

BALDWIN HILLS CONSERVANCY

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**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING
of the
BALDWIN HILLS CONSERVANCY
APRIL 5, 2002**

CALL TO ORDER

I. Roll Call

The public meeting of the Baldwin Hills Conservancy was called to order at 10:00 a.m. on, at Kenneth Hahn State Recreational Area, 4100 South La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90056.

Prior to roll, the Chair took a moment to present to Mr. Albert Vera, a resolution for his service as the past chair for the Baldwin Hills Conservancy and for his outstanding commitment and leadership as the first chair for the conservancy. Member Vera thanked everyone stating it was a great honor to receive it and continue the work on the vision of a world-class park.

The Chair introduced new board member, Tim Gallagher, Director of Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Department. The chair welcomed Supervisor Yvonne Burke, who was in attendance, and will attend as often as possible, and Senator Murray, who later arrived.

The Conservancy roll was called, and the following voting members were present: Ta-Lecia Ann Arbor, Tim Gallagher, Mary Ann Greene, Mary Nichols, Steve Treanor, and Al Vera. Absent: Kenneth Bentley, Clare Bronowski, and Annette Porini.

The following non-voting members were present: Paul Mount, II, and Don Rogers. Absent: Neal Fishman, Joe Edmiston, Sara Amir and Gregory Broughton.

The following staff members were present: David McNeill and Gloria Dangerfield.

Representing the Office of the Attorney General was John Saurenman.

After roll was taken, the Chair reminded the public of the Brown Act on how public comments would be accepted.

II. Approval of Minutes

It was moved, seconded, and carried, that the minutes be approved with no corrections.

III. Receive and File all Correspondence

A letter from the attorney general's office regarding CEQA compliance and a letter sent to Senator Murray regarding approval of the timeline extension for approval of the Baldwin Hills Plan, were filed.

IV. Acquisition & Executive Director Report - David McNeill

a. Kenneth Hahn Park West (Vista Pacifica)

Member Treanor stated although DPR are having some setbacks (due to State budget) they are working to make sure there is funding for the interim planning and are working diligently to find some alternative monies. There is a very firm commitment to make sure it occurs.

- i. Community Relations – DPR just hired a new ranger, Pete Gomez, who can speak Spanish, and will concentrate on the elementary schools and Ranger Dan Raducanu will concentrate on high schools.
- ii. Interim Planning/DPR Report on Proposed Dog Park at Jefferson Blvd. – DPR staff have looked at the suggestion and proposal for a dog park on state property for interim public use. Ranger Templeton stated that based upon costs (staffing and upkeep) they cannot support the use of the area in question for a dog park. Instead, they envision the proposed location as short-term parking for visitors coming to Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area. They are still committed to finding a suitable location dog park location.

Culver City Councilman David Hauptman spoke again in support of the dog park and reiterated that this is a community park.

Member Rogers stated that Culver City formed a non-profit organization to fundraise and facilitate passing and enforcing rules at local dog parks.

- iii. Long-term Planning –Member Treanor stated they are in the process of doing more long-term planning of the acreage in Kenneth Hahn West. Part of any delays would be related to making sure funding is secure. They are actively working on it. Once clarified, will be able to enter into a contract. Mr. McNeill added he has been in discussions with the coastal and mountain conservancies, State Parks, and Speaker Wesson and Senator Murray on this issue.

b. Stocker Street Corridor

Mr. McNeill reported appraisals for the properties have been approved and will be presented to the owners of the thirty-eight acres in question. There needs to be proper funding for maintenance.

c. Partnership

Supervisor Burke discussed the joint powers authority and its long history of property ownership. Outside of Kenneth Hahn State Recreation proper, the county is the largest owner of the lands that are being discussed in terms of Baldwin Hills Park. Supervisor Burke went over the property that the County has acquired and questioned whether the state and county should continue in their acquisitions separate and apart. Supervisor Burke stated she received the protocol being proposed, as far as a relationship with the conservancy, and stated they h people who have been negotiators and have worked on these acquisitions. She supports working out an agreement that is mutually beneficial to both the state and county.

Member Nichols supported that concern.

Member Vera agreed with Member Nichols, adding we don't have the staff, knowledge, or money, and feels the board should join force and make the two powers together. He suggested allowing Mike Bohlke, as Supervisor Burke is not available all the time, to enter in the closed sessions when strategies are being discussed.

Supervisor Burke stated Tim Gallagher has experience of acquiring property, and maybe at some point, there should be a joint meeting, where everyone can be involved in some of the difficult decision-making. She suggested maybe also joining in with them in terms of applying for funds.

