

Griffith Park Advisory Board Minutes
December 8, 2022
6:30pm via Zoom

- 1) **Roll Call:** Cramas, Thornton, Laib, Chung, Crow, Greenwald. Ashouri and Phillips absent.
- 2) **Chair Remarks:** Cramas advised she is looking for better “spread” on the board, to include assigned liaisons to other Griffith Park entities/constituent groups and more even work load among directors

- 3) **Approval of October minutes:** Correction offered from Greenwald that the word *slate* should be replaced by *elections*, as each officer was voted on individually.

Motion to approve

First Greenwald, Second Thornton. Minutes approved with correction.

Note: There were 13 electronic messages sent to the department re board business; 7 regarding the Griffith Park Pony Rides and 6 regarding south west Griffith Park crime issues.

4) **Special Guest Ranger Chief Loserelli**

Presented 2022 park crime trends. Robberies, vehicle burglaries, smoking, illegal camping incidents were up. There is a need for a *special enforcement zone* at the Bridge Housing, where there is a lot of illegal activity, including drug use and sales, as there is at these sites around the city.

Board questions/comments: None

Public questions/comments:

-Amy Gustincic, President of the LFIA: We are receiving many resident complaints about fires and drug use at the Bridge Home site; we feel it is not a safe or sustainable situation, without changes and improvements.

-Elizabeth Lovens: The Bridge Home area presents major health and safety concerns, including drug dealing, theft, bikeway blockage and threatened nearby residents. The facility management is inadequate and the lease should not be renewed.

-Sabrina: Is all of Griffith Park a high fire risk zone, meaning no camping or smoking/fires allowed? Can the rangers cite and remove offenders? Loserelli: Yes

-Call in: There has been reported rapes, two robberies, sex in a tennis court bathroom stall. Loserelli: Yes, this area is crime ridden and there are also a lot of car break ins there.

5) **General Public Comment**

-Deirdre: Pony Rides served a certain social economic group and had a positive impact on children.

-Marian Dodge: P-22 Day was a great success; thank you to GPAB members who came out.

-Michael Elric: Supports the Pony Rides.

-Ann Ammons: She owns a Pony Ride operation. Pony Rides can change a child’s life, particularly those with mental and/or physical challenges and it is an affordable family activity. Please let the Pony Rides in GP stay.

-Sabrina: Supports Pony Rides in GP; introduces families to animals; the extremists should not be forcing this decision.

-Naomi: Supports the Pony Rides; her granddaughter had a life altering experience there. Keep them in GP.

-4757: It is sad that we are losing a part of our culture with the elimination of the Pony Rides; they are quite valuable for children.

-Steve Alper: Would like the board to form an ad hoc committee to study visitor impact in the west GP area.

-Marcie: Wants a poll taken and a meeting with Jimmy Kim regarding reconsidering the Pony Rides in GP.

- Jay Geissheiner: In 2009 the city created the Equine Advisory Committee and they were not consulted; a travesty of process and arrogant.
- Samantha: Ponies help develop empathy in children.
- Duncan: Working at the Pony Rides is a gentle life for these ponies; he lives on Waverly and has experienced a spike in crime in recent years, attributable to the Bridge Home.

6) Special Informational Reports

The LA Riverwalk Project: Edward Giron presented about a widening walkway trail project from Riverside Dr to Forest Lawn Dr; a 12 foot wide pathway, that has a short area with a 6 foot minimum; separated from equestrian trail by a split rail fence. Wants to consult with GPAB regarding whether we would like concrete or composite material for fence. Note: Mr Giron was unable to screen share his design plan due to technical problems.

Board comments/questions:

- Crames: Is there a design posting somewhere for us to look at? Giron: No, but I can return with my partner, who is more tech savvy.
- Superintendent Smith: Have you work with RAP design staff yet? Giron: No, Mehmet at CD4 only pointed them to equestrian committees and GPAB. Smith: You also need to consult with our design team before doing anything in the park.
- Laib: Which side of the river is this on and most new fencing in the park is the composite product. Giron: South side of the river.

