

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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TO: All Commissioners and Alternates

FROM: Lawrence J. Goldzband, Executive Director (415/352-3653; larry.goldzband@bcdc.ca.gov)
Andrea Gaffney, Bay Design Analyst (415/352-3643; andrea.gaffney@bcdc.ca.gov)

SUBJECT: Approved Minutes of September 11, 2017, Design Review Board Meeting

1. **Call to Order and Safety Announcement.** Design Review Board (Board) Chair Karen Alschuler called the meeting to order at the Bay Area Metro Center, 375 Beale Street, Yerba Buena Room, First Floor, San Francisco, California, at approximately 5:30 p.m., and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Other Board members in attendance included Cheryl Barton, Tom Leader, Jacinta McCann, and Gary Strang. BCDC staff in attendance included Andrea Gaffney, Brad McCrea, and Hanna Miller. The presenters were Diane Oshima (Port of San Francisco) and Mike Rice (Main Street West Partners). Also in attendance were Jason Garben (Suisun City) and Johannes Pareigis (Resident, Suisun City).

Andrea Gaffney, BCDC Bay Design Analyst, reviewed the safety protocols, meeting protocols, and meeting agenda. She proposed switching the order of Agenda Items 4 and 5. Board members agreed.

2. **Report of Chief of Permits.** Ms. Gaffney presented the report on behalf of Jaime Michaels, the BCDC Chief of Permits, who was unable to be in attendance.

a. The Hercules Project, presented to the Board last June, was approved by the Commission. The Commission followed most of the Board recommendations – they expanded the central courtyard, added seating, and added a public restroom at the retail plaza. The Commission suggested other ways to assess public access and asked to see the project again to see how the public access is working after construction.

Chair Alschuler asked for an update on what the Commission referred to for amounts of space. Ms. Gaffney stated there is no standard – it is a case-by-case negotiation.

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b. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife restoration and remediation project on the Hill Slough open space areas was approved and permitted. Grizzly Island Road is being raised, Class 2 bicycle lanes are being added, and hiking trails are being installed in the open space area. This project was not brought before the Board because the access improvements were small and there was a scheduling issue. Staff will continue to work with the proponents during plan review regarding the safety of the Class 2 bicycle lane designation.

c. The vote on the Crane Cove Park project has been postponed until October. Types and quantities of special events to be permitted are currently in negotiation.

d. Upcoming projects to be reviewed by the Board include the Pier 70 project, Mission Bay Ferry Terminal, Mission Rock, and the India Basin development portion of the project.

3. **Approval of Draft Minutes for August 7, 2017 Meeting.** Ms. Barton referred to Item 9 on page 11 and stated she meant to recommend that the designers put more thought into the forms to make them safer to navigate and more compatible with the shoreline edge for better visual and physical transition.

Ms. Barton referred to her comment in the Public Hearing section on page 9 and asked to change the word “landscaping” to “landscape improvements.”

Ms. Alschuler asked Ms. Barton to give her notes to staff.

Mr. Strang stated one of Mr. Pellegrini’s comments at the last meeting referred to Doolittle Drive and that he wished the project could be better coordinated with Caltrans. Mr. Strang stated that was the only mention of the major issue of the night. He asked to add a couple of sentences about this expensive pathway, which is out in the Bay, with no visual separation from the roadway in a highspeed road with no improvements, mitigation, bicycle path, or traffic calming. Mr. Strang summarized that the Board had questioned the conception of the project, agreed it was a difficult problem, and the proponents explained that there would be a huge delay to work with Caltrans. He stated the solution presented was counterintuitive and befuddled the Board but, given the narrow range of Board purview, the Board gave a tepid endorsement with reservation.

Ms. Barton agreed and stated it had to do with the scheduling of when agencies come before the Board. This project was rushed and last-minute decisions were made. She stated that is not the way it should be done.

Ms. Gaffney stated staff has reached out to Caltrans and are continuing discussions on this project.

MOTION: Ms. McCann moved approval of the Minutes for the August 7, 2017, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission Design Review Board meeting as presented, seconded by Vice Chair Strang.

VOTE: The motion carried with a vote of 5-0-0 with Board Chair Alschuler, Board Vice Chair Strang, and Board Members Barton, Leader, and McCann voting approval with no abstentions.