The Chair thanked Supervisor Burke for her comments, and agreed to a joint meeting and will find out from the attorney general's office on how to have it. Two important issues should be discussed; 1) overall objective and 2) eminent domain. The legislation that created this body prohibits eminent domain.

Mr. Saurenman stated that there's no prohibition on the conservancy having a meeting with the joint powers agency. Under the Brown Act, the meeting has to be open. He stated there are limited circumstances that will allow closed sessions; with a real estate negotiator, and if the JPA is the negotiator working on acquiring property, then a closed session with the JPA is permissible. If it's a general matter, then that would be an open session; for example when you're discussing strategy.

Mr. McNeill stated that the purpose of the protocol was to ensure that the conservancy had a lead role in the acquisition efforts. The JPA brings vital resources to acquisition efforts, as do other state agencies, like the State Lands Commission, which has tremendous experience in acquiring land, oil operations, and mineral rights as well. He added he will work with the legacy project director to ensure that the conservancy priorities meet statewide criteria and are financially justified.

Member Vera stated that protocol should not be adopted today, but postponed until the county can come up with a suggestion.

Senator Murray stated he felt the passing of the park bond issue vindicated the concept of the conservancy. His dream is that the conservancy lives on past his tenure, but, in order to do that, it has to work cooperatively with all the agencies; particularly the county, as it's in business with the county yet it needs to establish its own set of policies and priorities and need not assign those responsibilities to anyone else. Although they are relatively short-staffed, he and Speaker Wesson are supportive of expanding through the legislature, money allocated for staff.

Senator Murray thanked the conservancy's chair, past chair, as well as the executive director for the wonderful job in getting the conservancy up and going.

Member Mount explained the role of State Land, stating they manage 400 million sovereign lands in the state and about 1.2 million acres of school land and as a land owner agency, has lots of expertise in this area. Their department has resources not available to other agencies, which allows them to do things that other agencies may not be able to do. They can acquire land directly and are on the board to help the conservancy achieve their goal.

Mr. McNeill stated for reference, members of the JPA are actually part of board of directors for the Baldwin Hills Conservancy.

Member Gallagher felt the key words in establishing this protocol is cooperation and flexibility, and, as a new member, didn't know what action had been planned to take on it today.

Senator Murray stated, in the absence of protocols (except when required by state laws in terms of spending money) you have flexibility; in entering into an understanding of cooperation with the County or JPA. There clearly needs to be more discussions.

Senator Murray asked Member Nichols if conservancies in general were allowed to make grants. Member Nichols answered yes. Senator Murray suggested appointing a sub-committee to do some long-term visioning on acquiring property, stating one of the things they need to address is specific relationship with the county on long-term management; their management of the Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area can be considered successful and as it's expanding, management and the relationship between the county and state needs to be discussed.

Supervisor Burke commented on the state's protocol to not use or threaten eminent domain. She stated the county's uses eminent domain when needed and when efficient to do so.

Member Mount stated that this is an issue, which they can, for example, move forward on acquisitions, fee or no fee, in, any way the conservancy desires. The issue is what does the conservancy desires and how do we work with other agencies to make it happen.

Supervisor Burke stated that the issue of eminent domain should be viewed rigorously, as sometimes there are twenty different interests in one piece of property. Senator Murray stated that he was very supportive of Supervisor Burke's approach as long as all the persons who participated in these discussions are satisfied that they are not going to be subjected to losing their home. Supervisor Burke commented she respected his position.

Member Vera stated that eminent domain sometimes has to be used to just to enter a piece of property. He stated there has been numbers of time when the City of Culver City, the County of Los Angeles, or the Baldwin Hills Conservancy, are negotiating separately on the same piece of land. To avoid this, everyone needs to be on the same page.

Member Rogers suggested appointing a sub-committee to study the issue and look at all the aspects on how to best proceed in bringing in all the partners.

Motion made authorizing Conservancy Chair to create the sub-committee to study protocol in the interim. Motion carried. The Chair stated she would do that and would like the committee to come back with a report at the next meeting.

V. Existing Facilities & Improvements

a. Kenneth Hahn Park East

- i. Restoration – Lori Bennett stated their habitat restoration project has continued through the past month.

b. Public Transportation

Mr. McNeill stated that in the last meeting, an attendee brought up the issue of the lack of transportation and public access, to the conservancy meetings. He stated if anyone had any recommendations with regards to solutions, to please make them in writing to him or the board. Mr. McNeill mentioned also, they could explore the possibility of working with MTA, Culver City Municipal Bus Line, and other public transportation.

