

BANKERS HILL COMMUNITY GROUP MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 18, 2019
Bankers Hill Clubhouse, 3030 Front St.

BHCG Treasurer Jeanne Rawlings called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The following Steering Committee members were present: Rawlings, Chair Amie Hayes, Vice Chair Nancy Moors, Secretary John Lamb, Ann Garwood, John Percy and Peter Raymond. There were approximately 52 people in attendance.

Rawlings welcomed attendees and introduced Steering Committee members.

Treasurer's Report

Rawlings reported that BHCG, as of the end of October, had \$4,656.16 in the bank. She asked attendees to continue to suggest community-improvement ideas on which to spend the funds.

Announcements

Rawlings also called for volunteers for the November and December Bankers Hill Clubhouse luncheons. She then introduced Aimee Leon, who operates Avant-Garde Travel, the featured business of the month.

Featured Business

Leon described Avant-Garde as a three-year-old boutique travel company in Bankers Hill with 15 advisors. Located at the corner of 5th Avenue and Kalmia Street, the company specializes in group travel, custom vacation planning, escorted tours, river and big-ship cruising and luxury hotels to develop "once-in-a-lifetime experiences," Leon said. Each advisor specializes in different things, she said, adding that most are based in Southern California. Agents average about 20 years of experience. Leon said events highlighting group-travel opportunities are held at the office. "We do individual trips as well," she said. Discounts are also available, she said. She also talked about future travel plans, including to Antarctica in 2022.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

Raymond said the homeless continue to come into Bankers Hill from Balboa Park. He said he hopes the next mayor will do a better job than the current mayor.

Government Representatives

Randy Wilde, representing state Assemblymember Todd Gloria, said legislative recess continues but "our doors are always open" for issues with state agencies. He said he spends a lot of time helping people navigate the Real ID issue, particularly what the requirements are. Also CalTrans matters and questions about Cover California, which is now in open enrollment. He encouraged attendees to provide ideas for future legislative bills and "the priorities you'd like to see" the state Legislature tackle in the next session, which begins in early January. He also invited audience members to attend an annual holiday open house Dec. 11 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the downtown state building and bring gift donations. This year, requests are for backpacks, jackets, socks, clothing and non-perishable food items that will be distributed to needy children.

Ty Burch, representative of District 3 Councilmember Chris Ward, reported that the City Council unanimously agreed that the Mission Valley stadium sale purchase offer of \$86.2 million from San Diego State University is a fair offer and in the public's interest. It now moves to the mayor's office, which will oversee negotiations. He said a fourth temporary shelter for the homeless opened at 17th and Imperial with 150 beds. Scooter corrals are beginning to pop up in Uptown, he said. He said 55 corrals are planned for the Bankers Hill area, mainly near 4th and 5th avenues in red no-parking zones. He encouraged residents to report — preferably through the

city's Get It Done app — scooters that are parked outside the corrals so the city can ramp up enforcement. He also said the 4th and 5th avenue bikeways should be breaking ground soon. He also said Ward's office, working with the BHCG, is hoping to do a "volunteer day" to repaint the Quince Street Bridge. He said money was requested for that in last year's city budget, but the mayor denied the request. "So we're trying to find a creative solution with our wonderful community here," he said. "We can take this into our own hands and make this happen." A tentative date of Feb. 7 has been discussed, Chair Hayes said.

Update on Maple Canyon Restoration Phases 1 and 2

Rawlings introduced presenters Elle Lotfi, project manager, and Nick Dorner, design consultant with Rick Engineering. Lotfi thanked audience members for their attendance and interest in this project, which dates back several years when the scope focused mainly on the replacement of the canyon's storm-drain system and outlet structures. "The purpose is to minimize the erosion that's currently happening on the side slopes of the canyon," she said, "and restoring it to the maximum extent that we can."

A couple years ago, she said, the non-profit San Diego Canyonlands brought forward an idea to restore the canyon's streambed and minimize the erosion there as well. The city "fully supported and collaborated" with San Diego Canyonlands, Lotfi said, in developing that concept and then "handed off" to the City of San Diego for further design work and moving it toward construction.

