



**MEETING NOTES
JULY 9, 2015**

ATTENDING: MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES- Ben Brewer, Michael Cortez, Estela de la Garza, Caleb Etheredge, Jerry Geyer, Scott Gustafson, Andi Rodriguez, Humberto Saldaña, .
STAFF AND CONSULTANTS- Carmen Fitts, Michael Arrington, Don Curry, David Garza, Bridget Hinze, Sonia Jimenez, John Mize, Brice Moczygemba, Bob Perez, Russell Persyn, Suzanne Scott, Kerry Averyt. **MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC-** Rosemary Geyer, Don Mathis, Larry Steves, Darren Ratajski, Robert Ramirez, Heath Coven, Joan Miller, Manuel Benavides

Welcome and Introductions

Michael Cortez, Co-chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 8:40 a.m.

Calendar Items

- a. Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee (WCROC) meeting – August 11, 2015, 6:00 p.m. at 100 E. Guenther, Board Room.
- b. San Pedro Creek Subcommittee meeting – August 13, 2015 8:30 .am. at 100 E. Guenther, Board Room.*

***This date was changed to August 7 to allow for committee review of the 70% plans prior to Bexar County Commissioner’s Court review and potential approval to move forward set for August 11.**

Approval of Meeting Notes from May 14, 2015 and June 11, 2015

Andi Rodriguez made a motion to approve both documents as drafted. Ben Brewer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Design Team Update

John Mize, Ford Powell and Carson, provided a design update. The draft estimate was completed on July 2 and will be finalized on July 29. The documentation has been received for the four bridges and channel walls to be eligible for listing on the National Register. The structures have distinct construction techniques related to the time they were built.

Looking ahead, the 70 percent plans are due on July 31st and scheduled to be presented to Commissioner’s Court for approval to continue to the 90 percent plans. The 90 percent construction document is due to the estimator on October 9th with the final due in early November. Utility coordination is ongoing along with real estate

property coordination.

Questions included the following:

- Is there an internal QC (quality control) for the construction plans? Yes. The plans are crosschecked utilizing all the disciplines to eliminate any conflicts and ensure they are done correctly. For the next phase, the QC will be more focused on due diligence. When the 90 percent effort starts, all issues will need to be formally addressed.
- Will this committee be reviewing the 70 percent documents? Currently, there is not a review scheduled. It would have to occur between July 31 and August 11, the date the plans are going to Commissioner's Court for approval.
- Is the 70 percent a decision point for Commissioner's Court? Yes. The approval of the 70 percent is the approval to move forward to the 90 percent plans.
- Has the team received any cost estimating feedback? The documents were submitted on July 2. Subsequently, a long list of questions and a conference call was conducted to go through the list. The call included all [technical] disciplines and included review of every character area. It was very productive. The team is preparing supplemental information to address the questions. The final is slated for completion on July 29 and will be part of the Commissioners Court package. The estimator will also double-check the estimates.
- The current costs are based on the 40 percent plans? Yes. Have there been any changes? Yes. They will be noted in the 70 percent estimate.
- Regarding the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) designation for the bridges and walls, are the documents ready to submit and how long before a response? The submittal is required for any historical project. Even though the structures are eligible, that does not mean they are getting the designation. The submittal is due in October but there is no timeframe for getting them listed.
- If these structures get listed, will it delay the project? No. The possibility of the designations was taken into account during the design.

Mr. Cortez noted that the designation of the Missions and the Alamo as a World Heritage Site will impact how people perceive what we are doing on this project and the process we use. Suzanne Scott, SARA General Manager, noted the designation was a celebration of the merging of cultures. The designation highlights not just the history of the United States but also the histories of those who came before this area was part of the nation.

Additional questions included:

- Is US Army Corps of Engineers review required for this project? Yes. They are aware of it. There has been one meeting for the initial coordination effort. There will be another call for the 70 percent submittal. They are well aware of the efforts and have been involved for several years. This project is unique with the tunnel system but the permit process is similar to the one SARA went through for Elmendorf Lake Park and the trail system. The Westside Creeks Feasibility Study involved the Corps and the limits go to Camp Street.

- Will design impact the 100-year floodplain – will it be reduced or eliminated? The goal is contain it within the banks of the creek. Current modeling shows it will be accomplished. The maps are available and were shown with the 40 percent presentation to this committee and the Commissioners Court.

Update on Storytelling Process & Curatorial Process

Steve Tillotson, Muñoz and Associates, provided the update. There has been one meeting of the storytelling working group. The draft narrative is due by mid-July and within the following 30 days, the final draft narrative is due. The team will be collecting additional information and in-depth research. There will be a need to continue the effort beyond final construction. The codex [illustrative diagram] provides the bridge between the story and design. The narrative will have form and substance with a level of content. From left to right, the codex begins with the Tree of Life and is aligned with the summer solstice sunrise and the winter solstice sunset. There are twelve significant art features and springs from the tunnel inlet to the Pan American Highway/I-35. The narrative will be based on a philosophical point of view, not a literal chronology. The story will be told using architecture, public art, and signage/wayfinding.