4. Suisun Waterfront Development, City of Suisun City, Solano County (First Pre-Application Review). The Board held their first pre-application review of a proposal by Main Street West Partners and Suisun City for a residential development on a 5.77-acre parcel at the east end of the sailing basin on Suisun Channel. Public access improvements include 460 linear feet of new public paths with game tables and a seat wall, an open space area, and the relocation and expansion of a public park and parking lot.

a. **Staff Presentation.** Hanna Miller, Coastal Program Analyst, provided an overview of the project, accompanied by a slide presentation, and summarized the issues identified in the staff report, including the following:

(1) Whether the Suisun Waterfront Development encourages diverse activities and creates a “sense of place” that is unique and enjoyable.

(2) Whether the proposed public amenities at the project site provide diverse and interesting experiences that meet the needs of the public and if the public would benefit from any additional amenities.

(3) Whether the elevated walkway located adjacent to the houses provides useable access that feels open for public use and whether additional design elements are needed to enhance the public feel of the area.

(4) Whether the open space area near the lighthouse appears open for public use considering the adjacent private residential property.

(5) Whether the connections between the new public pathways and open space areas and the existing public paths are designed cohesively and appropriately.

(6) Whether the proposed streets, paths, walkways, and landscape features are designed to maximize physical access to and along the shoreline.

(7) Whether the project design from the public thoroughfare of Civic Center Drive ensures the public’s ability to view Suisun Channel and whether there are recommendations for enhancing these public views, including adjustment to the proposed physical connections.

(8) Whether the proposed elevated public access maximizes access to and along the shoreline.

b. **Project Presentation.** Mike Rice, Principal Designer, Main Street West Partners, provided an overview, accompanied by a slide presentation, of the site summary, parking, access points to the waterfront, and view corridors of the proposed project. He stated the design is a work in progress; he asked the Board for their guidance on the direction of the plan.

Mr. Rice stated this project is unusual in that there will be improvements made to public and purchased lands. He noted a drafting error for the 2100 expected sea level rise on each of the cross-section presentation slides. The line is correct but the number is wrong; the error was corrected last Wednesday. The correct elevation is 13.49 instead of 12.28 listed on the exhibits 7-9.

c. **Board Questions.** Following the presentation, the Board asked a series of questions:

Ms. Barton asked how the site drains. Mr. Rice stated the plans are preliminary in nature but there are several bioretention areas planned. They are inland of Civic Center Drive. He pointed out the direction of the flow and where it drains on the presentation slides (back towards Civic Center Drive.)

Ms. McCann asked about the existing use of the promenade. Mr. Rice stated the busiest time for the promenade is July 4th. Other than the one annual event, the area is used for walking by city staff and other community members and is moderately used on weekends.

Mr. Leader asked about the relocation of the park and the public open space. Mr. Rice stated the ad hoc committee and the city council proposed moving the park to the center of the project and away from the wetland and the promenade.

Mr. Strang asked who takes care of the marsh area on the south side of the project. Mr. Rice stated the area is owned by the city and is currently improved with a 10-foot walkway along the marsh.

Ms. Alschuler stated the park was a shoreline park that is owned by the city; this plan moves the park more to the center of this project and enlarges it. Mr. Rice stated the new park location better serves the neighborhood across the street.

Mr. Leader asked if the central public park is fenced. Mr. Rice stated it is fully open to the public. The only fencing in the project will be to show definition between the housing and the park.

Mr. Leader asked if there is a fence at the lighthouse park. Mr. Rice stated the seawall almost comes up to the park. No change has been suggested at this time. There is no fence between the open space and the promenade.

d. **Public Hearing.** There were two public comments:

Johannes Pareigis, resident of Suisun City and architect in San Francisco, asked about the square footage of the existing park versus the proposed park. Mr. Rice stated he did not have that information with him.

Mr. Pareigis asked if the proposed park increases or decreases its current size. Mr. Rice pointed out three proposed areas on the presentation slides, the aggregate of which is larger than the existing location. The green area will be disbursed throughout the development.

Mr. Pareigis asked why the existing park is being moved inland. Mr. Rice stated moving the park closer to the primary users was the recommendation made by the city council. The move also leaves the more valuable land by the waterfront available for housing.

Mr. Pareigis asked about the width of the sidewalk between the houses and the roadway. Mr. Rice stated it is five feet wide.

Mr. Pareigis suggested a greater width of the sidewalk leading to the waterfront for pedestrian and bicycle safety. He stated his concerns that the design is not in keeping with the grid of the surrounding neighborhood and the proposed parking along the edge of the project is similar to a shopping mall. He suggested integrating parallel parking and a wider sidewalk. He suggested, if the park will be relocated, centering it, eliminating Almond Street, making it part of the park to bring more order to the street layout, and maintaining the waterfront as a public means.

