

NEWPORT BAY CONSERVANCY
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Back Bay Science Center Conference Room
Wednesday May 20, 2015, 2:00-4:00 pm
OPEN SESSION

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Directors Present: Peter Fuhrer, Donna Flower, Holly Fuhrer, Peter Bryant, Frances Cork, Howard Cork, Nancy Gardner, Sarah Kimball, Jean Whitaker, Danielle Zacherl

Directors Absent with Apologies: Michelle Clemente

Directors Absent: Dick Zembal

Guests: Jack Keating, Liz Flint, Krista Sloniowski

The meeting was called to order by Pres Fuhrer at 2:06 pm.

2. Secretary's Report

Sec Fuhrer presented the minutes of the April 15, 2015 Board Meeting. No corrections were offered. Motion made by Mbr Gardner to approve the minutes, seconded by Mbr Zacherl. All were in favor.

Sec Fuhrer requested a motion to go into Executive Session to review the April 15, 2015 minutes from the closed meeting. Motion made by Mbr Cork, seconded by Mbr Zacherl, and passed. Minutes from the closed meeting were distributed and reviewed by the Board. Mbr Gardner moved to accept the minutes, seconded by Mbr Zacherl. Eight votes in favor, one abstention (Mbr Cork who had not been present at the meeting). Pres Fuhrer called for a motion to return to the Open Session. So moved by Mbr Gardner, seconded by Mbr Cork, and approved unanimously.

3. Treasurer's Report

Treas Flower presented the Treasurer's Report and distributed four documents as follows:

1. Treasurer's Report to the Board for period ending April 30, 2015
2. 2015 Operations Budget – Unrestricted (for internal use only)
3. Unrestricted Profit and Loss Statement April 2015
4. NBC Earth Day Summary – 2015

In the discussion that followed, it was suggested that trend reports would be helpful for evaluation. Mbr Gardner moved to accept the Treasurer's Report. Seconded by Mbr Cork and passed unanimously. Hand-outs are attached.

4. Committee Reports

Fund Raising Committee – Frances Cork, Chair

Mbr Cork reported that the mid-year membership drive is under way. The Committee is revising the fund raising letter with the help of Jim Cokas, adding new graphics, copy, and color to try to attract donors more effectively.

Ms. Sloniowski arrived at 2:21 pm.

Past Pres Cork announced that Tracks is about to be published with the assistance of a core team composed of Jim Cokas, Howard Cork, Deb Brown, Cathy Cort, Bill Halliday, and Peter Bryant. He sent a draft to Board members yesterday to preview.

Research Committee – Peter Bryant, Chair

Mbr Bryant announced that the committee is moving ahead with plans for a Symposium on August 1st on invasive species. He has assembled an impressive list of speakers. The schedule and program will follow the format of previous symposia. Pres Fuhrer recommended that advertising for the event needs be discussed with the Marketing and Outreach Committee.

Marketing and Outreach Committee – Peter Fuhrer, Chair

Pres Fuhrer reported that the committee is continuing to evaluate the image, aesthetics, and effectiveness of NBC's various publications with the goal of projecting a cohesive, consistent, and appealing message about our mission. Jim Cokas is taking the lead in the creative process with help from Bill Halliday, Liz Grant, and Nancy Gardner. Specifically, in addition to the production of Tracks and the Membership Drive letter, they are working on revising the "Hidden Gem" brochure which will be larger, have new graphics and up-dated copy, and include a fold out map showing the legal trails. Target date for that revision is before the end of 2015.

Pres Fuhrer and Mbr Gardner had a meeting with "Visit Newport Beach", an independent organization funded by the City Hotel Tax whose mission is to promote Newport Beach and encourage tourism. They are eager to help us get information out to the public about what we are doing. They already have some information about NBC on their website and we are going to update that with new photos and text. This will help us get our information out to hotels in the area.

