



City of Sebastopol
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APPROVED MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF October 26, 2021

PLANNING COMMISSION:

The notice of the meeting was posted on October 21, 2021.

- 1. CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Fritz called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and read a procedural statement.
- 2. ROLL CALL:**
Present: Chair Fritz, Vice Chair Oetinger, and Commissioners Burnes, Douch, Fernandez, and Kelley
Absent: None.
Staff: Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director
- 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** None.
- 4. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA:** None.

Chair Fritz opened public comment.

Director Svanstrom commented that staff had received no written comments from the public.

Hearing none, Chair Fritz closed public comment.

- 5. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None.

6. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS:

- A. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan** – The City recently released the Public Review Draft LHMP and will provide an overview of the natural, human-health, and human-caused hazards assessed in the plan. The presentation will explain the hazard mitigation planning process and highlight the projects developed for the plan's mitigation strategy. The City will also discuss the organization of the Draft LHMP and how the public can provide feedback so that this input can be incorporated into the Final LHMP.

Director Svanstrom introduced the item.

Consultant Jeff Brislawn, Hazard Mitigation Lead of Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions, Inc., presented and was available for questions.

Chair Fritz asked for Commission questions.

Kathy Oetinger, Vice Chair

I was looking for some specific information in the study regarding Calder Creek flooding through Ives Park. I see you have mitigation for daylighting, etc. in that area, but can you refer me to a page or tell if you've had discussions or information about flooding in Ives Park?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I don't know where it is in the report, but I can answer that question. I discussed this is Juliana Presperi of Wood and the City's Public Works Superintendent Dante Del Prete recently and we either changed the language or we will be changing the language for that component to talk about Calder Creek. It's really along the entirety of it. There was some localized flooding around the Calder Creek outflow farther east during the large storm we had recently, not in Ives Park but along the Joe Rodota Trail. Dante and I did a site walk with GHD working on the hydrology for Ives Park and making sure the storm water flows all along that creek watershed to address any flooding issues. Our communication with Juliana was to ensure that that mitigation wasn't specific to only Ives Park but also looked at the whole Calder Creek corridor.

Kathy Oetinger, Vice Chair

I recognize that on the maps that show flooding it has to do with the specific information we have on the flooding in Atascadero Creek and in the Laguna channel, but other places like up on Pleasant Hill Road at Mitchell Court and Abbott Avenue aren't marked on the map as flooding areas, so I wanted to make sure they are covered in the plan.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

That's a good question for Jeff. Calder Creek is one of the two creeks that are storm water drainage throughout the City. If people have knowledge of specific locations outside of the mapped FEMA flood plains that are problematic localized flooding areas, what's the best way to get that information to you?

Jeff Brislawn, Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions

Maybe use the comment form to state that, and then if you have specific information on those problem spots, if they could provide them to you, Kari, and you could pass them on to us. That's the exact kind of information we'd be looking for. Those flood hazard areas, particularly the ones that are not mapped by FEMA, are often where we're lacking data, so we would welcome that information and can use it to ensure the plan discusses those issues in those areas. I also put in the chat where the mitigation action on the Calder Creek daylighting can be found.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Kathy, for that one we will be expanding that to the entire Calder Creek channel area, because it makes sense needing to maintain that as the storm water channel. What was the other location you said, around Pleasant Hill Road?

Kathy Oetinger, Vice Chair

It was listed in the report as Pleasant Hill Road and Mitchell Court. Another area shown on the map where it floods is down at the bottom of Valley View Court. There are some

townhouses that often flood when there's flooding on Atascadero Creek. Just a few things I noticed that I'll put onto the comments link.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

One question on the mitigation goal to minimize new development in hazard-prone areas: Does that align with the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) plan for the Bay Area as far as building and what's buildable?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

What was the mitigation reference?

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

Page 5-2 of chapter 5.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

The way the RHNA number works, for us it will be 200-and-something units over an eight-year period, which is our target for housing. The RHNA and Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) don't tell us where it should go. We're doing our Housing Element right now and part of that effort will be to identify sites that are appropriate for development. I had a lot of discussions with ABAG during the RHNA process regarding flood plains and how we need to look at not intensifying development there. Our original draft allocation in the RHNA cycle was over 400 units. Some of that reduction is related to greenhouse gas, but some of it is also related to the inappropriateness of high-density housing in a flood plain and the equity issue of not putting vulnerable people in a hazardous place. I anticipate there will be enough locations elsewhere in the City.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

Obviously a lot of these disasters and actions has to do with informing and educating the public, and I wanted to make sure the different forms of communication, whether Internet, radio, different languages, etc., that the emphasis is put in to try to reach people that receive communication and education in different formats.

Paul Fritz, Chair

In terms of the process, when the plan comes back from FEMA and they say it's ready to be adopted, does that come back to the Planning Commission or does that go straight to the City Council for adoption? Do we recommend to the City Council or do they just get it directly?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

In this case it's not something that needs a recommendation from the Planning Commission, so it can go directly to the City Council. If there are significant changes for some reason we would bring it back and let you all know about what's going on, and I'll certainly provide updates on it and let folks know about the City Council, but we don't anticipate that. Jeff, maybe you can talk a little bit about how Cal OES and FEMA both review this and what types of comments and changes they would request.

