

MOUNT SAN JACINTO WINTER PARK AUTHORITY

Minutes of the study session of the Mount San Jacinto Winter Park Authority held February 19, 2020 at the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, Palm Springs, CA.

Authority Members:

Brian Conley
Bary Freet
Jerry Ogburn
Jeff Ohlfs
Brian Nestande
Nancy Stuart

Staff:

Nancy Nichols, General Manager
Jim Whitmore, Executive VP
Tara Meinke, VP Finance
Greg Purdy, VP Marketing & Public Affairs
Cara Youngman, Public Relations Manager
Phil Parker, Security Chief

Absent:

Sandra Magana-Cuellar

Legal Counsel:

Robert Hargreaves

Guests:

Kelly Elliott, California State Parks
John Fritch, Elevated Experiences
Ned Barker, Guest
Mark Lenning, MSA Consulting
Dennis Woods, Palm Springs City Council
Member
Robert Rotman, Guest
Steve Nichols, Property Owner

CALL TO ORDER – NESTANDE

Meeting called to order at 10:17 a.m.

ROLL CALL – PURDY

STUDY SESSION

Nichols said the purpose of these periodic study sessions was for the board to provide staff with direction on what projects they would like to commence once current projects are completed. Projects would be brought back to the board for approval at a later date. The goal was to have projects ready to proceed in 2021, when the last of the current projects are finished. These are part of a 5-year plan, with the 10-year plan being the replacement of the tram cars.

TRAM WAY

Tram Way Pedestrian Counter

Authority Member Ohlfs has previously suggested that we install a pedestrian counter to help quantify the number of walkers along Tram Way. Whitmore reported that State Parks has recommended a specific make/model and the cost is \$2,200. Freet inquired about power source and it requires three AAA batteries. Ogburn inquired about how vandal-proof it was and Whitmore explained that we will need to see, but it will be in a locked box. Freet suggested promoting the healthy living approach of walking our road. Nichols stated would like to

commence healthy living public relations component once the count was known. Nichols stated these numbers would be reported as non-revenue generating attendance and provided separate. It was the consensus of the board that this item be brought back for board action at the next meeting.

Tram Way Bicycle Lane/CV Link

Tram staff and several board members had met with CVAG about adding a community connector to the CV Link that would proceed up Tram Way. CVAG has in-house resources to study the feasibility of this and their director, Tom Kirk, has quoted us \$49,000 for an engineering analysis, which would be the first step in the process. Stuart asked about CV Link timeline. Freet asked about bidding the study and Hargreaves said it was not necessary. Ogburn stated that CVAG may have some funding sources to assist with construction if connector is feasible. Nichols explained that this can be a stand-alone project and, hearing no objection, staff would study further and bring back at a later date.

Corner of Highway 111/Tram Way Project

Ogburn explained that he and Freet are members of the Chino Cone Subcommittee which is responsible for keeping the board informed of plans by others for the Chino Cone, as well as providing a 'voice' for the Tram board when and where these projects are discussed. Ogburn gave a presentation of a project proposed by property owner Steve Nichols that would be located at the base of Tram Way directly behind the Visitors Center. Ogburn explained that the benefit to the Tram would be the extension of the tram experience to the bottom of the road via a transit hub, trailheads, lodging, dining, an interpretative nature experience and additional parking. Conley asked how the Tram would be involved and Ogburn explained that it would be planning only and items involving transportation to the Tram. Hargreaves reminded that the enabling legislation charges the Authority with providing access to the recreational resources of the State Park. There was discussion about clean energy Sunline shuttle service and/or hotel-provided shuttles. Nestande said it would be good to have a Tram presence at this development. Freet hopes the developer would provide some public space benefitting the Tram in the project. Steve Nichols said he wouldn't be involved with this proposal if he didn't see a major public benefit. And since the Tram is the most-proximate partner, we have a joint opportunity, as an expansion of the original Tram vision. Stuart expressed her concern about the involvement of the sub-committee with this development when we should be an oversight entity rather than acting in a leadership or advisory role. Further, if it happens organically, they can come to us and ask our thoughts. Ogburn gave his assurance that the property owner now has to take the lead. GM Nichols asked if the board had any direction for the sub-committee? Conley expressed his appreciation for the outreach by Steve Nichols and the sub-committee. GM Nichols discussed the Tram's role with Desert Palisades, but that we need to specifically define the sub-committee's role with this project. Freet stated that they are vigilant in remaining within their limitations as board members. Stuart reiterated that we should not be perceived as a project lead or making presentations on the developer's behalf. Ohlfs said it was good that we know what's going on with our neighbors. That said, we need to be aware about the project's access with and impact to Tram Way. Nichols interpreted consensus that, while we should not be the lead, the sub-committee should keep the board informed as to the project's status and the Tram's interests protected.

11:30 a.m. - Chair Nestande departs meeting and Vice Chair Freet becomes presiding officer.

