

**SOLANO COUNTY PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD
THURSDAY, March 10, 2011**

**County Administration Center - First Floor Hearing Room,
675 Texas Street, Fairfield, California**

Commission Members Present: Hermsmeyer, Whited, Alvarez, Leong, Riddle
Commission Members Absent: None
Staff Present: Sykes, Tanner-Linne

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Hermsmeyer called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. A quorum was confirmed.

2. Approval of Minutes from January 13, 2011

Motion to approve (Whited), with second (Leong), and approved unanimously with changes.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve agenda (Leong) with second (Whited). Approved unanimously.

4. Chair and Commissioner Announcements: There were no announcements.

5. Public Comments: There were no comments.

6. Approve Use Policy for Lake Solano Nature Center and Recommendation for Staff to Begin Rental Operations.

Sykes introduced the Lake Solano Nature Center Use Policy (Policy). After much discussion with the Commission, the ad hoc Use Policy Committee and the Ranger staff, the consensus was for the Center to be used for exhibitions and educational and park-related recreational activities that embrace the themes of nature, water use and conservation, local history and outdoor recreation. Sykes noted that the Staff recommendation includes deleting Section 1.5.5(B), which would prohibit gambling and/or games of chance, since these could be appropriate uses, for example, for groups holding a bingo game fundraiser. A rental fee schedule (by the hour) was already approved in FY2009/10. The Staff recommendation distributed to the Commission includes a revised fee schedule that adds fees for use of the patio and outdoor circle/lawn area, and daily rental rates. The daily rental rates would be a discounted rate from the straight hourly rate, for longer rentals. The discounted daily rate would also be attractive to non-profit and government organizations, which would be the primary target markets for rentals. Suggestions from the Commissioners were as follows:

Hermsmeyer: He and Commissioner Riddle had worked on this and he was happy with the finished product. He suggested to Staff that an on-line reservation system be considered in the future. Hermsmeyer asked how staff time would be charged during the rentals and to cover opening and closing of events. Staff explained that the cost of staffing during an event is included in the rental rates. In addition, the Policy (Section 1.7.0) states that normal business

hours for event rentals are 8:30 am -3:30 pm, when the park is staffed anyway, so that ordinarily there would be no need for staff overtime to open and close the Nature Center.

Alvarez: In Section 1.1.2, the Policy should give examples of what “recreational” activities are, and they should those activities that happen at Lake Solano Park (not urban parks). The cost of employee overtime should be considered if an event runs over the scheduled time, and this practice should be discouraged. The Policy should indicate that events that run over by 1 hour should be charged the regular Ranger special services rate, and this rate should be doubled for each hour thereafter. At the City of Benicia, their Community Center events are staffed by an attendant for the entire event, at a salary rate lower than that of a Park Ranger. Alvarez suggested that a lower rental rate for local non-profits be used, and priority for use be given to local organizations. Alvarez suggested that the Policy state that if a security officer is required for an event, it should be a from a licensed security company, and not just a friend of the event holder. Staff explained that non-profits would receive a 25% discount on rental rates, and that seasonal Park Aides are an option to use for staffing at events, if needed. The suggestion for a different in-county and out-of-county rental rate would be considered in next year’s fee schedule revisions, since this year’s revisions were already in process.

Whited: The City of Suisun provides a list of licensed security officers for event rentals at its facilities. Whited stated that the City gives the event planner a definite end time for the event, at which time they need to be cleaned up, and has a walk-through checklist procedure at the beginning and closing of the event.

Leong: He agreed with Alvarez’s comments. He suspects that since Yolo County is close to the park, many of their organizations would also use the Center.

Motion to approve Use Policy for Lake Solano Nature Center with suggested changes and recommend Staff to begin rental operations (Riddle), with second (Hermsmeyer). Approved unanimously.

7. Respond to The Great California Delta Trail Blueprint Report for Contra Costa and Solano Counties

Staff introduced Alex Westhoff of the Delta Protection Commission (DPC), who was present to answer questions. Westhoff stated that Park Services Manager Sykes has shared with him the undated, draft response letter (Agenda Item 7) that the Park and Recreation Commission (Commission) was preparing to send to the DPC. He agreed that the Commission’s comments made sense. He clarified that the Great California Delta Trail Blueprint Report was just a draft, and that there was still time to incorporate corrections and new information in it. He was seeking the Commission’s approval of the Blueprint Report, and to forward it to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

Hermsmeyer said he thought it was important that the Commission go on record to support the concept.