The curatorial process will consist of a committee to curate the public art. There will be a number of opportunities with the vision being site-specific work of local, national, and international artists. The actual process is being designed and set up by Muñoz. The committee has yet to be formed and is anticipated to include the City of San Antonio, Public Art San Antonio art committee member, and collaboration of curators at the local and national levels as well as artist consultants including Jorge Rodriguez-Gerada.

The selection process will include an international search to identify artists. The process will have significant milestones with a strict timeline. The storytelling process will be expanded and informed by the selection process. There are 14 locations along the creek that have been identified for public art opportunities. The bridges and railings will be the object of artistic interpretation. Materials will be the same as the components and influence will be on the bridges themselves. The other opportunities will be installations. Some of these areas include close to the Alameda Theatre, the Tree of Life Plaza, and the I-35 underpass at the project's southern limit. Additional considerations are being given for the play pavilion and at the tunnel outlet.

Committee questions included the following:

- Is public art included in the project cost? Yes. There is nearly \$2 million in the budget at this point and some overlap with construction costs; some costs will be for design and others for the purchase of art.
- Are maintenance costs included? Part of the selection process will include consideration for repairable art and the costs to maintain it.
- Will the storytelling element manifest in a form that can be read as you move along the creek? There will be a certain didactic continuum throughout the

project. There will be some interpretive signs and it will take stories and cultural context through design and media (that may include smart phone apps) in whatever form is decided.

- Once the narrative is in final draft form, where will it be to read it? It will be shared with the ad hoc committee. Do not expect to see a chronology but something more inspirational. The history is a parallel document used and provided by UTSA and then framed by Maria Pfeiffer.
- Is August the deadline for design influence [of the narrative]? The committee will meet in August and September. Getting artists and the associated vetting process will take some months. The art will be part of the construction process and will not hinder the desired schedule. The preliminary art designs will be complete by the end of this year.
- Will technology play a role in the signage and history? QR (quick response) codes are being considered. The team has yet to fully explore the possibility that some artists may work in a medium that is less physical and more technical.

Mr. Geyer reported to the committee the overall outcomes from the first meeting of the ad hoc storytelling committee. It was held on June 25. The group discussed various ways to describe the creek (historical, geographical, and chronological perspectives) and how it can be more philosophical. This approach will be centered on what is it about the creek that attracted the native peoples, the Canary Islanders, and others to the area. The narrative is in rough draft now and John Phillip Santos is currently reviewing it. Mr. Santos wants to produce the narrative as a historical narrative that will guide the art curating. The goal is to provide a common narrative that is collectively understood and appreciated.

Bridget Hinze, San Antonio River Authority, informed the committee that another opportunity for the ad hoc committee to meet will be scheduled for next week.

Mr. Cortez added that the first meeting went great. It is a great opportunity to tell the collective story of everyone's experience.

Other Items

Mr. Geyer gave a brief summary of the 40% public survey. The official summary was distributed to all committee members who were present. He reminded the group that a presentation was given at last month's committee meeting. There were some comments that showed a thread where some respondents felt the project is being overdesigned. The River Authority, the committee co-chairs, the design team, and the County reviewed the summary. This group generally came to a couple of conclusions. First, the illustrations being currently used are mostly placeholders and not absolute and may be overly exuberant. For example, the Tree of Life concept is a good solid design but some details are highly stylized. The team is looking at variations of these designs. Secondly, the designs are examples of what could be and won't be final until the public art process is complete.

Mr. Tillotson added that some portions of the design have yet to go through refinement and the aesthetic may change. The pattern and color and overall impression are part of the aesthetic. We are currently in an age of minimalist aesthetic. The team considered a cultural design and understands it is not the prevailing mainstream aesthetic. Some areas are intended to become events along with a sense of movement as the creek is traversed. Nearly 40 percent of all the flood control features and engineering channelization provide a kinesthetic experience that is built-in and cannot be fully understood until it is constructed.

Mr. Geyer concluded that generally the design is on-track and looking good. The majority of respondents support the design effort. Moving forward more emphasis will be on the entire [holistic] design.

Mr. Cortez briefly added that the team is aware of different views and certain things need to be explained. The results provide a lot of reassurance that we are on track. But, there is still a lot more work to be done.

The question of the 40 percent design estimate was asked. The estimate came in at \$170 million. Some adjustments are being made for the overage on construction and new “on the ground” information that has been collected.

Items to WCROC

- 40 Percent Survey Report
- Update on Storytelling Process

Comments from the Public

Manuel Benavidez, Nogalitos Street Development, suggested the area where the river, railroad, and highway intersect should be carefully developed. His idea is to have a levy system that will back up water just south of Nogalitos. He also expressed concern that the State and the City engineers are not communicating and in the past it has caused unnecessary problems. Russell Persyn, San Antonio River Authority, informed Mr. Benavidez the section he is referring to is not part of this effort. There will be a trail constructed, no channel improvements, for that section as part of a City of San Antonio project but the San Pedro Creek improvements (for this effort) end at the confluence under the I-35 overpass. The area Mr. Benavidez is discussing is part of the USACE eco-restoration study – not this project.

Adjourn

With no more business to conduct, the meeting formally adjourned at 9:50 a.m.