

**From:** [Sarah Gurney](#)  
**To:** [Mary Gourley](#)  
**Cc:** [Lisa Pierce](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Calder Creek Thoughts  
**Date:** Monday, January 31, 2022 10:46:58 PM

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Hi Mary,

Please include this email from Lisa and Steve Pierce in the public record.

Though I've referred to it several times, this is the first when I've noticed that you were not included in its original transmission.

Thank you,

Sarah

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Lisa Pierce <[REDACTED]>  
**Date:** Fri, Jan 21, 2022 at 7:46 PM  
**Subject:** Calder Creek Thoughts  
**To:** Mayor Una JM Glass <[una.glass.seb@sonic.net](mailto:una.glass.seb@sonic.net)>, Patrick Slayter <[ps.sebcc@gmail.com](mailto:ps.sebcc@gmail.com)>, Diana Rich <[drich@cityofsebastopol.org](mailto:drich@cityofsebastopol.org)>, <[neysacouncil@gmail.com](mailto:neysacouncil@gmail.com)>, Sarah Gurney <[sarahgurney.seb@gmail.com](mailto:sarahgurney.seb@gmail.com)>

Dear Sebastopol City Council Members,

First, we want to thank you for all your hard work. We've said it before, but it bears repeating. After watching the Planning Commission meeting from December 14th, we felt compelled to share some of our thoughts, as you are being asked to choose between three proposed plans for Calder Creek and Ives Park.

While it would be great to see Ives park and Calder Creek get some more love, we have a bunch of concerns about all three of the options presented by Jessica Hall and Ann Riley from WRI. All three options seem to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. It's easy to get swept up in the excitement of a new vision, but then have second thoughts once the demolition gets going.

We know that Ives Park has become neglected, a bit run down and has lost some of it's appeal. We also know that some people have been pushing for years to naturalize Calder Creek. The people pushing for maximum change should not necessarily be the loudest voices in the room.

There are so many concerns that have not yet been addressed, and these proposed projects are so great in scope, that we feel this process has been too rushed. There has not been enough opportunity for public involvement. Here, on January 13th, as we write this, the plans were still nowhere to be seen on the City's website or anywhere else on line. How can the public engage with this very important decision if we can't see the plans?

We think that all three of the proposed plans fall short. Here are some concerns that we have about *all three* plans:

#### Liability:

In the past, we were told that opening up the creek could expose the city to lawsuits. Has this changed? Hopefully, our city attorney would confirm this before city money is spent.

#### Safety:

Calder Creek handles a tremendous amount of water after a heavy rain.

Without fencing, small children are more at risk. Being in the park with small children will require even more vigilance. One adult may be watching more than one child.

These plans show more places for people to hide. We want a park that is safe to walk through, even at night.

#### Water Quality:

With the Little Farm being less than 150 yards away, and lots of animals pooping in a very small area on the creek, a lot of manure is in the water. This concern was raised at the meeting and was met with assurances that increased vegetation would solve this issue. We wonder about that. While the Little Farm is no friend to the creek, it is a beloved neighborhood destination with lots of community support.

#### Invasive Vegetation:

Water hyacinth, especially, has been an ongoing problem in the creek. The high nitrogen from the farm is probably a contributing factor. So far, the City has not kept up with removal of this invasive plant. When the water really gets going through the park, it gets swept downstream. We imagine that the clean up will only become more difficult for the city if the stream bed is filled with plants that we do not want to be scooped up and removed. Removal will become a much more laborious project.

#### Cost:

Not addressed yet. WRI says there would be grants available for only portions of the project. Any of these projects would be very costly, but the greatest impact plan would naturally cost the most. We are concerned about runaway costs.

The old Master Plan recommended various donation schemes and grant resources. Back in 2012, when costs were estimated for the Ives Park Master Plan, the price tag estimate came to over \$3.7 million. We can't imagine what the costs would be today. \$6 million? Higher? Needless to say, the Master Plan was more modest in scope and did not include removing the ball field.

All three plans from WRI sprung from the 2013 Master Plan, which as far as we can see could use some changes. The Planning Commission has recognized that the Master Plan should be updated, yet the new proposed plans all incorporate some of the costly and controversial features. One example is the expansion of the park into Willow St.

Beyond the cost, the climate impact and the disruption caused by the demolition and construction, this proposed street change would create more noise and pollution from the cars stopping and starting. It may also create traffic backup into the intersection of Jewell and Bodega, as so many people traveling east on Bodega now take a right onto Jewell and then continue onto Willow to all points south.

There was no mention of improvements for the bathrooms, which need remodeling.

All three plans would require some fencing as the creek is entering and exiting the park far below ground level. On the eastern side, the park becomes quite narrow before the creek goes under High St., so the bank would be steep.

### **Concerns about specific plans:**

#### **The "Constrained Creek" Plan (Big Impact):**

The Playground, which is now ideally located in some ways, is moved from its current location over to the southwest corner of the park. The current location has both sun and shade, is right next to the big lawn area and, perhaps most important, right next to the safe, ample, accessible parking lot. Parents can go to their car, grab a snack or a sweater or change a diaper, all while keeping an eye on the playground. The proposed location places the playground in shade and far away from the parking lot, right next to all the noise and fumes from the street traffic.