Lotfi then introduced design consultant Dorner, who provided an overview of the construction phases. Phase 1, he said, involves replacing all 16 storm-drain outfalls flowing into Maple Canyon. "They are either undersized or are not going all the way down to the canyon floor, so it's causing the erosion of the slopes," he said. The drains will be "upsized" to meet current standards, he said, and also be extended all the way to the canyon floor to eliminate that erosion.

At the downstream end along West Maple Street, a new storm-drain system will be installed that will "capture all the runoff," Dorner said. Currently, every storm event produces runoff that flows over the street, leaving large deposits of silt from the canyon erosion. In the canyon, the scarring from years of erosion will be repaired and revegetated, including some new trees on the slopes, he said. In addition, 11 to 15 curb ramps will be upgraded to meet current standards, as well as some street and sidewalk repairs.

At the end of Nutmeg Street near First Avenue, a large storm-drain outfall will be taken down and a nearby finger canyon that created a lot of erosion will be restored, Dorner said. The Maple Canyon trail, to be used for access during construction, will be restored and improved "with a more defined width," Dorner said. He specifically mentioned planned improvements just south of the Quince Street Bridge, where erosion over time has narrowed the trail to a couple feet wide. After completion, he said, city maintenance crews will be able to access the entire system, unlike today.

As for Phase 2, design on that has just begun, Dorner said. He said Phase 2 involves taking the design developed by Canyonlands and proceeding with engineering details for an anticipated 25 "grade-control structures" along the length of the canyon and eliminating the "significant scouring" that's occurred in the canyon, which has created gorges as much as 15 to 20 feet deep.

In addition, Dorner emphasized that all but two previously planned large concrete outfall structures have been eliminated from the design and will be replaced with less visible concrete outfalls that will be colored to match the surrounding environment. Similarly blended cobble stones will be used at the end of the outfalls rather than the "angular granite" previously proposed.

Dorner said the plan is to protect as many of the existing trees as possible. "Any tree that does not have to be touched is not being touched," he said, adding that includes a row of jacaranda

along First Avenue that earlier were planned for removal. If trees require removal — there might be a couple, Dorner said — new trees will be planted when possible.

He said outreach is ongoing with owners of property that will be “directly impacted” by the project in order to resolve any concerns.

Rawlings asked what the timeline is for the two phases. Dorner said currently, because of environmental permits that are required, the timeline for both are being bundled together. He said it appears construction could begin in the spring of 2021 and be completed within 12 to 18 months, roughly the fall of 2022. Additional time will be required for restoration plans and maintenance and monitoring periods necessary, varying slightly for the canyon slopes and floor.

Lotfi added that the plan is to process and seek construction bids for both phases at once without delaying moving forward with Phase 1, which is in final design phases. The goal, she said, is to accelerate the design of Phase 2 as much as possible to catch up with Phase 1. The key is to halt the erosion happening in the canyon, she said.

Roy McMakin of Friends of Maple Canyon, which was involved extensively in the redesign process, noted additional plans for a crosswalk at 4th Avenue and that many of these ideas emerged “organically” from the community. He praised the city and Rick Engineering for embracing these ideas. He said working on both phases simultaneously is much appreciated and will allow for a cohesive approach that had been seriously lacking in past proposals.

One attendee asked how construction would proceed — working, for example, from the north end down to West Maple Street — and how long West Maple would be closed for construction. Dorner said the street drain is being designed in such a way to allow one lane of traffic to be open. He said the contractor will be required to provide residents with access to their homes during the roughly three months of construction along the street. As far as direction of construction, he said that will be up to the contractor. “Whatever they can do that’s the fastest and cheapest, most-effective way to get the project done on schedule,” Dorner said. Lotfi said residents will be notified prior to work beginning.

Asked for details about the West Maple work, Dorner said a 48-inch, reinforced-concrete pipeline will be run eight to 10 feet under the street. The canyon floor will be regraded to slow down the water flow, he said. Asked about the cost, Lotfi said Phase 1 is estimated at \$4 million for construction. No estimate yet for Phase 2. The city’s Transportation and Stormwater Department has committed to funding the full project. That department will also maintain the storm drains after construction.

