

June 19, 2003

Willie L. Brown, Jr., Mayor

RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION

MINUTES

Thursday, June 19, 2003 - 2:00 p.m.

The Regular Meeting of the Recreation and Park Commission was called to order on Thursday,

June 19, 2003 at 2:01 p.m. by Commission President John Murray.

GOLDEN GATE PARK STABLES

Supervisor Hall stated that he wanted to pay tribute in a public forum to the working group that has been working so hard to restore one of San Francisco's great national historic treasures, the Golden Gate Park Stables. He urged the Commissioners to pay close attention to this working document, which he believes will be historic in proportions leading to the rejuvenation of other historical sites. He spoke about the particular members of the group, Katherine Black, Robert Dougherty, Gary Hanes, DVM, John Farley and Rachel Arnstine Williamson who have worked very hard over the last two years to formulate this document. He added that the staff of the Recreation and Park Department under direction of Elizabeth Goldstein has really done a yeoman job on the project. Although it seemed like a little million dollar, easy project to attack, like an octopus, it kept growing tentacles. Problems arose but were worked out with the help of this working group and with the cooperation of Department staff. He stated that the Commissioners will have a project that they can be proud of and San Franciscans will be proud of this project when it is done. He spoke about this project opening up a whole new area of recreation for inner-city youth with a new dimension and a lot of new activities. He thanked the Commission for taking the time to calendar this item, the General Manager and Recreation and Park Department, the working group that really dug their teeth into this project, the City Attorney's office who prepared the legislation and citizens out there who supported this project from day one. To the citizens of San Francisco he was pleased to show government in action and regardless of what you read in the paper City government has done a great job. **General Manager Goldstein** thanked Supervisor Hall for bringing forward this idea and putting together the task force. She said it has been incredibly successful and brought a level of expertise to the table that the Department could never have gotten otherwise.

Tom Hart presented this item to the Commission to approve the conceptual plan for refurbishment of the Golden Gate Park Stables. He personally thanked the working group for the effort, time and enthusiasm collectively and individually that everyone brought to this project. He spoke about the working group working extremely hard and selflessly on this project and introduced the group in attendance to the Commission.

Background: When the last lessee/operator of the Golden Gate Park Stables dissolved business operations on September 30, 2001, the Department made the decision to temporarily close the stables to investigate the much-needed repairs.

Before the actual closure of the facility, Supervisor Tony Hall became interested in the situation at the stables and, through the Rules Committee of the Board of Supervisors, formed the Golden Gate Park Stables Working Group (the "Group") to assist the Department in assessing the future of the facility. The Group consists of four members with direct knowledge and experience in the equine industry and an additional member representing the Recreation and Park Department. He introduced Katherine Black, Robert Dougherty, Gary Hanes, DVM, John Farley and Rachel Arnstine Williamson who were able to attend the meeting today. Biographical information on the members can be found in the introductory section of the accompanying report.

The Group was made aware from the beginning of its meetings how strongly the Commission and Department feel about an open access policy for the stables and that any future activities should contribute to public riding instruction and programs. The Group approached this task in a very direct manner. Like many people who have contacted us from other areas, members of the Group sincerely feel it would be a great loss for this urban stable to disappear.

First, in order to assure any future success, the health and safety of the horses needed to be addressed. The facility over the years has become woefully inadequate for the care and management of the horses.

At the beginning of the process, the Group first chose a complete rebuild of the facility as the most logical manner in solving the deficiencies. However, upon thorough research, it was determined that certain structures were contributing factors to the historical nature of Golden Gate Park. The Department commissioned a study from Carey & Company, a local architecture firm that was a contributor to the Golden Gate Park Master Plan. A copy of that document is included as Attachment B to the accompanying report. As Golden Gate Park has been nominated as an historic district to the National Registry of Historic Places, is important that considerable care be given not to upset the balance of the design and the structures.

The historic structures, the four Works Progress Administration (WPA) horse stall buildings and the Grandstand Stalls surrounding the Central Arena, were found to be significant to the history of Golden Gate Park. However, the Grandstand structure has been deemed to be unrepairable and staff has started the procedure of requesting an exception for its demolition. The WPA stalls, however, are sound and should remain in place. This situation presented two problems for the Group. First, the WPA stall buildings are poorly situated on the property to make best use of available common areas and the size of the individual stalls is smaller than modern-day standards. The buildings cannot be moved, but the interior walls can be changed to enlarge the size of each stall and provide more space and better light and ventilation for the horses. Carey & Company has verified, through consulting structural engineers Tennebaum-Manheim, that the interior walls of the WPA building may be changed without undermining the integrity of the structures. As stated in the accompanying report, it's proposed that the stalls will be doubled in size from approximately 9' x 10' 10" to approximately 9' x 22'. As these buildings were constructed and not prefabricated, each stall size varies slightly.

