direction of where this goes.
- With regards to an exploratory committee, know the City has sometimes had a hard time filling some of committees and can get drawn out if we are looking at 11-13 members.
- It may be best to start this off as a subset of the Commission.
- We can open it up if we get a strong response from the community.

Chair Fernandez asked if other members of the Commission would be interested in serving on a subcommittee with Commissioner Lindenbusch to come up with game plan.

Commissioner Oetinger commented:

- Hesitates to commit at this point because she is involved in so many other things.
- Willing to do outreach and be involved but does not want to lead it.
- Has worked on the formation of non-profits three times that she can think of.
- She was brought it for her graphic design, advertising, and media expertise.
- Is removed from that now so does not feel that she has the expertise to lend to a committee but is happy to share her experience.
- Willing to work with Commissioner Lindenbusch and anyone else on the committee.

Chair Fernandez commented that it would be helpful to have Commissioner Oetinger involved given her experience.

Commissioner Oetinger commented:

- Vice Mayor Una Glass has that experience as well and knows more than she does.
- As a member of the Planning Commission who is interested in local parks, she would be a willing participant in this process.

Commissioner Lindenbusch commented that he would be willing to spearhead the formation of a subcommittee.

Commissioner Oetinger asked if a third member of the Commission is willing to get involved.

Hearing none, Chair Fernandez clarified that this would be a first step brainstorming session.

Director Svanstrom responded that that makes sense and noted that a subcommittee could not include more than three members of the Commission as that would be a quorum of the Commission and noted that other members, such as a member of the Council or another key community members could be involved.

Chair Fernandez noted that Commissioner Kelley may wish to be involved and commented that it may be worth checking with her since she was not able to attend this meeting.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Fernandez thanked Ms. Kelley for her presentation.

Ms. Kelley welcomed members to follow up with her if additional questions should arise.

Other members of the Commission reiterated their thanks to Ms. Kelley.

6. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Svanstrom updated the Commission on the following:

- Recent and upcoming Council actions.
- Budget items.

Chair Fernandez asked if outreach will be done, potentially targeting certain businesses or buildings, given the changes to the Façade Improvement Program.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- Expects to target business owners.
- Business owners typically apply for these grants, not landlords.

Chair Fernandez commented that Caltrans may have to be involved for some of the recipients to do the desired work.

Director Svanstrom commented:

- Temporary encroachments into the sidewalk can be handled by the Sebastopol Public Works department.

Commissioner Oetinger asked Director Svanstrom when the 1-year extension on permits would begin.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- Permits issued with an expiration date between March 17, 2020 and March 17, 2021 would get an automatic extension of 1 year, if approved by Council.
- Things may need to be changed or further updated depending on how things continue to go with Covid-19.

Commissioner Haug asked when the Commission could expect to hear back from RHAA on the proposed pathway improvements at Ives Park.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- Staff has been working with RHAA on incorporating the changes that the Commission requested.
- RHAA did a site visit last Tuesday and has worked through the changes that they are proposing to do.
- Staff could present those changes to the Commission if they want to see the final design or could send out the updated design electronically.

Commissioner Haug asked when the Commission could expect to receive part two of the Development Impact Fee Study presentation, part one occurred at their last meeting.

Director Svanstrom responded that that was expected to return to the Commission in October.

In response to a request by Commissioner Haug, Director Svanstrom asked Commissioner Haug to go over her thoughts about how a walking tour of Ives Park could be done given that the Commission can not do so as a group at this time.

Commissioner Haug commented:

- Believes they could have a small group component and use zoom so members of the public can join.
- People could go in groups of two, but we will likely end up with redundancy in terms of questions.
- Asked if members of the Commission would be interested in attending an in-person at a distance walking tour of Ives Park, with the public and other members of the public who may not want to attend in person joining by zoom.
    - This would allow real-time feedback from staff at Ives Park.
    - The Commission can use the Master Plan as their guide for this tour.

Director Svanstrom commented:

- Has serious concerns about doing a public meeting because we are limited by Covid-19 to 12 people in a group gathering even when social distancing and outdoors.
- With 8 members of the Commission and 3 staff, we have no way of knowing that more than 1 person from the public would not attend.

Chair Fernandez asked if their prior walking tour of Ives Park was a public meeting.

Director Svanstrom responded in the affirmative.

Vice Chair Fritz recalled that it was a public meeting and at least a couple members of the public did attend.

Chair Fernandez asked if the meeting could be held in-person for members of the Commission and staff and limit the public to participate via zoom?

Director Svanstrom responded that It would not seem appropriate to limit members of the public in that way.

Director Svanstrom commented that Commission Haug had an interesting idea of having the Commission do a tour of Ives Park with staff via zoom and noted that it would be helpful for members of the Commission to do their own walkthrough prior.

Commissioner Haug commented:

- Trying to figure out the best and most efficient way.
- It would be advantageous to have staff at Ives Park so they can look at the physical space and answer questions.
- Would not want to overburden staff by having the same questions asked of them over and over again.
- Would support holding the meeting via zoom with a member of staff at Ives Park, or individual members could go through Ives Park and create a list of questions which could be consolidated before being sent on to staff for a future Commission agenda where the Commission could have a discussion about it.

Chair Fernandez expressed a preference for individual, or small groups of no more than 3 member of the Commission at a time tours followed by a regular public meeting to discuss.

Commissioner Douch and Vice Chair Fritz concurred on that approach.

Vice Chair Fritz requested that prior minutes, or other relevant information from their initial tour of Ives Park be sent to the Commission.

Director Svanstrom responded that that could be done and noted that Superintendent Del Prete should attend the meeting when this is discussed for historical knowledge as he participated in the initial walking tour of Ives Park and has intimate knowledge of Ives Park.

The Commission discussed timeline for doing these walkthroughs and compiling their questions/comments for future discussion.

Commissioner Haug volunteered to compile questions and comments as they come in.

The Commission agreed to take the next month or so to do their walkthrough and submitting their questions/comments.

Commissioner Haug commented that the Master Plan is a helpful guide for this and requested that members of the Commission use it as a point of reference.

Vice Chair Fritz commented that it would be helpful to have the existing conditions plan along with the Master Plan for reference.

Director Svanstrom responded that the full Master Plan has a section on existing conditions which includes a diagram and commented that she could send a link to the Commission.

Chair Fernandez suggested that Commissioner Haug come up with a simple process that she wants the Commission to follow.

Commissioner Haug responded in the affirmative and asked staff to forward links for a variety of documents related to this.

Staff responded in the affirmative and noted that any communication to the entire Commission should come from staff.

Commissioner Oetinger requested that the due date be included in the correspondence on this.

Commissioner Haug responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Haug asked about agendizing discussion of selecting a liaison for the City's Housing Subcommittee.

Vice Chair Fritz commented that he was the original Planning Commission's liaison to the Housing Subcommittee and has attended meetings, although they have not met in a while to his knowledge. He added that he is happy to continue serving in that capacity.

Chair Fernandez suggested that Vice Chair Fritz check on the status of that and report back to the Commission.

Director Svanstrom commented that she is staff for the Housing Subcommittee and will invite Vice Chair Fritz to their meetings in the future.

Director Svanstrom noted that a Planning Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 22, 2020.

7. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Fernandez adjourned the meeting at 8:56 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting will take place on Tuesday, September 22, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Kari Svanstrom
Planning Director