

COALITION MEETING MINUTES

Community Opportunity Fund Draft Program

August 19th, 2009 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
City Hall, Room 305

I. Welcome & Introductions

Meredith Thomas, Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) Executive Director

II. Remarks from the Recreation and Park Commission

Michael Sullivan, Recreation and Park Commissioner

- The 2008 Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond specified the composition of the Community Opportunity Fund Task Force, which captures a wide range of expert knowledge and experience with developing community-based grant programs
- The Commission's role will be to adopt or modify the Task Force's recommendations, and set the ground rules for how the fund will work.
 - Ultimately, the projects that are chosen by the Opportunity Fund selection committee will have to be approved by the Recreation and Park Commission
- Projects will require that applicants commit resources of some kind (either financial or in-kind and sweat equity/volunteerism)

III. Overview of the use of bond dollars on the Community Opportunity Fund

Dawn Kamalanathan, Planning Director, Recreation and Park Department (RPD)

- The Community Opportunity Fund arose from two requests:
 - The 2008 bond had to find a way to fund small-scale projects that were community-nominated as opposed to identified by RPD
 - There is a need to create a mechanism to leverage additional resources by mobilizing and strengthening partnerships between RPD and community members, while increasing transparency in this process.
- Being part of a general obligation bond, Community Opportunity fund dollars cannot be spent on maintenance or programs, but only on capital improvements. Capital improvements are defined as improvements that increase or extend the expected life of a given asset, and are *not* costs that are considered routine upkeep of that asset. For example, the installation of a new water-saving irrigation system would be considered a capital improvement, whereas replace a sprinkler head would not.

IV. Presentation on the Community Opportunity Fund Task Force Process

Meredith Thomas, Neighborhood Parks Council; Kearstin Krehbiel, San Francisco Parks Trust; Jacob Gilchrist, Trust for Public Land

- Overview of the 2008 Parks Bond: *Meredith Thomas*
 - Proposition A, the Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond for \$185 million, was passed by 71.6% of voters on February 5, 2008. Proposition A is the first step in the City's new 10-year capital plan to upgrade San Francisco's declining capital facilities.
- What is the Community Opportunity Fund?
 - The Community Opportunity Fund Program provides a place for neighborhoods, community groups and people who love and care for their parks to apply for funding to do capital repairs and improvements to a Recreation & Park Department park or facility they nominate. This program allows the city to further leverage valuable bond dollars by teaming up the resources a committed community group or partner brings with funds through the bond.
 - The **goals** of the fund are to: improve San Francisco's parks, leverage resources beyond bond dollars, build community and foster stewardship, and improve partnership between RPD and community members
 - The **objectives** of the Community Opportunity Fund Task Force were as follows:
 - Conduct an informal survey to gauge park stakeholders' preferences. Distribute an online survey to park partners requesting feedback on most desired park improvements
 - Develop Partnership Toolkit. Create clear guidelines; create a clear, consistent path for review of projects within the department
 - Identify a COF Program Manager. Identify a central point of contact for technical assistance and support for community groups
 - Partner with NPC, Parks Trust and other park stakeholders to conduct outreach
 - The anticipated **outcomes** as developed by the Task Force are:
 - Stable, committed "Friends" and other stewardship groups dedicated to parks
 - Significant expansion of volunteer hours committed to improve RPD projects
 - Balanced distribution of fund across parks and the city
 - Significant infusion of community resources (i.e. sweat equity, in-kind, and financial) into parks
 - Well-designed, thoughtful capital improvements to parks across the city
 - The Task Force has also identified some **performance measures** that will ensure the program is well run and transparent:
 - Admin expenditures for that year (broken out by type of COF projects)
 - Number of projects awarded in each category, to whom, for what, for how much
 - Map of awards that illustrates geographic distribution, and amount of awards
 - Number of volunteer hours committed and performed in parks
 - Number of new "Friends" groups established
 - Amount of financial support pledged and ultimately committed to park projects
 - Customer satisfaction with process, as determined by surveys
 - If possible, number of reduced maintenance hours by field staff/ work orders
 - Description of outreach plan to all park stakeholders, neighborhood associations, media
 - Draft Program Structure and Project Types: the Task Force has struggled with two "balancing acts"
 - Be efficient with funds AND be unique with projects chosen
 - Keep administrative (i.e. project management) costs as low as possible
 - COF should fund many projects that mirror the unique preferences and tastes of the community
 - Leverage significant resources & focus on high need communities

