



Community Park Planning Session II

Summary—The Guiding Principles

May 5, 2009

This scoping session is part of a series of community meetings to assist in the planning process for the future of the Southern Humboldt Community Park. This session focused on “Guiding Principles” for the Park’s. These principles are a critical part of the Park’s Master Plan. They serve as an expression of our values and ideals and provide a foundation for decisions regarding community use and stewardship of the Park.

This session was an active working session in the “World Café” style of group conversation. Each group focused on a different component of the guiding principles. Participants moved from table to table to give input and discuss each of the components over the course of the session.

Five tables were ready with an assigned table host who also served as the recorder for a topic. The table hosts were tasked with exploring specific questions through group process while also encouraging new questions. They were urged to encourage everyone to participate and also to listen to gather knowledge from the group. At the end of each group the table hosts captured the essence of each group’s ideas and relayed them to each of the groups that followed.

Each table was presented with an element from the master plan and group participants were asked specific questions to inspire conversations related to the various Master Plan components. Participants were encouraged to show support for a principle, remove a principle and to suggest an additional guiding principle.

The table hosts reported that there was a general consensus that the Guiding Principles are sound and needed mostly minor revisions. The conversations were lively and a few concepts began to evolve and the discussions moved from table to table with new participants. Each table host has written a report of the discussions, comments and ideas that took place at their table.

Table Hosts Reports:

Natural Resources—Table Host: John Rogers

Question: What are the appropriate elements of a Natural Resource Utilization and Conservation Plan at the Park?

- Ensure careful utilization of park resources for the greatest community benefit.
- Protecting current park resources for their own sake as well as to provide for future community needs.
- Preserve the open space features and scenic beauty
- Protection of prime agricultural soils
- Protect archeological resources
- Prevent large-scale sprawling commercial and residential development
- Protect historic landscapes, resources, and structures.
- Continued restoration and management of upslope forested areas
- Continue to address legacy erosion problems
- Protection and restoration of riparian habitat for endangered fish and wildlife
- Minimize impact of development or construction on park viewshed

Natural Resources Table Summary:

The following Guiding Principles were presented to each of the groups that came to the NR table. It was noted for each group that some of the principles were more general overarching principles and others could be group around more specific topics. It was also noted that while most guiding principles prepared for the NR table were positive statements of desired conditions, two principles were negative proscriptive statements.

In general all the groups were supportive of all the Guiding Principles provided for the NR table. Only the proscriptive principles generated controversy. Discussion primarily focused on refining existing principles.

General:

- Ensure careful utilization of park resources for the greatest community benefit.
- Protecting current park resources for their own sake as well as to provide for future community needs.
- Preserve the open space features and scenic beauty.

Agricultural values:

- Protection of prime agricultural soils

Cultural values:

- Protect archeological resources
- Protect historic landscapes, resources and structures

Restoration:

- Continued restoration and management of upslope forested areas.
- Continue to address legacy erosion problems
- Protection and restoration of riparian habitat for endangered fish and wildlife

Proscriptive or negative:

- Minimize impact of development or construction on park viewshed
- Prevent large-scale sprawling commercial and residential development

Group One

This group focused on issues surrounding agricultural use.

One additional guiding principle emerged:

- Natural resource planning should include all available data sources and analysis

Additional comments:

NW side is prime agricultural area

South end difficult to farm

Use poor soils for parking

Use prime soils for agriculture

Facilitate/protect use of park recreational resources

Group Two

This group also focused on agriculture use policy along with discussion of potential site development for residential and other uses.

Additional guiding principles:

- Management of prime agricultural soils should recognize habitat values as well as agricultural production
- Any development should leave the park in its original condition (as it found it) after it's useful life

Modified principle:

- Prevent large-scale sprawling commercial and residential development

Additional comments:

Protection of prime agricultural soils does not equal plowed fields.

It was noted that restoration will impact agricultural soils and potentially raise water tables as eroded gullies are restored to higher level stream beds creating the potential for additional wetland areas, at least seasonally, within the park.

The guiding principle "prevent any residential development" was proposed. There was much discussion, but a consensus of support did not emerge.

Group Three

This group focused more on experiential aspects of park use. There was much discussion of how to incorporate the spiritual value of natural, scenic and open spaces as a guiding principle.

The groups reiterated support for slightly modified versions of two principles:

- Preserve the open space features and scenic beauty.
- Ensure careful utilization use of park resources for the greatest community benefit.

After subsequent email exchanges with two of the group's members a recommended guiding principle emerged that I believe is consistent with the intent and concerns of the group:

- Enable opportunities for park visitors to experience spiritual renewal in a natural, undeveloped setting.

Group Four

This group noted that implementation of park goals and objectives will require resources and oversight of park activities and recommended this additional guiding principle:

- Ensure that adequate funding and staffing are available to implement the above guidelines

Group Five

This group focused on the long-term sustainability and ecological integrity associated with any improvements implemented at the park.