Lotfi said the environmental process is currently holding up progress, in particular a site development permit that requires a letter of support from the community. From there, permits from other agencies will be sought, followed by the purchase of and easements required on some property, then seeking bids.

An attendee asked if, following the regrading of the canyon floor, would it then be revegetated. She said she’s been walking the canyon since 1994 and has seen it in various stages from lushness to “almost destroyed,” calling it “heartbreaking.” She called the plan “smart,” but “not the best thing.”

McMakin countered that it’s the same project as proposed by Canyonlands. The attendee disagreed, arguing that it would be better to “live with the environment” as is, and find a better way to manage that. She said she was concerned that the follow through wouldn’t match the plans.

An attendee asked if there were any photographs of similar work to get an idea of what it would look like. Lotfi said she was simply giving an overview of the project, but would be happy to

provide more specifics. She said the time constraints of the meeting precluded her from getting into more detail. Individuals are welcome to review the specifics at a future date, she said.

Tim Pruss, a landscape architect with Rick Engineering and part of the design team, said it's been a great opportunity to collaborate with the community. He said his hope is that the final design will be "very successful and sustainable." "There's been a lot of great ideas," he said. "We've thrown everything on the table, and I think collectively we've come together with a really great plan." The idea is to give the work a "more natural feel" that will "be there for generations. We've put a lot of thought into this."

Lotfi said as far as recommending another canyon with similar work done, all canyons are different and difficult to compare. "This is a unique canyon that deserves its own unique attention and its own unique individual design," she said.

Brendan Hastie, a project engineer with Rick Engineering, said the drainage plan takes a "well-documented approach" and was developed by Canyonlands. "We're simply taking that concept and moving that forward," he said. He said the control grades involve two-and-a-half- to four-foot drops, what he called "stair-stepping it," that will lower water-flow velocities and prevent erosion. That stabilization will allow vegetation to remain rather than getting ripped out with each storm event.

McMakin said the current plan is much improved over previous proposals. He said the "care and love" put into this by Canyonlands and Friends of Maple Canyon members, when "mixed in with Rick Engineering, I found an incredible synergy of a lot of love, expertise and professionalism that went really far. It's a really good plan and a really good team of people."

Rawlings noted that a table will be dedicated to Maple Canyon issues at the January BHCG roundtable meeting.

Eric Bowlby, executive director of San Diego Canyonlands, asked about proposed bends in the storm-drain pipes to dissipate the water energy, "and each one of those bends would involve an outfall cleanout, a pretty sizable piece of infrastructure, some 30 of them perhaps, on the slopes." He said his organization was proposing "internal ring" dissipators to reduce that energy that wouldn't require the drain cleanouts. He said if the city had cooperated, the stabilization of the canyon could have been completed by the coming summer. Permits and \$300,000 in grants "are in hand," Bowlby said.

Vice Chair Moors made a motion that the BHCG support the city's plans as represented and ask that continued concerns be addressed as the city moves through the planning and permitting process, and that updates continue to be brought to the community. Raymond seconded the motion. The motion passed, with approximately 40 attendees in support and seven opposed.

Airport Development Plan Update

Ted Anasis, planning manager for the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority, provided audience members with an update of construction plans for San Diego International Airport. He opened with some recent history about San Diego International. SDIA is the third-busiest airport in California. In 2018, the airport had a "banner year" serving 24 million passengers, the busiest year on record, he said. Of those, one million were international passengers. That uptick in volume has continued since the late 1990s, he said, particularly in the last five or six years.

Anasis said the airport contributes \$12 billion annually to the regional economy, all with a single runway of 9,401 feet on 661 acres. In the last decade, efforts have been made to reduce the airport's carbon footprint, he said, adding that through earlier projects, SDIA became the first Platinum LEED airport in the world. He said the airport is one of only two in the country to achieve a carbon neutrality rating. The airport is also only one of two to require alternative-fuel vehicles in its transportation network, he said.

The centerpiece of the next phase of planning, he said, is the replacement of Terminal 1, originally opened in 1967. "Poor Terminal 1," he said, noting that when it first opened, it was intended to serve 2.5 million annual passengers. It now serves five times that, roughly 12 million, he said.

