

CITY OF PLACERVILLE  
RECREATION & PARKS COMMISSION  
February 19, 2020  
MINUTES

**PRESENT:**

Recreation & Parks Commission: Jerry Barton, Kristin Becker, Andrew Mathews, Jackie Neau, and Peter Nolan.

Recreation & Parks Staff: Terry Zeller.

**ABSENT:** Matt Lishman

**GUESTS:** Jennifer Chapman, Presenter

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA:** Mr. Barton made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Nolan seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Mr. Barton made a motion to approve the minutes of November 20, 2019. Mrs. Becker seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** No public comment.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**CA Gold Rush Park Concept Presentation:**

Jennifer Chapman presented a concept for a Gold Rush National Historic Park. Her PowerPoint emphasized resources at risk in the proposed NHP area, including the Druid Monument and the 487/489 Main Street Historic City Hall buildings, the Court House, Clay Street Bridge, 3095 Cedar Ravine, Hangtown Creek wall remnants, and Tribal culture. Ms. Chapman stated that over 40 buildings have enough historic character to warrant being included in an Historic Park. She reviewed the existing National Park system and its economic benefits, and her interest in initiating a plan for developing a non-traditional, multi-jurisdictional National Historic Park. This type of park seeks to limit the ability of stakeholders with a NHP designation of what can be done with the assets within the boundary. Ms. Chapman commented that even though we have the Gold Bug Park and Coloma's Gold Discovery Park, they are not tied together in an historical context, and a National Historic Park would do that, and she also mentioned that a designation would prompt visitors to stay multiple days to increase tourism dollars to the area. Ms. Chapman finished with a request to get government support to proceed in planning. Some sort of a working group was suggested by her at the end of the presentation.

Commission Chair Neau asked for any questions from the Commission before opening the item up for public Comment.

Commissioner Mathews asked Ms. Chapman for her definition of 'historic'. Ms. Chapman replied the first definition is the 50 year cutoff, but she did have an architectural historian look at the buildings downtown, and there may not be enough change that they are a resource. There is also a period of significance, which for this area is the gold rush era.

Commissioner Barton asked what the historic standard is from a policy standpoint and does the city have a policy that defines a term? City Manager Morris answered that he was not aware of any policy that defined historic, but reiterated the 50 year attribute as a discussed attribute.

The agenda item was then opened up to public comment by Commissioner Neau, and followed a question/answer format with Ms. Chapman providing answers where possible.

Johnathan Burgess spoke and questioned the accuracy of an historic review and focus, to make sure it is told as it should be, and who would be in charge of getting the history "right", may need an independent view. Many times historians don't get the history right by including the several cultures that had a hand in making history.

Sue Taylor commented that she thought the NHP was a great idea, and that her perspective was that the whole area is historic, don't know why everyone isn't on board with this idea, and that we are at a point where either we appreciate the area for its preservation or we lose it, and that we need to have a committee. She moved here as a teenager, and thought everyone valued the historic resources, but has experienced adversarial situations in the community. Ms. Taylor feels like this is a turning point on whether history will be preserved or not.

Kirk Smith spoke, mentioning that everything on Ms. Chapman's list is at least 100 years old, and they are all significant. The potential for tourism is huge, much like Old Sacramento. I don't see the interest in a National Park, but it would be nice if someone got something done in regards to preservation. Commissioner Neau asked who the "who" would be in this effort. He talked of volunteer groups that could break off and focus on fundraising, evaluation of resources, etc.

John Clerici commented that the slide show was great until the end, and then the real point of this effort came out, which is the Clay Street Bridge. The first thing the group should do is ask the citizens of Placerville whether this is a good idea or not, and this staff and City only have so much time and money, and they are already busy running the City, so if all of you proponents want to get together and start going out and doing the heavy lifting, and if you folks are really excited about the park, then have at it. He feels that the citizens would not be too enamored with this idea. He

ended with the statement that this Park idea was built on a false premise of properties that are not really in danger of disappearing, but more about what the buildings would be used for. He offered his help with a volunteer effort.

