



**Escondido Creek Parkway  
Oversight Committee Meeting  
Kenedy High School  
August 12, 2020**

**MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

Diana Barrera, Kenedy School Board  
Collen Brownlow, San Antonio River Authority  
Kristen Hansen, San Antonio River Authority  
Meera Keshav, San Antonio River Authority  
Gary Richards, 4B Corporation  
Gaylon Oehlke, San Antonio River Authority

Kathy Oehlke, Fundraising Committee  
Jolene Terwilliger, Kenedy Chamber of Commerce  
Leslie Wynn, Kenedy City Council  
Raven Zamora, Interlex  
Greg Zaragoza, Interlex

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Gaylon Oehlke.

**I. Approval of Minutes**

Gaylon Oehlke motioned to approve the May meeting minutes, which was seconded by the committee and then approved unanimously.

**II. Tour Update**

Kristen shared information about the ongoing tour schedule, with one more in September and additional tours potentially throughout the fall, limited to groups of 10. Gaylon suggested scheduling tours every hour to bring in more visitors while taking active COVID precaution, such as requiring attendees for later tours to wait in their vehicles. Meera noted that these suggestions could be considered for the grand opening event.

**III. Grand Opening**

The grand opening event is scheduled for Saturday, September 26. Kristen assured that SARA would be planning a larger event in the absence of COVID, but instead are considering asking the mayor of Kenedy if the event could be increased to 50 attendees instead of the mandated limit of 10 people for public meetings. Leslie said that the City Council had written a letter to the attorney general to see if the mayor pro tem would sign for approval in the meantime.

Meera shared plans for a multi-day virtual grand opening via Facebook Live which would include donor recognition, giveaways of commemorative items, and general information about the park and its amenities, along with a video tour. A map would be available online for visitors to download. Meanwhile, in-person tours would be limited to 10 visitors each and would ideally begin at the various park entrances for smoother coordination among multiple groups. Gaylon reflected on the original intent to have a larger grand opening celebration, and Kristen agreed that such an event could be scheduled later under a different name once COVID is under control. Meera and Kristen stressed the importance of scheduling the virtual grand opening over multiple days while thinking of engaging ideas to make it easier for people to view online. Gaylon expressed concern over how to properly recognize officials like the SARA board, Kenedy City Council, etc. virtually. Kathy asked whether the park would be open at all considering the



severity of the pandemic, and Kristen replied that the playground, splashpad, and pavilions would be roped off to prevent congregation while walking trails and other amenities could be used.

The committee discussed which local organizations or individuals should speak during the virtual grand opening, as certain figures throughout the County had viewed ECP as just a Kenedy park instead of a County-wide park throughout the duration of the project. Supporters and donors of the project would help ECP's perception as a reason to visit Kenedy.

#### **IV. Construction Update**

Collen announced that the splashpad and pumphouse foundation slabs, low water crossing #3, and LID feature had been completed since the previous committee meeting. Construction would continue on the splashpad and pumphouse for the next three weeks while the amphitheater lighting is currently installed; hydromulching and landscape work would lastly occur after the larger construction is complete.

Collen presented 3-D renderings of the splashpad in use, before detailing the internal engineering framework and plumbing underneath its concrete foundation; Kathy noted that the splashpad recirculates water instead of continuously pulling freshwater from other sources. Collen also shared photos and construction updates of the pavilion and bathroom facilities before discussing further details of various items, specifically colors and types of surfaces paired with the donor wall, with the committee.

The LID bioretention feature will filter runoff from the parking area and collect rainwater to deposit back into the creek. Rain harvesters will also collect rainwater at the pavilion. Both are marked by interpretive signs that refer to grants which SARA provides to projects with LID features. Additional stone benches have been placed along the trails and at the skatepark; all of the concrete work in the park (except for a few small areas) has been completed.

Collen shared an updated construction timeline for the following items:

- Playground construction to begin – late August 2020
- Artery trail – late August 2020
- Splashpad construction complete – September 2020
- Park opening – September 26, 2020

The playground will feature a pour-in-place layer instead of mulch for easier maintenance. Collen shared an aerial video of the layout of the park, the continued construction progress, and the newly planted trees. Gaylon informed the committee of ongoing complaints of weeds along the creek; normally these plants would be shredded throughout the year, but Kristen said the construction work will have to stop anyone from managing the growth for now. Spraying the weeds would add chemicals to the creek water, so the best option would be to shred in the future. Since ECP is a nature park, most grass and weeds will be managed but now allowed to overgrow too much.