VALLEY STATION

Infrastructure/Upgrade

Nichols explained that the infrastructure of the Tram's Valley Station has never been upgraded. When the security/parking gate was constructed and the entrance upgraded several years ago, the plan was to do the Valley Station next. She is recommending that staff put together some costs and bring back to the board for review.

Visitors Activities

Stuart asked about the status of the Treehouse Project? Whitmore explained that the project was tabled 2-3 years ago due to demands of other projects, but the company was still around. The CEQA, though, may need to be updated. Whitmore then gave a description of what the project was and where we were in the design process. Nichols asked if the board would like us to resume process. Freet said that the Treehouse Project should perhaps be linked to the Valley Station infrastructure upgrade. Ohlfs asked if staff could provide some sort of budget pro forma with all the discussed capital projects and possible timing. He added that bus replacement should be included in the analysis. Freet said this could be a 5-10-year capital plan. Nichols said that staff would prepare and bring back for board review and prioritization. Nichols said CV Link would be ready first then would prepare costs for Valley Station infrastructure upgrades, guest activity projects, plus a bus replacement schedule.

MOUNTAIN STATION

No discussion.

STATE PARK

Long Valley Management Plan

Stuart asked about the Long Valley Management Plan. Nichols explained the plan included moving the Adventure Center to an already-disturbed area by the current Ranger Station plus building additional restrooms, a nature amphitheater, new ranger station and utility shed. Nichols would like the board to look at the Long Valley Management Plan, identify items of interest and staff would start feasibility studies and costing of these items. Elliott stated that implementation of the plan hasn't received a lot of attention and she would like the relocation of the Adventure Center to be the first priority. Additional restrooms could actually be a part of that phase. The State Park was trying to pull everything out of the meadow and outside of Long Valley, so there was less impact. Moving the Adventure Center was the main component of that process. They would like to see it relocated to the stables area along with the restrooms. Further, she views the Adventure Center as being under-utilized and sees the potential for it operating year-round with seasonal rentals (climbing and hiking gear along with snow gear.) And, if it were on the path to the ranger station, the concession potential would be greatly enhanced. Nichols agreed with this assessment and that hiking gear would be a great addition. The consensus was that staff should do some costs analysis and bring back to board. Ohlfs asked if he could receive a copy of the Long Valley Management Plan? Nichols will email. He thought hiking gear would be great to have and, especially, its year-round operation.

Ohlfs asked about the State's top priorities, although it sounded like Adventure Center and restrooms were top. Stuart thought this (year-round Adventure Center, amphitheater, etc.) was an opportunity to add value for our patrons. Nichols said we would proceed with the board's direction and agenda for a future board meeting to prioritize the various components, and estimated a few months to prepare.

FUTURE PROJECTS

Ohlfs would like us to consider a sister-park program and would like it to be Cape Peninsula National Park (Table Mountain) in South Africa as they have a similar tram car. It would be a good cross-promotion and mutual benefit for all involved. Would want to work closely with State Parks on this. It was the consensus of the board that staff will reach out to them and investigate further.

Ohlfs asked about our lands and specifically what were the Mt. San Jacinto Winter Park Authority boundaries? Our land protection plan should cover three items: 1) Legislative boundary, 2) Land we own and 3) Who our neighbors are. Nichols confirmed that we have our parcel numbers and know our neighboring land owners. Freet added that fire marshals have this discussion and, from his work as a Chino Cone subcommittee member, he knows that there is tribal land and allotted land among others. He (Freet) asked if Nancy can pull this information together? Ohlfs would like to confirm that Assessors Office has correct information.

Conley asked about setting up a foundation. Had worked with other State agencies that had foundation which have worked out well. Hargreaves asked if this would be funded by donations and Conley confirmed that this is what he envisions. Nichols asked if this would be Tram contributions or outside sources? Conley confirmed the latter with a "Friends of the Tramway" concept that could do things the Tramway itself may not be able to do. Nichols would research further and bring back to the board for review.

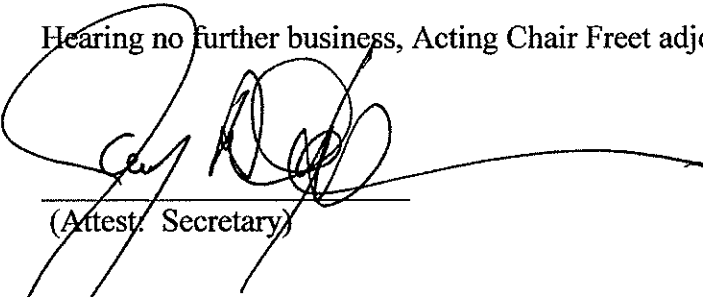
Elliott has an overlay of State Park boundaries and asked if we would like to see it? Nichols asked her to send.

11:55 a.m. - Authority Member Stuart departs.

Freet asked if there were any additional comments by board and staff? Nichols thanked everyone for all their feedback, information and ideas. We'll bring back a few things at the next board meeting and other items later, and the board can prioritize.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business, Acting Chair Freet adjourned the meeting at noon.



(Attest: Secretary)