Kirk Smith spoke again, agreeing with John Clerici and would offer that the efforts should be made to form a volunteer committee. On the history aspect, Mr. Smith offered the outrage of a roundabout at Cedar Ravine, and that came from a lack of asking the public what they wanted. Gauge the public interest.

Ms. Chapman then turned to the ketchup and mustard building, and there is a proposal that might destroy the historic integrity of the buildings, and there was a survey on preserving the Court House building, and she talked about the traffic issues and how they could be solved with a shuttle system and parking reservations, but we do need hotels.

An unidentified speaker got up and asked about the maps and why the downtown corridor did not get designated, and that was because when it was proposed, the committee she was on got hammered, and people were very strongly against it because the property owners did not want the City in control of their private decisions. If they were opposed to City control, how much more would they be in opposition to Federal control. Also, the background information was thorough, but if a park is a viable concept, why aren't more communities doing this type of thing. She enquired about it and found that the National Park Service needed any National Park approved by Congress. The first step would be a study, and the price tag would be around \$150-500,000 to qualify for admission into consideration. With that number, it would be important to see if this sum could be raised for the effort from the private community.

Ms. Chapman returned to speak, saying that Placerville was a place to start the conversation, but definitely involves other places but hopes that Placerville starts the effort to evaluate it. She is not asking for the City to devote staff and funding, but at least support the exploring of it as a viable effort, and have a staff person as a liaison to report back to the City. Doing a survey would be a good first step.

Sue Taylor commented again, saying that she has been involved in so many volunteer efforts, including others in the audience that volunteer, and sometimes it is a blessing to discuss this so that some groups could be engaged in the conversation, but feels that it creates controversy to even discuss any effort at preservation.

Lisa Perdichizzi, who was the person who presented the RFP on the ketchup and mustard buildings representing a coalition including the Niesen Band of Mewuk Indians, and the slide referred to was a 2016 study was sent out in PG&E bills to the people of Placerville, and 45 percent supported a visitors center as the preferred use for the ketchup and mustard buildings, as you know, the City wants to turn them into apartments. She referred to John Clerici's statement and supported his view that

people needed to get up off their xxxx and take the project out of the City's hands because they obviously don't know what they are doing, turning an historical building into apartments, so in closing the original RFP respondents are still interested in taking on the project of these buildings.

Cleve Morris, City Manager spoke, saying that he wanted to correct that the survey was sent out in the City's utility bill, not the PG&E bill, and to correct previous comments that what is proposed for the ketchup and mustard buildings is a cultural center that would allow for multiple exhibitions, and they do intend to put apartments in the upper floors for in-house artists whose presentations would happen on the main floor. It was the City's concern about how ongoing maintenance would be taken care of, and there is no proposal to change the outside of the building, and the awarded proposal would restore the balcony and the façade of the buildings to maintain the historic character.

Lisa Perdichizzi asked that the City consider her proposal again.

Commission Chair Neau closed public comment, as it was straying from the agenda item. She turned it back over to Commissioners for questions.

Commissioner Barton asked who would be answering the Commission Chair's and other Commissioner's questions. Commission Chair Neau responded that Ms. Chapman presented the item, and the Chair would be looking for responses from Ms. Chapman.

Commissioner Mathews spoke, asking about property concerns, saying that the canal that goes through Pollack Pines goes through his yard, and what would the private property situation be if this National Historic Park was established if he suddenly had a park in his yard. Would that be a part of it?

Ms. Chapman answered that there are wild river designations of segments, and it would need to be studied. If you sold your house, the canal portion may be purchased by a government entity.

Commissioner Mathews responded that he grew up in this town, and the history is huge to him, and he is very familiar with, so this is something that needs to be considered because the concept is interesting, but there are many little fingers that reach into many properties and these would have to be addressed for their impact in any proposed National Park.

Sue Taylor also responded to Commissioner Mathews' question by stating that a local City can put in anything that they want, molding it to be what the City wants it to be, and it should include the input of the people.