Alvarez said he agreed with Hermsmeyer, but requested that several additional comments be incorporated into the Commission’s response letter. Further, the Commission’s response letter should be attached to the Blueprint Report, so that it becomes a part of the Blueprint Report. The response letter should state that the Commission wished the report had been presented first in draft form, so their comments could have been incorporated into a “final” report. He emphasized that this County and its cities were very active in community planning and that

someone from County Parks and the Commission should have been asked to be on one of the advisory committees. Also missing are the Cities of Benicia, Suisun, and Vallejo, all of which are very active in waterfront development. The City of Benicia is especially important since it contains parts of the San Francisco Bay Trail and Bay Area Ridge Trail. The former DPC Director used to be in contact with Solano County and the present director is not. Also, on Exhibit 3, page 24, the map should show the new bicycle/pedestrian link across the Carquinez Bridge that connects Contra Costa and Solano Counties.

Riddle said that if this is going to be presented to the Board of Supervisors, he highly recommends that DPC should get Vallejo, Suisun and Benicia input included in the document. The absence of input from the cities might make it hard for the Board of Supervisors to give a “yes” vote.

Leong said he agreed with the other commissioners and requested that the Commission revise its response letter to include these comments.

Sykes suggested that he could revise the letter and then forward it to Chair Hermsmeyer for review and signature on behalf of the Commission.

A motion was made by Alvarez to: Direct Staff to revise the response letter, get it reviewed and signed by Chair Hermsmeyer, and then forward the letter and the DPC’s “Great California Delta Trail Blueprint Report for Contra Costa and Solano Counties” to the Board of Supervisors for approval, contingent on the incorporation of the Commission’s comments as stated in the response letter. The motion was seconded by Whited, and approved unanimously.

8. Review Status of Lake Solano Fishery and Discuss Potential Commission Response

Sykes provided the Commission with a series of e-mails between the County and the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) regarding the future of fish stocking in Lake Solano (Agenda Item 8). In summary, DFG had identified several obstacles to fish stocking due to the potential for planted fish to negatively impact native fish populations in Lake Solano itself, in the stretch of Putah Creek upstream of the “island,” and the stretch of Putah Creek downstream of the Solano Irrigation District “diversion dam” (and downstream of the park).

Hermsmeyer suggested if there is a concern about planted fish getting upstream, the creek could be screened at the island, and a Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund (FWPF) grant might help pay for it. His interest was in getting fish back in the lake to help with revenues for Lake Solano Park.

Hermsmeyer said he would like the Commission to help with this, and asked whether it would be advantageous for the chair to form an ad hoc committee. Hermsmeyer said he would like to be involved, including making phone calls and sending e-mails. Staff stated that further correspondence with DFG would be a good place to start.

Leong said we should do whatever needed to bring fish back to the lake. He also liked the idea of using a FWPF grant for a fish screen.

Riddle and Whited said they would like to help out. Riddle suggested that we continue to work with the Putah Creek Trout group.

Hermesmeyer appointed an ad hoc committee called the Lake Solano Fishery Committee, consisting of Commissioners Riddle and Whited, with Hermesmeyer as an alternate.

9.Parks and Recreation Division Staff Report

Staff reviewed handouts showing attendance and revenue over the past 6 years (Agenda Item 9A), noting a recent steady increase in attendance at Sandy Beach and a drop in attendance at Lake Solano in FY2008/09 that appears to have leveled off in FY2009/10 and current year. Staff will be targeting Lake Solano for future efforts to improve attendance. Staff discussed construction projects at Lake Solano and Sandy Beach County Parks that were being completed this month with Proposition 40 funds. Staff was waiting on word from California State Parks whether the County would be awarded a \$74,870 grant from the Nature Education Facilities grant program (for Lake Solano Nature Center), supposedly to be announced at the end of March. Staff had also received word that the County would be awarded a \$60,000 grant from the California Department of Fish and Game for a fish cleaning station at Sandy Beach County Park. Staff reported that 3 training sessions for the Lake Solano volunteer docent program had been conducted in late February/early March, and that guided tours would begin at the park in April or May. Staff reported that the County was completing negotiations with a mobile food cart concessionaire that would be operating at Sandy Beach Park starting in late spring.

- 10.** The next Regular Meeting was confirmed for May 12, 2011, 5:30 pm. The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 pm.