



MEASURE A: CITIZENS OVERSIGHT ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting

October 28, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

Virtual Teams Meeting

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

David Diaz, First District

Irma R. Muñoz, Second District

Veronica Padilla, Third District

Mark Baucum, Fourth District (joined during item 4)

Kathleen Howald, Fifth District (joined at the end of Item 3, disconnected during item 4)

REGIONAL PARK & OPEN SPACE DISTRICT (RPOSD) STAFF PRESENT

Norma E. Garcia, Director

Christina Angeles, Acting District Administrator

Arnaldo de la Paz, Fiscal Section Manager

Narineh Nersessian, Administration Section Manager

Rocio Diaz, Administration Section Assistant Manager

Jack Sahl, Technical Assistance Program Project Manager

Parjack Ghaderi, Senior Deputy County Counsel

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Measure A Citizens Oversight Advisory Board meeting was called to order by Chair Diaz at 10:07 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM 7/1/2020 MEETING

Board Member Muñoz moved to approve the July 1, 2020 meeting minutes. Chair Diaz and Board Member Padilla were in favor. With no objections, the minutes were approved.

4. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Norma E. Garcia announced that the department has been working very closely with the Auditor Controller on an audit regarding the technical assistance grants to ensure that the policies and procedures are in the best interest of transparency for Measure A. She credited RPOSD staff, who immediately started working on recommendations coming forth from the Auditor Controller and began implementing updates to policies and procedures. She thanked the Oversight Advisory Board Members for the conversations that ignited an introspective look at the management of the Technical Assistance Program.

The Bobcat Fire devastated open space, habitat, and natural and wildlife areas in the North County. In addition to the loss of over 80 homes and structures, Los Angeles County Parks & Recreation suffered a loss to one of its wildlife sanctuaries, and a nature center and a visitor center beloved by County residents. Ninety-eight percent of Devil's Punchbowl, an approximately 1300-acre natural area and nature center, was lost. Both Prop A and Measure A funding had been dedicated to the site. The department is working very closely with CEO and FEMA to restore the site.

The Department of Parks and Recreation continues to be committed to serving our most vulnerable communities during Covid-19. Parks and open spaces have been havens for these communities. Over 22,000 households were provided food; 3,000 families are served with every food bank distribution; there have been over half a million visitors to regional parks alone; over 80,000 meals were served to youth under 18 over the summer; parks are serving as voting centers; ten parks will be opened to homeless as augmented winter shelters.

Lastly, the over \$33 million that will be released in Categories 3 and 4 will ignite a workforce development, green, park-focused, open space-focused initiative in Los Angeles County. She commended the work of the Oversight Advisory Board for their support of Measure A.

Board Member Muñoz inquired about outreach efforts for upcoming grant programs. Director Garcia explained that RPOSD will develop a significant community engagement and outreach effort, along with workshops for prospective applicants. In the monthly meetings Director Garcia hosts with all cities in Los Angeles County, Christina Angeles is a standing update, reminding all cities to start preparing. RPOSD intends to engage nonprofit organizations, cities, community groups, large media and marketing, so that all angles are covered, and lack of information is not a barrier to applying to the grant programs.

5. ACTING DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE

The District's Acting District Administrator, Christina Angeles, began by noting the importance of adhering to the quarterly dates set for the 2021 meetings of the Advisory Board as much as possible. She noted that this meeting is the first time that we are attempting a Spanish simultaneous translation per a suggestion from members of the public; she is hopeful it will be a practice that can be continued in the future. She commended RPOSD staff, operating at about 60% capacity, for their hard work and dedication.

The Auditor Controller conducted an audit of RPOSD, and it will be issuing its findings in the next week. RPOSD anticipated and began work in all the areas where the Auditor Controller recommended the District take corrective action. In the first area, contracting process, the recommendation is that the District ensure adherence to County contracting processes and procedures, as well as additional training for RPOSD staff. The second area is the policy regarding advance funds, the third area is the approving of payment of expenses that fall into the ineligible category, and the last area is the development of a conflict of interest policy that would cover RPOSD staff. In all these areas, RPOSD has worked diligently to come up with revisions to the GRANTS ADMINISTRATION MANUALS in order to implement the changes. The Auditor allowed for 90 days to implement the changes but based on the work RPOSD has done to date, Director Garcia has committed to making the changes within 45 days for three of the four findings, and withing 60 days for the remaining finding. Acting District Administrator Angeles anticipates RPOSD will be fully compliant with all the Auditor Controller's recommendations within a period of no more than 60 days.

