

OPEN SPACE AND ECOLOGY COMMITTEE**February 11, 2009**

*COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM, BRISBANE CITY HALL
50 PARK PLACE, BRISBANE, CA 94005*

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Committee Chairperson Whitten-Greenlee called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present:	Fieldman, Gutekanst, Liu, Miller, and Whitten-Greenlee
Staff Members Present:	Management Analyst Pontecorvo, Community Development Director Prince, Assistant to the City Manager Smith, Principal Planner Swiecki
Consultants Present:	Peter Dangermond and Karin Winters, The Dangermond Group
Others Present:	John Christopher Burr; Dana Dillworth; Mike Pacelli, Bay Relations, Universal Paragon Corporation

* MC = Member of Committee

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MC Miller made a motion, seconded by MC Gutekanst, to adopt the agenda as proposed. The motion was carried unanimously.

BAYLANDS PUBLIC SPACE PLANNING WORKSHOP

Community Development Director introduced the City's consultant, Peter Dangermond, and gave a brief summary of his background. He invited Mr. Dangermond to give a presentation about the open space at the Baylands and take comments from the committee and members of the public.

Mr. Dangermond noted that his firm specializes in master planning for trails, parks, and open space, all of which will be important elements at the Baylands. He emphasized the importance of first deciding what open space uses a community wants in a given area, noting that identifying specific facilities and locations can take place after that.

Mr. Dangermond noted that Brisbane's vision for the Baylands focuses on sustainability and extensive open space. He reviewed previously identified guiding principles: keeping most of the space south of Visitation Creek open, using sustainability as a framework for both the open space and the development, restoring and preserving wetlands, providing community amenities as well as regional attractions, preserving views of the Bay, and connecting the Baylands with

the rest of Brisbane and surrounding areas.

MC Miller commented that the Baylands should provide connections for wildlife and habitat corridors in addition to connections for humans.

Mr. Dangermond showed aerial maps of the site and pointed out its main features and constraints. He said the consultants began their work by gathering information about technical issues, environmental issues, aesthetics, social needs, and financing. He noted that gathering input from the City Council and the City's advisory groups is an important part of this process.

Mr. Dangermond discussed possible ways of connecting the Baylands with its surroundings and identified barriers to connectivity. He suggested mitigating freeway noise, view impacts, and wind by constructing earthen mounds and berms. He proposed rerouting the main entrance road to create a more attractive gateway. Mr. Dangermond noted that some portions of the Baylands are subject to contamination and soil settlement, and he recommended careful selection of open space uses to avoid those problems.

Mr. Dangermond talking about enhancing Visitacion Creek and the habitat around the lagoon. He observed that the Baylands has considerable natural habitat that people want to preserve. He suggested having uses adjacent to the habitat areas such as interpretive centers and displays to help promote a better understanding of the environment.

Mr. Dangermond displayed a list of ideas for open space uses suggested in past meetings and workshops. He noted the items are grouped in terms of active and passive uses, indoor and outdoor uses, and activities geared for adults and children. Mr. Dangermond welcomed comments and suggestions from the committee.

MC Miller asked Mr. Dangermond to explain the numbering system on the map. Mr. Dangermond described the characteristics of the eight numbered areas and gave examples of potential compatible uses for each section.

MC Gutekanst recommended taking public comments before committee discussion, and other committee members agreed.

Chairperson Whitten-Greenlee invited comments from audience members.

Dana Dillworth, Brisbane resident, provided a copy of a PowerPoint presentation about the alternatives to the developer's specific plan. She said the Baylands has extremely valuable natural resources, including extensive wetlands that provides habitat for migrating birds. Ms. Dillworth displayed pictures of native frogs at the Baylands. She noted that sustainability can include facilities like a fish hatchery and algae production for biofuels.

Ms. Dillworth expressed her opinion that the three alternatives identified by the City's

consultants overlook some of the important opportunities presented by the Baylands development. She recommended taking advantage of windy conditions and geothermal heat by using these resources to generate power and heat. She noted that the rail corridor should be used to move goods as well as people. Ms. Dillworth expressed concern that mounds will block views of the Bay, and she questioned the environmental impact of moving large amounts of soil.

Ms. Dillworth emphasized the need to select open space uses carefully, especially in areas with vernal pools and wildlife habitat. She objected to cutting the property in two with a road, and noted that building new attractions at the Baylands could bring unwanted traffic and crowds.

Ms. Dillworth concluded by saying that breaking the Baylands into separate small pieces will not achieve the City's goal of protecting habitat and preserving open space. She recommended finding ways to expand and connect green areas.