- Foster a sense of stewardship for parks (groups who actively fundraise or volunteer to help take care of parks)
 - Some individuals and communities lack the resources or capacity to contribute in those ways, but still deserve access to the improvements COF can fund
 - In an effort to develop a basic program structure that supports all of these values, staff proposed that the COF fund two types of projects: Menu and Custom.
- **Menu projects** are park basics that require less design expertise, benefit from standardization, have standard per unit costs, and are relatively inexpensive (i.e. drinking fountains, picnic tables, etc.). Menu projects have lower leveraging requirements for participation. They range in size from \$1 to \$100,000

TABLE 1. THE COF MENU (WITH PRICE/UNIT)

Menu Item	Cost/Unit	Menu Item	Cost/Unit
Garbage/Recycling Receptacles	\$1200 EA	Paving Renovation & Pathways	\$8/SF
Benches	\$2,000 EA	Kiosks	\$3,000 EA
Drinking Fountains	\$4,000 EA	Fencing (6' chain link)	\$100/LF
Lighting	Wtg for info	Stairs/Steps/Handrails (4' wide)	\$1,200 CY
Signage/Wayfinding/Interpretive Signs	Wtg for info	Gates (4')	\$1,200 EA
Picnic Tables (Wood)	\$1,200 EA	Sports Court Resurfacing	\$30/SF
Seating (Seatwall – 16")	\$1,000 CY	Playground Safety Surfacing	\$30/SF

- **Custom projects** more closely resemble our typical capital partnerships with community groups, and require a more complex design process (i.e. community gardens, play structures, art installations). They offer neighborhood groups more opportunities to enhance the unique identity of their park/neighborhood. Given the higher level of participation required, leveraging requirements are higher. They range in size from \$1 to \$250,000.
 - Menu projects have to be completed within a year of the award, while custom projects have two years to be completed.
- Draft Application Process
 - The application will build off the process established by the Partnership Toolkit
 - All applicants will need to attend a pre-submittal information session to walk through the application process
 - The general process will look like this:
 - Applicant shares idea with NSA Manager; if a Custom project, must also attend RPD office hours
 - Applicant submits application to Selection Committee
 - CCG program staff will review applications to determine if they meet eligibility requirements
 - Eligible applications will be forwarded to the internal RPD review team; the review team will provide feedback and comments on all applications
 - Selection Committee reviews all applications, with RPD staff comments and applies criteria and selects a balanced, diverse group for final awards
 - Selection Committee recommendations go to RPD Commission for approval
 - Rounds and Calendar

- Three rounds of awards for the \$4 million unreserved and available for the COF, with a final round comprised of money released from the reserve in 2013

Round I (Pilot – 6 months)	\$500,000
Round II (12 months)	\$1,250,000
Round III (12 months)	\$1,250,000
Total Awarded	\$3,000,000
<u>Project Management@ 25%</u>	<u>\$1,000,000</u>
Total COF	\$4,000,000

- For the first pilot round, 30% of funds will be set aside for Menu projects, and 70% for Custom projects
- After the first pilot round, the Selection Committee will make recommendations to the RPD Commission on:
 - The appropriate split of funds in future rounds for Menu and Custom projects
 - Suggested improvements to the application process and guidelines
- Any portion of the \$1.0 million in reserved COF funds released upon completion of the other bond projects, will apply to a fourth round of COF projects
- RPD will align the awards cycle calendar to complement, rather than mirror, the Community Challenge Grant (CCG) program. This will allow prospective applicants to utilize any CCG funds awarded as match for a COF application
- Staffing
 - RPD staff propose that administrative costs paid for by the COF for these first three rounds of awards would be capped at \$1,000,000
 - Equals 25% of the \$4m in COF funds; the average soft cost percentage for a typical capital project is 30%. This administrative budget would fund one full time capital Project Manager for 2.7 years
 - All other materials and supplies costs will be addressed with existing funds, or through partnerships with other organizations
 - After the first pilot round, refine workload estimate
- Selection Committee
 - The task force proposes that the RPD Commission appoint a Selection Committee comprised of seven members:
 - (1) PROSAC member
 - (1) RPD Commissioner
 - (1) Community Organizer/Representative from a High Needs, Underserved area
 - (1) Member of a parks/"Friends of" group
 - (1) Youth Member (Youth Commission)
 - (1) Program Service Provider
 - (1) Landscape Architect
 - CCG staff will provide support for the Selection Committee. This support includes collecting and organizing applications, scheduling selection committee meetings, and staffing the selection committee's deliberations
- Outreach Plan
 - NPC, Parks Trust, and RPD will jointly draft an outreach strategy to promote the COF