"It is an aging facility," he said. Designed with a single curb-front to serve both arriving and departing passengers, Terminal 1 is now congested and not an efficient facility to move passengers through the airport, he said. It also has "substandard" waiting lounges, concessions, security lanes and baggage claim. He said the goal is to provide "parity" with the improvements at Terminal 2.

Over the past two years, environmental reviews have been conducted, focused primarily on "how do we improve transit to the airport," he said. Working with other agencies, the airport has looked at ways to improve connectivity near-term and long-term, he explained. Comments on the airport's 2018 Environmental Impact Report urged some of the following improvements, including using airport funds to make off-airport improvements to its circulation system surrounding the airport.

He noted the proposed designated transit area that might include a connection to the San Diego Trolley in the long term and the launch of an Old Town shuttle bus that would be in service in 2020. Parking will also be reduced at the airport in a second proposed parking structure near Terminal 1. "We've reduced it by 2,000 parking stalls," he said.

He said the airport has worked to improve sustainability by including elements of the city's Climate Action Plan around the airport, particularly regarding pedestrian and bicycling improvements. The plans also include preparation for sea-level rise, he said.

Anasis then provided some details on the anticipated design of Terminal 1, including a new taxiway, referred to as Alpha, to create a "bidirectional flow" of airplanes on the airfield. It will allow planes to get to gates more quickly, he said. Terminal 1, now featuring 19 gates, would grow to 30 gates in the new design, he said. The airport's current gate total would rise from 51 to 62, he said.

Similar to Terminal 2, Terminal 1 would become a "dual-level" facility, with arrivals at the bottom level and departures on top, he said. In addition, a new three-lane entry road would be constructed, bringing airport-bound traffic from Laurel Street and Harbor Drive onto airport property, allowing non-airport traffic to continue on to Harbor Island and Point Loma, he said.

Rental shuttle buses would also be removed completely from Harbor Drive, he added. Also, six electric shuttle buses would provide a free connection from Old Town's multi-modal transit location. The goal, he said, is to reduce travel times to the airport. Anasis said the hope is to certify the final EIR by January 2020, seek various federal and state reviews, and then begin construction on the new Terminal 1 in 2021, with the first 19 new gates operational by 2024.

Proposed Charter Amendment for November 2020 Ballot Measure re Police Practices

Kate Yavenditti, an attorney and member of Women Occupy San Diego and the National Lawyers Guild, gave attendees a preview of a proposed ballot measure that would establish an Independent Commission on Police Practices in San Diego.

Speaking on behalf of San Diegans for Justice, Yavenditti said when complaints are filed now regarding police misconduct, the complaint goes to the city's Community Review Board on Police Practices, which then sends it over to the San Diego Police Department. "And they do nothing with it," she said. She said the Police Department reviews only about 10-15 percent of the complaints made.

Once reviewed, the police provide a report to the Community Review Board, a 26-member, all-volunteer civilian oversight panel that reviews all the documents, review body-camera video and audio, and witness interviews. The board then decides if it agrees with police Internal Affairs investigations and then makes its own recommendations. It also makes recommendations on police policies and practices, she said.

Yavenditti said the Police Department should not be investigating itself. "We believe the oversight board needs to be an independent agency to investigate complaints of the Police Department," she said, just like other professionals like doctors, lawyers, dentists, etc.

She said the proposed ballot measure would abolish the current review board and establish an independent commission that would: 1) be independent of the mayor, taking it out of the political process; 2) use independent investigators, not members of the Police Department; 3) have subpoena power; and 4) have independent legal counsel, versus the current use of the City Attorney, which also represents the Police Department.

Yavenditti said she hopes the City Council will agree to put the measure on the November 2020 ballot, possibly in January but not later than February. She said she would like the BHCG to sign on as a supporter. About 50 organizations have already offered their support, she said.

An audience member asked who pays for the new commission. Yavenditti said it would still be funded by the city, modeled after the city's Ethics Commission and Housing Commission. There would be city staff, she said.

Meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by John Lamb, Secretary.