Jeff Brislawn, Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions

There's what's called a plan review tool that gets submitted with the plan, and part of our job as the consultant will be to fill out that plan review tool. It basically says where in the plan and what page numbers that the requirements are met. We try to make our plans as foolproof as possible, but sometimes it depends also on who reviews the plan. They might take issue with some things but they want to make sure that if you've identified hazards that have significant risk that you have mitigation actions that address those risks, and then

also making sure that you've documented the process adequately. They like to see the backup meeting materials and minutes and that kind of thing. With a single jurisdictional plan such as they typically go through the approval process is a bit quicker and smoother than a large, multiple-jurisdictional plan in my experience.

Paul Fritz, Chair

In terms of process, how does this get incorporated into the General Plan? What would be the methodology for that?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

We don't need to do a General Plan amendment. We have a safety element in the General Plan and it talks about having a local hazard mitigation plan, and so it would be adopted as a document and that new document would replace the older document; so this is an update, this isn't the first time we've done it. Our current plan is expired in terms of what FEMA requires but it's still our hazard mitigation plan until we adopt a new one, so this would simply replace that.

Paul Fritz, Chair

Page 2-18 of the plan, which is page 38 of the staff report, contains background data that talks about commuter population and says Sebastopol has X number of jobs and X number of residents, workers, and then it assumes that it looks like the difference are commuting out of Sebastopol, but I think we have probably a lot more people commuting out of Sebastopol. Not everyone that is of working age that lives in Sebastopol is necessarily working in Sebastopol and the excess is the ones that are commuting. I don't know if that's necessarily important. Obviously there's a lot more traffic that goes back and forth and more than 2,800 people I think because of people working in other places, but I don't know if that's something that is known that can be quantified or if that should be adjusted somehow.

Jeff Brislawn, Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions

We can certainly take another look at that, and if you have information to inform that section we would certainly welcome that.

Paul Fritz, Chair

I certainly don't. I don't know, Kari, if the City has any kind of other background data on how many people are commuting to other places.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

The 2020 census is starting to release some information, so we can look through and see if there is updated information from the 2020 census that would be helpful for that. Obviously, most of that took place before Covid so it hopefully would be more or less relevant where people would be reporting their normal activities as opposed to their Covid activities if they're working from home anew or temporarily. SCADA did do a traffic model recently. It didn't look at numbers in this way, it was more about trips and how many were through-trips and destinations, but I can look at that and see if it jibes with some of this information or if there's maybe something else there.

Paul Fritz, Chair

Then on page 4-88, which is page 164 of the staff report, there are a couple of maps about critical infrastructure being in wildfire areas, and there are two green boxes that indicate shelter, which I'm assuming is some kind of community shelter. I don't know exactly what that means but one of them looks like it's the bathrooms at Ragle Park and the other one looks like it might be Kari's house on the north edge of town and I'm wondering what those

are and what kind of shelter are we concerned about being in this wildfire area? Does anyone know where those came from?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

That's a good question. We can definitely check that out. The square on the north is fairly close to my house. It may be the Jehovah's Witnesses site, but I'm not sure. There's a church on High School Road if that's what that is trying to map, but that's a good point. So, there was that one, and what was the other one?

Paul Fritz, Chair

The other one is like in Ragle Park it looks like.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

We did map Ragle Park because during Covid they used the regional park as a shelter location when people were evacuating for fires from, for instance, the Armstrong Wood areas. They wanted an outdoor space where they would coordinate and direct people and they used Ragle Park. It seems weird, but that is why that's on there. I did realize that the green dot just on the other side of the road is supposed to be at the high school, because I see now the high school was an evacuation center for a month or so during the Tubbs Fire, so we'll make sure we move that. I don't really want you all to come to my house.

Paul Fritz, Chair

The issue of soft story inventory had been in, I guess, the 2010 plan as well. Do we ever make requirements that those need to be addressed if a building is remodeled, for example? How do we hold people to try and improve that situation? Is there a methodology for doing that? If you come to pull a building permit for some reason over a certain amount of money or a certain area of remodel like we do for fire sprinklers, is there a way to require that to be addressed?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Jeff, can you address the question about how people deal with soft stories? Do they require it through their building code, or how do people usually implement that?

Jeff Brislawn, Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions

That can be addressed similar to your Flood Plain Ordinance where if there's a substantial improvement in the flood plain, which is defined as over 50% of the value of the structure, you could have a requirement that there be seismic retrofitting as part of that. That's just one example. Or just like with the Flood Plain Ordinance you could have a substantial damage type of clause where if it's more than 50% damage from whether it's structure fire or some other hazard event that it have a requirement to address the soft story vulnerability. So there are different ways you could approach that, and there are some other hazard models out there that you can follow.