Jason Garben, Development Services Director, Suisun City, stated all the land is city-controlled. To the south is a parcel that includes city hall and the park area. What is park area versus open land is not well defined. There is a project across the street that houses a youth program and the park is primarily used by that program. The interest of city council and staff is to ensure that this park is accessible.

Mr. Garben stated the access to the train depot from adjacent neighborhoods in this northern area needs to be fleshed out better. The city received an application today for a new hotel on the parcel to the north of the project and there is no access proposed from Driftwood Drive. A more appropriate space for dealing with pedestrian access and continuing with that connection to the train depot would be along the north side because transportation access issues do not need to be dealt with.

Ms. Alschuler asked about the unusual BCDC jurisdiction line as depicted on a presentation slide. Ms. Miller stated the line is jagged because of the marsh vegetation.

Ms. Alschuler stated it was reported that 18 of the 41 houses will sit in some way as part of the jurisdiction. Ms. Miller agreed.

Ms. Alschuler asked Mr. Rice to further discuss the marsh area and what was observed about it.

Mr. Strang agreed it would be helpful to better understand the dotted line that says "approximate edge of marsh vegetation" when there are several acacia trees and forest that have taken root there and have obstructed the view.

Mr. Rice pointed out the BCDC jurisdiction and the marsh area on Ms. Miller's aerial view presentation slide. The jurisdictional determination by the engineer will be to figure out exactly where the marsh edge is.

Mr. Leader asked the city about their plan for the marsh area. Mr. Rice stated there is no particular plan for that area at this time. The area contains non-native growth such as palm trees, which make it difficult to see the view to the south toward the marina. He stated he has discussed this unutilized space with staff and no improvements were proposed for that area because it is part of the wetland jurisdiction.

Ms. Alschuler stated there is a chance that the marsh will take over that area all the way to the civic center, which is important visually and physically to create the sense of a civic place.

Mr. Rice stated he wished he could begin every presentation with an aerial view of this area in 1987, when the redevelopment projects began. It is difficult to describe the dramatic transformation of Suisun over the past 25 to 30 years. The San Francisco Chronicle ranked it the worst place to live in the Bay Area in 1987. Those articles are hanging throughout city hall. The transformation is something the city is proud of. The vegetation growth has changed over the past 20 years in this area to the south of Lighthouse Path. To the north, it has been loosely maintained as a lawn as part of that park area.

Mr. Leader asked if the waterway is dredged for boat access. Mr. Rice stated the proponent is currently in the process of obtaining dredging permits.

Mr. Leader asked if the wetland is the product of sediment piling up over time. Mr. Rice stated it could be.

Mr. McCrea stated the city has done a great job of connecting the neighborhoods to the waterfront. The BCDC has been involved in Suisun City planning for many years. The grid on the other side is connected to the waterfront and streets that purposefully end at the water's edge.

Ms. Alschuler asked if the same developer has been involved on that side. Mr. Garben pointed out areas that Mr. Rice has been involved with on the presentation slides, such as Delta Cove, a unique project to the south that interfaces with the waterfront.

e. **Board Discussion.** The Board members discussed the following:

Ms. Alschuler referred to Exhibit 20, titled "Suisun Water Front Parcel 13." She stated the diagram of the public verses private land is instructive. She noted that the southern waterfront and lighthouse depends on a connection across private land. She asked Board Members to give their recommendations in response to the staff questions provided in the meeting packet.

(1) Would the Suisun Waterfront Development encourage diverse activities and create a "sense of place" that is unique and enjoyable?

Mr. Strang referred to the site plan and stated the need to locate the park in the right place to provide the best use of the waterfront area. He noted that the city park is not in a desirable place.

Mr. Leader agreed and stated it is a shame to separate the public park and marsh in a way that is not convenient for the children across the street. If those areas were held together, it might be safer relative to vehicle traffic. He suggested putting the two open spaces together and putting the park on the edge.

Ms. Alschuler stated the biggest surprise was taking the shoreline park with the beautiful, educational marsh area resource and making it an inland neighborhood park.

(2) Are the proposed public amenities at the project site appropriate to provide diverse and interesting experiences and would they be distributed and designed to meet the needs of the public? Would the public benefit from any additional amenities?

Ms. Alschuler suggested a different kind of walkway for the area along the marsh, such as building up the existing walkway to have a connected area that would work for a longer period of time.

Ms. McCann agreed and stated there also could be some balancing done. She felt something more could be done with Almond Street and Driftwood Drive to define their character. She asked how the parking spaces could be configured for a more generous sidewalk and more space for trees. That would help the plan have clarity of access to the waterfront.

