



LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGIONAL PARK AND OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

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MEASURE A: CITIZENS OVERSIGHT ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting

July 1, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

Virtual Teams Meeting

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

David Diaz, First District

Irma R. Muñoz, Second District

Veronica Padilla, Third District

Mark Baucum, Fourth District

Kathleen Howald, Fifth District

REGIONAL PARK & OPEN SPACE DISTRICT (RPOSD)

STAFF PRESENT

Norma E. Garcia, Acting Director

Christina Angeles, Acting District Administrator

Narineh Nersessian, Administration Section Manager

Agie Jordan, Grants Section Manager

Arnaldo de la Paz, Fiscal Section Manager

LaTrina Hancock, Grants Section Assistant Manager

Linda Resendez, Management Secretary

Jack Sahl, Technical Assistance Program Project Manager

Rory Allen, Deputy County Counsel

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Measure A: Citizens Oversight Advisory Board meeting was called to order by Advisory Board Member at 10:00 a.m.

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2. ROLL CALL

Roll was taken by Narineh Nersessian. Advisory Board Members David Diaz, Irma R. Muñoz, Veronica Padilla, Mark Baucum, and Kathleen Howald were present.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received prior to the meeting. The public was asked to place their name in the chat box and members of the public were called on in the order their names came in.

Francisco Romero, from Community Transformation at Promesa Boyle Heights stated, that Promesa is coordinating the Built Environment Public Advocacy Fund, and is working with residents to help them participate in the process around Measure A. He suggested that there be interpretation at future Advisory Board meetings. He was interested in learning about the frequency of the meetings so they could participate in the process. He wants to open the lines of communication to include community residents and their ideas. Lastly, he asked if it would be possible to have a Spanish version of the Grants Manual.

Yvette Lopez-Ledesma is Urban to Wild Director with The Wilderness Society and a member of the Park Equity Alliance. She stated that the Park Equity Alliance is working to ensure an equitable distribution of park resources across the County. She asked for consistency on meeting schedules, language, accessibility, and for a Spanish version of the Grants Manual and other materials. She appreciated the swift response by Board Members to the issues around transparency for the grants.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM 1/8/2020 MEETING

Chair Diaz moved to approve the January 8, 2020 minutes. All Advisory Board Members were in favor. With no objections, the minutes were approved.

5. ACTING DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Norma E. Garcia introduced herself as the Acting Director for the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation and the Regional Park and Open Space District.

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Acting Director Garcia shared a statement of commitment and solidarity. She noted that in the last couple of months, we have faced some of the most challenging times with the impact of COVID, quarantine and the economy. Acting Director Garcia stated that the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the Regional Park and Open Space District are no strangers to standing up for equity. In 2016, DPR published the Countywide Parks Needs Assessment, which illustrated park disparities in Los Angeles County. The data showed that high and very high park need communities and communities of color lacked open space throughout the county. DPR and the District then supported a park equity movement and the public passed Measure A, which was the first equity ballot measure in LA County dedicating resources to high and very high need park areas and communities of color. DPR implemented an equity formula to add additional park staff to those parks located in high and very high need communities.

The Acting Director discussed the department budget and stated that DPR will be implementing a \$23 million budget curtailment. This is an approximately 8% curtailment that was put forth for every County department. In addition to the loss of revenue from golf courses, rentals, programs, concessionaires, this resulted in the reduction of 856 recurrent budgeted positions department wide. While these cuts and these impacts may seem drastic, they were necessary to ensure that there were no permanent layoffs.

Lastly, Acting Director Garcia informed the Board Members that the former District Administrator of the Regional Park and Open Space District, Jane Beesley, is no longer with the Department and that Christina Angeles will formally transfer from County Counsel to continue to serve as the Acting Deputy Director over the Regional Park and Open Space District.

6. ACTING DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE

The District's Acting District Administrator, Christina Angeles, welcomed the Oversight Advisory Board members. She introduced herself and briefly provided her background with the County. She mentioned, she previously served as Counsel for the Regional Park and Open Space District. During that time, she gained familiarity with Proposition A of '92 and '96 and was advising the Regional Park and Open Space District during both the failed Proposition P and then the successful Measure A.

