

CALIFORNIA STATE PARK and RECREATION COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING CONDUCTED VIA TELECONFERENCE
Teleconference Location: California State Parks Russian River District Office
25831 Steelhead Boulevard
Duncans Mills, California

Minutes of the Special Meeting - Friday, June 12, 2009

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT AT THE TELECONFERENCE LOCATION

Caryl Hart, CHAIR

COMMISSIONERS PARTICIPATING VIA TELECONFERENCE AS PERMITTED BY CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 11123

Lindy DeKoven
Alice Huffman
Gail Kautz
William "Bill" Kogerman
Paul Junger Witt

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS STAFF

Brian Cahill, ASSISTANT DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PARK OPERATIONS
Ruth Coleman, DIRECTOR
Michael Harris, ACTING CHIEF DEPUTY DIRECTOR
Manuel Lopez, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, ADMINISTRATION
Tara Lynch, ACTING CHIEF COUNSEL
Roy Stearns, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS
Kathryn Tobias, SENIOR STAFF COUNSEL
Barry Trute, ACTING ASSISTANT TO THE STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

SPEAKERS REGISTERED/REPRESENTING

Pam Armas/California State Park Rangers Association (CSPRA)
Teresa Cooke/California Travel Industry Association (calTIA)
Baubie Fox/City of Lodi Parks and Recreation Commission
Robert Garcia/The City Project
Elizabeth Goldstein/California State Parks Foundation
Tony Minicucci/Self
Jerry Rubin/Alliance for Survival
Carolyn Schoff/California League of Park Associations (CALPA)
Traci Verardo-Torres/California State Parks Foundation
Dr. Rosemarie White/Sierra Club

CALL TO ORDER

Legal notice having been given, this special meeting of the California State Park and Recreation Commission was called to order at 10:03 a.m. by Commission Chair Caryl Hart.

Chair Hart noted that the first order of business was for her to state that as Chair, she had convened this special meeting of the Commission for the purpose of considering the effects on California State Parks of

the state budget proposal currently being considered by the legislature and determining the Commission's role in addressing the consequences of the proposed budget on California State Parks, and for the purpose of identifying strategies and possible actions to be taken by the Commission in response to the proposed budget. The Chair noted that before the meeting could proceed the Commission was required by law to make a finding, by a two-third vote of the attending commissioners, that a special meeting was necessary because compliance with the 10-day notice requirement of the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act would have imposed substantial hardship or that immediate action was required to protect the public interest.

Chair Hart made a motion that as the legislature was expected to vote on the proposed budget at any time, a special meeting was necessary in order for the Commission to take timely action to protect the public interest; if the meeting were delayed the opportunity for the Commission to take timely and effective action would have passed. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bill Kogerman. Chair Hart requested a roll call vote and Commissioners DeKoven, Kautz, Kogerman, Witt, and Chair Hart each voted to adopt the motion that a special meeting was necessary for the reasons stated. Commissioner Alice Huffman was not participating in the teleconference at the time of this vote.

Chair Hart introduced the commissioners participating in the teleconference and asked the State Parks staff and members of the public present at each teleconference location to introduce themselves as well.

AGENDA ITEM 1/AGENDA ITEM 2:

UPDATE ON THE STATE BUDGET PROPOSAL CURRENTLY BEING CONSIDERED BY THE LEGISLATURE/COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS

Director Ruth Coleman provided an overview of the current budget proposal and how State Parks planned to respond to the reductions imposed by this budget. Brian Cahill, Assistant Deputy Director for Park Operations, and Michael Harris, Acting Chief Deputy Director contributed to this presentation.

The commissioners and staff discussed the possible impacts the budget could have on State Parks. Subjects discussed included risk management, particularly as it related to public safety on park property, wildfires, vandalism, loss of tourism revenue to neighboring communities, and the important role State Parks staff and facilities play during emergencies – parks used as evacuation sites, for firefighting incident command, and the contribution of State Parks peace officers to public safety and law enforcement.

Reduction of State Parks staff were discussed, with a reduction of 90% planned for State Parks headquarters in Sacramento and a overall loss of over 1,200 positions estimated over a two-year period.

Emphasis was given to the temporary nature of any solutions being discussed at this time. It was stated that operating agreements with other agencies or private entities would be for two years or less.

Commissioner Alice Huffman joined the teleconference during this discussion at 10:32 a.m.

Note was made of the need for California State Parks to shift from its traditional operations model of accessibility – making parks available to as many citizens as possible – to a revenue generating/for profit model wherein parks must be self-supporting. Also discussed was the potential of revenue-generating parks to support other park units, the potential for public/private partnerships to continue park operations, and the possibility of indemnifying from liability any entities that might come forward to operate parks.

Chair Caryl Hart requested a summary of the tasks that arose from the discussion. The following were listed: Quantify the impact to public safety of the reduction of State Parks lifeguards, Quantify the increase in fire danger and other crisis, and the effect of vandalism. Director Ruth Coleman noted that it would not be possible to quantify some of these effects, though it should be possible to characterize them.

Commissioners discussed new revenue generating opportunities in parks and agreed that potential economic opportunities should be investigated. They discussed variations of the vehicle license fee proposal that had been considered in the legislature and elsewhere over the last year, and the difference between a mandatory vehicle license fee and a voluntary “opt out” program. Other suggestions included the possibil-

ity of offering carbon offsets (carbon sequestering) through California State Parks. Chair Caryl Hart noted that commissioners and State Parks staff should make an effort to develop a strong connection between parks and minimizing the effects of climate change. The commissioners agreed that it was essential that decisions made in reaction to the current budget crisis not be decisions that would be regretted later.