John Christopher Burr, lifelong resident of Brisbane, said the Planning Commission expressed its desire to identify suitable sites for solar and wind power facilities before planning the rest of the development, and he supported this approach. He recommended that the Open Space and Ecology Committee endorse the idea of setting aside sites for solar and wind resources. Mr. Burr urged the City to take a leadership role in promoting alternative energy sources. He cited research done by Paul Finn, of Public Power, regarding green power energy projects and how they can be financed, and he suggested involving Mr. Finn in the planning process.

Mr. Burr advocated restoring the freshwater and tidal wetlands in the Baylands. He noted that much of Crocker Industrial Park was wetlands before it was developed, and underground water is still flowing. He recommended making use of the old rail tunnel as a trail connecting Crocker Industrial Park with the Baylands.

Mr. Burr expressed concern about building earthen mounds and high fences to screen the rail corridor and block noise. He said there are better and less expensive ways of mitigating noise impacts, such as using speakers to cancel noise. He urged the City to explore these possibilities.

Mr. Burr noted that several educational institutions and research organizations in the Bay Area are interested in the lagoon and the wetlands. He suggested that the City invite these entities to adopt the lagoon as a project for students.

Chairperson Whitten-Greenlee thanked audience members for their comments.

MC Gutekanst said one of her primary concerns is ensuring well-connected and functioning wetlands. She proposed connecting the Crocker Park and Baylands wetlands as Mr. Burr suggested. She noted that the wetlands should be viewed as a large flood plain rather than a limited area near the creek. She also recommended creating wildlife corridors connecting the Baylands with San Bruno Mountain, the area north of Geneva Avenue, the PG&E marsh, and Candlestick Point. MC Gutekanst suggested first identifying the wetlands areas, and then

identifying locations for alternative power facilities.

MC Gutekanst cautioned that mountain bikes should not be allowed in sensitive habitat areas.

MC Gutekanst recommended using wetlands for bioremediation. She noted a bioremediation site could be a cultural and educational attraction as well.

Mr. Dangermond said he was familiar with a wetlands bioremediation project near Humboldt Bay. He noted that freshwater wetlands areas can be used to clean stormwater runoff before it reaches the Bay, but saltwater wetlands might not be feasible because of the contaminated soil. MC Gutekanst advocated cleaning up the contamination to prevent toxins from leaching into the Bay.

MC Gutekanst expressed interest in expanding the lagoon and extending the wetlands back toward Crocker Park. Mr. Dangermond observed that most of the water from Crocker Park drains into the creek near the fire station.

Mr. Dangermond said one of the alternatives shows a road next to the creek. He clarified that he was not advocating bisecting the wetlands, but thought that integrating the road into the open space would be a quieter and more attractive alternative.

MC Miller cautioned that a major underground pipeline runs between the tank farm and the Bay, and the pipe has leaked in the past. He recommended not wasting time and money trying to clean that area, but focusing instead on expanding the wetlands farther south.

MC Liu expressed support for expanding the wetlands across Bayshore Boulevard. She recommended following up on Mr. Burr's suggestion about noise-canceling technology. MC Liu suggested providing a restroom along the Bay Trail for use by bikers and pedestrians.

Mr. Dangermond noted that railroad noise is not as big a problem as safety. He explained that the purpose of the high fences is to separate the tracks from people.

MC Liu recalled that an ongoing wind study was underway, and she asked when the results of that investigation would be available. MC Miller indicated that the one-year study will be concluded in April.

Chairperson Whitten-Greenlee observed that Area 1 would be a good site for a high school because of its proximity to town and accessibility. She said she would like to see as much wetlands area restored as possible. She asked about the possibility of creating a green-roof overpass to cross the railroad tracks.

Mr. Dangermond pointed out two possible places where underpasses could be placed to provide crossings for wildlife. He suggested that the City and the developer jointly ask for this feature as

part of the high-speed rail project.

Chairperson Whitten-Greenlee recommended establishing an equestrian facility with riding trails and a farm near Ice House Hill. She noted that an urban farm with livestock would be an excellent educational resource for children.

Mr. Dangermond recommended making sure that horse grazing is not detrimental to butterfly host plants.

MC Gutekanst noted that people have used the area near the quarry as a shooting range, so the soil is contaminated with lead.

Chairperson Whitten-Greenlee said she would like to see some kind of water element, such as a pond or lake, around Area 7. She indicated that a speaker at a recent native plant conference made the point that not all water should go into pipes.

Chairperson Whitten-Greenlee advocated encouraging bike commuters in addition to recreational bike-riding. She recommended more trails and hiking opportunities.