Paul Fritz, Chair

My last question is maybe one for the fire chief. Page 251 of the staff report, which is page 5-26, has to do with defensible space mitigation. I just wondered how that works in an urban area like Sebastopol when your house could be five feet from your property line. How do you address defensible space requirements or issues when you only have so much control over the environment immediately adjacent to your property?

Bill Braga, Fire Chief

That's a good point. I do try to follow the CAL FIRE's Defensible Space program, but I am up against the areas that we live in. The City has a Weed Abatement Ordinance, so that takes a

piece of the pie. What I provide as the fire chief and fire marshal is I will go out and meet with the homeowners and walk their property and walk their home and come up with a plan of recommendations, maybe trimming back some oak trees, cutting back some brush or bushes that are along their home, so it's more about a one-on-one that I'm doing with the homeowners that request it. I think it is much easier for the rural areas and for like CAL FIRE to have a nice plan, and they put out really a nice little publication on this. Well, we don't have that luxury, so for me it's more of a personal touch and providing a walk-through assessment, so that's what I've been doing.

Paul Fritz, Chair

Great, thanks. That's good to know because I have a neighbor whose tree is overreaching my property and I'd love to have you give some advice on that.

Bill Braga, Fire Chief

Absolutely.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Paul, to expand on that a little bit, looking at the Tree Ordinance, are there adjustments that need to be made? We already don't want but have not banned exotic pyrophytic species like acacias and eucalyptus, although we do exempt them from tree permits because we know those are issues, but is there any funding or programs available to assist in funding removal of these trees, which can be hugely expensive, as part of urban forestry and vegetation management? And then, do our Tree Ordinances reflect that? We have a tree replacement requirement of if you remove a heritage tree that you have to replace it with two trees. For a single family that's 10 inches in diameter or larger at breast height, and for multiple-family and commercial it's 10 inches and requires review by the City and usually a replacement, other than those exotic species. One of the things that communities can do is change it to say either plant two trees or take pyrophytic trees out of the lot as well, and then it's not really reforestation but it is trying to help to remove some of those hazards. I do know communities that have banned certain pyrophytic and invasive trees and you cannot plant them. So there are definitely policies we can look at as we move forward with implementation of this.

Paul Fritz, Chair

Yeah, and in particular I think about if you remove a heritage tree from a property, then you're required to plant two more, but if you have a small lot to begin and you're getting rid of a tree because of whatever reason—it's too big and it's shading, or a danger or whatever—and then you have to plant two more, maybe that's not the right approach if you have a property that's going to be negatively impacted in another 20 years when these trees grow up.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Right, and we do have a tree fund so that if that doesn't make sense on a lot, which it doesn't on some lots, then the City uses that for maintenance of replacement of trees, and we've done that kind of forest management in our parks recently. I know in Ives Park there have been some trees that were hazards that were removed and replanted.

Bill Braga, Fire Chief

And Paul, one more note. I get complaints all the time about dead trees, and it's really frustrating for me. We have a really good Weed Abatement Ordinance but it doesn't cover trees, and I have no authority as fire chief and fire marshal to go to a homeowner or property owner and tell them that a tree in on their property is so dead and volatile, so I

hope that what we develop some type of a tree ordinance that will give me the authority to say a tree has got to go, and right now I can't do it; I have no authority.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

Kari answered one of my questions, which was I know it's a struggle for a lot of homeowners when they would like to do some of this fire maintenance but cost is an issue, so it sounds like that is something you're already looking at and addressing. Where is the budget coming from in order for the City to be able to implement some of these solutions, and has that already happened or is that phase two?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I'll start this and then Jeff may know a little bit more about FEMA grants. There are two reasons in my mind for making sure your local hazard mitigation plan is up to date. One is that in the event of any emergency you make sure that we are eligible for FEMA funds for recovery. The other is that once you have an adopted plan you're eligible to apply to FEMA for grants to implement those mitigation measures, and so that is a source of funding. Jeff, did I say that right?

Jeff Brislawn, Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions

Yeah. The plan makes you eligible for the FEMA hazard mitigation assistance of which there are a variety of grants. There are some that are tied to disaster declarations anywhere, and the state opened up a pot of funding, and then there's the new BRIC grant, which is an annual grant cycle, and having this plan approved will make you eligible for that. Regarding your question on what is the funding source, each of the actions has a section of potential funding where we've identified whether it might be general funds or state funds or potentially FEMA grants. But you're right, and part of the next phase and implementation is securing that funding and refining the cost estimates to implement these.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

So, if I heard you right, Kari, at the beginning you said the current plan that we have is outdated and was supposed to have been updated, and then also what I additionally just heard was that having an updated plan means that we can be eligible for FEMA funding in the event one of these emergencies happens. So does that mean between the time this gets approved, which you said would be maybe January-February-ish, and now, if there were to be anything that happened we would not be eligible for FEMA funding?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I'm going to ask either Jeff Brislawn or Chief Braga to answer that one because Chief Braga is our emergency operations head for the City and he certainly had his share of dealing with FEMA funding in the past couple of years, but if one of you could answer that I would appreciate it.