- This plan should include contacting “Friends of” groups, neighborhood associations, elected officials, policy makers, and a specific strategy for reaching out to low income communities
 - NPC, Parks Trust, and RPD can present this plan to the RPD Commission in November
 - The plan should leverage existing partnerships, and take advantage of existing forums, as much as possible
 - Other Cool Ideas
 - Partner w Art Commission to develop pool or artists community groups can work with
 - Craigslist of park improvement supplies
 - Approach other foundations to help partner on projects
 - Have public review of site furnishings on the menu
- Eligibility Requirements: *Jacob Gilchrist*
 - Applicant will attend a pre-application training to learn about the application process
 - Applicant will make a volunteer commitment agreement
 - There will need to be an inclusion of an outreach plan
 - All projects must be a capital improvement
 - Project must be at an RPD facility
 - Project must have support of RPD field staff (NSA Manager)
 - Project should have a realistic budget
- Selection Criteria
 - Park Identity and Experience
 - Enhances park aesthetics
 - Increases enjoyment of neighborhood
 - Facilitates sustainable features/management – will this project make it easier to maintain the park?
 - Demonstrates adaptation of park amenities for desired use
 - Enhances the non-human habitat
 - Increases the flexibility of park spaces
 - Community Support
 - Projects must demonstrate community support. Requirements for demonstrating support will vary depending on the size and type of project
 - Projects should promote the interaction of diverse park users
 - Projects should articulate their transformative potential (i.e. describing how the installation of new benches will allow for neighborhood seniors to gather more frequently in the park)
 - Leveraging Resources
 - Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate an ability to leverage additional financial resources (donations, grants), in-kind donations (design services, materials) and sweat equity or volunteer resources
 - Stewardship
 - Applicants that have demonstrated a commitment to work with RPD, agree to help maintain improvements, and have demonstrated communication throughout life of past projects will be prioritized.
 - Project Planning
 - Projects that clearly describe what the community wants, are ready to go, are well-planned with a realistic timeline and are durable and/or easy to maintain will be given special consideration

- Purpose and Development of the Community Partner Tool Kit: *Kearstin Krehbiel*
 - The **purpose** of the Community Partner Tool Kit is to improve and define the process by which community groups partner with the City to help parks through capital improvements
 - Task Force members who worked on the development of the Tool Kit:
 - Chris Boettcher, Interim Director, Citywide Services, RPD
 - Kearstin Krehbiel, Director of Programs, San Francisco Parks Trust
 - Meredith Thomas, Executive Director, Neighborhood Parks Council
 - Meghan Tiernan, Project Manager, Capital Division, RPD
 - With help from:
 - Maria D'Angelico, Fiscal Sponsorship Manager, San Francisco Parks Trust
 - Bob Palacio, NSA Manager, RPD
 - Steve Cismowski, NSA Manager, RPD
 - The **desired outcomes** of the Tool Kit are:
 - A simple process for engaging with RPD on park improvements
 - Online and print how-to-guide
 - Project request form
 - More park improvements!
 - Currently, draft guidelines and a draft decision tree have been developed

V. Question and Answer with Full Group

Meredith Thomas, Neighborhood Parks Council; Kearstin Krehbiel, San Francisco Parks Trust; Jacob Gilchrist, Trust for Public Land; Dawn Kamalanathan, San Francisco Recreation and Park Department