Chair Hart introduced Elizabeth Goldstein, President of the California State Parks Foundation, to present the Foundation's interpretation of the current budget proposal. Ms. Goldstein and Traci Verardo-Torres, Legislative & Policy Director for the Foundation, highlighted detriments of budget proposal. Ms. Goldstein and Ms. Verardo-Torres also provided information on their efforts to develop support for State Parks from both members of the public and commercial partners through the Foundation's "Save Our State Parks" campaign. They described working with over 400 organizations to generate over 100,000 contacts to the legislature and the governor in support of California State Parks. Elizabeth Goldstein emphasized the need to develop a sustainable, long-term solution to funding State Parks.

Discussion took place amongst commissioners and the State Parks Foundation representatives concerning the vehicle license fee proposal, the history of this effort and current legislative interest in this concept.

Commissioner Bill Kogerman suggested that the Commission should request a legal opinion as to whether or not a voluntary vehicle license fee would require a two-thirds vote in the legislature to pass. State Parks Acting Chief Counsel Tara Lynch suggested the commissioners seek an opinion from the California Legislative Counsel. Commissioners agreed that only this opinion would be of value.

Commissioner Alice Huffman moved that the Commission should formally seek an opinion from the California Legislative Counsel regarding whether or not a voluntary, "opt out" vehicle license fee in support of State Parks would require a two-thirds vote in the legislature. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gail Kautz. The commissioners voted unanimously to pass the motion. Commissioner Paul Witt requested clarification regarding which commissioner(s) would make the request of the Legislative Counsel. Chair Caryl Hart stated that she would make the request by working with Commissioner Bill Kogerman.

AGENDA ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Hart opened the public comment portion of the meeting at 11:53 a.m. The following speakers addressed the Commission from the various teleconference locations:

Pam Armas, representing the California State Park Rangers Association (CSPRA), concerning the prevention of layoffs of State Parks staff, the important role parks staff play in protecting public safety, safeguarding park resources, and the value of careers with California State Parks

Baubie Fox, representing the City of Lodi Parks and Recreation Commission, concerning the vehicle license fee proposal and special license plates to raise funds for parks.

Robert Garcia of The City Project, concerning his letters to President Barack Obama, federal representatives, and Arnold Schwarzenegger requesting that the National Park Service operate state park units.

Tony Minicucci, concessionaire at Leo Carillo State Beach, concerning contacting legislators to build support for State Parks, the value parks provide for children, and the acceptability of increased fees to keep parks open.

Jerry Rubin, from Alliance for Survival, concerning fundraising, keeping an optimistic attitude towards success of park efforts and not accepting park closures as a solution.

Carolyn Schoff, representing the California League of Park Associations (CALPA), concerning the development of long-term solutions for the funding of State Parks and partnering with public and private entities.

Dr. Rosemarie White from the Sierra Club, concerning respecting the environment, particularly during these times of great fiscal challenge.

Chair Hart closed public comment at 12:11 p.m.

Chair Hart stated that the loss of parks was equivalent to a life-and-death situation. The appropriateness of characterizing the loss of parks as life-or-death was discussed amongst the commissioners and California State Parks Foundation staff. The Foundation noted that its position was to focus on the economic impact of closing parks. It was suggested that the California State Park Rangers Association could best quantify the impact of the loss of lifeguards and other public safety-related services of State Parks.

Commissioner Bill Kogerman and Director Ruth Coleman discussed the possibility of layoffs and giving priority to existing State Parks staff. Director Coleman stated that existing staff would be given priority when filling open positions. She added that parks management was well aware of the stress the budget situation was causing for staff, and that State Parks' employees were the department's greatest resource.

Commissioner Alice Huffman noted that she had not yet been in contact with legislators, wishing to first obtain agreement from commissioners that this is something those with such relationships should pursue. Chair Hart stated that she and Commissioners Gail Kautz and Paul Witt addressed legislators at a hearing the previous week. The commissioners agreed that they should each utilize whatever relationships they had with legislators to increase awareness of how the budget would be effecting State Parks.

AGENDA ITEM 4:

CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS PENDING LITIGATION

As permitted by Government Code Section 11126(e)(1) & (e)(2)(C)(i). Pending Litigation: Budget Proposals. Conference with legal counsel to confer with and receive advice regarding pending litigation when discussion in open session would prejudice the position of the Commission

Chair Hart announced this agenda item and noted that each of the teleconference location rooms must now be cleared for the closed session. Acting Chief Counsel Tara Lynch specified that only commissioners, necessary State Parks staff, and legal counsel would be permitted to remain during the closed session.

Chair Hart called the closed session to order at 12:26 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 5:

PUBLIC ACCOUNT OF REPORTABLE ITEMS, IF ANY, FROM CLOSED SESSION, ADJOURNMENT

Chair Hart reconvened the Commission in open session at 12:40 p.m. The Chair noted that there were no reportable items from the closed session, and asked for confirmation of this from Acting Chief Counsel Tara Lynch. Ms. Lynch confirmed that there were no reportable items from the closed session. Chair Hart then asked if there were any additional comments or questions from commissioners or staff. There being none, Chair Hart adjourned the special meeting at 12:41 p.m.

ATTEST: These minutes were approved by the California State Park and Recreation Commission on October 8, 2009, at its duly-noticed public meeting in Sacramento, California.

By: ORIGINAL SIGNED BY Date: 10-8-09

Louis Nastro
Assistant to the Commission
For Ruth Coleman, Director
California Department of Parks and Recreation
Secretary to the Commission