The committee is also planning a review of the NBC website and an effort to coordinate it with all of our other publicity and publications.

5. Watershed Project: Final Report and Recommendations - Krista Sloniowski, Watershed Coordinator

Ms Sloniowski discussed the final results and recommendations that emerged from her work on the Watershed Coordinator Grant for the past two years. She has prepared an "Idea Book" as her final report which puts forth her conclusion and primary recommendation that efforts be made to utilize open and urban spaces to capture storm water as a way of conserving water and mitigating the flow of sediment and pollution into the Upper Newport Bay. Her work is presently at the concept level. The next phase of the work would be the planning and design level. She proposes three different scales of activity – local, urban, and regional - each scale employing a different strategy.

It was pointed out that this approach is new and unique and, if effectively marketed to municipalities and potential funding resources, could be very important. The Board discussed how the work could be moved forward and what role NBC should play in the process. When the Board decided to bid for the 6 month extension grant to prepare these storm water capture ideas, it was agreed we did not have the capabilities to seek funding for such projects, but would discuss with Friends of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks their interest in doing so. The FHBP Board has shown interest in this.

Mbr Gardner suggested that it would be a missed opportunity if NBC did not make efforts to carry these recommendations forward. Past Pres Cork reminded the Board of its prior decision not to overreach our capabilities. However, since one of the project ideas is to explore storm water capture on the property between San Joaquin Ponds and the UCI marsh, it might be interesting for us to consider pursuing this concept because it is so close to The Bay. Ms Sloniowski and VP Clemente went to Sacramento and met with two possible funding resources who expressed interest in the idea but weren't sure yet how to move the idea "from here to there", what the business model would be, or how to use a collaborative model.

Pres Fuhrer suggested that we find a way to continue this discussion outside of the Board meeting. Past Pres Cork, Mbr Gardner, Ms Sloniowski, and Jack Keating volunteered to be on a Watershed Strategy Committee to explore various options.

6. UNB Strategic Plan – Howard Cork and Liz Flint

One of the top priorities and key actions that were designated at the 2015 Board Retreat was that NBC develop a “straw horse” vision of the Upper Newport Bay, a collective view of what should happen with the entire open space over time. Led by then President Howard Cork, a UNB Collaboration Team was developed last year consisting of representatives from NBC, DFW, OCParks, and the City. Through that effort NBC has established itself as a facilitator of dialogue between the land owning agencies regarding topics of mutual interest and concern. These agencies have expressed interest and support for developing an overall plan for the entire area. This kind of collaborative effort was attempted several years ago in the form of the Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP) which eventually lost impetus. At a meeting of Past Pres Cork, several Board members, and Liz Flint, one of our Naturalists who is a land use attorney, it was decided to try to formalize the effort again, hence this proposal.

1. Working with the present UNB Collaboration Team, NBC would offer to coordinate and lead the development of a strategic plan.

2.1 NBC would prepare a high level description of the marine and land area to be covered by the Plan, together with a similarly high level description of what a future desired state might look like.

2.2 The proposed Plan would be presented to the three agency representatives for discussion.

2.3 Assuming broad support from all parties involved, NBC would propose a process to enable the Plan to move forward and agree what contribution each agency would make.

Discussion: NBC would have to dedicate significant resources and commit to some heavy lifting in order to accomplish this. It would be important to find out what Strategic Plans exist already within the three agencies. We would have to be precise about what would be included in the agreement. We would have to keep it at a level where every partner clearly understands what is involved and remains committed to the plan. We may need help from other partners around the Bay.

Motion made by Mbr Cork that we have the intention to develop a strategic plan for the Upper Newport Bay. Seconded by Mbr Gardner. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Plans for Muth Interpretive Center Exhibits

Mbr Cork, who works the front desk and spends a good deal of time at the IC, has observed that in the last few months, under the direction of OCParks, many of the exhibits have been taken down and not replaced. The pillars that displayed various videos related to the Bay have been removed. The “Magic Planet” exhibit that was installed four and a half years ago to replace the Migration exhibit is still not functional. Display and information tables have been taken down. The lobby appears empty. There is little for the public to see anymore. NBC has an investment in this matter since our volunteers have previously used these exhibits for educational and teaching purposes and we have raised funds for some of them.