RPOSD has successfully reconciled and closed out four of the five TAP grants where stop notices were issued. On the fifth, RPOSD is working with the grantee to set up a repayment plan for funds that are still due to the District. That grantee is presently not in good standing.

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Regarding the Technical Assistance Program, RPOSD forwarded to Counsel this morning the draft Request for Statement of Qualifications for her review and anticipates being able to release it as soon as Counsel gives the green light. There will be no deadline to submit proposals, so as consultants are qualified and meet the minimum requirements, RPOSD would be able to add them to the list of qualified vendors. RPOSD would then be able to link these consultants and experts with high and very high need areas in order to provide technical assistance in very specialized categories.

RPOSD is about 90% complete with the competitive solicitation for Categories 3 and 4. RPOSD anticipates a release date of late this year or early next year. There will be approximately \$33 million of funding, specifically about \$14 million for multi-benefit projects, \$11 million for trail and accessibility projects, and \$8.2 million for acquisition only projects. RPOSD will make sure to work with all stakeholders in order to ensure that cities and the community at large is aware of the available funds.

6. COUNTY COUNSEL: ADVISORY BOARD FUNCTIONS & DUTIES

Parjack Ghaderi will be representing RPOSD going forward. In representing other commissions in the past, she knows it's very helpful to periodically review the function and scope of the commission.

While commissions and advisory boards are primarily created through Board of Supervisors action, this board is created through a voter approved measure. While some commissions are created with the authority to take independent action, others, like this board, serve as an advisory role and do not really take independent action of its creating authority, in this case the measure and the Board of Supervisors.

The scope of the Measure A mandate is twofold: ensure transparency through independent financial audits and oversight in reviewing expenditures. The measure outlines four specific duties that the board has. First, to review all expenditures from the special tax four times a year. Second, ensure the program is integrated into the annual independent audit. Third, publish through coordination of the District, a complete accounting of all the allocations each year, including the location and footprint of each funded project, its objectives, status, outcomes, any matching funds used, and the applicable program from the expenditure plan. The last of the duties outlined in the measure is to submit periodic evaluations of the program to the Board of Supervisors who can then take independent action at their discretion.

7. QUARTERLY STATUS REPORT (AS OF 6/30/2020)

Fiscal Section Manager Arnaldo de la Paz provided a brief overview of the Quarterly Status Report. The report describes the activities from July 2017 through fiscal 2019/2020. The report begins with a summary on page one, shows how accumulated funds are designated through purposes necessary for the implementation of Measure A. Page two continues with details on financial activities and includes available funding for the operation of the District and the implementation of the Technical Assistance Program.

Grant Programs are next, and the report has additional narratives that explain the terminologies used, with the goal of helping the reader better understand the report. Annual allocations are presented first, as Category 1, then followed by competitive grants. Individual cities with multiple study areas or substantial allocations are highlighted in the table, while smaller study areas are combined under “other cities.” Allocations for unincorporated areas managed by Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation are reported on the line for Unincorporated LA County DPR. The same is done with Category 2 through the competitive grant programs, Categories 3, 4 and 5, some of which are going to be offered soon.

The report ends with a table showing available funding for the maintenance and servicing projects that receive funding from the District.

Board Member Muñoz moved to approve the item. Chair Diaz and Board Members Padilla and Baucum were in favor; with no objections, the motion passed. The Measure A Quarterly Status Report as of 6/30/2020 was endorsed by the Advisory Board Members.

Acting District Administrator Angeles noted funds have been accumulating due to litigation that the District was a defendant in for the initial three years after the measure passed. Thankfully, the District was successful and was able to move forward with the expenditures and looks forward to awarding some of these accumulated funds.