Jeff Brislawn, Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions

I was going to say that effectively your statement is correct. You would not be eligible, however, if there were a disaster that affected the area you'd still be eligible for the recovery fund. The hazard mitigation funding usually follows six to eight months after the federal disaster declaration, so there's usually a window of time there, and then if they know your plan is near complete sometimes they'll allow extenuating circumstances to apply.

Bill Braga, Fire Chief

Right. Thanks, Jeff. It has been frustrating for us. Kari and I see a lot of grant opportunities coming across our desks and that's why we truly appreciate Jeff and Juliana putting

together our plan and getting it blessed by Cal OES and FEMA. When these grant opportunities come across after we have implemented our plan we will now be able to apply for a grant for funding for, let's say, defensible space that Paul and I were talking about. There are grants out there for defensible space and unfortunately because our plan has not been updated and approved and adopted I'm not able to apply for those grants, so I'm truly looking forward to early next year when this is all blessed and adopted and I can go after some money to help me with some of the plans I want to work on.

Zachary Douch, Commissioner

This is actually a really good segue to the discussion about funding. In these mitigation measures there are many that are characterized as high priority and many with significant price tags. Is the prioritization generally done agency-by-agency or would that be something that City Council or Planning might take an overview look at at some point? How is prioritization dealt with by, say, fine-tuning of the high priority items given that it's multiple different agencies carrying responsibility?

Jeff Brislawn, Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions

In terms of the actions that have been identified in the plan, there was a prioritization process that was used to give an initial priority for the action and that was based on some criteria that include does it address areas of most risk. We looked at the social, technical, environmental, legal, administrative, and political aspects of each project to come up with a collective kind of low, medium, and high prioritization. Now, ultimately when you get down to looking at the funding availability and the price tag in more detail those priorities aren't necessarily set in stone. There could be some low priority, but lower hanging fruit, easier to implement projects that you might want to go for first. So, they are prioritized, but again, it's really how the City wants to move forward with these.

Zachary Douch, Commissioner

Absolutely. I saw the prioritization and understand that, but of course there are so many high priority items is really where the question is, but what I think I hear you saying is how out of those high priority items it's going to be the agencies and across agency discussion perhaps in terms of agreeing to a strategy or way going off to, as you say, the high priority, low hanging fruit or specific mitigation methods that are deemed to be the most high priority.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Zach, one thing to add to that is actually we're pretty close to Chief Braga and Dante Del Prete at Public Works. As department heads we have weekly meetings, but those of us who are in charge of some of the physical infrastructure for the City also meet every other week to review private projects that come to the Commission for review to ensure we're all on the same page, and we also look at other things like City infrastructure needs. So yes, there are a number of things that are higher priorities that always make it easier when you're applying for a grant, but it also provides flexibility given how quickly things are changing. In 2017 we had major fires. In 2019 we had a major flood. In 2020 we had a major pandemic. In 2021 we had a major drought. There is a need to look at all these things as a comprehensive approach, which thing goes first. I have confidence as a City that the various departments will be able to work cooperatively together in terms of understanding what makes the most sense right now if there is one application or whatnot that we're providing for. And of course any grants that we're applying for that require any sort of match from the City go to the City Council for authorization for that funding so the Council is involved with that decision. They don't mind if you go after any 100% grants that we can go after and we certainly do look at those on a case-by-case basis as well.

Zachary Douch, Commissioner

That's great. Thanks, Kari. That's what I was looking for, that interaction amongst those agencies that would ultimately be responsible for implementation of different measures, so thanks so much.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

And we do have the advantage that because we're such a small city with one or two people departments we're constantly talking to the same people all the time and are always kind of on the same page, or at least we understand where things are going.

Chair Fritz asked for any other comments from commissioners. Hearing none, Chair Fritz opened public comment.

Director Svanstrom and Chair Fritz commented that there were no members of the public wishing to speak.

Chair Fritz closed public comment and asked if commissioners had any further comments on the item. Hearing none, Chair Fritz thanked Jeff Brislaw for his presentation and the LHMP plan, and thanked Commissioner Douch for being the Planning Commission liaison.

Jeff Brislaw, Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions

You're welcome. It's been a great experience working with the City of Sebastopol.

Chair Fritz moved on to the next item.

- B. Calder Creek Naturalization Project–Design Basis/Discussion** – The Waterways Restoration Institute will lead a discussion with the community and Commission as they begin their design work.

Director Svanstrom introduced the item.

Jessica Hall, Fellow of Switzer Foundation, presented and was available for questions.

Ann Riley, Executive Director of Waterways Restoration Institute (WRI), presented and was available for questions.

Chair Fritz asked for Commission questions.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

You mentioned blackberries as one of the shrubs, and the redwood forest there is overgrown with blackberry bushes. Do they help with stabilization, but then it keeps people away? What is your take on that type of vegetation?