VI. Policy

a. Legislation

Mr. McNeill stated there were no new updates.

b. Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area Preliminary General Plan

Clint Simmons, member of the Baldwin Hills Homeowners Association questioned use of the Brown Act and if there is a preliminary plan, what is it and if the plan would be available to the community. He also asked how is the public notified of the meetings and how the board members were selected.

The Chair explained member's selection and public participation in the preliminary plan process.

Steve Leon, Ladera Heights Civic Association, they endorse the preliminary plan and asked that the Conservancy Board vote to adopt the preliminary plan for the park.

Mr. Saurenman reported on the attorney general's position regarding adoption of the plan.

Mr. McNeill commented that public comment period on the plan that State Parks is currently working on still open. State Parks will do a plan based upon the land that already exists in public ownership. The conservancy is still required to approve a plan. Basically there are two significant recommendations; 1) re-titling the plan to the Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan, 2) the environmental analysis section of the plan should be removed and substituted with a statement re-affirming the conceptual nature of the plan. Mr. McNeill also discussed other recommendations.

Member Vera stated that Culver City has started negotiations with landowners near West Los Angeles College. Culver City has expressed their wishes to annex 168 acres for a golf course for Culver City. Member Vera asked why it could not be included in the general plan as well.

Member Nichols stated the board could not change it here, since it's already been done, but State Parks could change that piece of it if they wanted. The conservancy will have plenty of authority to change what happens in the future, if they choose to do it.

Senator Murray stated he doesn't believe anyone would be against Culver City building a golf course. Senator Murray suggested maybe making a statement of the board's intent to work with the Department of Culver City on moving forward on this.

The Chair stated this represented community input and organization over a period of time and she didn't recall a Culver City proposal for a golf course as part of the discussions. She stated the credibility of the conservancy is important, and the plan was developed through community activity and input. The Chair stated if there were any major changes, she would like it to become part of community discussions again.

Member Vera stated a meeting was held with the mayor of Culver City, Mayor Wolkowitz, Los Angeles County, and Esther Feldman (CCI) years ago and in the discussions, it was negotiated that Culver City would annex a piece of land to open a golf course or variety of sports. He stated Esther Feldman promised it would be part of this plan.

Esther Feldman (CCI) was asked to respond.

The Chair stated this would be subject to other discussions, and the master plan along with the modifications Mr. McNeill mentioned. She further stated that no one, public officials or private individuals, could have or should have promised certain things to anyone.

Helen Coleman, resident, commented she was really excited about a first class park in the community, which will be open to all residents.

Member Rogers wanted to make everyone aware that this is a conceptual plan, not a master plan.

Member Arbor echoed Member Rogers' comment and welcomed the comments from the community.

Member Treanor stated State Parks are going through site-specific planning and extensive effort. Vista Pacifica will have an additional planning effort where everyone will have a chance to participate.

Member Nichols stated the vision is for a world-class state park and suggested that the matter be agendized for the next meeting and a resolution be made at that time on the modifications that Mr. McNeill made to the plan.

c. Ballona Creek Study

Mr. McNeill and Jim Lamm (Ballona Creek Renaissance) both spoke on the RFP's for study of Ballona Creek. Mr. Lamm stated that hopefully, consultants will be on board soon and informed us that the Watershed Task Multi-Agency Group and Los Angeles County will be looking at the whole watershed to see what the needs are. At their next Wednesday meeting, representatives from Irvine Ranch Water System, the Audubon Society, and Army Corp will be present; there will be a short walking tour of Ballona Creek prior to the meeting.

Ron Webster, Sierra Club, suggested establishing a trail through Culver Park through Kenneth Hahn West into the summit, sooner rather than later.

VII. Public Comment on Agenda Items

VIII. Board Member Comments

Member Treanor stated they are looking into interim public usage. Their staff will be very interested in hearing any comments.

Member Arbor stated she has had several discussions with community members, who want to have the public meeting changed to an evening meeting. She suggested maybe rotating the meeting every other month. Member Arbor would like to have this item put on next month's agenda.

Member Nichols introduced Jen Carville, as the newest member of her staff.

Member Vera wants to have put on next month's agenda, a way to help Culver City's Fire Department.

Member Mount asked who maintained the conservancy's website and volunteered his MIS person to help out on it.

Public Comments:

IX. Closed Session:

Motion made to close meeting. The public meeting closed at 12:35 p.m. to discuss Stocker Corridor.

ADJOURNMENT

Closed session adjourned and the public meeting was reopened at 1:35 p.m., to report that during closed session, prioritizing the acquisition of parcels were discussed without a decision being made. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Approved:

Mary Ann Greene
Chairperson