8. UPDATE ON TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Jack Sahl, Technical Assistance Program (TAP) Project Manager, provided an update on the Technical Assistance Program. The Technical Assistance Program was included as part of Measure A to help achieve and address park and open space equity. The problem being addressed is that some communities are not well positioned or don't have the resources to compete for Measure A

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competitive grant programs. The program provides resources to these communities so they can successfully apply, construct, build and provide recreational services for their communities.

The first problem is trying to identify what kind of help eligible park entities need; these are communities that are identified as park “high-need” or “very-high-need” in the Park Needs Assessment. In the continuum of park development, there are some entities that have space and a park concept, and when the announcement is made of the competitive grant programs, they may need help with the grant application. There are other entities that may need help with community outreach and engagement. Some communities will also need help in the areas of developing a concept or imagining what can be done in their community to help meet this need.

The second problem is how to get technical assistance resources under contract and available to support these identified needs. RPOSD is moving forward with a request for qualifications from the consulting community, so they are available to be matched up with these high need communities. Finally, the District wants to make sure while moving through this process that it is getting community support that results from effective outreach and engagement.

There are 30 jurisdictions with 72 study areas that are park high-need or very-high-need; two of these jurisdictions – the unincorporated part of Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles – have a majority of these study areas. There are an additional 25 jurisdictions that have a single study area and are much smaller in scope. RPOSD needs to be as effective and helpful to very small public agencies as the larger organizations like the City of Los Angeles and unincorporated County.

RPOSD will be using the statements of qualifications and master agreements to put consultants under contract, then use statements of work to receive bids from them, then match them up with the resources requested by the jurisdictions. RPOSD will evaluate the value delivered and the success relative to advancing projects to successful parks in the community.

There are six categories of services that will be provided to high and very high need communities so that they can be successful in competitive grant programs. While grants officers are a key part of interfacing with the community, they provide support to both high need communities and all other entities eligible for funding.

RPOSD has been building out the framework, and now it’s the time to get the input of key stakeholders. RPOSD is asking eligible entities what their projects and needs are so it can best support them so that they have the most success on the competitive grant programs.

Chair Diaz inquired about a timeline for the release of the competitive grant programs and the TAP professional services. Acting District Administrator Angeles explained that RPOSD anticipates releasing the competitive grant programs for Categories 3 and 4 after the holidays in early January and is contemplating a 6-month window to submit proposals. Proposals would be reviewed on a

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pass/no pass basis, then move on to a neutral evaluation panel for scoring. RPOSD hopes to release the TAP RFSQ prior to releasing Categories 3 and 4. There is no deadline for the consultants, so as a consultant meets the qualifications for a category, they would be approved on the list and RPOSD would be able to connect high or very high need entities with TAP professionals. Mr. Sahl clarified that for this first cycle of competitive grants, the technical assistance need will be focused on supporting grant application and community outreach and engagement. He explained that the provision of technical assistance professional services is a rolling process that tries to match the needs with the resources on a real-time basis. RPOSD will be providing technical assistance resources through the deadlines for the competitive grant programs; RPOSD will not wait for eligible entities to contact RPOSD regarding their technical assistance needs, but rather will consistently go out to the eligible entities so that they know the resources they have available.

Mr. Sahl clarified that, in order to get technical assistance, entities must meet at least 3 criteria: be a park eligible entity (includes cities, a subset of community based organizations and nonprofits), have a project in a high or very high need area, and the project must have enough viability so that technical assistance could be effective.

Mr. Sahl explained that the goal of community outreach is to ensure that as projects are developed, they are meeting the needs and have the support of the local community. Outreach entails identifying the people in the community and community-based organizations that have an interest in the outcome. Engagement goes beyond the identification part of outreach and entails engaging in a dialogue, getting input, and reflecting that input into a park plan. The key is to do both.

Board Member Muñoz wants to ensure that the community that we have been working towards benefiting with park space for them and their children get to have a say as to what takes place and what is built for their benefit, as opposed to a generic project. Mr. Sahl explained that RPOSD is specifically trying to ensure that it can get small, community-based organizations in the funding cycle supported from a technical assistance perspective. He acknowledged the challenge of addressing communities that are complex entities that don't speak in one voice and want different things, and described the need to blend the voices and make a decision. He clarified that RPOSD's role is limited to igniting the conversation and ensuring the dialogue, but the decisionmakers will decide the outcome. He described success at this point in the process not as the number of parks built or turning an area from red to green, but getting grants in the right places.

