

MONTHLY COALITION MEETING NOTES

Community Opportunity Fund: Designing an Effective Program

January 29, 2008 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
San Francisco City Hall, Room 305

1. A panel including Dee Dee Workman, SF Beautiful, Anne Halsted, former chair of Open Space Committee, Lanita Henriquez, Community Challenge Fund Manager, Jeanne Darrah PROSAC, Meredith Thomas, NPC, and Dawn Kalamanathan of Rec and Park all presented their program experience in managing/overseeing community/open space/beautification grants programs or their observation on what they believed the RPD bond program should consider as it is established in 2008, assuming the parks bond passes on Tuesday, February 5th.

a. First Presenter: San Francisco Beautiful Freidel Klussmann Grants Program
Dee Dee Workman, San Francisco Beautiful Executive Director

Purpose: To give volunteers the tools they need to get the accomplish neighborhood improvement projects

Structure

- Small grants program: \$5,000 - \$10,000
- 4 grant cycles per year: 2/1, 5/1, 8/1, 11/1

Key Selection Criteria

- Wide-spread community support and sweat equity
- Project sustainability: drought resistant plants and group track record
- Thorough long-term maintenance plan

b. Open Space Fund Neighborhood Park Improvements

Anne Halsted, Metropolitan Transportation Commissioner

How did the Open Space Fund support Neighborhood Park Improvements?

Methodology

- Open Space committee of 23 (precursor to PROSAC) met weekly and developed criteria for a point system based on high-need areas, etc.
- On a weekly basis during the annual grant period (6 months) the Committee heard members of the public who presented their appeals for capital funding of park acquisition and improvement projects
- Grant amounts greatly varied in size and were awarded in priority groupings; group 1 was likely to get their funding, group 2 less likely and so on.
- Groups were frequently allocated partial funding for their project, requiring presentations for many consecutive years to pool sufficient funds to complete a project (Richmond Rec Center too 16 years and was finished with NP Bond 2000 funds).

Lesson's Learned from OSC process and experience

- Ensure projects are achievable
- Multi-year pooling of funds may not be a good idea
- Broad community support for projects is key
- Look at the life of a project to prevent the project taking away maintenance funds from other areas of the city. Funding for park maintenance continues to be a problem and we do not want to add to this burden.

c. Community Challenge Grant Program

Lanita Henriquez, Community Challenge Grant Program Manager

How grants are awarded, criteria and overall structure of the program.

Purpose: To fund community-driven neighborhood beautification projects

Structure

- Three Grant Sizes: Small (up to \$10,000), Medium (\$10,000 - \$25,000), Large (\$25,000 - \$100,000)
- 7-person Advisory Committee determines grantees
- The Advisory Committee is composed of seven community members, chosen through a competitive selection process and includes Dee Dee Workman who runs the San Francisco Beautiful Freidel Klusmann Grants Program
- 2 Grant cycles per year

Key Criteria

- Very similar to San Francisco Beautiful's Granting Criteria
- Wide-spread community support and sweat equity are important
- Project sustainability: e.g. drought resistant plants
- Provide a thorough long-term maintenance plan.
- Requires a 5-year maintenance contract between community group and with the city agency that manages the land.
- Community Benefit and Community Match are the two most important and heavily weighted categories

d. PROSAC's Role (Parks Recreation and Open Space Advisory Committee)

Jeanne Darrah, District 9 PROSAC Representative since 2000, Mother, Park Advocate, NPC Grant Committee, City Fields Foundation Planning Committee, Bond Planning Committee

\$5 Million Community Opportunity Grants:

PROSAC will be working with RPD staff to set up a task force that will develop the process for administering the Opportunity Fund grants. Jeanne Darrah hopes to be involved in this, and encourages everyone to attend the PROSAC meetings where the proposed guidelines will be discussed.

