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## **Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation**

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*Editorial Note: Although every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the material in this presentation, the scope of the material covered and the discussions undertaken lends itself to the possibility of minor transcription misinterpretations.*

**PRESENTATIONS BY  
Russ Guiney  
Director Department of Parks & Recreation  
Los Angeles County**

**May 7, 2009**

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### **The Efficiency Plan for the Department of Parks & Recreation**

Chairman Barcelona greeted Mr. Russ Guiney, Department of Parks and Recreation and welcomed him while turning it over for Mr. Guiney to speak to the Economy and Efficiency Commission (EEC). Mr. Guiney expressed that he was honored to be there and thanked Executive Director Edward Eng for inviting him to speak to the EEC.

### **Parks and Recreation Overview**

Mr. Guiney stated that the Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for providing a system of recreational facilities and programs benefiting residents and visitors of Los Angeles County. He stated the Department also seeks recreation opportunities with the County's 88 cities. Its expectations include being a partner to reduce juvenile crime, increasing school readiness among children, developing accessible parks and activities, establishing healthy parks, influencing economic well-being, and enhancing the social and emotional well-being of children and their families.

Mr. Guiney stated his Department provides the leadership for healthier communities, environmental stewardship, community connections and partnership, and integrity in its ability to promote social, recreational and cultural opportunities stimulating Los Angeles County's residents and visitors through quality programming, services and customer satisfaction.

Mr. Guiney also stated that his Department is responsible for administration of more than 144 facilities, including 19 golf courses, making up the largest municipal golf courses system in the county, 94 local and community regional parks, 52 riding and hiking trails, Catalina Island Interpretive Center, Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden, Whittier Narrows Nature Center, Hollywood Bowl, John Anson Ford Amphitheatre, Descanso Gardens, Santa Fe Dam Recreation Center, Virginia Robinson Gardens, Castaic Lake State Recreation Area and South Coast Botanic Garden.

### **Defining the Vision of the Department**

Mr. Guiney stated that his Department is a medium-size Department with 1600 employees with a budget of about \$150 million and a capital building program that has reached about \$220 million. He stated the staff for his Department has declined by 13% in the last two years. Mr. Guiney expressed that two years ago people were not in the mode we are in now, knowing the importance of efficiency, cutting coast, and saving money. He stated that his Department has had a long standing tradition in trying to find ways to do things more efficiently.

Mr. Guiney stated the there are five phases to his Department's plan that was created; phase one is initiating the process by having staff and the community more involved. Staff members from all levels and areas of the Department received training to provide outreach and facilitation support throughout the entire process. Mr. Guiney stated that phase two was understanding the context and prioritizing the challenges. The staff, community, and stakeholders assessed Department strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in a variety of inclusive forums. Emerging park and recreation trends that impact the Department's future programs and services were evaluated. He stated that his Department developed six key outcome statements to describe the results for his customers and staff. Phase three had to do with setting the course for the Department. He stated that staff representatives, working in self-guided teams, developed strategies in six Departmental focus areas to define how to achieve the outcomes. He stated that phase four is to move into action. The teams mapped out a five year detailed plan of action for implementing the strategies with priorities for the first two years. He stated the last phase; phase five was about making it happen. Performance measures are assigned that will track progress toward the desired outcomes where progress will be assessed annually.

Mr. Guiney stated that the long-term outcome is trying to achieve Community Cohesion where the community comes together because parks provide a gathering place for all residents to socialize, recreate, and share their lives and providing a nurturing and safe environment for children and youth. He stated he would like to see more Community partnership because the community itself as a "partner" in caring for valuable resources: parks, facilities, and programs.

Mr. Guiney stated that he felt one of the ways to get his staff more involved in helping with the improvement of the Department was to have the staff come up with ideas. He began to hold meetings with all staff looking for more ways to create a more efficient environment. He stated that the ideas were pyramided up and the Department took the best of those ideas and brought it to the CEO at various forums with over 300 employees. The individuals that initiated the ideas were then asked to present the idea. Mr. Guiney stated that one of the ideas that was chosen is pretty simple-- converting the parks to reclaimed water. He stated that his Department is the biggest single user of water in the County. The water bill for this Department is about \$5.5 million a year, cutting down on the water bill will not only help save money but it will also help the State. He also stated there are 19 golf courses and there are four that are within a mile of reclaimed water and the Department is trying to bridge the gap for that water use. He stated that another idea is to reduce gang violence. The Department has about 20 parks that are impacted by gangs. He stated that his Department put together some cost saving ideas with the Human Relations Commission to see what they could do to provide more positive activity to reduce gang violence. He stated that this will not directly reflect in the Department's budget but will be reflected for the County as a whole. Mr. Guiney stated that another area where he can cut down on the use of water is using Spark Controllers. He stated that Spark Controllers are computer controlled and they have a weather component and sensors that go into the ground. These controllers determine when water is needed. Mr. Guiney stated that there were so many ideas such as: video conferencing, solar heating for all the pools, tankless water heater, and others. He stated that the Department doesn't want to stop with just these ideas, he wants to institutionalize the way of thinking of how can his Department become more efficient and how the ideas can keep coming.