- Audience Member: Would it be possible to run through a scenario project?
 - Meredith Thomas: Let's say you wanted to install a doggie drinking fountain in your park. The first step would be to build consensus among park users and neighborhood residents. You would then follow by working with RPD field staff to get a sense of how feasible the project is for your park. If the project is fairly simple, you might be able to choose it from one of the menu items. If it were more complicated (i.e. if you wanted to also include a doggie mural), you would attend an RPD manager's office hours where they would flag all the steps in the process for you. You would attend a pre-application meeting to get further clarification on the process, and then fill out and submit an application. RPD will review your application and make notes, and then forward it to the Selection Committee. If the Selection Committee approves your project it will get sent to the Recreation and Park Commission for final approval, and once approved you will work with RPD staff to implement the project.
- Audience Member: If your group has already raised money, could it be counted as matching funds for a Community Opportunity Fund grant?
 - Meredith Thomas: we will discuss this at the Task Force
- Audience Member: How will any regular maintenance projects get done if RPD staff is completing these new projects? Also, is the application process the same for small and large projects?
 - Meredith Thomas: smaller projects will have a simpler application process.
 - Dawn Kamalanathan: because these are general obligation bond dollars RPD will be bringing on additional contractors for these projects so they won't affect current staffing.
 - Meredith Thomas: In addition, job-order contracting will make it easier to bundle project types and will make the contracting process more efficient
- Audience Member: What about sites that are currently down for renovation. Should groups still try to apply for these funds?

- Meredith Thomas: you probably wouldn't want to jump into the pilot phase if your park is currently down for renovation. The bond report identifies the bond going until 2013, and there might be an opportunity for your park to apply for funding in subsequent rounds.
- Audience Member: This money should leverage additional resources across all parks.
 - Dawn Kamalanathan: This is possible. For example, if there were a design for a new type of water saving drinking fountain or maybe an irrigation improvement for a cluster of parks, this would be considered a capital improvement. Applicants could also partner with someone like PG&E to make this type of project happen across many parks.
- Audience Member: What about parks that never get any money and need to be totally rethought. How do we get improvements without putting us out of the running for major improvements?
 - Meredith Thomas: This is a master-planning question, which isn't something that this fund will address.
- Audience Member: I had initially heard that the Task Force was hoping to leverage additional resources to make the bond go from \$5-million to \$15-million. Is that still a number you're considering? Do you think it's feasible?
 - Meredith Thomas: That figure was something I suggested as a goal and includes the financial dollars assigned to volunteer hours and pro bono work, which are realistic. However, the number isn't hard and fast, but we're hoping to aim high in terms of the additional resources we want to leverage.
- Audience Member: I like the idea of menu items, but I'm concerned about neighborhoods where there aren't any organized groups but there is high need. How will those groups show community support for projects?
 - Meredith Thomas: Menu items make the barrier to entry much lower in that you don't have to demonstrate a major history of work. However, every group can commit to volunteer and everyone has access to some amount of in-kind services.
- Audience Member: I need more clarification on the difference between maintenance projects versus capital projects. What about irrigation and draining?
 - Dawn Kamalanathan: Maintenance is the set of routine activities to maintain proper working function of an asset. When you replace, install or renovate an asset, it is a capital project.
- Audience Member: What kind of infrastructure training will you do to be efficient on your end to prevent red tape?
 - Meredith Thomas: The Community Challenge Grant program will help RPD realize efficiencies with this program because it is similar to the work they already do and they will be conducting distribution and receipt of applications and facilitation of the selection committee. The Partnership Toolkit will also help by laying out the process. Having a point person at RPD for this program will also help make sure there is oversight.

VI. Break Out Discussions

Facilitated by Meredith Thomas, Neighborhood Parks Council; Kearstin Krehbiel, San Francisco Parks Trust; Jacob Gilchrist, Trust for Public Land

- Group One (Facilitated by Meredith Thomas):
 - The **goals and objectives** resonate as they are currently laid out.
 - What are the qualities necessary for the person monitoring the **bond reporting** process?
 - Must be in RPD
 - Must be accessible after work hours, not a M-F, 9-5 schedule where evenings and weekends are considered overtime (when volunteers are around)
 - 1M in funding for 2.7 years of a project manager needs to be reviewed