Acting District Administrator Angeles stated the total collections for Measure A for this past Fiscal Year 2019-2020 is \$103.1 million, to date. She anticipated the last funding for this Fiscal Year to come in late August or early September. Acting Administrator Angeles stated that the District was grappling with how to handle the Competitive Grant Cycle. Applications for recreation Access and

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Youth and Veteran Job Training were due in February 2020. The dilemma is trying to determine whether those grants can move forward given the uncertainties of COVID. The District was engaging in a deeper dive to determine whether the prospective projects and programming are feasible. Acting Administrator Angeles noted that she planned to vet an update and a final resolution, which will be communicated to the Board, within the next couple of weeks. On a more positive note, there are two upcoming Competitive Grant Programs which are scheduled to be released in the fall of 2020. The first one is the Regional Recreation Facilities, Multi-Use Trails and Accessibility, which should have approximately \$10 million worth of Measure A funding attached to it and the second will be for Natural Lands, Local Beaches, Local Water Conservation and Protection with approximately \$11.5 million of Measure A funding.

Acting District Administrator Angeles noted she was not present for the January Advisory Board meeting but is aware of the issue raised regarding outstanding TAP contracts that had been awarded. The five TAP contracts were issued stop notices back in January and were terminated effective March 2020. Three of the grantees had received partial advances. The District has been fully reimbursed by one of the grantees and partially reimbursed by the second and the third grantees. RPOSD is looking to reconcile all outstanding invoices for the three grantees in question. The District is reviewing what changes have to be made to District policies to determine when it is in the best interest of both the grantee and the public to advance funds, and what percentage and what safety measures the District needs to implement to ensure that funds are used consistently and appropriately. RPOSD is also looking at policies in general, trying to determine what additional changes must be made as far as requiring additional documentation and making clear which expenses are going to be ineligible, etc.

RPOSD is waiting for a report from the County's Auditor Controller which will include recommendations for the best practices to implement for the District, including some corrective action measures. Once RPOSD receives the report from the Auditor Controller, RPOSD will work to ensure that those recommendations are implemented.

7. UPDATE ON TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Jack Sahl, Technical Assistance Program (TAP) Project Manager, provided an update of the Technical Assistance Program. TAP park development resources are targeted to park 'High-Need' or 'Very-High-Need' communities (based on results of the Los Angeles County Park Needs Assessment). We have three priorities: 1) allocating competitive grant funds for these parks need areas; 2) delivery of Technical Resources to meet the needs of these communities; and 3) ensure that the park applications include significant and timely Community Outreach and Engagement.

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TAP technical assistance resources will be provided for projects in all stages of maturity. Curated professional services will be identified using a request for qualifications, a bid process. This helps RPOSD to enter into Grant Agreements with both the consultant who will provide the needed support and the park eligible entity where the project will be placed. Finally, RPOSD envisions a pipeline of projects that are in various stages of development, so that you have projects that are both grant ready now or will be available to compete for future grant cycles. This would be an ongoing program. RPOSD will learn to improve the approach and supplement resources to match the specific needs of our communities.

8. ANNUAL INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF RPOSD SENT TO BOS 1/6/2020 (PRESENTATION)

Acting District Administrator, Christina Angeles provided a verbal report and an overview of the Annual Audit Report of the District's financial statements for the period ending June 2019. It takes the independent auditor approximately six months to issue the audit findings, which is the reason for the lag time. The findings were issued January 6, 2020, and they were transmitted directly to the Board of Supervisors by our County's Auditor Controller. The audit concluded that the District's financial statements are presented fairly and in conformance with accepted accounting principles. In addition, the Auditor indicated that no material deficiencies in the District's controls over financial reporting were indicated.

RPOSD's Fiscal Section Manager, Arnaldo de la Paz, provided a brief overview of the Annual Audit report. The expenditure plan describes how Measure A funding is allocated and refers to Measure A funding that has accumulated from two fiscal years, presently at \$188.5 million. New allocations for 2020 will not be announced until September 15, 2020, because the District must wait for the County books to be closed.