Jessica Hall, Fellow of Switzer Foundation

What we are showing are typical native shrubs and it doesn't mean that that has to be the one that is used in our design. A lot of what you use at the redwood forest are the non-native Himalayan blackberry. It has a thicker cane and meaner spines, but both are a pretty effective groundcover and they do play a role in erosion control. Our reference to it was primarily ecological and in terms of how it supports the stream function. The selection of the vegetation to be used really does need to relate also to how humans engage with it and what is wanted and needed.

Ann Riley, Executive Director of Waterways Restoration Institute

The native blackberry is totally different than the Himalayan blackberry. It's not this horrible invasive plant. As a matter of fact, when homeowners tear out ivy or Himalayan blackberry we advise them to replace it native blackberry because it's a very benign plant and it's really a tough plant that can compete against these invasive plants.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

Great, thank you for that. We talked about how the creek restoration fits in with the master plan and so forth. Do you think that you could, or would you, design or give your opinion on, let's say, there was no master plan and you would just go through and do what you think would be best, how that would look regardless of what the master plan shows? Is that something that you might be doing as well as trying to incorporate with the master plan?

Jessica Hall, Fellow of Switzer Foundation

We're preparing several alternatives, and one of them certainly could be based on that approach. Our main concern was to be sensitive to work that had already been done and not be duplicative, but we're happy to do one of the alternatives.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

I would just like to know what would be the ideal, like what should it be and then work from there to determine what we want to say. From my viewpoint I'd like to see what it would be naturally without any of the other constraints.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

To follow up on the blackberries, and I understand the Himalayan blackberries are very different, but we do have a problem in Sebastopol with having poison oak overrun our natural habitats, and it is getting worse with climate change and drought, and so our walking path now is basically blackberries and poison oak. I hear from a lot of parents in town that kids and pets will often get in there and it becomes an issue. With the native blackberries do you have the same issue with poison oak growing in tandem with it, or is there any poison oak plan?

Ann Riley, Executive Director of Waterways Restoration Institute

We're not planning on planting poison oak.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

It doesn't get planted; it appears itself.

Ann Riley, Executive Director of Waterways Restoration Institute

Ninebark and blackberry does really well as groundcovers. We're just throwing out some plants that are common groundcovers that are native. They can help compete against the kinds of groundcover you don't want, but I'm not seeing that we're going to be setting up conditions here for poison oak to invade this creek corridor.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

I just hear so many Sebastopol parents finding less and less places here where their kids and play safely because it's just takes over, and I know blackberries are one habitat they really enjoy, so just putting that out there to you when you're thinking about the vegetation.

Jessica Hall, Fellow of Switzer Foundation

I would just add that there are strategies like mass plantings of native understory plants and grasses that can help act as barriers and buffers between trails and walking ways and

some of the interior species, so that's another thing we can look at as we are moving forward with this.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

Then lastly, safety issues for both adults and children near the creek once it's transformed. Right now there is actual fencing there but I notice a lot of the images we see are more inviting, which is great, but I also wonder about viabilities, especially when waters are high, so is that addressed in the plan as well?

Jessica Hall, Fellow of Switzer Foundation

I think we have some options. The overall concept that we're doing is really about how the stream alignment will work with the park elements, and whether or not you want some fencing, even if it was a low split rail fence or whatever it could be, those could be added and it could be an "add alternate" item when you're submitting your grants looking for funding.

Ann Riley, Executive Director of Waterways Restoration Institute

I think we're first addressing how unsafe the existing conditions are where you've got a trapezoidal channel or a rectangular channel and the water is really deep and it's going really fast, and so we want to address that basic safety problem and allow the water to spread out some on a flood plain, allow the water to interact with vegetation, and then that means your velocities go way down. Our creek isn't going to be as deep, so in terms of that trapezoidal depth that you have, like you have a 12-15 foot deep creek. Our active channel that's going to be meandering through is probably going to be more like 15 feet wide and 1-2 feet deep, so we're really going to change the liability factor in the way this new creek is going to behave.

Kathy Oetinger, Vice Chair

I'd like to reiterate Commissioner Fernandez's vision of the creek that you think should be here versus what's in the master plan for the park. Some of the other things that we have talked about regarding creek restoration and this master plan is that we think that the children's playground should remain where it is on the east side because there are bathrooms closer to it and we don't expect the bathrooms to be publicly available on the west side. Another thought was that many of us like the redwood trees that are running along the creek where it's channelized and the thought was that that could remain there, and while I would like the park to be extended at Willow Street and Jewell Avenue, the cost of that, especially with the infrastructure under there doesn't seem to be a very good tradeoff for what we could get unless it were, in this case, part of a creek restoration and that it made sense. That's just my take on some of the things that some of us are thinking might be different from this master plan that we have now. Another thing that occurs to me is if you're widening the creek on the east side from High Street, that would be nice because I would love all of the fencing to be down if that's possible, except for maybe the low curb fencing to keep bikes and strollers from falling in, so I would be really open to that. On the other hand, if that can't be done I'd be open to channelizing that east side as well and to be gaining the park space if that's an appropriate solution to what the water needs to pass through; I don't know if those two things are compatible. As for the plantings, if you've looked at the Laguna Uplands Preserve, which is at the end of Palm Avenue, there are some areas there where there is drainage and a small amount of water coming down into a swale and it's vegetated with some sort of bunch grasses and sedges and interspersed with some trees, willows and olive probably, and I think it's a nice look except for the fact that it would be nice to have some small pathways that people could use to get down to the water, and I think that that kind of an approach would be useful in the park as well, that it could look something like that.