- Craig Dawson: Are there some projects that should not be considered because of the burden they place on sustainability or maintenance? For example, are fountains just a bad idea? Is there a more sustainable option?
- Capital projects require maintenance. That is, adding new or more complex park features actually increases maintenance in some cases. Is this oxymoronic?
- Leveraging resources and promoting diversity
 - Communities that have need but no real cohesion need support
 - Define what is a capital project more clearly
 - Make menu items very transparent about how they effect life (major improvements versus maintenance)
 - Know what is slated versus what is a new idea
 - Work with NSA Manager regarding plans for parks
 - There may be park improvements that may have already been requested but not funded or the NSA manager may already have ideas and should communicate with the community
- Meredith Thomas: Is this process too competitive? Is it problematic that neighborhood groups will be competing with one another for needed resources?
 - That's how it is
 - Neighborhoods aren't comparable
- Timelines
 - Pilot Round: 70% custom projects (2 years to complete); 30% menu projects (1 year to complete)
 - Timeline is good
 - Two-year life span of custom projects means it will expand beyond the pilot program
 - Logical proposals for needs
- Draft Program Schedule: Application process
 - Not all online, needs to be accessible
 - List NSA info for people to use:
 - Organization chart
 - Contact info (managers, department heads, etc.)
 - This all needs to be included in the toolkit
 - Make materials readily available (libraries)
 - Glossary of terms – will be put in partnership toolkit
- Craig Dawson: Is a project fair after the pilot round that would show people the successful applicants a good idea?
 - Yes!
- Menu concept is excellent. It helps quantify needs and specs.
- Is there opportunity to substitute menu items with local resources (i.e. skip City vendors)?
 - If you aren't going to use RPD approved vendors, you can't spend RPD money.
- Selection Committee: Are these the right people?
 - Use PROSAC because they already exist
 - Who selects and manages them?
 - Membership should be representative of neighborhoods
 - Meredith Thomas: like the Community Challenge Grant process
 - Should be people that aren't vested
 - What is the term?
 - Should be staggered

- Discriminates against “friends” groups (forced exclusion) if the person sitting on the selection committee also wants to apply for their park so they should be able to rotate off and have the ability to participate in the application process
 - Meredith Thomas: the selection committee needs to be very independent and represent diverse perspectives, not tied to political associations. It would not be appropriate for me to be on the selection committee as I am working too closely with park groups who may want to apply.
 - Community Challenge Grant has good working system
 - Geographic
 - Social
 - Ability to satisfy several areas of expertise in one person
 - Application and Score Sheet: What do we want?
 - Dog representative – SPCA
 - Maybe covered by friends
 - Create profiles
 - Dog owner
 - Parent
 - Ethnic group
 - “Friends” groups represent all users and it takes things too far to try to represent each group
 - Information distribution
 - Community leaders/groups
 - Libraries
 - Press
- Group Two (facilitated by Jacob Gilchrist)
 - Can you leverage resources from other nonprofits?
 - Is Koshland sidewalk on RPD land?
 - Can a preliminary plan be used?
 - There should be lots of clarification on the leveraging requirements
 - Would time be better spent just doing the work that needs to be done?
 - Early indication of successes would be helpful
 - Offering programs for a lot of hours
 - Strong support for athletes
 - Important that RPD staff not undermine community desires
 - Criteria – recognize volunteer programs such as gardeners
 - History of partnerships should be heavily weighted
 - Inconsistent cost estimates are a big problem
 - Database of costs of individual items would help applicants
- Group Three (facilitated by Kearstin Krehbiel)
 - Concerns:
 - Application process as a barrier, specifically mandatory meeting attendance (suggestion: multiple categories for applicants – nonprofit versus community group)
 - Ensuring/enforcing applicant match (suggestion: community challenge grant application includes detailed volunteer info/agreements)
 - Sustainability of awarded groups: make sure that they stay and steward (suggestion: barriers to entry)

- Outreach for the program (suggestions: make all grant docs available online, webinar “how-to”, use social media specifically facebook and twitter, posters in/around parks)
- Incentivize partnerships (suggestion: leveraged partnerships with other City agencies, community organizations, corporations, etc. should be weighted more heavily in selection process)
- Help inexperienced groups do better (suggestion: provide feedback on denied proposals, checklist of approvals needed i.e. ADA etc.)
- Questions:
 - How do you know how much money to ask for?
 - Should applicants pre-meet with approved City vendors to price installation or items?
 - Will the menu items price include soft-costs?
 - What can be included as a match? Can planning be included?
 - Can grants include money for planning?
 - Will the requirements for local support for big versus small projects be the same?
 - Does “youth” belong in the selection criteria?

VII. Adjourn