

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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TO: Design Review Board Members
FROM: Lawrence J. Goldzband, Executive Director (415/352-3653; larry.goldzband@bcdc.ca.gov)
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SUBJECT: Draft Minutes of May 11, 2015 BCDC Design Review Board Meeting

1. **Call to Order and Attendance.** Dan Hodapp (Chair of the Port's Waterfront Design Advisory Committee (WDAC)) called the meeting to order at approximately 5:30 p.m. Other WDAC members in attendance included David Alumbaugh, Kathrin Moore, and Marcia Maytum. Design Review Board (DRB or Board) members in attendance included John Kriken, Steve Thompson, Karen Alschuler, Cheryl Barton, Ephraim Hirsch, and Michael Smiley. BCDC staff in attendance included Brad McCrea, Ellen Miramontes, and Ming Yeung.

2. **Approval of Draft Minutes for the April 6, 2015 Meeting.** The Board approved the minutes with no revisions.

3. **Downtown San Francisco Ferry Terminal (Second Review).** The DRB conducted a second review of a proposal by the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) to construct the south basin phase of the Downtown San Francisco Ferry Terminal Expansion project, located south of the Ferry Building, in the City and County of San Francisco. The project would involve the construction of two additional gates, Gates F and G in the south basin, reconstruction of Gate E, and public access at the site. The proposed public access improvements would include the creation of an East Bayside Promenade to connect Gates E, F and G, and the creation of a raised new plaza area over the "lagoon" between the Ferry Building and the Agriculture Building. Though not proposed by the applicant as part of this project, a design for a South Bayside Promenade along the Ferry Plaza was also included for review by the Board. On June 6, 2011, the Board had previously reviewed the overall Master Plan concept for the Downtown San Francisco Ferry Terminal Expansion that involved construction in both the north and south basins and public space improvement concepts that extended over the greater Ferry Plaza area.

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a. **Staff Presentation.** Ming Yeung introduced the project and the issues identified in the staff report, which included: whether the project provides adequate, usable, and attractive public spaces and adequate connections to and through the public access spaces; specific questions on the proposed canopy/shade structures; design treatments for the raised plaza area; and sea level rise.

b. **Project Presentation.** Michael Gougherty of the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) made some introductory remarks regarding WETA's ferry service, future new routes planned, and its timeline going forward.

Boris Dramov of ROMA Design Group introduced the project and explained the changes made since 2011. He stated that since 2011, Pier ½ has been demolished, that the Port will be demolishing Sinbad's and Pier 2, and that the revised project will focus on the construction within the south basin. He provided a historical look at the site for use as a ferry terminal and highlighted three changes to the proposed project: (1) changes responding to sea level rise, which resulted in new filled areas to be raised an additional three feet (or to 14.5 feet MLLW) to accommodate for predicted sea level rise until 2070; (2) changes responding to new stormwater guidelines, which include more preventive and cleanup measures at the site; (3) changes to the proposed canopy structure, which include a split of the continuous structure along the East Bayside Promenade into two structures, and the inclusion of photovoltaic panels on the roof, and (4) changes in response to recent considerations regarding the movement of the seawall during a major seismic event and the angling the plaza to the geometry of the seawall.

c. **Board and WDAC Questions.** The Board and WDAC members asked several questions.

Mr. Hirsch asked whether the fill for the lagoon was new and if it is being mitigated with the removal of Pier ½. He also asked whether Gate E is a new gate, for clarification on the ramps, steps and access to the plaza, whether there was a direct access ramp from the Embarcadero and about the proposed pattern on the plaza. Ms. Miramontes responded that the fill for the lagoon is new fill and would be mitigated for, as required by other resource agencies. Mr. Dramov responded to the other questions. He explained that Gate E would be the same but rebuilt at a higher elevation; he described how the public could access the plaza and referred the Board and Committee members to the model that had been constructed for illustrative purposes. He explained that there would be no direct ramp from the Embarcadero. Finally, Mr. Dramov explained that the pattern on the plaza was a compass rose with a high point in the middle of the compass for drainage purposes. The Plaza would be granite paving while the rest of the paved areas would be concrete. He was open to other ideas for the plaza pattern.

Mr. Kriken asked whether the plaza would be used for the weekend farmer's market. Mr. Dramov answered that programming decisions would need to be made in the future. Ms. Miramontes added that WETA has indicated that the plaza will need to serve as an emergency evacuation area so it will need to be kept open.