Ann Riley, Executive Director of Waterways Restoration Institute

Can you repeat what that location is, at the end of what?

Kathy Oetinger, Vice Chair

At the end Palm Avenue there is a little trail that goes down to the Laguna Uplands Preserve. It's an area that was saved and has been replanted. I have some email communications I could share with you—maybe I already did—from the naturalist who actually planted those areas. When I was walking there I could envision something that looked like that swale or that ravine in the park and that it would be easy to maintain as well. And for now that's all I can think of, but I'm sure something else will come up.

Ann Riley, Executive Director of Waterways Restoration Institute

That's great.

Paul Fritz, Chair

I also agree that I would like to see an alternate that is open-ended and not necessarily constrained by the master plan. Obviously the master plan had a component of naturalizing the creek, but also the master plan does put a lot of constraints on your work and I would be interested in doing something different that would require a change in the master plan if it makes sense. I would be happy to take a look at changing the master plan to accommodate this, and that for me would include—because we've talked about this a lot on the Planning Commission—the Little League field. Look how much area of the park the Little League field occupies. There are other baseball fields in town. Is that one absolutely necessary? I'm sure that would be a big deal to get rid of, but it's a sizable portion of the park and not very many people get to use it. Keep in mind that this is a park and we do want other activities, not just a creek, so balancing it, and I'm sure you guys can understand that concept. I'll just add that over the weekend when it was raining I took a walk through the park and it was very interesting to see how quickly the water was moving through those concrete channels and then when it got to the grassy area it totally slowed down, and I can very much see what you're saying. That area had room to spread out and it slows down, and then it goes over that weir and it just takes off again into that channel, and it was a very interesting kind of contrast to see those two different environments and how the creek behaved. If a kid fell into where that water was moving that fast, once they go over the weir they would be gone, there would be no stopping them, but if they fell into that slow-moving area you could go and grab them and get them out of there, so I could appreciate your previous comment about slowing it down and taking some of the liability away; I could see that making sense.

Chair Fritz opened public comment.

Lynn Deedler

I think this master plan is seriously in need of a relook. It was approved the night it was presented. The public was there, it was presented to them, and was slightly overwhelmed with no time to think about it. It got voted on and it was a done deal. There are a lot of problems with it. You brought up the need for having a ballpark in Ives field. I hope that the Planning Commission will really take a look at that question and study it. I have a little bit, and before I make any comments about it, I'm all for the Little League. I think it's a great institution and doing a really good job and nothing against them, but it does take up one-third of a very small park. You add Ives pool to that and you've got an exceptionally small park in the dead center of town where you should have a jewel of park, a centerpiece for our town. In just looking at that a little bit as far as the need for the ball field in Ives Park, the City has three exclusive agreements with the Little League where they get a lock and

key on three really nice parks in this town. No other town in Sonoma County has near that. Even big towns where big time baseball is played, like Petaluma, don't have such a deal, and only two of them outside of Ives Park are locked up in this county. Plus, this city has plenty of ball fields; it has 12 per capita, five times the average of the rest of the county; it's ten times as many ball fields per capita as Santa Rosa. We have almost 12 public ball fields, ones that are not used that could be used by the Little League, and so that would open up that creek to be meandering widely and be restored all the way through. Including the island between Willow Street and Jewell Avenue would allow you to extend the creek up to where people can see it. You could add 75 feet to the creek and open it up and the whole neighborhood around there would love to see it; it would add such a lot to the whole feel of the center of the town and the park. Let me add one thing that should be known too. I just happened to talk to a neighbor who was weeding there and we started discussing adding that corner to the park. She was so for it and she said, "I'll go the first \$10,000 and if you need more, we'll talk."

Paul Fritz, Chair

Thanks, Lynn. We'll contact you.

Joan and Geoffrey Skinner

I've got my husband, Geoffrey Skinner, with me as well. All I wanted to say was I'm grateful to see this process going forward. Thank you to Ann Riley and Jessica Hall for the presentation. Geoffrey and I and Lynn and others have been thinking about this creek and naturalizing the creek through the park for a decade or so, so we're thrilled to see this moving forward and yeah, would love to stay posted on the process. I'd be interested to hear what the next steps are; I imagine you Planning Commission folks know what those are, but I didn't catch that if that was covered. I also am a vegetation ecologist by trade and I work with a firm that does a lot of stream restorations, and so just would love to follow the plans as they develop and certainly can provide input on local vegetation that would be suitable for the planting as well.

Jessica Hall, Fellow of Switzer Foundation

Wonderful. Thank you.

Ann Riley, Executive Director of Waterways Restoration Institute

That's great. Thank you.

Paul Fritz, Chair

Great. Thank you.