Public Comment/questions:

- Sabrina: Please present to the Equestrian Advisory Group
- Michael Elrica; Please leave the Pollywog arenas intact. It's a narrow area and a trail needs to be 8-10 feet away. Giron: We won't be mixing user groups.
- Liz Radley, National Trail Organization: The horse trail near the Victory off ramp has open gates, which is resulting in bicyclists, motorbikers and hikers taking that trail. They need to be resecured. Giron: We are aware that DOT is supposed to keep those gates locked but the locks keep getting cut.

Park Central Mural Project

- Gerry Hans, President, Friends of Griffith Park
They have sponsored a mural to be located on three wall panels on the north side of the visitor center community room. The mural depicts native flora and fauna, and provides a local 'sense of place'. Hans introduced the mural creators and artist, Sophia Lacin and Hennessy Christophel from Studio Tutto. They screen shared other public space projects from their portfolio and renderings of their vision for this project, which they named 'Under the Oaks'. It integrates native flora, P-22, mule deer, wrens and native brush.

Board comments/questions:

- Laib: Is it graffiti proof and weather protected? Hans: It is placed on the north wall to mitigate direct sunlight. Lacin: They use durable products to factor for weather and sunlight.
- Thornton: Shouldn't P-22 be further in the background? There is growing fear in the neighborhood about him. Hans: He is depicted in the wild area of the park and as a cat should be depicted-hiding.
- Crames: Who is funding the project? Hans: FOGP is funding, however, the signage about the mural and necessary removal of the non native junipers against the north wall is not yet approved. He would like that in a motion from the board.
- Crow: How long will it take to complete? Lacin: 6 weeks.
- Greenwald: Is this approved by park management? Superintendent Smith: No, but she doesn't see any issues with it and likes it.

Public comment/questions:

- Steve Alper: Beautiful, and free Billy the elephant!
- Sabrina: Impressive!

-Kathryn Louyse: Stunning piece and P-22 should stay as depicted; he should be honored for his endurance.

Motion:

Thornton: Board should write a letter of support, which integrates the removal of the junipers.

Second: Crow. Motion passes unanimously and Crow and Greenwald will draft the letter for the board.

Chair Crames: Announces that the next two items, Griffith Observatory parking revenue and bylaw revision presentations will be continued until the January meeting, due to time restraints.

South Griffith Park Area Planning: Past Safety Committee chair Laib

A presentation about the GP area south of Los Feliz Boulevard and west of Riverside Dr. There are several tracts of land here, including a DWP site, an equestrian easement, a So Cal Edison utility easement, the rec and parks land where the temporary Bridge Home, old California Theatre ruins and recently demolished LA Shares site. The discussion is to encourage board review about what is appropriate for this park space, which is zoned open space. The southernmost part to this park area is currently fallow, except for the Bridge Home. Laib emphasized that this is not a discussion about the appropriateness of Bridge Homes and transitional homeless housing, but rather whether it is an appropriate area, based on its direct proximity to highly utilized recreation space and densifying housing, which has not public park space. He made a comparison to the recent enacted prohibition of homeless housing next to schools, and sees no difference here. This area is designated as the permanent home for the Griffith Park Adult Activity Center, as advocated by the Vision for Griffith Park and has been promised by both past Councilpeople La Bonge and Ryu.

Board comments/questions:

-Greenwald: What is your objective here? It seems you are advocating for long range planning.

Laib: Midterm planning and long term planning and alignment with our governing document, the Vision for Griffith Park.

-Thornton: The Bridge Home should not be in the park, adjacent to numerous family and children recreation area.

-Crow: People experiencing homelessness is a serious and dire citywide challenge and we all need to contribute to solutions. Laib: Agree, however, as stated up front in the presentation, is it appropriate to put housing of this kind in the park and adjacent to high volume family recreation sites and high density housing?

Laib: May I suggest that we continue the conversation and analysis of this at upcoming board meetings? And perhaps Crow can help us get CD4 and the operators of the Bridge Home to join us? Crow: Yes, would be happy to help with that.