Acting District Administrator Angeles explained that RPOSD was thoughtful in having the Request for Statement of Qualifications open on a rolling basis because it is the hope that there are many stakeholders and providers out there that will be able to submit their qualifications and sign on to the master agreement. RPOSD was very purposeful in not having a hard deadline in hopes that more folks would have the opportunity to qualify.

9. UPDATE ON RPOSD'S BRANDING POLICY

Rocio Diaz, Administration Section Assistant Manager, provided a brief update on the branding policy. RPOSD has been working on a branding policy to increase the District's recognition and to help develop a greater awareness of RPOSD grant-funded projects, highlight the use of taxpayer dollars, the support of Los Angeles County voters, and the contributions toward the improvements and protection of parks and open spaces across Los Angeles County.

All grant projects and programmatic projects funded by RPOSD must acknowledge RPOSD as the source of funds. Capital projects will be required to have a posted sign acknowledging RPOSD support, and programmatic projects will be required to acknowledge RPOSD assistance in their written materials, visual displays, and temporary signage that is produced for the program. In addition, all projects funded by RPOSD will be required to publicly mention RPOSD's support at events, in its project related press releases, and social media postings.

RPOSD is developing the specific guidelines regarding the use of brand elements, including the required logos, language, and sign specifications. As soon as the policy is approved, RPOSD will update the language in both the Proposition A and the Measure A Grants Administration Manuals and make available an RPOSD Branding Guide, that will be available on the RPOSD website.

She thanked the staff on the Branding Team for their effort and hard work in putting this policy together.

Acting District Administrator Angeles echoed thanks to the staff, noting RPOSD is looking forward to seeing recognition not only of the District but also to the taxpayers of Los Angeles County for all the great projects that RPOSD has funded through Prop A and Measure A. The branding policy will mostly impact projects prospectively, but RPOSD will try to assist existing grantees in putting up signage to acknowledge the District and the taxpayers for projects that have been completed or are being finalized.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Diaz explained that members of the public who didn't submit their written comments online in advance of the meeting could still submit their comments via chat to be read aloud, or

if they preferred to give verbal comment, could place their name in the chat box to be called on in the order their names came in. He added that comments in Spanish would be translated.

Ms. Nersessian explained that one public comment was submitted prior to the meeting, and an RPOSD grants officer responded to that member of the public prior to the meeting.

Public comments left via the chat were read aloud, and individuals who submitted their names in the chat were called upon to provide live verbal comment.

A live verbal comment was provided in Spanish during the English meeting, and Ms. Nersessian explained the comment would be translated afterwards.

The interpreter translated three public comments from the Spanish meeting for the Advisory Board.

11. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Chair Diaz offered to consider an afternoon meeting time as a pilot to see if it works better for public participation. Acting District Administrator Angeles said RPOSD would be happy to accommodate the Board for an afternoon or evening meeting. Board Member Muñoz recommended early evening for people who are working. Board Member Padilla said it's worth trying a later start time of 6PM to see if it encourages participation. She explained with the size of the County it's impossible to be engaged with what's going on everywhere, so hearing public comment is really helpful and allows the Board to be of more service in their positions. Board Member Baucum said he would be okay with trialing an evening or afternoon meeting, and shared the need to have a metric in place to know what's being expected of public participation to keep at a later time slot or revert back to some other time.

Board Member Baucum shared that, even though RPOSD made it through the lawsuit and hasn't expended things yet, he knows things are coming up in future quarters, so he will be looking forward to that to see if this is shaping to be in line with the vision of Measure A, and he is sure it will with the community participation and the TAP program.

12. NEXT MEETING

The next Citizens Oversight Advisory Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 6, 2021 from 6 to 8PM. Acting District Administrator Angeles anticipates the January meeting will have to

continue to be virtual. She explained there are large options such as Ayres Hall at the Arboretum that could accommodate social distancing, and following the January meeting an in person meeting hosted at a Parks facility may be contemplated. Board Member Padilla suggested continuing to offer virtual participation after the Board returns to in person meetings because it provides some relief to folks.

13. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Narineh Nersessian