

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

LINEAR CREEKWAY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD (LCPAB)

Minutes December 10, 2024

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Natalie Garza, District One
Sue Calberg, District Two
Myrl Britten, District Six
Don Rios, District Seven

Robert Trottmann, District Eight
John Kent, District Nine
Sherri Dugas, District Ten

STAFF PRESENT

Brandon Ross, Parks and Recreation
Margarita Hernandez, Parks and Recreation
Riki Kobayashi, Parks and Recreation
Lt. Juan De La Peña, Park Police

Sofia Martino, Parks and Recreation
Bill Pennell, Parks and Recreation
Phillip Zuniga, Parks and Recreation

GUESTS PRESENT

Raquel Torres
Jeff Jordan
Patricia Seidenberger

Rick Shaw
Fred Chase

REGULAR BUSINESS

- Meeting called to order at 6:01 PM.

Motion to approve the revised October minutes:

Motion: Sue Calberg, District 2

Second: Sherri Dugas, District 10

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- None

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

- Sue Calberg, District Two
 - Ms. Calberg mentioned that Mayor Peak's memorial was tentatively scheduled for January 7th.
 - Ms. Calberg stated that Congressman Joaquin Castro has secured \$2 million for the Martinez Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project.
 - Ms. Calberg spoke about the future San Antonio Arboretum, who is moving forward with their masterplan.

Park Police Briefing by Lieutenant Juan De La Peña, Park Police:

- Lt. Juan De La Peña represents the Trails and ATV section of Park Police, which focuses specifically on trail systems all throughout the City of San Antonio.
- Lt. De La Peña spoke about finding trends using local statistics, information that he gets from his staff regarding issues they are facing daily, reports from users, and determine where the suspicious behavior is going on and to get his officers on it. They have been able to pinpoint issues this way and been able to address it before it becomes anything bigger.
- Ms. Dugas asked if there is any correlation between more incidents in an urban area vs in wooded areas where the trails are located.

- Lt. De La Peña explained that it is very unlikely to have crime on the trails as they have nowhere to go after a crime is committed. If a crime does occur and the police are called, they can use infrared to find them in the woods and catch them vs an urban environment where there are a lot of people and other factors. The majority of the issues that he sees are at the trailheads, where many people leave valuable items in their cars such as laptops, wallets, and sometimes even their keys. Trailheads that are closer to discount stores such as Walmart where they can steal your cards and use them quickly have higher rates of crime than trailheads that are in the middle of nowhere.
- Mr. Kent asked about crime in areas where the trail goes under bridges, which could have homeless people camping/taking shelter in.
 - Lt. De La Peña stated that they do not see much crime in these areas. You may see homeless people under bridges in areas near Goodwill as that is a resource for them. Areas that are not as populated do not have these issues as there are no resources for them.
 - Lt. De La Peña explained that when a homeless encampment is set up, there is a specific procedure that must be followed as homeless people have homestead rights. Park Police's role is to locate the encampment, make sure it is safe, and then reach out to the Department of Health Services, who brings a team out to provide outreach, resources. If they do not leave in the allotted time after this interaction, then everything will be cleared out. Either they leave or accept resources and Public Works comes by and cleans everything up. Every time they see a homeless encampment in the greenway system, it is being tended to.
- Mr. Kent asked if officers are visiting every part of the greenway at least once a day.
 - Lt. De La Peña stated that he has found ways to ensure that every single day every single part of the trail is visited at least once by an officer to make sure that everything is ok. Officers are out on the trails until 10pm. After that, someone will go out there if a call is made.
 - Lt De La Peña emphasized the importance of having a dedicated unit that is out on the trail. They can pay more attention to what is going on out there, slow down, talk more with people, look at the wooded areas and see what is out there.
- Mr. Kent asked if any information can be passed on regarding the Walker Ranch incident.
 - Lt. De La Peña said that this incident did not occur on the trail, rather the person was dumped there after the crime was committed.
- Ms. Calberg asked what do to if they encounter an encampment in the woods off trail and what is the most appropriate way to report it. What number should they call and what do we do when they ask for an address?
 - Lt. De La Peña responded that the best way report an encampment is to call the police non-emergency line (210-207-7273). When you call, they will ask for a street address, but since there is no particular street address because you are on the trail, some ways to help pinpoint location include giving them a mile marker number, getting the GPS coordinates from your phone on your maps app, or telling them it is between "x" trailhead and "x" trailhead. He also emphasized that you should avoid confrontation and do not approach them.
- Ms. Calberg asked what it about the Austin Highway Area is that makes it so attractive for homeless people and why action is so difficult.
 - Lt. De La Peña responded that this area has a Dollar General, hotels, and other resources that these people seek out. Before the trail was built here, it was a wooded area where no one went. Then the trail was built. It is the same situation at the Westside Creeks. People say that the trails in this area are filled with homeless people, but they have always been there. They go out there and abate it, but someone else moves in, and the cycle continues.
- Ms. Calberg asked about feral hog reports and damage.

- Lt. De La Peña stated that there used to be some feral hogs around Leon North, but the main problem has been taken care of. Now there have been reports near Salado South by SE Military and traps have been set up to mitigate this issue.
- Ms. Garza asked about the relationship between trail stewards and park police. What is the protocol for when an issue occurs on the trail and how it is reported to trail stewards?
 - Lt. De La Peña stated that there is communication between the Trail Stewards and Park Police. Oftentimes, Trail Stewards will call Park Police and inform them of issues. They are like a force multiplier since there are only so many officers available on the trail, they are a big help. When an incident occurs, Trail Steward Management is informed, and information is passed down. Sometimes the information Park Police can give out is very limited depending on if it is an active case, which can be challenging.
- Mr. Kent asked what the plan for the force as new segments of trail is open up.
 - Lt. De La Peña stated that his goal is to create smaller patrol areas per officer to create quicker response times. He has started to look at how many more officers will be needed based on various factors like how many miles of trails are coming online, how many parking lots there will be, and predicted usage.
- Mr. Trottmann asked if there are statistics for crimes specific to the Parks and Trails System.
 - Lt. De La Peña responded that statistics can often be skewed and paint a different picture. He looks at major crimes, Uniform Crime Reports (UCR Crimes), and so far, the only major crime that has happened on the trails was the murder of Ms. Dramiga. The second one that was found, the Walker Ranch one, did not occur on the trail, rather it occurred somewhere else, and they were placed there after the fact.
 - Lt. De La Peña stated that they do have a problem with vehicular robberies. It is very well known that people don't want to carry stuff with them when they go for a run, so you find that people leave wallets, laptops, purses, and sometimes even keys in their car while they are out on the trail. There have been less vehicular robberies this time of year than usual, which is good.
 - They have also had a lot of success with their undercover operations, with about 11-12 arrests a day from just one operation.
- Lt. De La Peña stated that if you see something wrong, just call the police. If it's nothing, it's nothing, but if it's something, it is better that you made that call than not calling and something happens.

STAFF REPORT

- Mr. Ross showed some pictures of Mayor Howard Peak at various moments for the HWP Greenway System. One at the Olmos Ribbon Cutting, another at Voelker Homestead where the first ribbon cutting that was ever done for the HWP System, and some images of him at the first groundbreaking for the HWP Greenway Trail System in 2007.
- Mr. Ross stated that construction will start on some projects as soon as February 2025. These projects come in waves, and we are going to see a lot of projects start construction in 2025 and be completed in the next couple years.

ADJOURNMENT

- The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:20 p.m.
Motion: Sherri Dugas, District 10
Second: Don Rios, District 7
Motion Carried.