Ms. Moore asked how the area has been designed to preclude skateboarders. Mr. Dramov explained that it is hard to build in any hardscape and preclude skateboarders unless there is a good management and enforcement approach. He also explained that there are measures that are available, for example, creating notches in the edges of the steps and that there are fairly attractive metal cleats that can also be used.

Ms. Maytum asked about the “edges” around the plaza and access onto the plaza. Mr. Dramov answered that the steps up to the plaza would be designed with amphitheater seating (1-foot steps rather than 6-inch ones), which would enhance the public use of the change in grade. In addition, it would also eliminate the need for a railing. This would also help deter skateboarders.

Mr. Hirsch followed up with another question about the steps and ramps between the raised plaza and the Agriculture Building. Mr. Dramov clarified how this area would function.

Ms. Alschuler asked whether there would be a high wall between the East Bayside Promenade and the sunken plaza next to the Agriculture Building. Mr. Dramov explained that there would not be a wall, but rather a railing. The adjacent space, as shown in the cross-sections, would be used by the tenant of the Agriculture Building and could serve as a sunken, wind-protected outdoor seating area.

Mr. Alumbaugh asked about the elevations at the East Bayside Promenade, particularly noting that the exhibits show the corner of the plaza to be at a 14.1-foot elevation. Mr. Dramov explained that the promenade is at a 14.5-foot elevation and the corner may be a bit lower to account for a one-percent slope for drainage.

d. **Public Comment.** There were four members of the public that commented on the project.

Mr. Chuck Stinson of Sinbad’s restaurant commented that Sinbad’s has provided a convenient sheltered place for ferry passengers over the years and that demolition of the restaurant before construction of the ferry terminal would result in an “eye-sore” at the site for a year.

Ms. Bernadette Lambert of BART commented that BART is concerned about impacts to its access to its facility via the drive aisle between the Ferry Building and the new plaza. She expressed concerns that the new plaza, with seating on its steps, would result in pedestrians spilling out onto the drive aisle and that the access road is currently blocked during the farmer’s market on Saturdays (she passed around photos of this condition). She requested that this be considered, in case the plaza is used for special events in the future. Mr. Hirsch asked Ms. Lambert how often BART needs access. Ms. Lambert responded that they require access everyday, all day, especially during special events since there could be a safety issue. Mr. Smiley asked whether there is an agreed-upon width with the Port of San Francisco for access along this edge. Mr. Hodapp from the Port of San Francisco responded that there is a 24-foot-wide drive aisle with a walkway on the south edge. The project proposal retains a 24-foot-wide drive aisle with a 10-foot-wide pedestrian area so the proposal would not impact BART’s existing access.

Mr. Duane Stinson of Sinbad's restaurant asked when work is expected to start. Mr. Gougherty of WETA responded that if all goes according to schedule, WETA would award a construction contract by Spring 2016 and work could start late 2016.

Mr. Bobby Winston of Bay Crossings commented that he thought the project was beautiful and important for ferry riders, especially when a big earthquake hits and it would provide an essential structure for emergency transportation. He also commented that the canopy structures are practical and "a really cool thing."

e. **Board Discussion.** The Board members discussed the following:

Ms. Barton asked for more detail on the canopy structures and about bicycle parking. Mr. Connolly of WETA responded that service at this location would mainly serve passengers getting on board with bikes so there is not much demand for bike parking. Mr. Hodapp added that areas behind the Ferry Building and around the Agriculture Building are being examined for bike parking but is not part of the proposed project by the Port of San Francisco now.

Mr. Thompson requested more information on the details of the project including lighting, railings and other final design features. He asked whether the north basin would be reviewed as well, and asked that comments on the south basin be incorporated into any future designs for the north basin.

Mr. Kriken commented that the project is a beautiful, carefully designed project but expressed concern over how it would function with the weekend farmer's market.

Mr. Alumbaugh commented that he is concerned about the grade issues and particularly with the southwest corner of the plaza as it meets the Embarcadero. He asked that this edge be looked at more and that the applicants explore ways to ensure a smoother connection between the plaza and the Embarcadero. He also commented on the canopy structures and questioned whether they would help with queuing and would truly provide shelter from the rain.

Mr. Hirsch added that perhaps the structures could rotate based on wind and sun conditions.

Ms. Alschuler also commented on the canopy structures and stated that she did not agree with revising it to a rotating structure. She also commented on the area between the raised plaza and the Agriculture Building and asked that a simpler design be developed for this area, perhaps something that could be designed with a ramp that simplifies the entryway from the Embarcadero. She commented that adding this additional public access area may actually assist in addressing BART's concerns of people populating the drive aisle adjacent to the Ferry Building, since people would congregate within the new plaza instead.