Chair Fritz asked for additional comments from the public. Seeing none, he closed public comment and asked Director Svanstrom to speak to Joan Skinner's question regarding the next steps.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Just so everyone knows, we have created a flyer. If you go to the Planning Department and go to the Parks Planning page we have the dates and some of the links to the upcoming meetings. I'll let Jessica Hall speak a little bit further on this, but this is the first step for WRI and our Parks Commission to get community input on what you all want to see. We have a project meeting tomorrow with WRI, Dante Del Prete from Public Works, and GHD to process it and talk about some direction. Jessica Hall and Ann Riley will then be developing some design alternatives. They're scheduled to return to the Planning Commission on December 14th to present those design alternatives, and I will say if we get into redoing the entire master plan we will need to check in with Council first. Our City Council knows that

there may be some adjustments based on the constraints in the design of the creek, but if it's so major that huge elements like ball fields and stuff are coming out I want to go to them first before we have Jessica and Riley do a lot of work on developing the preferred alternative to ensure that whatever that design concept is makes sense, but they will be developing a concept plan from the design alternatives presentation on December 14th and feedback from the Planning Commission. GHD is working on the hydrology study and making sure that the storm water components of it are all coordinated with Jessica and Riley's work. So, right now we tentatively have a scheduled meeting to come back to the Planning Commission in January with the preferred concept and then we would take that to City Council to present to them.

Chair Fritz asked for additional feedback from the commissioners.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

The master plan is coming up on nine years old and a lot of things have changed. I feel the same way as some of the other commissioners that to direct or plan the creek around the master plan at this point is like the tail wagging the dog. I think we need to look at what is possible as a Park Commission, then perhaps we may recommend to look at that again and look at some of the strategies and what were planned, but I think a lot of stuff that is there just doesn't seem to fit in or work. For example, and I echo Lynn Deedler's comments as well, great respect for the Little League and everything that they've done, but if you were able to use that space for a concerts and music area that frees up a lot of the other space that was kind of planned for that, and that was one of the reasons they were talking about removing some of those redwood trees and paving over part of the creek there was to extend the area where people can be to enjoy that part of it. So, I just wanted to iterate that's my feeling on it. I'm not sure if others agree but I think it's something we need to take a look at and look at it as planned, so take that into consideration. We're not going to have you do a bunch of work for that, but again, I'd like to hear and see what the possibilities without constraints are and then we can see when you're talking about other alternatives what kind of mitigation you did, what changed, the flow and that type of thing to then incorporate. And Jessica and Riley, I really appreciate all the work that you've done. We're really blessed to have you guys doing this and helping us move forward, and everybody else that's been involved, and Kari jumping in and so forth, so really appreciate this effort and the fact that we're moving forward instead of another 20 years I'm sure we would have been talking about, so thank you very much for everything you guys have done.

Paul Fritz, Chair

Yeah, I'd like to reiterate that. When this master plan was done I wasn't on the Commission so I don't know how much thought went into the naturalization of the creek. Obviously, it was discussed and was a component of the plan, but I can see it really being the driver for a new Ives Park in a lot of ways. It's such a unique, great feature and could be a great feature of the park that I would love to try to capitalize on, and then possibly building the rest of the master plan and adapting to that rather than again, trying to cram this creek into the park, which is what it feels like it is now. I hate to see us do this whole exercise only to have this creek feel like it was crammed into this park again. It would be nice to feel like there's this great creek here and we designed a park around it, if we took advantage of that rather than forcing the park around this kind of forced creek, and that may be a longer process. We might not be able to get to the concept plan right away if we have to go back and revisit the master plan, but think we should try. We have this opportunity and we should try to get it right. We're not going to have this chance again for a long time.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Maybe I should have said this during public comment and it's actually a question. In terms of when you did the first presentation, Jessica and Riley, you talked about the outside of Ives Park part of it and I found your presentation today with the what not to do, the horror stories, very interesting. I wonder, some of those steps and best practices or those things not to do, are they applicable to people who are either upstream or downstream or even on a small drainage channel that's not Calder Creek but just a drainage channel? I do have a personal interest because I have a drainage swale in my back yard that is a couple feet deep and a few feet wide. It's not a big deal but I was thinking I could make that look like a dry creek bed, but now I'm wondering if that's the right thing to do. I think it would be helpful for the average homeowner, but certainly those who do own property on Calder Creek, in terms of what they should or shouldn't be doing. I'm curious what your thoughts are.

Ann Riley, Executive Director of Waterways Restoration Institute

I'll send you a publication published by the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board back in 2003—I'll just send the PDF—and it's intended to cover these dos and don'ts. The San Francisco Bay Regional Board also has a newer publication out, basically dos and don'ts if you're trying to design a flood control project, so I'll send you both of those, but the first one is really good for property owners. I think Prunuske Chatham produced something way back in the nineties for property owners in Sonoma County on how to manage your creeks.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I'm going to ask Joan, who worked for Prunuske Chatham, to answer that question.

Joan Skinner

Yeah, we did. It was before my time at Prunuske Chatham, but yeah, Groundwork.