Mr. Strang stated locating the park in an area that transitions into the marsh area with its educational opportunity is a rich resource. He suggested thinning the acacia forest to allow more natural species to come in, which would open up a better view from the city hall. Having houses that face the park that faces the water would work better economically.

Mr. Leader stated it puts pressure on the city to take a more active management of the wetland area that has been undefined until now. He stated the need to manage the boundaries of the wetland, which may involve dredging. He asked if the city could dredge in an area that is not for navigation in order to keep the marsh from encroaching on the city hall.

Ms. Alschuler agreed that keeping the marshland away from the city hall is important. She also suggested bringing the green space back to the edge for a view of the water along Civic Center Drive. She suggested placing some of the parking related to water access near the marsh so there is connection there.

(3) Would the elevated walkway located adjacent to the houses provide useable access that feels open for public use? Are additional design elements needed to enhance the public feel of this area?

Ms. Alschuler stated the need to pay attention to the southern walkway, the Lighthouse Path, and the elevated walkway as an integrated system, which will play an important role in the evolution of the site.

Board members agreed the integrated system is the right approach.

Ms. McCann stated the whole basin will need to be protected from flooding and that should be what the city focuses on. She stated this design adds 12 feet of paving to the existing 20-foot-wide promenade that is only heavily used one day per year. She suggested that an adaptation plan be created.

Mr. Leader suggested narrowing the walkway and making more garden space for the units.

Ms. McCann agreed and stated her other reaction was to initially make it all an elevated public garden area or narrow path that could be converted later.

Mr. Strang agreed that that area should be a transition area that acts as a green buffer between the houses and the street. This area with increased planting should be maintained as a public edge and should be made more inviting to the public in the interim.

Ms. Alschuler stated there are two paths: a global approach and the existing approach where the elevated pathway will take over for the promenade in the future. If the elevated pathway will become the public path, it needs to be 12 feet wide. She stated the Board leans toward having an adaptation plan, which could be to raise the promenade. This is an unresolved issue due to the lack of information.

Mr. Strang stated the Board suggested sticking with the raised path now and is discussing the character of that raised path, knowing that is the easiest adaptation plan. The elevation of the 12-foot-wide path is good where it is but it would have more planting in the interim.

Mr. Leader agreed with less paving and more planting and leaving it up to the applicant to design.

Ms. Barton agreed with Ms. McCann's suggestion for a tighter walkway than 12 feet but suggested designing it with enough room to widen it to 12 feet in the future.

(4) As proposed, would the open space area near the lighthouse appear open for public use considering the adjacent private residential property? If not, how should the design be modified?

Ms. Alschuler suggested that the lighthouse area be a public space or have a clear easement as opposed to a private space that will perhaps lock the public out. The access should be clearly public and inviting. She stated there is interpretive potential there also.

Mr. Leader suggested increasing the lawn space in the lighthouse area to increase its usefulness as a public space.

(5) Are the connections between the new public areas (pathways and open space areas) and the existing public paths designed cohesively and appropriately?

Ms. Alschuler stated the development on the western side of the harbor is clear in terms of access and the roads line up. This plan lines up with Almond Street and Driftwood Drive.

Ms. Barton suggested strengthening those connections and designing them with the same character that the remainder of the city edge around the basin has taken on. She stated it is fine for the street to end at a walkway through to the waterfront as long as it is broad enough to see through.

Mr. Strang stated Driftwood Drive ends in a parking lot.

Ms. Barton agreed and suggested changing it to something more amenable to pedestrians.

Mr. Leader questioned the planning for the houses since water will be flooding the crawl space of these houses in the future. He stated houses should be there longer than 30 years. Mr. Rice stated the plan is for 50 years; however, one of the concepts is looking for global solutions for the protection of Suisun. He stated that is the idea of getting the study started – to look at broader solutions that eventually create better protection for the entire city.

(6) Are the proposed streets, paths, walkways, and landscape features designed to maximize physical access to and along the shoreline?

Suggestions to this question are incorporated in the suggestions to other questions.

(7) Does the project design from the public thoroughfare of Civic Center Drive ensure the public's ability to view Suisun Channel? Are there recommendations for enhancing these public views, including adjustment to the proposed physical connections?

Ms. Alschuler stated the approach at Civic Center Drive will be important to keep the sense of connectiveness to this great little waterfront area and the role of the marsh.