Mr. Hodapp commented that he was concerned that a change in the area between the plaza and the Agriculture Building could change the square dimension of the plaza. Ms. Alschuler clarified that she was commenting on changing the ramp up to the plaza, not the plaza shape.

Ms. Maytum commented that she likes the two-canopy approach and the simplicity of the canopy structure. She would not like to see the canopy structure rotate. She added that the texture and materiality of paving, lighting, and street furniture will make the plaza a great space. She also agreed that the challenge is the south side of the plaza and how to work with the existing elevation of the Agriculture Building. She asked about the timing of the possible renovation of the Agriculture Building and commented that it would be unfortunate to make the space such a great space, but not finish it because of unknown projects in the future. Mr. Hodapp commented that the Port is just now looking at options for the Agriculture Building and it will be a great expense to rehabilitate it.

Ms. Moore added that she liked the two-canopy approach as well. She also commented that it would be important to know how the space will change with respect to circulation and pedestrian flow with Sinbad's gone.

Mr. Smiley commented that the applicants should give the canopy structures another look and ensure that they are fairly effective in the rain. He commented that he liked the simplicity of the structures as well but it would be important to fully understand the nature of the wind-driven rain and to get some assurance that the structures would indeed provide some measure of shelter.

Mr. Hodapp responded that ferry passengers were surveyed and their number one concern and comment was the desire for some shelter. He commented that the proposed canopy structures at 20 feet should be adequate for rain protection. He added that the shelters are not intended to provide full protection but rather some sense of shelter. As a comparison, the F-line muni shelters are 12 to 15 feet in width with a similar height.

Mr. Alumbaugh added that, rather than considering the width, consideration could be given to lowering the height, if needed to provide additional protection, or that the structure could be moved slightly to the west, if needed to better respond to the rain patterns.

Mr. Kriken commented that he would recommend a nautical feel for the site furniture, railings and canopy structures. He asked that the applicants look to what has been designed on the other side of the Ferry Building along the Embarcadero and asked whether there could be some continuity of the space from one to the other. He also asked that the applicants consider the pedestrian flow in the area and think about how the space will function during construction.

Ms. Alschuler stated that the project will be one of the first along the Embarcadero to address sea level rise in a real and innovative way and will make the public aware of these changes. She commented that some interpretive information about the project's response to sea level rise would be appropriate.

f. **Board Summary and Conclusions.** The Board made the following summary and conclusions:

(1) **Response to Public Access Issues Raised by BCDC Staff.** The general consensus of the Board was that the proposed public spaces would create attractive new public access areas and improve existing public access use of the Ferry Building area.

(2) **Southwest Corner of Plaza and Entryway.** The Board noted that this entry point appeared too tight and recommended that it be widened and the entryway made “clear and simple” from the Embarcadero.

(3) **Design Details.** Some Board members expressed a desire to see the project return with more details on the paving materials, railing design, furniture and lighting. One noted that it would make sense for these finishing details to have a nautical character.

(4) **Canopy Structures.** The Board generally agreed that the canopy structures are useful and should be retained, that two structures were preferred over one, and that the details and dimensions of the design should be contemplated more closely. The Board recommended that the applicants study the structures’ effectiveness in sheltering passengers from the rain and consider possible changes to the height or location, as necessary.

(5) **Sequence Design for Over Time.** The Board suggested that the applicants give further consideration to the nature of the connections to the shoreline between the plaza and the Agriculture Building and along the south side of the Agriculture Building during the period prior to future renovation of the Agriculture Building. There was also discussion about the construction process and how the area would continue to function and remain “whole” through the two-year construction period. It was noted that waterside construction is interesting and the public should be able to fully observe this construction process over time.

(6) **Pedestrian Circulation Patterns.** The Board recommended that the existing pedestrian circulation patterns in the vicinity of the whole Ferry Building be diagrammed in conjunction with the projected new circulation patterns expected with the proposed project.

(7) **Sea Level Rise.** The Board recommended that some interpretive information that explains how the project’s design responds to sea level rise will help in educating the public about the issue.

(8) **Continuity Between South Basin, Ferry Plaza and North Basin.** The Board recommended that continuity of design should be provided between the proposed new south basin, the ferry plaza and the north basin.

6. **Adjournment.** Mr. Kriken adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

ELLEN MIRAMONTES
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