Commissioner Mathews followed up with a question about bridges, and that there are many cool ones in this town, and he knows Clay Street is a hot topic. These bridges are getting old, and if you want to preserve the bridges you will still need to get over the creeks, so a newer bridge will need to be built near the old bridge, as you would want to be safe crossing.

Sue Taylor responded with a short description of what is functionally obsolete vs. other designations of bridges, and determinations of whether they are safe for traffic or can be used for other purposes.

John Clerici spoke up, as he is a transportation planner, so we can get into the weeds about what is obsolete, and the idea for Clay Street is to replace it with a two lane bridge; the existing bridge replaced one that the City determined was no longer working for their purposes.

Commission Chair Neau asked if Ms. Chapman had talked to the National Park Service about this concept. Ms. Chapman answered that they were hesitant, because they can't advocate, they have to wait until Congress brings it to them, she has reached out to them about the trails, and where the trails go, but they can't lobby or advocate, but did hear from the office in San Francisco that said they could do a basic survey if a Congressman asked them. A next step would be for our local Congress person to initiate that. Commission Chair Neau then responded that she had looked at the criteria for designation, and one of those that did not apply (one of the 3 requirements) saying it requires direct Park Service management instead of some other government entity or private sector; so she would like to see a letter of intent from the National Park Service.

Ms. Chapman suggested that the next step would be having guests come in and talk about this path and journey. Commission Chair Neau responded that what we need are facts; there is an interesting next step and I want to know if the NPS is actually interested, do we have enough to work with or are we wasting time with groups just to have the NPS say that they aren't interested; at the same time we need to talk to the citizens, because this is a huge idea that is going to impact the residents of this City but in order to go to the residents, I feel we need more facts.

Ms. Chapman agreed and stated that we need to look at many other sites and cities, and find out what the role of the NPS is in those sites. Commission Chair Neau responded that she thinks Ms. Chapman needs to compile this information, this is a beginning conversation.

Commission Chair Neau then stated that another one of her questions are which other cities have a National Park. Ms. Chapman replied that there are many sites on the National Historic Register that we can look at, such as Marshall Gold Discovery Park. Commission Chair Neau responded that El Dorado County had decided not to pursue a designation with the Rubicon Trail because of the property rights and the

local control that was wanted. It was presented by the Forest Service in 2014. Ms. Chapman replied that the NPS was already in the area with sites.

Commission Chair Neau followed up with other things she felt were needed, such as how we could incorporate more history in other sites from the County museum, bringing items out and incorporating them into the trail, interpreting them, and getting the history out where the people are; so a lot of what you are talking about tonight can happen and happen soon, and I have been advocating for that, but I have gotten resistance from the Museum because they are not wanted to put things outside. People are always coming up with things they want to see others do. Start coming up with these Boards and work on these things, because what you are really talking about is interpreting the history of Placerville and so let's get those sign boards up at places like the Cary House, people walk from parking lots to the Courthouse every morning, let's start getting those things in place without having to go through all of these levels of bureaucracy; I'm not saying to stop that conversation, but I'm saying I hear from you that the City is not interested, but that's not true; we've had a Historic Review Board and no one wanted to stay on to that and keep it going, it takes a lot of work to get things done, and if you're here and a new voice and you're going to lead that, great; So, that is part of my point to you. As far as things that we normally ask for in a proposal; a financial plan to know how this will be paid for. You say that there are grants out there, but let's see exactly which grants, those are the things we want to see to help us move forward. To move to the City Council, we need a plan so those are my list of things I would like to see. I would like to see a letter of intention from the National Park Service that they actually want to move forward with this. Are the State Parks interested in being nationalized?

Ms. Chapman responded that what we need is a letter from a Congressman perhaps.

An unidentified person spoke next, who works for the State Parks, but is here tonight as a private citizen, and he has heard a lot of ideas tonight and all I can do is speak to Marshall Gold Discovery, and recognizing our history and the stories can be told, and there are many stories of African American, Asian and other's stories that still need to be uncovered and we want to tell the stories, and another important story is that of agriculture, and the original intent of the museum was to only tell gold rush history, but there are many other stories in that facility. Yes, the dream was the gold, but that dream changed over time.

