

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: November 16, 2009
Reviewed by: BP

SUBJECT: East Bay Regional Park District - Measure WW
1) \$27 million – Eastshore State Park
2) \$12.3 million – Bay Trail

FROM: Ann Chaney, Community Development Director

WATERFRONT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to be forwarded to the East Bay Park District:

- 1) Eastshore State Park - Proposed projects for expansion, restoration, and development projects (\$27 million from Measure WW):
 - (a) Prepare a project area plan, and implement plan for Albany Plateau; and Prepare a project area plan, and implement plan for Albany Neck and Bulb
 - (b) Expand the Albany salt marsh
 - (c) Sell the City-owned Bulb to the State of California in “as-is” condition
- 2) Bay Trail – (\$12.3 million)
 - (a) Permanent Bay Trail – acquire land or easement, and construct the Bay Trail extension through Golden Gate Fields property (construct interim Bay Trail if permanent trail is not possible at this time)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

When forwarding the recommendations, advise the East Bay Regional Parks District that there may be ideas that emerge out of the *Voices to Vision* waterfront planning process for expansion, restoration, and/or development for the Albany portion of Eastshore State Park, and/or ideas for the project area plans when the process concludes in early spring 2010.

BACKGROUND

East Bay Regional Park District Measure WW was passed in November 2008. In addition to the per capital Local Grant portion of Measure WW, \$375 million has been allocated to fund regional park acquisition and capital projects. Of particular interest to Albany is the \$27 million allotted to Eastshore State Park, and \$12.3 million to the Bay Trail (from Fremont to Martinez). These funds are intended for expansion, restoration and improvements (see attached list excerpt).

In February 2009, the City Council referred to the Parks and Recreation Commission the responsibility of recommending projects for use of the per capita funds, with input from the Waterfront Committee. The Council also requested that the Waterfront Committee discuss and look at other means available within the East Bay Regional Parks District Measure WW funds for land acquisition and improvements, for recommendation to the City Council.

Unlike the Local Grant program, decisions regarding regional park acquisition and capital projects will be at the discretion of the Park District. However, because of the importance of the Eastshore State Park (ESP) and Bay Trail, the Waterfront Committee developed a list of recommendations for City Council consideration for submittal to the Park District, as shown under the Recommendation section. In addition, it is staffs' understanding that the City is not required to submit a cost estimate, or prepare CEQA certification forms, because the District would be directly responsible for these projects. Nor are there limitations on whether the land is publicly or privately owned, because acquisition is one of the intended uses of the funds. There is however a limitation on the amount of funding that can be used for planning purposes (20% of the total project cost).

The Waterfront Committee worked to compile these recommendations, as well as those for the Local Grant program, during their March, April, May and June 2009 meetings. Each member was encouraged to submit proposals. Each proposal was discussed and voted on. Three projects are being recommended for ESP funding, and one project for Bay Trail funding.

DISCUSSION

Waterfront Committee Recommendations

Eastshore State Park:

The three projects the Committee is recommending are: (1) prepare a project area plan for the Albany Plateau, and implement that plan; and prepare a project area plan for the Albany Neck and Bulb, and implement that plan; (2) Expand the Albany salt marsh; (3) sell the Bulb to the State of California in "as-is" condition.

Bay Trail:

The one project the Committee is recommending is: (1) Acquire land or easement, and construct a permanent Bay Trail through Golden Gate Fields property (construct interim Bay Trail if permanent trail is not possible at this time).

A more detailed description is attached of each of these proposals as written by the Committee member. Staff has provided the following comments regarding a few of the proposals.

Project Area Plans: It is the WF Committees' understanding that a similar project area plan was prepared prior to improvements being made at the Berkeley Meadow. Thus, a similar planning effort would be needed for the Albany Plateau, Neck and Bulb, prior to implementation.

Salt Marsh expansion: This project was identified as one of the oil spill remediation projects. The marsh is not located on public property. Thus the expansion area would need to be acquired, an easement obtained, or at a minimum, approval granted by the property owner (Golden Gate Fields).

Sell Albany Bulb to State: The concept for this proposal is that the City-owned Bulb has value, and should not be transferred to the State without compensation. It was recommended that the sale price be no less than \$1,000,000.

Bay Trail extension: The East Bay Regional Park District has virtually completed engineered plans for an interim Bay Trail extension through Golden Gate Fields property. Remaining issues include funding, and permission from Golden Gate Fields to install an interim trail.

ANALYSIS

Fern Tiger Associates is under contract with the City to work with the community on a vision for the Albany waterfront in a process called Voices to Vision. There may be ideas that emerge out of that planning process that would augment the Committee's recommendations. Staff recommends that Council revisit the recommendations upon conclusion of the process, called Voices to Vision, to determine whether any supplemental recommendations are warranted. In the meantime, staff advises that the City convey its interest to the District in funds being allocated to the Albany portion of Eastshore State Park and the recommendations that have emerged to date.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

Measure WW supports the continued restoration of urban creeks; protection of wildlife; allows for the purchase of open space, wetlands, and bay shoreline as well as allows for the improvement and development of local and regional parks, trails, and recreational facilities close to home for East Bay residents. All projects being considered promote health and wellness by expanding the recreational opportunities in Albany.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

Attachments

1. Complete list of projects considered by the Waterfront Committee (including the Local Grant program)
2. Expanded Description of projects recommended by the Waterfront Committee
3. Excerpt from EBRPD Regional Parks Bond Extension Project List (non- Local Grant projects)

