

**Alameda Creek Watershed Center Planning  
SFPUC Meeting with Sunol Residents at Kilkare Woods Club House  
October 25, 2011**

*Draft Notes, posted November 10, 2011*

**Recap and Review of August 19 Meeting at the SFPUC Corporation Yard**

SFPUC staff explained that the discussion is ongoing with the SFPUC Commission about how the allocation of art funds will work and how it can be incorporated into the planning efforts for the Center. In response to the request for increasing the open hours for the Temple from the community, staff explained that it is not possible at this time due to staffing constraints. However, it will likely be possible before the Center is completed.

**Discussion about October 7 Site Visit to the confluence**

- At least 25 people attended
- Sunol residents explained that the tour was a very valuable experience, and it was the first time many residents had ever seen it. It showed those in attendance the potential for the area and they hope the SFPUC will expand the scope of the site to include creek access.
- Also it was clarified by SFPUC staff that this project (including the Watershed Center and Corporation Yard improvements) will have a CEQA document, but will not be as formal as an EIR. However, public comments will be solicited and welcomed throughout the CEQA process as well.
- Meeting attendees explained that Sunol residents are sensitive to a Mitigated Negative Declaration CEQA process in light of their experience with the Caltrans Hwy 84 project.

**Recap of Alviso Adobe Visit**

- Park operated by the City of Pleasanton and SFPUC visited on Oct. 7
- There were interesting displays and plaques at the park, but staff would have liked more information and more interactive activities. The outdoor setting was beautiful and inviting with the oak trees and the creek nearby, which was a good model. Some residents explained that the staff at the park have said that the main issues with the park are the lack of running water inside as well as insufficient storage. (It was later explained by a participant that the designers purposely didn't include water inside the building to discourage certain uses at the park.)

**Picnic Grounds**

- The SFPUC understands that re-opening the picnic grounds is very important to residents. Therefore, opening up that area under managed circumstances will be included in the project. Access to Alameda Creek is also being considered as part of the environmental review.
- Attendees commented that the community would be happy to provide additional input about the picnic grounds, if needed moving forward.

**Trail Connections**

- Tim Ramirez explained that access to confluence area is challenging due to security issues, and the fact that this area is an active part of the SFPUC water system. Because of this, a new trail loop to the confluence will not be feasible at this phase of the project. However, it could be an

option later on. Also, staff would be happy to escort folks to this area for regular site visits if folks arrange it in advance.

- Over the long term, SFPUC will work with East Bay Regional Park District on a plan for connecting the Watershed Center lands to the Vargas Plateau, which is located near the mouth of Niles Canyon. Completion of the Vargas trail depends on agreement being reached with owners of private property through which the trail would need to pass.
- The SFPUC would include the possibility of a trail head and connecting bridge over Alameda Creek in the Picnic Ground area that would eventually connect to the Vargas Plateau. However, plans for the trail, bridge, and other connections are not included in the current project, but would be considered separately.

### **Overview of Preliminary Concepts for Facilities and Grounds**

- Paul Okamoto, a new architectural design consultant for the SFPUC, described some design concepts for the Watershed Center that included the following:
  - Passive solar design with the building orientation to best maximize solar opportunities
  - Visual access down the road with no detractor from Temple
  - Size of 1-2.5 acres
  - More of a campus approach with three smaller buildings to maximize outdoor gathering spaces
  - Some of the green design considerations including:
    - LEED Certification
    - Net-zero energy (produce as much energy as you consume)
    - Water efficiency (e.g. compost toilets)
    - Green roof
- Meeting attendees appreciated the design philosophy statement for the Watershed Center.

### **Overview of Interpretive Elements**

- Jenny Rigby, an interpretive consultant for the SFPUC, provided an overview of the interpretive elements being considered for the Watershed Center that included the following:
  - Interpretive planning is centered around planning thoughtfully with creativity and guidance to create a journey for the visitors
  - This Center has a unique story to capture and show to visitors centering around the Sunol Water Temple, Alameda Creek Watershed and the water system
  - Goal to make the Watershed Center and Temple area special to visitors who may not know it is special
    - It is important to have a clear vision, mission, theme and principles
    - Need to consider the architecture itself as an exhibit and ensure landscape architecture is part of the site
- General Comments from meeting attendees:
  - Request that the Watershed Center display the history of steelhead and the efforts at restoration in the Watershed.
  - Some stated that Jenny encapsulated the community's ideas for what the Watershed Center should be. Others supported Jenny's description as inspiring and a pleasure to hear.
  - Emphasizing the importance that children can get their feet wet and interact with water at the Center. Stressing that this should be integrated into the curriculum at the Center.

**Closing Comments**

- SFPUC appreciates the community engagement for this project that has helped the SFPUC retain the appropriate consultants to help with planning the Center. The next regular meeting will be scheduled for January 2012. A date will be confirmed with the group by the end of November 2011.

Attached are the notes of Jim O'Laughlin of the meeting, which were distributed to members of the Sunol Water Temple Preservation Association following the meeting.

*Excerpt from E-mail from Jim O'Laughlin to members of the Sunol Water Temple Preservation Association, presented here with his kind permission.*

To: SWTPA  
INTERESTED SUNOLIANS  
FROM: JIM O'LAUGHLIN, CHAIRPERSON  
SUNOL WATER TEMPLE PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION  
SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF OCTOBER 25, MEETING WITH SFPUC

Last night, representatives of the SFPUC and members of the Sunol Community met to hear a report on planning activities related to the Alameda Creek Watershed Center and Water Temple Grounds Restoration project in Sunol. There was an update on items from the August 19, meeting and activities since that time. There were positive reactions to the tour of the area from the Water Temple down to the confluence of Alameda Creek and the Arroyo de la Laguna that took place on October 7. There was also a report from the visit made to the Alviso Adobe in Pleasanton. A representative from EBRPD discussed the possibility of a trail from the Water Temple to the Vargas Plateau section of park land that will be opened to the public in the near future. The SFPUC and EBRPD have been discussing this possibility and are working together to develop a plan to bring this about. There was very favorable reaction to this possibility. The Water Temple area would act as a trailhead for this end of the trail. There was also further confirmation that the Water Temple Picnic Grounds would be restored. It was also clarified that there would not be a full EIR done for this project as had previously been reported. A negative declaration process will be used which basically says that there will be no adverse environmental impacts from the project and therefore a full Environmental Impact Report would not be necessary. I think this is a logical move when the nature of the project is considered.

In addition there were presentations by the newly designated architect for the project and the consultant focusing on the interpretive elements of the project. Their reports were well received and offered an overview of many exciting possibilities for the site. Still in a philosophical and conceptual stage, there will be ongoing discussions as more detail is developed. Building will provide space for interpretive exhibits, staff offices and restrooms, and an event gathering space with kitchen. The Water Temple will remain the main focus of the site and buildings will reflect innovative green design elements. The interpretive space will include a variety of interactive, hands-on exhibits which will relate to the overarching themes of the Watershed Center. A number of innovative green building features that have been discussed for possible inclusion in the design were presented. Additional green design features will be considered during the design process.

A more complete summary of the meeting and related documents will be posted on the SFPUC website for the Sunol Valley at [sfwater.org/sunolvalley](http://sfwater.org/sunolvalley). You can subscribe to this site and get regular updates on all of the SFPUC activity in the Sunol Valley, including the Watershed Center planning effort. We should look forward to continued involvement in this planning process as it evolves and plans become more detailed. Your questions should be presented for discussion, as well as your suggestions.

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