Commissioner Barton asked to jump in, and stated that when we talk about this, it is also important to talk about what the vision is for Gold Bug Park in a broader context, and that historic preservation is obviously one piece of that but there are a lot of things that the general public not here today are interested in and potential other uses at the Park, and I got onto this Commission really from a recreation perspective, looking at active living, community health, and I think these are important when we talk about a property that is owned by the public. I think it is

important to figure out how the City can develop a broader vision for the Park because we have designated it as an historic park, and I think this is one part of it, and I know staff is going to have to seek out a grant, make a plan for Gold Bug, but that is an important foundation that needs to be laid before we consider a National Park. I think another important thing is the geography of this regulation, does it actually extend to the Clay Street Bridge, does it extend to the Druid Monument, are these pieces of the picture that you are painting; when you lay out this idea it is important to parse out these pieces, and our purview as Commissioners is really just Gold Bug Park, all of those other sites are not our areas of influence. I think it is important to consider recreational activities, I am not talking about a diamond at Gold Bug Park, but there are others that think we should, and so I think we have to look at it as a City Park and not just as an historical resource. Do we want this to be a local park that is used by locals, or one that brings in others from out of town? It is our resource, so we have to think about it from all those different perspectives.

Commissioner Nolan asked what is the next step, as we are an advisory Committee, and Commissioner Barton had a good point that we are focused on parks and rec, and where is our jurisdiction to make recommendations.

Commission Chair Neau responded that it is our role to make decisions, and the presentation bounced around many concepts and so I don't know geographically what is covered under the City of Placerville. Are there geographic lines, is it all of the City, part of the City?

Ms. Chapman replied that she is looking at the district as a resource, and the Clay Street Bridge is part of that area, and whether or not the bridge is being recognized, is assumed to be a significant historic resource for the purposes of planning, so the City resources we identified were the City's historic district and contributing elements to that historic district, and there is the Southern Pacific railroad corridor, and that is part of it. Commission Chair Neau noted that the railroad corridor is outside the City, is preserved from the City limits to the County line, and so it is not a corridor through the City, and then restated her question about what is included within the National Historic Park boundary because as my fellow Commissioners are bringing up, we are only able to respond to those sites that are within our jurisdiction, so a lot of the other sites are out of our control.

Ms. Chapman responded that all the sites in her presentation contribute to the history of the Gold Rush, and Commission Chair Neau again asked where the geographic boundary was in her concept.

Ms. Chapman replied that it is a very conceptual space and even with a special resource study, there would be several alternatives for where that line would exist.

Commission Chair Neau then stated that she knew what the Recreation and Parks Commission's next step is which is, in terms of the Park land in the City of Placerville

or along the trail, I would like to see you bring back a proposal of things that interpret history in our purview, which is our parks and trail. So, things that you think we could interpret and share with the public in our parks and trail that aren't already there?

Commissioner Mathews added that what needs to be made clear is, what are we responsible for, because we are responsible for the parks, including Gold Bug Park which is our biggest one. Commission Chair Neau added that the Commission is not going to decide on roads and buildings.

Ms., Chapman stated that, since this body's jurisdiction is the parks and trails, this concept is bigger than the City of Placerville that are identified along the highway 50 corridor and the highway 49 corridor, and to me the thing that has national significance that we should all be interested in is the Pony Express trail, Wells Fargo and that history, and what was going on with the origins of the postal service, and in terms of history, there is a great mural in the old post office, but since your jurisdiction is the parks, maybe it's just the concept...

Sue Taylor jumped in, saying that the two highway corridors create a cross where Placerville is the hub.

Commission Chair Neau then stated that she sees the need to go back to the drawing board and really tighten up this presentation because, I heard Placerville but there are all these other locations.