Lessons Learned from 2000 Bond:

1. **Accountability:** Capital Plan not good enough in creating a project priority list. Many projects moved up in priority or were cut from the list all together with no community input, and RPD did not have to answer to anyone—not PROSAC or the commission about these decisions. It became clear that if the city were to go back to the voters, we needed to give the public a list of what projects would be undertaken, based on a clear assessment of need and selection based on objective criteria. The bulk of the 2008 park bond money is

going to larger park projects that are beyond the scope of what neighborhoods can undertake themselves and they are spread throughout the city.

2. **Community Initiative:** On the other hand, because the list of projects to be funded in 2000 was not set in stone, there was room for groups of citizens to come together around certain parks, advocate and rally together the resources of their community to get funding and make park renovations, and these may not have otherwise happened. Examples of this can be seen at Aptos Playground and 24th Street Mini Park to name a few. In planning for the bond we felt it was important to encourage and support this sort of community involvement and have an avenue for motivated park groups to get their projects funded (\$5 Million for the Community Opportunity Grants Program).

Additional Suggestions

1. PROSAC should **continue to be involved** in approving grants after the process is determined. There should continue to be a public forum in which the grants are considered, so that the department is held accountable.
2. The **size of the grants** is critical. The larger the grants, the more a specific park can accomplish. If the grants are small there will be more grants to go around, but they will not accomplish as much. Jeanne Darrah would like to hear public feedback on this important point.
3. There is an issue of the **role of the Capital Division** of RPD and the **public bidding and public contracting regulations**. Jeanne Darrach's feeling is that the park groups should be able to administer the projects themselves and not be bound by these cumbersome and expensive restrictions. On the other hand there are reasons of public safety, fair labor practices, local business support, etc., to have these regulations in place. Her suggestion is that park groups should be able to administer their projects with only minimal oversight by a project manager in the capital division of the recreation and parks department—much like the Trust for Public Lands projects. There might be legal restrictions, but she would like to hear more input regarding this.
4. There should be a process for **preliminary approval** of a grant, so that a group can then go the matching source of funds, be it the community, another grant, etc., and solicit funds with a qualified approval of RPD to match the grants.
5. There must be a mechanism to ensure the **money is spread** throughout the city and the poorer and more middle class neighborhoods are served as well as the wealthier neighborhoods where people have more money, talented volunteers and organized groups. The allocation of money from the last bond throughout the city was very uneven, which is one reason why the vast majority of the money is already allocated for this bond. However, equity will still have to be a factor for the \$5M in this Grant program. This I think will be a critical role of the non-profits, like NPC, SF Beautiful, Trust for Public Lands and the Parks Trust—to support park improvements in neighborhoods that might not have the resources to effectively organize and fundraise on their own.
6. Finally, the **process has to be open**. Since this is public money the criteria has to be clear and the department needs to be able to defend its decisions about how the money is allocated.

e. Neighborhood Parks Council's Experience with Executing Small Grants

Meredith Thomas, NPC Program Manager

One of the most difficult components to executing a grant is sticking to a timeline when a project is dependent on Recreation and Park Commission approval, weather and a number of other issues that can potentially arise.

Lessons Learned

- Crucial to be thoughtful at the beginning of the project with the planning
- Set clear goals
- Prepare a strong project plan and budget

f. Recreation and Parks Department's Role

Dawn Kamalanathan, Planning Director RPD

RPD's proposal and preliminary plan of implementation.

Community partnerships are critical moving forward for maintaining our over 200 parks and 400 buildings.

