

John McLaren Park Community Collaborative Kick-Off Meeting Minutes

44 people attended the first community meeting of the planned John McLaren Park Community Collaborative Group which took place Wednesday, January 19th 2011 at the Louis Sutter Roundhouse in McLaren Park. Chaired by Linda D'Avirro & Linda Litehiser, the meeting was conducted by SF Neighborhood Parks Council/SFNPC Deputy Director, Victoria Bell, with opening remarks by Meredith Thomas, Executive Director of SFNPC.

Discussion & Agreement - Meeting Purpose

Linda Litehiser & Linda D'Avirro spoke about holding the meeting because the community could use an umbrella organization to connect us to each other. The collaborative would offer all a way to inform everyone at the same time and a way for new people to get "plugged into" what's going on with everyone's own projects. The park is the "real SF jewel" and a community asset that is now getting attention from several directions. It's incumbent on us to lead the discussion and ensure our points of view are given priority for the park. There are a number of independent programs worked on independently and this group can put them together and look at the big picture.

Structuring the Collaborative

After introductions the group discussed how they see the collaborative working, including what the structure should be, what groups should be included and who is missing, and what opportunities are there to work more effectively with supervisors and park officials.

The discussions lead to agreement to start with a committee structure consisting of 6 groups working on key areas that would best address the many needs of the park. The committees for (1) Master Plan Review & Planning, (2) Safety, MTA/DPW issues, & Infrastructure, (3) Events/Activation, (4) Maintenance & capital improvements, (5) Habitat education. (6) PR/Outreach. Members interested in a committee can join that group which will meet to focus on the Goals for the group and choose the delegate(s) to report back to the Umbrella group when it meets. The consensus was that the District 11 Council model may work for the group.

Meetings will be monthly, rather than quarterly, from 6-7:30pm with a larger space and Cantonese (and possibly Spanish) translation. Meredith Thomas said NPC might be able to assist with translation and the representatives from Supervisors Cohen and Avalos' office may be able as well.

Next Steps

Gia Grant will forward a digital version of the 1997 park Master Plan to NPC who will post minutes and the Master Plan under "minutes" on their website, www.Sfnpc.org. Victoria Bell will work with the group to create a website link on the NPC website.

John McLaren Park Community Collaborative Kick-Off Meeting Minutes

Linda D'Avirro will transcribe the sign-in sheet and set up a Google or Yahoo group and send out a confirming e-mail.

Members will identify who's working on what, and the collaborative will create a resource to see these projects and the group will start identifying the gaps at the next meeting.

Issues Discussed at the Meeting

Issues that the Collaborative should address include (1) updating the Master Plan, (2) fixing the long-standing issues with McNab Lake and (3) complete already-identified infrastructure and safety items.

Gia Grant said she just completed her Master's thesis on McLaren Park and said the park's Master Plan hasn't had a collective vision since the 80's: It's important to have a framework to work from, she said.

Fran Martin said RPD's Needs Assessment was flawed because it excluded Visitacion Valley and they had a separate meeting with RPD. We should be looking at a Master Plan with the best and highest uses for the most people, she said.

Dan Schneider said kids need to have a place to learn bike skills Others agreed saying there's a lack of contemporary spaces & activities for teens.

Bill Yelda said he gave the Mayor's rep his comprehensive plan for fixing McNab Lake at the last Needs Assessment meeting. It disappeared with the rep and no one got back to him. Also, the Jerry Garcia Amphitheater used to have lighting, and then they took all the lighting out. Victoria Bell said that committee would be tasked to look at these things to get them done.

One person said safety issues are perfect for a committee to solve – Hazardous trails, potholes, etc. are accidents waiting to happen. We can put pressure to get stop signs, speed bumps, designated biking trails, signage, lighting, eliminating potholes and repaving Shelley Drive. There are heavy erosion areas and there should be a detailed plan to rotate parts of the park and redo the planting in those areas. Commercial dog walkers need to be licensed. One member said she was held up 7am and wants more people in the park along with better patrols and safety features. Victoria Bell said she's glad we can have a cohesive group and we need to make safety a high priority.

Maryanne Razzo said there's a negative perception of the SE neighborhoods. Others see it a scarcity of resources. We want good intentioned people to displace bad intentioned ones. Shouldn't we also have resources for advocacy?

Betty Parshall said Earth Day events attracted new people and she's now seeing more families with young children. Others said they would like to see "Reclaim the Night" – overnight camping trips back in the park.