

MEMORANDUM

February 9, 2017

TO: MEMBERS, PORT COMMISSION
Hon. Willie Adams, President
Hon. Kimberly Brandon, Vice President
Hon. Leslie Katz
Hon. Eleni Kounalakis
Hon. Doreen Woo Ho

FROM: Elaine Forbes
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Informational presentation on the Operations and Public Programs at the EcoCenter at Heron's Head Park

DIRECTOR'S RECOMMENDATION: Informational Only; No Action Required

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The EcoCenter at Heron's Head Park (EcoCenter) is a unique "green building"¹ located within Heron's Head Park, at the Port's southern edge (see Exhibit A: Heron's Head Park and EcoCenter Location). In March 2014, the Port leased the EcoCenter to the non-profit bay.org. The lease specifies that the Port operate and maintain the EcoCenter structure and building systems, and bay.org use the EcoCenter for public benefit, educating the public about green building technologies and the environment, and engaging the surrounding community in EcoCenter programs. At the time of lease award, the Port Commission requested that Port staff return with progress reports on EcoCenter operations. Over the past three years, bay.org has delivered on all commitments made in its original proposal to the Port, and built new partnerships with local organizations that contribute to the success of its efforts.

PORT'S STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE

The Port's lease to bay.org and bay.org's operations at the EcoCenter implement the following goals of the Port's Strategic Plan:

¹ A "green building" is one that is created using construction material and methods, and operating processes that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a building's life-cycle from siting to design, construction, operation, maintenance, renovation and deconstruction.

Sustainability: *Limit climate change and employ strong environmental stewardship principles through implementation of Port-wide practices that protect the environment and promote ecological balance.*

Engagement: *Promote the richness the Port has to offer through education, marketing, and maintaining strong relationships with Port users and stakeholders.*

BACKGROUND

The Port created Heron's Head Park as a fill removal and habitat restoration project in 1998-99, and constructed additional improvements to the park entrance and parking lot, in 2010 (see Exhibit A: Heron's Head Park and EcoCenter Location). Since its inception, Heron's Head Park has been a beloved refuge for people and wildlife in the primarily industrial southern waterfront. The Port has funded environmental education programs and volunteer opportunities at Heron's Head Park for 18 years.

In September 2005, non-profit organization and former Port tenant, Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ), leased 2,300 square feet of land within Heron's Head Park to build the EcoCenter at Heron's Head Park (EcoCenter). LEJ completed construction in 2010, and owned and operated the EcoCenter until January 2014, when it turned the EcoCenter over to Port ownership.

The EcoCenter is a unique and beautiful facility, designed to serve as a model for green building, sustainable resource use, environmental justice, experiential learning and community engagement for San Francisco's southeastern neighborhoods. The EcoCenter is LEED Platinum certified, featuring a living roof, solar power, rainwater capture, and on-site wastewater treatment and re-use. Its only connection to municipal utilities is the potable water supply.

When the Port assumed ownership of the EcoCenter, it sought a tenant who could maximize the public benefits that the EcoCenter has to offer. The Port conducted a competitive process to select a tenant who could best achieve the Port's goals. Two teams, The A. Philip Randolph Institute – San Francisco (APRI - SF) and bay.org (formerly The Bay Institute Aquarium Foundation) in partnership with City College of San Francisco (CCSF) submitted proposals. In January 2014, the Port awarded the EcoCenter lease opportunity to bay.org, in partnership with both APRI and CCSF.

On February 1, 2014 the Port and bay.org executed Lease L-15771 (the Lease) for a five-year term with options to extend the Lease for up to two additional 2-year terms. Under the terms of the Lease, bay.org pays a nominal rent of \$1/year; the Port is responsible to maintain the EcoCenter structure and operating systems (i.e. power, water, and wastewater); and bay.org is responsible for operating the EcoCenter in a manner that serves the public and takes best advantage of the environmental education and community engagement opportunities that the EcoCenter presents. The Port does not provide financial support to bay.org's staffing, operations, or programs offered at the EcoCenter.

PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

This report presents an overview of bay.org and its partners' activities at the EcoCenter over the past three years. These accomplishments would not have come to fruition without collaboration with many partners and fellow community organizations, including those identified in the Lease: CCSF and APRI. CCSF has contributed to the successful, on-going internship programs at the EcoCenter, participates in the EcoCenter Advisory Committee (EAC), and connects new professors and students in the CCSF system with the EcoCenter. APRI's partnership has been influential in connecting bay.org staff to the BVHP community by providing opportunities to work side-by-side with community leaders, providing job skills training for EcoCenter interns, and strong participation and leadership in the EAC. For both partners, bay.org/EcoCenter staff provides opportunity to use the EcoCenter as a meeting place and offer education programs for the students/youth these organizations serve.