The event area is pinched and narrow and the small lawn is remote at the other end of the park. This plan would not allow for the kind of events that we have been able to have at the park. Currently, we have plenty of spillover room within our main event area for food trucks, wine tents, portapotties, etc.

## **The “Updated Charette” Plan (Bigger Impact)**

Here again, the event area has shrunk to half its present size with no spillover room.

## **The Stable Platform Creek (Biggest Impact)**

Just the climate impact of this plan, with the massive demolition and earth moving that would be required, should give us pause. The expense of moving the massive lights to another field would be considerable, as would the ongoing increased maintenance with the increased area.

Here again, the Event Space has little spill-over space.

We really hope a dog park doesn't go into Ives Park.

### **Another Possible Solution:**

The most climate-friendly solution would have the lowest impact. (More on this below) The total costs of any of these proposed projects would be huge. Any design, including these being proposed, will become run down and shabby without the time and resources devoted to maintaining it.

The main drawbacks in Ives Park appear to be the unattractive fencing, the run down bathrooms, the deteriorated asphalt paving, the lackluster, skimpy landscaping and the complete waste of the open part of the creek that is not channelized that used to be called the accessible wading area.

When this open wading area was first created, it was well landscaped and well used. People loved it, although there were several close calls with children going in when the water was raging. Those close calls were the reason that the boy scouts put up the chain link fence, a fence that is considered unattractive to our current aesthetic views, but is very practical because it is easy to see through, very durable and requires no maintenance. Even though replacing it would be environmentally detrimental, all the chain link fencing should probably go.

We would love to see the wading area opened up, accessible and restored with appropriate and attractive landscaping. The concrete areas on each side of the wading area have clearly outlived their life span. However, the entire length of the southwestern portion of the stone lined creek bed, appear to have been very well constructed and could last many more years. In the twenty five years that we have watched it, the condition of the creek bed has appeared to be stable.

Flooding has not been an issue in Ives Park, except for the rare times when debris has not been cleared downstream. The creek bed has been

able to handle massive amounts of water flowing through the park. It works.

Needless to say, we are in a climate crisis. What is it that we *want* to do and what is it that we *need* to do? We think the question really does need to be asked: Is this project really what we should be prioritizing? At our last Sebastopol Climate Action meeting, we were reminded that the Planning Department is stretched with limited resources and may not have the staff time or resources to hire a grant writer, which is what is required in order to take on significant and meaningful climate actions. Meanwhile, a lot of staff time has already gone into and would continue to go into the plans that are being proposed by WRI.

It is important to acknowledge that while this proposed project may create a more attractive park, it does nothing to lower our city's contribution to green house gasses, carbon or climate change. Unfortunately, large demolition and construction projects such as this do just the opposite. The removal of trees, the large earth moving equipment transporting dirt, carting away and disposing of the demolished creek bed, bringing in tons of raw and processed materials such as rock, concrete and everything else needed to create a new creek and a new park will produce many, many tons of CO2. In other words, from a climate perspective, these proposed plans would do more harm than good, and this would need to be acknowledged.

As a city, we are barely able to maintain the park as it is, and all three of these plans would significantly add to the maintenance costs. The assumption that skilled volunteers will consistently over time show up to do the maintenance work is probably wishful thinking.

### **An Alternative Plan:**

One alternative plan that would be much more budget-friendly than any of the three being currently considered would be to have a "Phase One" plan that would actually be doable and manageable for the City to accomplish soon.

This would be to leave the creek bed as it is for the upstream, southwestern portion and open up and develop the central wading area/meadow and possibly expand and naturalize the area just downstream as well.

This way, we could keep the large willow and redwood trees in this section upstream. We would not have to mess with the sewer line, and we could keep our large, flexible event space with plenty of spill-over space. The stone creek bed on this side is especially mossy and pretty and looks to be in good condition. The bridge by the redwood grove also appears to be in good condition.

All the chain link cyclone fencing would be removed. Perhaps wrought iron fencing, maybe unique and even artistic, could replace the chain link fencing where the banks are steep. Many parks in England have attractive wrought iron fencing.

This fencing could also be placed on the southern, Ives Pool side of the open wading area, but the path that skirts the ball field could be unfenced. This would allow plenty of access to the creek, but would be a bit safer for small children running around in the park. Part of the creek would be accessible, naturalized, planted and could even have a modest course change. Pathways could be replaced with more attractive surfaces and even relocated if desired.

In summary, this "Phase One" Plan would leave the upstream, south western portion of the creek as it is and concentrate our resources on the wading area portion of the creek and possibly extend the accessible, naturalized portion further downstream until it goes into the pipe under High St. Our playground, event area, fields, picnic areas and ball field would all stay in their present locations.

This lower impact park and creek restoration would save the City a bundle. There are so many ways we as a City could make a real difference with our contribution to climate change. For example, we could be incentivizing electrifying homes and rental properties or assisting with installation of EV chargers for rental properties. Is demolishing our entire park and building a new one really the highest and best use of our funds?

Thank you for reading this, Lisa & Steve Pierce

For reference, we are attaching three screen shots we snagged from the Dec. 4th meeting showing the three proposed plans.

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Sarah Glade Gurney