Possible Guiding Principle based on the conversation:

- Any "permanent" improvements shall be designed to be self-sustaining and self-maintaining and to protect the long-term sustainability and ecological integrity of the park.

(Rio Anderson and Dave Hope gave specific input regarding the phrasing of the above principle and may be willing to review and refine the above phrasing.)

Additional comments:

Don't fight the landscape!

Do it right the first time!

Additional recommendations:

Work toward the development of an overall stewardship plan for the entire park.

Set up conservation easement(s) to protect park resources in perpetuity.

Community Benefit –Table Host: Dennis Huber

Question: How can the park provide the most benefit for the community?

- Ensure the use of this park by the community in perpetuity
- Create access for the community through a series of interpretive trails and picnic areas, linking to a regional trail system
- Support community use for active recreation areas such as a soccer, baseball, or football fields
- Support community use for event
- Reserve areas for future community needs

Community Benefit Table Summary:

Question # 1:---Ensure the use of this property by the community in perpetuity.

Participant Comments:

- Define Perpetuity
- How is it guaranteed?
- Review Golden Gate Park mission statement

Question #2:---Create access for the community through a series of interpretive trails and picnic areas, linking to a regional trail system

Participant Comments:

- General agreement
- Devil is in the details
- Town Square connect top priority
- Contemplative area needed
- All advocacy groups need to meet established criteria

Question # 3:--Support community use for active recreation areas such as soccer, baseball, or football fields

Participant Comments:

- Flexibility needed for placement
- Reserve area for marginal croplands such as olives
- Economic benefits
- Maintenance costs analyzed
- Only non-agriculture areas
- Pool
- Aesthetics important
- Top priority in planning
- Financial concerns
- Good governance
- Would prefer a membership non-profit better-let voting determine
- Allocation of water important
- Community involvement in decision
- Other locations already serving needs
- Large carbon footprint to travel outside our community for this type of recreation
- Keep in balance with agriculture needs
- Bring in folks who understand requirements
- Lower priority

Question # 4:--Reserve areas for future needs

Participant Comments:

- Good planning is needed
- Master plan needed
- Long-term ecological planning
- Yes

Question #5:-- Support community use for events such as the Summer Arts Fair

Participant Comments:

- Capacity study
- Located properly
- Scale important
- Small events preferred--350 persons
- Non-profits only
- No tax money used
- Summer Arts OK
- Only generated by and for local community
- Flexibility needed
- Loud, late concerts No!
- How is enforcement handled?
- Method for community input needed

Question: What is the best role for the Park in agriculture in Southern Humboldt?

- Promote a higher level of agricultural production than under past management
- Protect the prime agricultural soils
- Promote more *intensive* rather than *extensive* agricultural production
- Encourage dry farming and water conservation
- Encourage organic farming
- Encourage economically viable farming operations by providing basic infrastructure needs and administration
- Facilitate cost-sharing between multiple farming user groups

Agriculture Table Summary:

The major response was that the guiding principles for agriculture at the park are sound. There seemed to be a general desire to clarify certain definitions.

- **Promote a higher level of agricultural production than under past management.**

“Past management” is too broad a term, in that while the park is more agriculturally productive than under Tooby ownership, it is less productive than under Woods management. A number of participants shared a vision of vibrant diverse agriculture on the land. Orchards, vineyards, and grazing were mentioned as wishes.

- **Protect the prime agricultural soils.**

This general notion is supported by consensus. One participant brought up the point that prime soil is currently in use for species habitat. It was pointed out that preserving habitat is also a way of preserving prime soils. Another participant brought up that even some of the lesser grade soils at the park (Hookton) still have agricultural value, (Hookton can, for example, produce 2 or 3 tons of hay/acre annually) and should also be protected from development and parking.

It was generally agreed that if the land is protected as open space, and if creative parking alternatives could be found, that the agricultural integrity of the land is protected.

- **Promote more intensive, rather than extensive agricultural production.**

In each group this statement was identified as being confusing and ambiguous. This is also where we came into the discussion of how to integrate multiple uses of the park facility, while suffering no net loss of agricultural potential.

- **Encourage dry farming and water conservation.**

Again, this was agreed upon in principle. Participants discussed the desire for installing orchards, and others questioned whether we have the water to do so.

- **Encourage economically viable farming operations by providing basic infrastructure needs and administration.**

- **Facilitate cost sharing between multiple farming groups.**

There is an awareness that the park is in possession of considerable agricultural resources that could be managed to bring income to the park. How that could be implemented was discussed. Moderators shared their understanding of how this can work.

(Addendum)

One question that needs a public answer, is the issue of how the rezoning of the land into Public Recreation will affect the future of agriculture at the park. Some claimed it is the “end” of agriculture, while board member Tim Metz said it would have no effect at all.