Ms. Chapman jumped in restating that if it is just about the parks and trail, and there are other things like the roads and bridge that will need to go to the Planning Commission and seek other approvals, but since this is a National Park concept, it is a different thing, and we brought this to you since it had parks within it, but it sounds like you are grounded in representing Gold Bug park, and you brought up many things that would be concerns for the public there, and so maybe this needs to be a working group with other organizations. I think that a next step would be to form a collaborative group with multiple organizations, and for the Commission it would be what would concern the parks and trail.

There was a question from the audience about where to find the maps for the parks, and Commission Chair Neau responded that the information can be found on the City's website.

Commission Chair Neau then responded that she sees this concept as being in a very base state, and that we are not at a point of devoting time to this, and still don't know where the boundary is. The two highway corridors are very big areas, and the City is within that, which means that you are talking about a lot of other jurisdictions in your conversation on this concept.



Ms. Chapman responded that what she is hearing is that this Commission's nexus is the parks and trail.

Commission Chair Neau stated that that was Commissioner Barton's idea, and I have given all sorts of ideas on how to go out and start sharing history. The point is that we have all these great resources and they are not being interpreted. So you are not actually interested in interpreting them, am I right?

Ms. Chapman stated that this is not an interpretive plan, and as we move towards a National Historic Park plan, that is different than an interpretive plan.

Commissioner Mathews stated that, going back to what Commission Chair Neau said, I think this is very interesting, but what we are looking at as a Commission are much smaller things, and it will take a grass roots effort to get anything like this done for the City, and what I think is being said is to tighten it up so we have something we can vote on; right now you have given us this great macro description which is cool, but I think about Rotary park, which used to be a pond, and they took it out to make it a great baseball field, but it takes that group to put together a plan and come up with the funding and then make presentations to the Commission. So this needs to be tightened up in order to be appropriate for us, because we are just a small body and so that is a good segue to get into the City.

Sue Taylor asked if a grass roots group does the work and comes back with a proposal, is there any interest on the part of the City.

Commissioner Mathews stated that he is only talking for himself as a Commissioner, but it is an interesting concept, just too massive and affects so many people.

Commission Chair Neau added that the City is 10,000 people, not the 5 up here, and that would be the audience for this decision. It's all the neighbors and businesses.

A question from an unidentified person asked whose idea this is and who came up with the PowerPoint. Ms. Chapman responded that there are a lot of groups interested in this concept. The person responded that, okay, so there are all these different people that are working to promote this creation, which means a civic body and the NPS.

Ms. Chapman responded that everyone is working on their small piece of this, and I am a facilitator, and would love to hear from others on the Planning Commission. There is a large group working on this.

Commission Chair Neau stated that she wanted to wrap things up on this agenda item, and people can feel free to talk and network after the meeting. This is going a lot of places, and for this Commission, in terms of your proposal, we would like it to

be tightened up, and bring us another proposal. This was a huge history lesson, and very interesting, but in terms of exactly what you want from this body, you need to work with your groups for what you want from the City of Placerville.

Ms. Chapman asked for clarification on if you want the group to refine the proposal without the input of the City at this time.

Commission Chair Neau responded yes, that is what we are looking for.

Commissioner Barton added that if it is to come back to the Recreation and Parks Commission, we need to be focused on what is our purview, and that is Gold Bug and the trail. There are other parks but the one with the historic interest is Gold Bug.

Commissioner Barton was asked by Chair Neau if he was ready to make a motion, and Commissioner Barton responded that he is not sure what the requested action is, if it is to send the working group back to work on it, he did not think it was ready for engagement with City staff, and not well defined enough to have an historic resource conversation.

Commissioner Barton made the motion that the City NOT participate in a working group with an initiative to make the city of Placerville a National Historic Park at this time, until further developments are presented.

Commissioner Neau thanked the presenter and the audience for participating in a lively discussion, and then moved to other business.

#### **STAFF REPORTS:**

**Youth Assistance Fund:** Mr. Zeller reported that since the last meeting there were no requests for funding. We received \$113.00 in donations. The projected fund balance is \$4,215.77

Commission Chair Neau stated that the fund is usually around \$6,000 and asked if any action was being taken to get the funding back up.

Mr. Zeller responded that Matt Lishman is working on ideas for that issue.

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.