Upon executing the Lease, bay.org hired staff to operate the EcoCenter. These staff members were former Port partners at CCSF and their knowledge of the EcoCenter's systems was instrumental in the transition to new organizational leadership and ensured the EcoCenter was immediately open to the public four days per week. Bay.org then established an **EcoCenter Advisory Committee (EAC)** consisting of members of the Bayview Hunters Point community and partner organizations in June 2014. The EAC guides bay.org staff to enhance EcoCenter programs and community engagement. It is co-chaired by bay.org and APRI-SF, and includes representatives from San Francisco Department of Recreation and Parks (RPD), Bayview Hunters Point Mobilization for Adolescent Growth in our Communities (BMAGIC), City of Dreams, Laborers 261, CCSF, Parks 94124 and Habitat for Humanity Greater San Francisco. For more information: <http://www.ecocenterhbp.org/advisory-committee/>

Since execution of the Lease, bay.org and CCSF have offered Spring and Fall semester credit-based internships at the EcoCenter through the Sustainability 91 course to a total of 20 interns. Additionally, with support from a grant from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), bay.org has provided paid internships for high school and college youth from Southeast San Francisco, serving 21 students over three summers. The paid internships include job skills workshops provided by APR, training regarding the EcoCenter's green building systems and field trips to SFPUC facilities.

In keeping with its original proposal to the Port, bay.org appointed a Bayview Hunters Point community representative, Angelique Thompkins, to its Board of Directors in Fall 2014. Ms. Thompkins has been a tireless advocate for the EcoCenter and a great connector to the community. She was instrumental in planning and executing the largest EcoCenter event to date, "Bay Splash," in October 2015. Bay Splash brought more than 30 community organizations to the EcoCenter to host science, environment and health activities for 300+ attendees. For more information: <http://bay.org/board-of-directors/>.

The EcoCenter hosts free weekly "**Science Saturdays**" at the EcoCenter, engaging the community in topics such as:

- Bayview Hunters Point Environmental Justice Mapping Project: Honoring the Women who Protect their Community
- Heron's Head Park Bioblitz: Species Identification Party
- Divers, Dabblers, and Waders: The Birds of Heron's Head Park
- The Hidden World of Plankton

These popular programs often include community/partner organizations. EcoCenter staff collaborates with the San Francisco Department of Recreation & Parks (RPD) to offer two Science Saturday events each month: "Second Saturday", at which the Greenagers lead volunteers to care for the native plants in Heron's Head Park, and a "Healthy Parks, Healthy People" trail walk, lead by RPD staff and concluding at the EcoCenter for a tour. In fall 2016, bay.org partnered with BMAGIC to host their annual Back-to-School Celebration in conjunction with a Science Saturday at the EcoCenter, where over 200 visitors attended and BMAGIC distributed free backpacks filled with school supplies to K-12 students. Since execution of the Lease, a total of 2,723 visitors have participated in a Science Saturday programs. For more information:

<http://www.ecocenterhnp.org/science-saturdays/>

Thanks to a significant grant from the SD Bechtel Jr. Foundation, bay.org developed 10 new **K-12 environmental education programs** that meet standards for science education for schools. These programs focus on the hands-on learning opportunities that the unique building and park can provide, touching on topics such as climate change, biodiversity, and wetland ecology, and are provided free of charge to any K-12 school or youth group year round. To date, these programs have served 2,865 students/youth, teachers and chaperones. The environmental education programs at the EcoCenter offer another connection with RPD's Youth Stewardship Program (YSP). YSP provides educational restoration activities for San Francisco schools in Heron's Head Park, which greatly complement the EcoCenter's programs. RPD and EcoCenter teams work together on collaborative programming, serving more than 900 participants since bay.org's lease term began. For more information on these programs, please visit:

<http://www.ecocenterhnp.org/k-12-and-youth-groups/>

Bay.org staff coordinates free use of the EcoCenter by Bayview Hunters Point community groups and local government organizations, which is a great way to introduce new audiences and visitors to the EcoCenter. Community groups served include Edgewood Center/Southeast Families United Family Resource Center, YMCA's Huntersview Community Health and Wellness Center's Peer Health Leaders, the Port's Southern Waterfront Advisory Group, and many other organizations. Since the Lease began, 1,897 participants have used the meeting space and. For more information, please visit: <http://www.ecocenterhnp.org/host-an-event/>

In addition to the partnerships with APRI and CCSF envisioned in the Lease, bay.org staff has developed many new formal and informal partnerships with other local community groups. Below are two examples of such partnerships that are currently active:

- **City of Dreams:** bay.org and City of Dreams collaborate to provide youth development and programming ranging from coastal cleanups to a co-sponsored Science Saturday film screening of *Straight Outta' Hunters Point 2* and discussion with local filmmaker Kevin Epps. This event brought together BVHP youth, interns, and mentors from City of Dreams, EcoCenter, and Literacy for Environmental Justice.
- **Bayview Hunters Point YMCA Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) Workforce Development Program:** Director of Workforce Development, Demetrius Durham, provides guidance and youth referrals for the EcoCenter's internship program, and bay.org staff hosts a recurring 10-week series of environmental education programs and native habitat restoration workdays for Mr. Durham's SFPUC-funded Environmental Advocates TAY internship.

Looking Forward

Bay.org is looking forward to continuing its public education and engagement mission at the EcoCenter, and developing opportunities to expand its programs. New Chief Executive Officer, George Jacob, assumed his new role at bay.org on January 23, 2017. Bay.org recently received a \$40,000 Community Challenge Grant from the City of San Francisco to expand the EcoCenter's paid internship programs. Bay.org is currently focusing on recruiting two new EAC members, and improving outreach to BVHP K-12 schools and community groups. Port staff will continue coordinating with and supporting bay.org in the on-going operation of the EcoCenter to realize the public benefits envisioned for this unique facility.

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