Collen also shared more aerial videos of the horned toad habitat, windmill, low water crossing #3, and other connecting trails on the other side of the park. The committee discussed the construction of an artery trail that would allow visitors to reach the habitat, pumpjack, anacua tree, and Wells Fargo rest area; a cement stabilized base would provide a solid trail that could withstand any water without pouring concrete.



Further discussion items in the construction update were the pavilion roofing and flagpole. Collen said there is a stargazer light at the top of the flagpole timed with the rest of the park lights, so the flagpole needs to be situated near an electrical source; Gaylon preferred the flagpole to be located near the splashpad so views of the flag would be unobstructed by the pavilion. Men's and women's facilities are located at the pavilion and the splashpad pump house, which also features filtration equipment.

Collen shared a view of the completed donor wall at the pavilion, with 165 leaves featuring various donors of smaller park items and the stones showing the names of larger organizations. The committee discussed which paint colors to use so the tree can easily stand out against the wall, and how additional donor leaves and other plaques could be added in the future. He later shared a close-up example of a leaf, which all include the donor name, the GPS number of their contribution, and an icon signifying what was donated.

Although there is a sidewalk surrounding the splashpad, the committee discussed what kind of barrier could be added to minimize foot traffic and prevent children from easily running out into the nearby street. Collen shared renderings of possible fence examples before showing a 18"-high seat bench that could encircle the splashpad. Kristen mentioned that other SARA-managed parks have installed "skate stops" that keep skateboarders from trying to jump onto benches and similar surfaces. The committee discussed a mix of the seat benches and fencing on the street-facing side of the splashpad; Gary suggested a spiked fence with smaller spikes on top (to again prevent skateboarders) that could not easily be bent.

Kristen stated that park rules will be listed at each entrance, while further specific rules will be posted at areas like the splashpad, skatepark, and playground. The City has their own list of prohibitions, and park signs can list these ordinances for visitors to research if they wish.

Q: Where will the ConocoPhillips sign for the horned toad habitat be located?

A: It will be close enough to the artery trail for visitors to read.

Q: Will there be an interpretive sign for the butterfly garden?

A: That sign will be added later as the garden will be added after the grand opening.

Q: Is there room for future donations on the donor wall?

A: Additional leaves can be placed on the top and sides of the wall without having to be connected to the "branches" of the tree.

## **V. Fundraising/Donation Update**

Kathy announced that the Kenedy Beautification Group gave \$1K for a butterfly garden. An anonymous donor had originally given \$20K for a flag and flagpole, but since those items cost less than the donation, the remaining money will go toward buying picnic tables for the pavilion. Kathy noted that just about 200 individuals, businesses, and corporations have contributed to the ECP project, and that in-kind contributions along with fundraising money total over \$1.01M. Additional monies from SARA, 4B Corporation, the City of Kenedy, and the Kenedy Chamber of Commerce plus a \$500K grant from Texas Parks & Wildfire have pushed total contributions to ECP over \$7.18M. Gaylon commented that other amenities purchased by SARA could make ECP a \$7.5M project.



#### **VI. Social Media Update**

Meera said the ECP website is now live at [escondidocreekparkway.org](http://escondidocreekparkway.org), and walked the committee through the site navigation and contact form. Gaylon asked whether the virtual opening would be hosted there or on Facebook, and Meera responded that a livestream could be possibly shared between the two. Kristen said that the virtual opening videos could be hosted on the site later. Reservations for the amphitheater and pavilion can be made from the site on the contact page as well, and Kristen mentioned that the reservations will be free for the first year like other SARA-managed parks.

#### **VII. Other**

The committee discussed the considerable public interest in already holding events at the park. Kristen said that SARA is currently hiring park technicians, especially someone certified to operate the splashpad. The splashpad will likely run mostly during hotter months, 7 days a week; weekly maintenance will occur outside of operating hours.

Gary wondered whether the designer bag bingo fundraiser would happen again. The committee discussed how to organize the event with social distancing concerns; the event could happen out at a local baseball field, or virtually without having to arrange for food/drink, etc. Gaylon reminded everyone that selling in-person tables is what brings in money, but the event has become so popular that the committee was sure that people would still be interested in attending no matter what.

Kathy mentioned the other phases of the project development, such as extending trails and paving and maintaining roads near the park. Leslie said that the City is currently seeking bids to pave Pullen St. by the park opening date.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM.**

**Next meeting will be Wednesday, November 18, 2020.**