

Final

**Alameda Creek Watershed Center at Sunol
Planning Meeting
Wednesday, May 6, 2015
10:00 a.m.
SFPUC Sunol Yard Conference Room, 505 Paloma Way**

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Barry Kaminsky
Irv Tiessen
Diane Tiessen
Mary Marshall
Ann Dowling
Dan Reasor
Jim O’Laughlin
Rosemary Chang
Ted Buttner

Jenny Rigby, The Acorn Group
Paul De Freitas, SF DPW
Nick Ancel, SF DPW
Tim Ramirez, SFPUC
Bryan Dessaure, SFPUC
Carla Schultheis, SFPUC
Neal Fujita, SFPUC
Tim, Koopmann, SFPUC
Amy Dawson, SFPUC
Betsy L. Rhodes, SFPUC

I. Updates on Design of the Watershed Center

a. Building Design - Paul DeFreitas, Building Design and Construction, SF Dept of Public Works

- i. The building would open to the garden, and the opposite side is opaque and covered mostly by a berm.
 1. For energy management –keep it cool in summer and warmer in winter
 2. To not draw away from the visual of the water temple as you approach it down Temple Road.
 3. The berm will be constructed using material from the excavation work at the Sunol Corporation Yard.
 4. Our goal is to make the center a part of the topography.
- ii. Other cooling and heating elements include operable windows that allow for ventilation and sun canopies and trellises overhead.
- iii. The interior of the building will boast wooden roof slats that will be from re-claimed wood from the nut barn in the Yard. The roof slats will hide wires and lights. The exterior trellises will mimic these, but be made of aluminum for easier maintenance.
- iv. Visitors will enter the building from the main entrance as if from the headwaters.
- v. Rain chains will harvest water for reuse in the toilets on site.
- vi. The community room has now been expanded to 1500 square feet.
- vii. The project team is working on the possibility of photovoltaic panels (solar panels) for the roof, which could generate up to 65 Kw of electricity on site.
- viii. Paul provided a three dimensional tour of the building.

b. Landscape Design – Nick Ancel, Building Design and Construction, SF Dept of Public Works

- i. As is the case with the architectural design, the essence of the landscape design has not changed since the last meeting with the group. What we have been doing is refining the current layout and adding detail.
- ii. The total acreage used for the grounds and the site is 3.5 acres.
- iii. The forecourt is lined with no mow grass and tall straight trees.
- iv. The road into the parking lot will be spotted with oaks.
- v. The parking lot would hold 24 spaces.
- vi. The gardens would be laid out as informal botanical gardens with vignettes that show the different landscapes in the watershed. Evergreen forest, oak savannah, chaparral, riparian, Diablan sage scrub, mixed needlegrass, and native meadow.
 1. We are still working on which plants, how, and where to balance the educational value of the garden with the scientific accuracy as well as beauty. It is a garden and should look pleasing. We have been working with a specialist on native plant gardens.
 2. We will use highly efficient irrigation at the site. Natives prefer that which mimics their normal water sources – a spray as opposed to drip. Once the new plants are established, we can back off the irrigation. However, the irrigation is crucial during the first two years for these plants.
- vii. Fencing at the site is still being worked on.
- viii. There will be an ADA accessible ramp and a stairway connecting the temple grounds with the picnic area.
- ix. There will be an intermittent stream that ends in a pond. Children will be able to access the stream in these areas.
- x. Outdoor benches will be concrete with the same reclaimed wood from the barn.
- xi. The pathways would mostly be covered in 'natural pave.' It is local sand and resin, but is as hard as concrete.
- xii. Questions:
 1. Have you considered using Coulter pines in your plan? They are beautiful.
 - a. Answer; yes. We could use some Coulter pines.
 2. Why are you using stone from Pennsylvania and not local stone for the area around and under the pond? There are some beautiful chert boulders in the area that you could use.
 - a. Answer: we tried to use locally sourced materials as much as possible. We agree. However, the local quarries that provide this type of stone could not provide us the amount we needed with the reliability we needed. They have source limits.
- xiii. General Comments
 1. Very ambitious!
 2. Feels very organic.
 3. It is a very positive step to increase the size of the community/ multi-purpose room. It will better serve the community and the center.