9. MEASURE A QUARTERLY STATUS REPORT AS OF 12/31/2019 (ENDORSEMENT)

Fiscal Section Manager Arnaldo de la Paz provided a brief overview of the Quarterly Status Report. The report describes the activities from July 2017 to December 2019. The report shows how Measure A funding will be administered through the different expenditure plans, such as District Operations, which pays for services, supplies, and the staff salaries. Program Innovation and Oversight provides funding for the Technical Assistance Program. County Priority Projects is funding for the five Districts. Maintenance and Servicing is to provide M&S funding for projects completed with District funding. The report also describes how much money is allocated to each of the five districts.

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The Measure A Quarterly Status Report as of 12/31/2019 was endorsed by the Advisory Board Members.

10. MEASURE A QUARTERLY STATUS REPORT AS OF 3/31/2020 (ENDORSEMENT)

Board Member Muñoz noted that there was a mention of MRCA on the Measure A Quarterly Status Report and recused herself from the vote.

The Measure A Quarterly Status Report as of 3/31/2020 was endorsed by the other 4 Advisory Board Members.

11. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Chair Diaz thanked the District for the information and reports provided. He thanked the members of the public for their input and willingness to come to this meeting and to voice their opinions and thoughts. Also, he thanked Acting Director, Norma E. Garcia for her responsiveness, compassion, and empathy to our communities during this time of COVID.

Board Member Muñoz asked how the District publicly noticed this meeting. She thanked Norma E. Garcia for setting the tone of what members of the public and community have experienced the last couple of months. She stated the need to put on a different lens and, regardless of whatever position, develop the policy that is needed to ask the questions that have not been asked, so all of the County residents have a fair share of what we have to offer to them. We must look at COVID, the economic impacts, the mental health impacts, and every kind of impact imaginable that COVID has brought, including Black Lives Matter.

Board Member Muñoz mentioned that Measure A is supposed to be different from all the others, and is an equity with a capital E. It is important for those neighborhoods and communities that traditionally have not had access to any kind of funding, sometimes because they don't know how to access or because they don't know that it's available. When calling for public comment, there should be 20 to 30 people who want to share their thoughts and opinions, not two or three. Board Member Muñoz asked for serious consideration of the massive list, that has the supporters, the people who did the parks assessment, people that supported the Measure, the nonprofits, the community leaders, the community-based organizations. There should be a lot of public comment in this meeting.

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Acting District Administrator Angeles responded to Board Member Muñoz, that the Brown Act requires publication of agendas. RPOSD publicly notified, published physically and within the building, and in 72 hours. RPOSD also publishes all the agenda items. In this instance, because of COVID, the meeting was held virtually, and all the information was put on the District's website. She was not sure if it was published or posted at the Hall of Administration given that the building is closed to the public. RPOSD did comply with the COVID Brown Act measures in order to publicly notice the meeting.

Chair Diaz requested, if possible, extending to at least a two-hour rule to allow for more public participation. Acting District Administrator Angeles responded that the update would be applied for the next meeting of the Citizens Oversight Advisory Board.

Chair Diaz asked if it is possible to send the meeting notice through the County's List Serve. Acting District Administrator Angeles responded to Chair Diaz, that, the first time that the board convened in January was a regular scheduled meeting. The next meeting that was to have occurred in March was cancelled because of COVID, and this July 1 meeting moved forward virtually. She indicated that she believed the next quarterly meeting date is already on the RPOSD website and that she would look to ensure that it is user friendly and easy for members of the public to find it. She did not know where the next meeting will be, whether it will continue to be virtual, which is a bit more difficult for folks or if it will be in person, but can definitely make sure that RPOSD sends out the link or the information, if it is to be a physical meeting, with the when, the who, the how, etc. to ensure that there is more public participation.

Board Member Padilla mentioned that it is important to recognize our public comment. She thanked Yvette and Francisco for participating. They both mentioned transparency, so she said that she wanted to be transparent and shared that she is the Executive Director of the Park Equity Alliance.

Board Member Baucum asked for clarification on the Annual Audit Report on a \$14 million long term debt. Fiscal Section Manager Arnaldo de la Paz responded that the District does not have any debts and that the \$14 million debt service was for Prop A, not Measure A.

12.NEXT MEETING

The next Citizens Oversight Advisory Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 7, 2020.

13.ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Management Secretary Linda Resendez