The single most important proposed change to the facility will be the doubling in size and the covering and lighting of the Central Arena. San Francisco weather prohibits a financially viable operation for public instruction without such a structure. Lessons will be able to be conducted after dark and during periods of inclement weather for the first time at the facility.

The increase in the size of the WPA stalls decreases the number of stalls and, therefore, will require additional stalls to be built. The plan, as recommended by the Group, calls for an additional twenty (20)

12' x 14' stalls to be built with individual paddocks measuring approximately 12' x 16'. The plan is for the SPA stalls to house the school horses, all of whom will receive ample daily exercise, and the new stalls with paddocks would be used for boarded horses. The stables complex has four arenas within reasonable distance for turning out. It is common practice now at many Bay Area barns to have "train and board" requirements. Boarders are required to have his or her own horse at the stables be part of the programs offered there. This enhances the overall experience and prevents a divergence of goals among people using the facility. Golden Gate Park Stables is far too small not to have all participants of the facility operate in concert with one another. As is pointed out in the model budget of the report, however, it would be impossible to maintain a consistent quality-riding program without the financial assistance of boarding or some other subsidy.

The facility will continue to require 24-hour presence for the safeguarding of the animals. Rather than construct a single-family dwelling, the Group recommends that two one-bedroom apartments, suitable for employees of the next operator, be built. This will afford the new operator with more flexibility in scheduling around-the-clock supervision.

The last major element change will be the relocation of the hay barn, shavings storage and manure processing area. One of the elevated costs of an urban stable is delivery into the City. Without easy access and enough space for ample storage, hay and bedding costs can reach unreasonable heights. The placement of the hay barn, tucked into the hill adjacent to the stables and on an access road from JFK Drive will assist the new operator in providing adequate supplies at a far more reasonable cost.

Staff is requesting approval of this conceptual plan for the physical changes and upgrades to the stable facility. Upon receiving approval, we will move forward with more detailed drawings and documents to quantify costs for this project. California voters passed the "California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002" (2002 Resources Bond) on March 5, 2002. Golden Gate Park has been allocated \$35,000,000 and, of that amount, \$1,500,000 has been slated for work on the Golden Gate Park Stables.

Upon ascertaining costs for the proposed improvements, we will have a better idea of how to phase the various elements of the project. Although not desirable, it may be necessary to pass some of the improvement responsibilities on to the next lessee through a lease agreement. The Department intends to make every effort to complete the stall reconfiguration, the new Central Arena and the new hay barn in order to afford the new operator every opportunity to open the facility as soon as those elements are completed.

Staff plans to begin drafting a Request for Proposal (RFP) package to bring to the Commission in the fall in hopes that we are able to select a new operator by the first of the year. The RFP will underscore the need for experience both in riding instruction and business management to offer the best possible opportunity for success when the stables is reopened.

Financial Impact/Source of Funds: All costs associated with this request will be paid by the funds from Prop 40 allotted to the stable project.

President Murray commented that it was a difficult decision bordering on courageous to shutdown the stables because we had a very vocal group of people at the site. He stated that he was very proud of staff for closing the facility so the Department could go through an appropriate planning process. His expectations as the Department goes forward we will see a multiple times of number of kids that went through there in the past a real ability to refocus. The prior operator although they made a great effort to do a good job they were not capitalized and the kind of investment we are envisioning and are going to do in are process would never have been supported by the business that they were running so we had no hope of that relationship producing this kind of result and every once in awhile it is important to actually stop and plan and then come back to the table with a better idea and more resources and put something in place.

John Laskin agreed with **President Murray** that the previous operator could not generate cash to maintain the building. He asked the Commission where the money was coming from to repair the stables. **President Murray** explained that money would be coming from the State of California. **Mr. Laskin** suggested that funding for this type of project should come from private a source.

On motion made by **Commissioner Prozan** and duly seconded the following resolution was adopted:

RES. NO. 0306-014

RESOLVED, That this Commission does approve the conceptual plan for refurbishment of the Golden Gate Park Stables.