(8) Given the existing promenade lies below the current Base Flood Elevation, does the proposed elevated public access maximize access to and along the shoreline?

Ms. Gaffney asked for input on the Lighthouse Path and if there are issues with the current orientation, the proximity of the homes to the path, and the width of the path.

Ms. Alschuler stated that the design proposal would suggest to a visitor that the homes owned the pathway. It will feel private and uncomfortable for individuals to use the Lighthouse Path. She stated six feet between houses is not a good connection to the water. She stated she was particularly concerned about the house at the civic center parcel. She suggested townhouses or clustering to open up waterfront views and allow more density with different kinds of units. The houses next to the lighthouse may also be a problem.

Mr. Leader stated the Board will have additional comments if the location of the park is not moved.

f. **Applicant Response.** Mr. Rice responded positively to the Board's suggestions and stated the design team will take the Board's comments into consideration and will come up with an improved design.

g. **Board Summary and Conclusions.** The Board made the following summary and conclusions:

(1) Have the park stay where it currently is located. It should serve the entire community on both sides of Civic Center Drive, and be easy to get to safely by walking across the intersection at Almond.

(2) Take advantage of the educational opportunity of being along the marsh and the waterfront. The value is being in the shoreline park.

(3) Look at a better balance and distribution of public and private lands.

(4) Clarify visual access to the water.

(5) Use the streets to be attractive pathways to the water.

(6) Make improvements to Driftwood Drive using the hotel as an option.

(7) Include a future adaptation plan, if possible. Twenty-one feet for an upper pathway is unnecessary right now but leave room for 12 feet so it could be there in the future.

(8) Ensure that the Lighthouse Park feels public and is not fenced off, inviting the public to pass through it and to use it. More lawn over planting would be valuable.

(9) Have the new plan take advantage of the existing development grid and the model development across the harbor.

(10) Always be able to easily get to the water if you live in that development using the grid and the hotel path.

(11) Open view to the water from the civic center and Civic Center Drive.

(12) Follow through with an analysis of whether the marsh can be improved, restored, and made part of an urban waterfront. Acacia removal, opening up the views, and connections.

(13) Encourage a larger sea level rise adaptation study. A solution is needed at some point for the whole city.

Ms. Gaffney asked if the Board would like to see this again. The Board stated they would like to see it again if the plan does not change.

5. Port of San Francisco Waterfront Plan Update Briefing. Diane Oshima, Port of San Francisco (Port) Planning and Environment Division, provided an overview of the public process currently underway to update the Port of San Francisco Waterfront Land Use Plan for 7-1/2 miles of historic piers and shoreline from Fisherman's Wharf to India Basin.

Ms. Oshima stated the Port created a 32-member Waterfront Plan Working Group, assisted by seven Advisory Teams, to develop recommendations for the Waterfront Plan update. Three Working Group subcommittees have been created to focus on land use, resilience, and transportation issues. The recommendations from the subcommittees will be presented to the Working Group next Tuesday. She stated it is a good time to get the Board's thoughts as the Port gets ready for the next stage of the public process.

Ms. Oshima showed a video, which provided an overview of the background, location, existing amenities, challenges faced such as deteriorating historic piers and seawall, and a detailed description of the current activities to update the Waterfront Plan to keep it vibrant, public, and resilient.

Ms. Oshima provided an overview of key issues, challenges, and opportunities, including the Seawall Resiliency Project, to ensure the Waterfront Plan aligns with the long-term needs of the waterfront. She stated the need to focus on financing and land use strategy amendments to the Waterfront Plan, and on sharing information across agency lines in the interest of coming together with long-term strategies that all agencies can adopt. She asked for ideas on recreation, pier activities, shoreline habitat, historic preservation, transportation issues, and environmental protection.

a. **Board Questions and Discussion.** Mr. Leader asked for a comparison between updating the Waterfront Plan and the Seawall Resiliency Project. Ms. Oshima stated they are in a sequencing arrangement. The public process that is underway will help to inform the proponents about what is important to stakeholders about the waterfront, what is successful, and what improvements can be made, such as a more diversified range of activities. The Seawall Project will take this information from the updated Waterfront Plan and take it to the next stage.

Ms. Alschuler asked that the Board be kept informed about the Seawall Resiliency Project activities. Ms. Oshima agreed and suggested shared sessions between agencies to discuss the big-picture design questions.

6. **Adjournment.** There being no further business, Ms. Alschuler adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

ANDREA GAFFNEY
Bay Design Analyst

Approved, as corrected, at the
Design Review Board Meeting of November 6, 2017.