Mr. Guiney reported that the CEO has directed all Departments in the 09-1010 budgets to only submit unmet needs that reduce cost or create efficiencies. The Department is also linking this to incorporating efficiency planning into the Management Appraisal Performance Plans (MAPP). These plans will incorporate efficiency ideas. He stated that his Department managers will set up progress reports so at least twice a year they will report to the employees on the status of their ideas. Mr. Guiney expressed that he is excited about the things that his Department has accomplished and he is excited that the department is able to

institutionalize it so that it's not a one time event. His Department is taking a 5% reduction in this year's budget over last year if approved by the Board of Supervisors. He stated his Department is prepared to take another 5% based on what happens with the election within the next couple of weeks which affects the State budget that will trickle down to the County's budget.

Mr. Guiney stated that it is important for his Department to be efficient and he stated they will be committed to it. He stated that he is seeing great results and is hoping to see many more. He stated that he wanted to welcome any questions the Commission had but more importantly any suggestions the Commission has to help his Department become more efficient.

### **Questions:**

Commissioner Ikejiri stated that he is a son of a gardener and he was watering his lawn and began thinking how crazy it is to water the lawn then you have to cut it but when you go to Arizona or Scottsdale they have cactus and water for each individual plant. He asked Mr. Guiney if the same idea would apply here. Mr. Guiney replied that we are already headed in that direction. The Department is redesigning the Altadena 9-hole golf course and if it works and cuts down on water consumption, it may be the blue print for the future. Commissioner Ikejiri stated that Arnold Palmer was discussing doing a course out of all synthetic grass where you don't have to water at all. Commissioner Ikejiri stated that the key part is the affect on one's mental and physical health just to be able to go to the park and enjoy the trees and the surrounding environment.

Commissioner Cole stated that he grew up in Jesse Owens Park area and it kept him out of trouble and it had a lot of great programs going on, and it turned the members of the community around. Commissioner Cole asked whether the staff cut was due to termination, retirement, or other reasons. Mr. Guiney replied that it was due to loss of vacant positions. Mr. Guiney also stated that so far within the County there have not been any layoffs. The County has avoided layoff by taking money for those vacant positions and reducing hours in the hourly employees.

Commissioner Fuhrman asked if Mr. Guiney if he is inviting some of the commercial and private sector golf course operators to its annual park summit. Mr. Guiney replied that some vendors do attend to show products on how to save money, but the Department also communicates with the private operators. Mr. Guiney stated that the Golf Director was a former Golf Pro and worked in the private sector, and one of the assistant Directors just came over from a private sector golf course. Commissioner Fuhrman commneted that there are a lot of areas where County courses are relatively close to private courses that the County could collaborate with.

Commissioner Mindlin stated that he has served on the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) and suggested Mr. Guiney to keep in touch with them because the RWQCB assess fines due to regulatory violations. Commissioner Mindlin stated that one way people deal with their fines is something called "steps" which is when someone does bad things in the area they would get a fine but the fine would go towards educational and water cleanup in that particular area. Commissioner Mindlin stated that the money is not allowed to be used for operations but for the community.

Commissioner Glassman asked whether Mr. Guiney had submitted anything to the loan section of the Quality & Productivity (Q&P) Commission. The Q&P Commission has funds for loan and periods for payback. Mr. Guiney replied that his Department closely looks at that each quarter.

Chair-Emeritus asked if there are any surveillance cameras in any of the parks. Mr. Guiney replied that they are at one park but he is really pushing for more cameras throughout all the parks. Mr. Guiney stated the Office of Public Safety (OPS) provides the police Safety for the facilities. He stated that he is collaborating with OPS to receive grants and funding for more surveillance cameras.

Chairman Barcelona expressed his appreciation to Mr. Guiney for coming to speak to the EEC and the Commissioners applauded.

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