Ann Riley, Executive Director of Waterways Restoration Institute

Yeah, Groundwork.

Joan Skinner

Yeah, Kari, I can get you a copy.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Okay, and if any of this stuff is available as a web link, that's something that we can certainly look at and post on our website as well to provide information to the public as we head into the rainy season; interesting for people to think about.

Paul Fritz, Chair

That's a great point, Kari, because most of our creeks are not on public property but on private property, and people probably do really bad things when a creek is on their property, so it would be good to have some best practices that are easily available to residents.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

I appreciate that comment as well, and I think maybe we should consider going farther than just providing information. Maybe the City might want to come up with a plan as to how creeks should be taken care of, just like zero waste that we are recommending to different businesses and so forth. Rather than just recommendation I'd like to see it go a little farther than that and also be able to offer assistance to these property owners to do the right thing and what can be done, because it affects everyone. Access maybe needs to be done to

those creeks and looked at to see what's there and how it needs to be managed, but I think we just want to keep that in mind and it might be something the Planning Commission may recommend that the City Council take a look at.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Thank you, Commissioner Fernandez. I've spoken with Jessica and Riley already about our current creek ordinance—which is very much from the eighties or nineties era—that it really is concerned about the localized flooding from a FEMA perspective, not building buildings within 30 feet of top of bank of a creek. I used to work with the City of Mill Valley, which has three major creeks that run through it, and it had the same exact ordinance basically and were running into problems like people building a hot tub in the creek, which was clearly not allowed, but it didn't have any regulations in terms of building decks or paving or pressure-treated wood right on the banks of the creek, those types of things, and it's the same exact regulations in Sebastopol. Other than don't build a structure that requires a building permit within that 30 foot from top of bank regulation we don't have any best practices, so I've actually already talked with Jessica and Riley about maybe one of the other things that comes out of this is we put updating our creek ordinance to address some of those issues on the Planning Commission work plan.

Kathy Oetinger, Vice Chair

Something Chair Fritz said about we don't do this very often and we should take the time to take a good look at it reminds me to say that Calder Creek goes all the way down to the Railroad Forest and there is an instinct to daylight things, and I can hardly imagine crossing two highways and running through two blocks. I don't know how much time the designers want to think about that but if you're thinking about an alternative I want to mention that that's also a possibility. Who knows whether you can get more money to do all that than you can just to do a little park as part of it? Maybe there's more money in that than there is in fixing the park, so I just wanted to say that. Reading through the hazard mitigation document that we were just looking at, they mention daylighting creeks, so just putting all those things together and throwing it into your basket of concepts, because like Paul said, we've got one chance to do it in our lifetimes, we might as well at least think about it. Thank you.

Jessica Hall, Fellow of Switzer Foundation

It's definitely something that we're talking about and thinking about, that connection from the creek part down to the forest.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

I think it makes sense to walk before we run and look at the bigger picture because again, it really resonated with me that this is our chance, so let's do it right. Let's not try to push it into what's there now but what it potentially could be. I think that's just right on point.

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

I just want to add, if it's appropriate when you're doing a walk or tour or getting together if you could put the word out. I know that we have all the Brown Act rules, but I'd like to know some of those things. I'd be interested just to follow along and just listen to some of the conversations, what you're looking at and your strategies and so forth, so if you just put that information out if it's okay with you guys, I'd be interested in hearing more about it.

Jessica Hall, Fellow of Switzer Foundation

Great. Will do.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

And Evert, maybe something where we would pull in the Ives Park Subcommittee, which is yourself and Kathy. As planning commissioners you've get a little bit more information and feedback as well.

Chair Fritz asked for final planning commissioner comments. Hearing none, he thanked Jessica Hall and Ann Riley and closed the item.

7. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Evert Fernandez, Commissioner

Zero Waste Subcommittee. Members of the Zero Waste Subcommittee have volunteered to order takeout from restaurants and observe what they are providing. It's not to go back and penalize them or anything like that; it is to be helpful to them. For example, when picking up to-go food the restaurant is supposed to ask if you want utensils or condiment packets rather than automatically include them with the order, so those types of things that they may not know, because this ordinance is coming up. The idea is that we report back on our observations and then contact the restaurant to help them, to say this ordinance is coming along and this is how it will operate, here's what needs to be done, how they can help, what alternatives they have, and let them know there is even a little bit of grant money available.

8. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Svanstrom provided updates.

- Housing Element.
- City Council:
 - Approved six sculptures for Ives Park sculpture garden.
 - Announced openings for City boards and commissions.
 - Special meeting on October 27th at 6:30 P.M. to discuss pilot project for 24/7 RV parking.
- Planning Commission
 - Heltney Square ten-unit townhome development.

The Commission asked questions of Director Svanstrom.

Planning Commission members expressed their gratitude to Commissioner Douch for his service to the City of Sebastopol as he will be leaving the Planning Commission at the end of the year.

9. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Fritz adjourned the meeting at 9:04 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting will take place on Wednesday, November 9, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.