Mr. Dangermond noted that his firm has been looking at ways of connecting the transit hub with the rest of the Baylands with bike and pedestrian trails.

MC Liu emphasized the importance of connectivity. She agreed that Area 1 would be the best area for a high school because of its accessibility. She expressed support extensive trails throughout the Baylands.

MC Liu said she would like to see a sculpture park incorporating some of the historic uses of the site, an organic farm, an interpretive center, and alternative energy facilities. She recommended protecting people from highway noise and pollution with screening and berms.

Chairperson Whitten-Greenlee advocated integrating art with the landscape itself. She suggested consulting artists about attractive ways to design the parks and trails. Mr. Dangermond noted that designing specific features will happen at a later stage in the planning process. He stated that his firm has a relationship with a creative landscape artist with expertise in this area. He added that placement of uses will provide opportunities to connect spaces in a creative and interesting way.

MC Liu mentioned the warming hut at Crissy Field in San Francisco as an example of a useful amenity for trail users and visitors.

MC Miller said he agreed with the suggestions made by other committee members. He reiterated Ms. Dillworth's point that some of the site's constraints can be opportunities for creative uses. He expressed support for exploring wind power options and solar energy.

MC Miller emphasized that integration and connectivity are major aspects of sustainability. He noted that corridors should be established throughout the buildings as well as in green areas, and he recommended considering this when planning the public space. He recalled that the guest panelist from the Presidio talked about connecting islands of open space to form a more coherent whole. MC Miller observed that everything in the development should be integrated and interrelated, and he expressed his opinion that this approach should be part of the guiding principles.

MC Fieldman commented that she did not yet have a clear idea of the biological potential of the Baylands. She said the natural resources should drive the placement of alternative energy facilities and buildings in the development. She agreed with MC Miller that uses need to be compatible and integrated with each other.

MC Miller noted that Mr. Dangermond's work can help the City identify the different kinds of biological resources and potential compatible uses for the site. Mr. Dangermond suggested having a biologist analyze the Baylands and identify biological resources. He said experts agree that uses that increase biodiversity and habitat are most beneficial.

Community Development Director Prince recommended *The World Without Us*, a book by Alan Weisman about the regenerative powers of a site.

Chairperson Whitten-Greenlee said she and her husband created a pond and garden in their yard that has been attracting frogs. She noted that creating even a small amount of habitat can produce significant benefits for wildlife.

Committee members thanked Mr. Dangermond for his efforts and said they looked forward to seeing his work.

Assistant to the City Manager Smith asked Mr. Dangermond about the next steps in the planning process. Mr. Dangermond said he would be meeting with the Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission, representatives from the Association of Bay Area Governments, and local artists. He stated that all of the comments from the City Council, members of the public, and the advisory groups will be incorporated in a draft report that will be submitted to the Council for review.

Community Development Director Prince noted that the three alternatives include open space, but without much direction about potential uses and locations. He explained that the purpose of Mr. Dangermond's work is to reflect the community's ideas and help establish a framework for what should go into the open space, and these ideas will then be incorporated in the community's preferred alternative for analysis in the EIR.

MC Miller observed that the City Council seems to be looking for an overall parameter plan.

MC Gutekanst noted that there have been groups of people meeting to discuss connectivity. She recommended that Mr. Dangermond talk with Dave Holland, from the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Department.

LEED UPDATE

Management Analyst Pontecorvo distributed a memo describing the draft LEED rating systems for neighborhoods and new construction. She said the new 2009 LEED standard will be published within the next few months. She noted that the document includes a detailed discussion of the credits available.

MC Gutekanst suggested postponing discussion of the LEED update until the next meeting, and other committee members agreed.

CITY COUNCIL MATTERS

Renewable Energy Policy, Review of Green Building Ordinance

Assistant to the City Manager Smith provided copies of the revised draft renewable energy policy.

MC Miller advised that the City Council will address this topic at its next meeting. He said the draft resolution seemed too weak and too broad, applying to all new developments including the Baylands. He noted that as a result of comments made at its last meeting, the Council directed the staff to redraft the provisions to clarify that more restrictive standards will apply to the Baylands.

OTHER COMMITTEE MATTERS

CAG Update

MC Gutekanst reported that at its last meeting, the Community Advisory Group (CAG) reviewed and discussed a report characterizing the landfill waste at the Baylands. She said the CAG would be meeting with the author of the report the following week, and she offered to provide an update at the next meeting.

MC Gutekanst noted that the CAG heard an interesting presentation from an Audubon Society representative about restoration efforts at Pier 94 in San Francisco.

MC Miller pointed out that the project demonstrates that habitat restoration is feasible and successful.