The community would be well served by a clear statement from the board on this matter, once all the information is in and an answer can be presented.

Economic Sustainability and Fundraising – Table Host: Yashi Hoffman

Question: How can we best ensure economic sustainability for the Park and Park advocate groups?

- Develop long-range plan for economic stability for the park
- Promote community values, health and economic development of the immediate area and region by providing additional safe, attractive and convenient recreational opportunities
- Encourage the entrepreneurial spirit of advocate groups where it is consistent with our goals
- Support continued operation of long-established, locally owned gravel operation providing valuable resources for the community
- Use careful, ecologically sound housing units to enable the park to create an endowment that supports park operations in perpetuity.
- Support housing that may include, but is not necessarily limited to, intergenerational housing and eldercare to help to meet community needs

Economic Sustainability and Fundraising Table Summary:

Revenue Sources-This list of possible revenue sources was collected from the various groups (In no particular order)

- Bequests from wills.
- Green burial sites
- Hayfield cultivation
- Park memberships
- Special district supported by a tax assessment
- Olive trees
- RV campground at Tooby park
- Ecotourism

- Canoe and bicycle rentals
- Walk-in campground facilities
- Food vendors
- Permaculture demonstration gardens
- Partnerships with local organizations
- Tourism promotion through advertising
- Youth programs from out of the area
- Support for advocacy groups to present their plans
- Sell the gravel operation and use cash to payoff debt

Housing

There was widespread support for housing at the park as a means of long-term income. There were two expressed oppositions to any housing. The concerns for housing were centered on location, environmental compatibility, use, containment of runaway growth and visibility. Intergenerational housing and eldercare were welcomed with concerns about the level of care and the hospital's capabilities.

Concerts

Initially, there was a wide mix of opinion on concerts expressed but as discussion continued and issues regarding size, decibel levels, frequency, end time, parking and traffic was addressed, support grows to over 75% in favor.

Gravel

Majority position is not comfortable with gravel pit association with the park. Some do not agree with its inclusion with the guiding principle, many do not know the details of the relationship of the gravel pit to the park and want clarification. Many feel a gravel extraction business is incompatible with the parks overarching goals.

Cash Donations

Solicit funding from the local alternative green economy. Appeal to this vast revenue source as a way to give back to their community. A few insisted that a full public accounting of funds to date was necessary and indicated their reluctance to pay for interest on the loan. One suggestion was for a targeted donation option. This would be a donation that would have a % (set by the board) to go toward debt retirement and operational cost and the remaining % to go the advocacy group of the donors choice (i.e. stream restoration or John and Lisa's community farm).

Community Participation—Table Host: Peter Ryce

Question: In what ways can the park, the community, and individuals benefit from increased community participation? What would you like to do to help?

Community Participation Summary

Community Input

When advocates for Park use come forth with proposals they should be put on the website and the public should be allowed to comment on the proposals before they are approved. Have a better explanation of the advocate process.

When a project reaches a certain level of development have a public poll on its impacts, usefulness and relevancy before continuing its development

Need a mechanism to ensure public input is heard and action is taken. Where is the carry through?

When new master plan is developed there needs to be public input, comment period and processes before it is submitted.

Governance

Have Board members responsible for particular areas and let the public know who they are so they can contact that Board member with their concerns. Keep it all cohesive. There should be a clear process for board evolution.

The Park has evolved beyond its 'start-up' phase and a new model for governance may be warranted.

Current Board is doing great. They have done an incredible amount of work. Their governance works well.

The Park should be a membership organization in order to give the public a sense of inclusion or ownership. However, membership can bog an organization down. At least board meetings should be open. There should be public and fiscal accountability at all times. If the Park creates a membership and charges dues it will help seek 'inclusion' and gives a voice to the people.

Have a 'site' committee (like a planning commission) to oversee and assist in Park planning.

Communication

Have this type of 'World Café' three times per year so that there can be public discussion and conversation on issues affecting the Park. However, the information gets lost because there is no lasting value that gets 'implemented.'

More and better communication between the Board and the public is needed. Use the Website. Have an advisory committee, use the radio, have newsletters, more outreach.

Have a Facebook page. Tell what services are available, what sites, at what cost? Park needs higher profile. Show the Park as a county/regional facility. Make presentations to the Board of Supervisors, Chamber of Commerce, service groups, local businesses, etc.

Keep local neighbors well informed, they are a resource and supporters. Use e-mail. Keep them in the loop.

Additional Comments

1) Organize energy for volunteer efforts. Appoint a community member to do this. 2) Have a booster club. 3) Look to older (or other) Parks for models of organization, governance and

planning, i.e. Bidwell in Chico, Ashland Community Park 4) Train docents give tours, i.e. restoration, farming, fauna, flora, etc. 5) Income could be produced by selling advertising on the website.