Several months ago Pres Fuhrer and members of the Board attended a meeting with OCParks’ Scott Fegley, Ellen Larkin, and Amy Erikson at which Ms Erikson presented an extensive plan for the redesign of the IC interpretive elements. She expressed the intention of hiring a professional consultant and forming a committee, with some of our Naturalists as consultants, to further the plan. At last report she told Pres Fuhrer that the plan was on hold now until the new Tideland exhibit is finished and there is no known timetable for completion of that project.

After discussion, it was decided that Pres Fuhrer would write a letter to Ms Erickson requesting more information about the status of the exhibits and OCParks’ Plan to refurbish them. Past Pres Cork suggested we offer to use money from the Interpretive Center Capital Campaign Fund as an incentive to move the process along, perhaps helping to pay for a consultant.

8. OCParks/NBC Vests

After several months of “transitioning” NBC volunteers into the new OCParks/IRC volunteer management program, NBC representatives led by Heather Cieslak have reportedly completed the negotiations. As part of our agreement with OCParks, we have incorporated aspects of their required orientation program into our existing protocol including their First Aid and CPR classes. Most of our volunteers who wish to work on OCParks property have completed those sessions. We have also agreed to wear OCParks vests and successfully convinced them to include on the vests the monogrammed logos of the four major partners that work around the Bay – OCParks, DFW, the City, and the Coastal Commission Community Restoration Program. NBC volunteers are to be allowed to wear their nametags displaying our logo with no other patches permissible. OCParks would like all NBC volunteers to wear these vests around the Bay even if we are not working on OCParks property. The argument has been made that we need to have a uniform appearance and that the NBC vests need to be updated since many are old and worn out, the styles are diverse, and they have too many other distracting adornments (patches, pins, buttons). OCParks will pay for vests for those NBC volunteers who have completed their orientation program. OCParks has offered to have similar vests made for NBC volunteers who have not been through the program, with a small monogrammed NBC logo added, but they will require that NBC or the volunteers pay for them themselves at a cost of \$48.00 each.

Discussion followed the presentation of this issue. Several questions were raised about this proposal, among them why should all NBC volunteers working around the Bay with other property owners have to wear the OCParks uniform, why should an agency other than NBC be determining NBC’s branding, and is this the best deal we can get with regard to financing the vests? NBC has been very cooperative and accommodating in trying to integrate OCParks’ changes into our existing programs while maintaining our own integrity and identity. What should be the reasonable limits of this effort?

Mbrs Zacherl and Kimball left the meeting at 4:05 pm.

Mbr Gardner made a motion that we notify OCParks that we will not pay for vests at this time and invite Stacy Blackwell, Bill Reiter, and Jackie Cordero to come to a Board meeting to discuss the issue. Seconded by Sec Fuhrer. Past Pres Cork suggested that we talk to them about exhibits at the IC at the same time. A vote was called for and the motion passed unanimously.

9. Newport Green Expo

Mbr Gardner reminded the Board that Newport Green Expo, which we have agreed to participate in, is coming up on September 19 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. She expressed concern about the overlap of time since NBC is also participating in Coastal Clean-Up Day from 8:00 to 12:00 on the same day. It was agreed we have enough volunteers to cover both events and that we should do some cross marketing.

10. Other Business/Matters Rising

Meeting with Videographer

Pres Fuhrer suggested we postpone this agenda item in the interest of time.

11. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Treas Flower, seconded by Sec Fuhrer. All were in favor. The meeting ended at 4:35 pm.

Holly Fuhrer, Board Secretary
Newport Bay Conservancy