4. It is also positive to reuse the timbers from the barn onsite in the center. It is a small thing, but it incorporates the old with the new.
- c. *Interpretive Exhibit Design – Jenny Rigby, The Acorn Group*
- i. As you enter the center, the interpretive experience begins before you walk inside. Etched in the stone paving on the ground is an accurate map of the watershed.
 - ii. As you enter the building, the center piece of the front room is the 50 foot-long stream profile aquarium. It could hold up to 30 rainbow trout.
 1. The recirculating water flow starts at what appears to be Little Yosemite and flows into a deep pool. The boulders and riparian vegetation will be continuous with the outside landscaping to blur the lines of inside and outside for the visitor. We hope to house newts, rainbow trout, salamanders, pond turtles, and other animals that actually live in Alameda Creek.
 2. Minimal interpretive media will be displayed at the stream profile: sturdy, museum-quality flip books.
 - iii. The opposite wall is what we call the Watershed Wall.
 1. It has large, realistic murals of the watershed. It also discusses what a watershed is, why it is important to all of us, and what we can do to protect it.
 2. We have a menu of media: flip lids, flip books, rubbing plates, iPads, touchscreens, multi-touch tables, interpretive panels.
 - iv. The transition between natural history and cultural history occurs in the ‘filter gallery.’
 1. The low ceiling and dark corridor mimics the real filter galleries underneath. Real water flows from one side, under your feet (visible through a glass bridge) to the other side.
 2. A mural of the actual galleries will be on your left.
 - v. The next room is a place of quiet. On one side of the building are flat screens with multiple watershed images.
 - vi. There will be 2 multi-touch tables, where multiple viewers can view multiple storylines of the watershed and area at once. These storylines include photos, audio, even three-dimensional objects that the viewer can manipulate and pass to someone else at the other end of the table.
 1. Some of the stories we are working on are: the history of the Niles Canyon Railroad, trading cards of watershed animals, history of the Muwekma Ohlone, morphological changes in steelhead trout, and changes to the Alameda Creek Watershed over time,
 2. Staff hopes to include the history of Sunol in this as well.
 - vii. Semi-immersive history alcoves occur at the opposite end of the room, behind a partition wall.
 1. The four alcoves display different ages of the human history of the valley. The subject matter include: Muwekma Ohlone, ranching, creation of the water system, and construction of the Water Temple.

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2. The view literally steps into a time and place, where sounds of the day can be heard as you view objects from the era in front of you, or just out of reach if they are fragile.
3. It is meant to be a multi-sensory experience.
- viii. The exterior watershed map continues outside on the learning terrace and patio adjacent to the community room by the pond.
- ix. The outside gardens include interpretive panels about the plants and animals, as well as an animal “hide and seek” experience for young and “young at heart” visitors.
- d. Questions
 - i. Why use low-tech flipbooks in our high tech world?
 1. Answer: Media near the stream profile likely will get wet. We selected durable flip books for this area. The high tech equipment will be in the adjoining room for that reason.
 - ii. The Livermore Fly Fishermen do a great educational piece on trout that might be a good place to look for information.
 1. Answer: Yes! This work is part of the Trout in the Classroom program which is great.

II. Update on Project Schedule, Bryan Dessaure, SFPUC

- a. The Watershed Center is at 50% design currently.
- b. The Sunol Yard is at 95% design.
- c. Both designs should be moving toward final design in July or Early August of this year.
- d. The environmental document we hope will be certified in that same timeframe.
- e. We hope to start construction in March/ April of 2016.

III. Next Steps

- a. The Sunol group will work on some potential storylines on the history of the town. They were provided with some sample story lines. Staff would be happy to work with folks on refining as necessary.
- b. The next meeting with the group will be around final design in summer, or earlier if needed.