# Alameda Creek Watershed Center Planning SFPUC Meeting at with Sunol Residents at Sunol Yard Conference Room August 19, 2011 10:00 a.m.

# **Introductory remarks:**

SFPUC staff distributed Minutes of the June 17 planning meeting with the approximately 19 Sunol residents in attendance. Jim O'Laughlin stated that most interested Sunol residents already reviewed the minutes posted on the web site. He has also been urging residents to sign-up for the email notification for minutes and meetings.

After the June 17 meeting, SFPUC staff was charged with clarifying the parameters of the project in terms of the site plan, timeline and budgets. Assistant General Manager for Water Steve Ritchie attended today's meeting to report on SFPUC Management's response to the public comments received thus far and the current state of planning for the project.

# Discussion of parameters of the proposed restoration of the grounds and construction of the Watershed Center

# Site Map (see handouts on sfwater.org/sunolvalley):

- SFPUC distributed a site map and handout which described the parameters of the project, subject to outcome of the CEQA process and to final budget review and approval from SFPUC Commission. The site map included the access road, temple and plans for three new buildings (interpretive center, classroom and meeting room) and a restored picnic area. Not shown on the map are plans for an outdoor amphitheater.
- SFPUC is in the process of contracting with an architect who will work to ensure the new buildings are aesthetically pleasing and in harmony with the local landscape.
- The projected time line is for construction to begin in 2014 and to end in 2016. Priorities in terms of which elements will be constructed first have not been established.

## **Project elements:**

- The picnic grounds behind the temple will be reopened, provided that they are under supervision. Mr. Ritchie requested any historic photographs or drawing of the picnic area to assist the architect with the restoration efforts.
- Sunol residents were very pleased with the proposed expanded hours for the site, including weekends. They asked when the expanded hours would be implemented. No decision on timing has been made.
- The corporation yard is included in the site plan and concern was expressed that these buildings
  were constructed without community input and the community notice required as part of the CEQA
  process. The concern is that while large storage facilities are important; there might have been
  design choices that could have better balanced the aesthetics with the utilitarian purposes. Steve
  Ritchie stated that the buildings cannot be modified at this juncture, and emphasized that they will
  be screened by trees.
- It was recommended that as much agriculture land as possible be restored. SAGE is working with farmers to develop a plan for restoring the persimmon orchard. They may be future potential for expanding agriculture onto the land around the quarry berm, depending upon the details of the mining permit and Environmental document.
- A demonstration permaculture garden was recommended.

- The Water Temple Preservation Association steering committee (15 members) strongly recommends establishing an interpretive trail that will enable visitors to walk along Alameda Creek to the confluence of Arroyo de La Laguna and Alameda Creek. The group presented google maps of the site and showed the potential path for the trail. They recommended interpretive signage for the trail.
- SFPUC responded that, while the CEQA process has already begun, and the environmental constraints need to be considered, an interpretive trail will be seriously considered for the site. If it cannot be added to the project now due to time and money constraints, it may be added in phase 2 or 3.
- Telling the complete history of the local valley is important, including the story of the Ohlone, Vaqueros and local farmers. Some of the history could be developed in a mural format. There is a mural which depicts local history at a local dairy site.
- In response to a question about the budget for the entire project, including the improving the corporation yard is approximately \$35 million.
- 2% of the funding for the above ground building will be dedicated to the arts. SFPUC is in negotiation with the commission to have stronger role in how this money is spent.

#### **Future site tour:**

In the future, a field trip will be arranged to walk along Alameda Creek to the confluence.

## Other aspect of the community survey:

- Overall the goals of the Center and SFPUC plans are aligned.
- Several issues still need to be discussed included parking facilities (capacity and location).
- At this point, SFPUC does not think the new center will be open for rental by private parties such as weddings.
- While EBRPD and other partners may be involved, SFPUC expects to hire staff and run the Center themselves.
- A water treatment demonstration area, which was suggested by the Sunol survey, is not part of the current plan.
- Volunteers are seen as an active part of the management of the Center. There will be opportunities for local residents as well as the broader community to participate.

### **Next steps:**

- Sunol residents are welcome to contribute their ideas on the Center. Residents should forward suggestions to Jim O'Laughlin and he will forward them to SFPUC staff.
- SFPUC will set up field trip to Alameda Creek.
- SFPUC will also investigate if the site plan can be expanded to include interpretive trail along Alameda Creek.
- SFPUC will try to find out if the public hours for the Temple could be expanded sooner, rather than waiting for the construction work on the grounds.
- SFPUC will research possible ways to have input into the process for spending the art commission monies.

#### **Watershed Center website:**

• Visit www.sfwater.org/sunolvalley for updates on the project

# **Next meeting:**

Tuesday, Oct. 25 from 7-9 at the Kilkare Association Clubhouse