Potential Community Opportunity Fund

- The idea is to give out Small Grants of up to \$200,000
- Projects selected will achieve the initial policy goals that framed the 2008 Bond Planning, but we still need to narrow those down. Will we focus on improving the city's mini-parks? Sweat Equity's importance? Balance between large and small projects?
- Projects will help develop greater stewardship of our Parks
- The idea is for PROSAC (Parks Recreation and Open Space Advisory Committee) and the department to set up a task force of community groups, community members and non-profits to draft the program's structure with the approval of the Recreation and Parks Department.
- These grants will be used to leverage other resources
- The city will manage the funds similarly to the Community Challenge Grants Program
- The details and entire structure of the program still need to be worked out

g. Q&A and Coalition Discussion

- Jill Fox, DCYF (Department of Children, Youth and their Families):
 - The Community Task Force should speak with DOE (Department of the Environment) and DCYF as well because these city agencies administer many grants.
 - The Community Challenge Grant structure of Small, Medium and Large Grants is a great system
 - Can only Recreation and Parks Department managed land receive these funds?
 - Dawn Kamalanathan, RPD: Yes
 - Beware of funding projects that are difficult for the department to repair after they are installed; for example playgrounds built with non-standard equipment have parts that are not easy to replace when damaged
- Why not expand the Community Challenge Grant Program?
 - Dawn Kamalanathan, RPD: We intend to administer larger grants and our focus is only RPD Open Space
- Who will manage the projects?

- Dawn Kamalanathan, RPD: That is a good question and is something that needs to be worked out by the Task Force.
- Dee Dee Workman, SFB: Grantees often have trouble navigating through the policies of the Recreation and Parks Department. Will the department offer facilitation through the project approval and execution process?
- Time estimates are NEVER accurate and costs always go up
 - Dawn Kamalanathan, RPD: The department is weak on offering technical assistance and something we have been discussing is devising a partnership kit on how to navigate the system that will include design guidelines, common park safety standards and other requirements of projects.
 - Meredith Thomas, NPC: While a grant manager at the Stewardship Council, we found that clear grant reporting and grant making plans were important in evaluating the first year of our program and in making improvements to the system. In starting a new program it is important to tolerate change.
- What is the role of the Task Force?
 - Dawn Kamalanathan, RPD: PROSAC will recommend the composition of the Task Force and the Recreation and Parks Commission will approve the well-rounded, representative body.
- Dawn Kamalanathan, RPD: The first funding we will see should the bond pass will be in August after the first bond sale where we will present how much funding we think we will need.
- On February 6, 2008 PROSAC will discuss the Community Opportunity Fund at their 6:30pm meeting in City Hall

Community Opportunity Fund Community Feedback and Discussion

Equity

- Allocation of RPD staff on projects; wealthier neighborhoods may get to the trough first
- Not having big projects pull resources away from smaller projects since RPD staff time is limited
- Question of balancing projects throughout the city, making sure to get to poor & middle income neighborhoods

Collaborate with other City Funders

- DCYF
- MTC
- (SFB)
- CCG

Size

- S, M, L = like having funding levels
- Small projects are discrete and can be estimated
- Large projects become cumbersome

Allocation of COF on RPD Parks only

- Verify

Task Force

- RPD will appoint
 - 1) Well rounded
 - 2) Fiscal sponsor
 - 3) Grant maker
 - 4) Successful community group

- Who will ultimately make funding decisions: PROSAC?
 - 1) Who will do the Program work/administration?
 - 2) Will RPD Partner Manager help with leveraging grants for some projects?

Timeline

- PROSAC : have this on the February and March agenda?
- Task Force selected mid-March; 1st meeting April...

Execution

- Who determines grant awards?
- Issue with City Vendor vs. Gift in place
- Who manages these projects...capital staff?
- What will the admin cap be for these projects?
- Need process booklet/partnership kit (with non-bureaucratic guidelines)
- Need sample timelines for different types of projects (Time is always underestimated; [Cost Escalation])
- Contract management system

Announcements

Remember to Vote on Tuesday, February 5th!!

NEXT NPC February Coalition Meeting: The Future of Candlestick Park Wednesday, February 13th

LGBT Center, 1800 Market Street @ Octavia, Room Q11

For more information email Chloe Good at cgood@sfnpc.org

Respectfully Submitted,

Chloe Good
Outreach Coordinator
Neighborhood Parks Council

If you have any questions or corrections regarding the minutes please contact Chloe Good at (415) 621-3260 or cgood@sfnpc.org.