Public comment/questions:

-Stephanie Vendig, board member of the GP Adult Activity Center. There has to be a resolution on the Bridge Home for the Adult Center project to move forward. And, this area was promised to us by both La Bonge and Ryu and the city council approved it.

-Kathryn Louyse: "expletive".

-6577: This area has become a magnet for drug use, prostitution and illicit trade with those that live in the river area. There was a recent rape at the Tennis Court women's restroom by a resident at the Bridge Home. There could not be any worse possible location. Note: It has since been determined that the alleged rape was by an ex resident of the Bridge Home who had been expelled prior due to behavioral problems.

More Board comments/questions

-Crames: She wants CD4 to come to next meeting to join this conversation.

-Greenwald: The location of the GP Adult Activity Center permanent home IS in the Vision for GP for this location and he supports the board advising the department in the planning for it, and a vision for this area in general.

7) **Superintendent Updates:** Superintendent Smith

- The mobility plan suggestions for GP Dr are nearing completion and striping and permanent signage is going out to bid.
- Crystal Springs Drive safety and mobility study has begun.
- The Pony Ride concession agreement expires on 12/22/22 and will not be extended. The RAP executive office made this decision based on some recent developments, involving improper documentation and a recent discovery of pony deaths that were unreported, violating an expected collaborative transparency by all vendors in the park. There is an extensive report on this on the RAP website and there will be public input and public meetings as to future use of this area.
- The Los Feliz Plunge was closed due to a worldwide shortage of chlorine, due to covid and a need for serious repairs. We are aspiring to reopen it as soon as possible.
- The Breakfast Club contract is in negotiations after the expiration of their initial 50 year lease.
- 6 park restrooms are designated for remodeling and repairs and the Bureau of Engineering is engaged in utilizing Prop K funding. Regrettably, redistricting has eliminated the Bronson Cave restrooms Prop K funding.

Board comments/questions

- Laib: Can we please integrate the public comment tonight about the benefit of animal/adolescent interaction in the planning please. Smith: Absolutely.
- Crow: How was this decision made? Smith: The RAP General Manager made the decision.
- Thornton: She is shocked that RAP did not consult/include the equestrian groups and that the decision seems rushed. Smith: RAP was just notified about the death of the ponies, the lack of required documentation and transparency. And, the contract is ending. A reimagined animal concession will be considered.
- Greenwald: Is there other funding for the Bronson restrooms? This summer the temporary toilets were quite odiferous, particularly in summer. Smith: Planning and CD4 need to find funding.
- Thornton: Why is the Merry Go Round still closed? Smith: It is a concession and the ride itself is privately owned and tied up legally in a probate court case.

Public comment/questions:

- Nedra: This was abrupt and seems irresponsible. Can it be reversed?
- Michael Elrick: This was a coup by animal activists, who trampled on children and bullied this decision.
- Cameron: The Bridge Home has become an active site of crystal meth dealing and fires.
- Katherine Schwartz: According to the RAP website, the veterinarian's recommendations were met.
- Gerry Hans: FOGP was both surprised and disappointed that they nor the public or GPAB were consulted re the Pony Rides.
- Michael: The City just needs to quit doing things this way and honor public input.
- Stephanie Vendig: So you know, the Breakfast Club has also been subleasing space to the GP Adult Activity Center.
- Elizabeth Lovens: There is \$770,000 in Quimby funds in CD4, which should be enough to support the Adult Center permanent home and LF Plunge improvements. And toilets at Bronson!

8) **Committee Reports:** Crames

Executive Committee: We dealt with the bylaw revisions and director Greenwald shall report on them at the January board meeting

9) **Board Business**

- Laib: Invite new Rec and Parks GM Kim to a GPAB meeting.

-Greenwald: We agreed that the new park biologist would regularly report to the board and what is the progress on the permanent contract? We should consider a crosswalk at the Trails Cafe, as identified by a past public comment.

-Crames: We need to relook at the Dixon report, particularly the parking revenue funding and public transportation elements.

Motion to adjourn

First Greenwald/second Laib
meeting adjourns at 9:17pm

Next GPAB meeting is January 26, 2023 at 6:30pm via Zoom

