



American Planning Association

California Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

DATE: **October 3, 2015**

TO: **APA California Board of Directors**

FROM: **Steven A. Preston, FAICP, Chapter Historian – South**
 Larry Mintier, FAICP, Chapter Historian - North

SUBJECT: **APA CALIFORNIA HISTORY VIDEO**

ACTION ITEMS

Prior to the Board meeting, all Board members should review the link to the alternative video treatment proposed by Brian Mooney, which may be accessed at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jfaz5JsBrAs&feature=em-upload_owner

There is no formal action, but the Board will be asked to provide direction regarding the proposed treatment of a planning history video. This report provides you with a brief background and the results of recent discussions.

BACKGROUND

In 2008, in preparation for the Chapter Conference in Hollywood, the Chapter asked us to prepare a presentation that told the history of APA California in honor of the Chapter's 60th anniversary. At a gala luncheon, we presented a visual history of APA California and its role in advancing the art and science of planning in California.

The project, which included a Power Point presentation, commemorative booklet, and research documents, was well received. But when a group of members representing our planners of color contacted me immediately after the celebration, they expressed concern that this story would be incomplete until the stories of planners and communities of color were integrated into the narrative.

In 2009 a committee was formed to explore options, and the Board ultimately authorized \$15,000 to produce a video history of APA California with the understanding that it would include new material documenting the history of planners of color and communities of color. The project was assigned to the VP of Public Information and the Chapter Historians, supported by a committee comprised of Steve Preston, David Salazar, Jeannette Dinwiddie-Moore, Janet Ruggiero, Don Cotton, and others. (Chapter Historian Betty Croly was ill at this point and passed shortly after this process began.)

The VP for Public Information selected a consultant to perform the work; that consultant failed after more than a year to produce a video within an acceptable time frame, and was required to return all monies advanced. The Committee then sought to identify a university program or other institution that would take on the project, but as of last year no organization had committed to produce the video. The original funding remains available for the project.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Last year, then-Chapter President Brooke Peterson suggested that we contact Brian Mooney, a San Diego based planner and urban historian who has produced a noteworthy video on the development of the Nolen plan in San Diego. Mr. Mooney agreed to take the project on with the understanding that he might want to adapt the original proposal to better capture his vision of the project.

Brian reviewed the materials provided and the budget, and proposed an alternative vision of what this video might look like, in the form of a 'trailer' video. This new version would focus to a greater degree on broader movements, social equity and underserved communities. He would commit his own funds or secure additional funding to the project, which by his current estimate will require between \$45,000 and \$50,000 to produce. (The Chapter's contribution to that total would be the original \$15,000 budget.)

This new proposal was previewed in a conference call with the project committee in August. At that time, the members of the committee raised concerns about the extent to which the proposed treatment and tone accurately portrays California planning history, the extent to which individuals suggested by Mr. Mooney would be substituted for planners of color originally envisioned to speak in the video, and whether the role of APA is diminished in the new treatment.

For his part, Mr. Mooney has expressed a willingness to make certain adaptations, but believes that if he is going to commit personal resources to the task, his vision, focusing on larger questions of social equity and community empowerment, must be held intact. The committee has politely indicated that they are not willing to proceed under those conditions, as some members of the committee do not believe the proposed treatment accurately reflects the original board-approved vision.

CONFERENCE CALL

In a conference call on September 18, former President Brooke Peterson, current President Hing Wong, and I met to discuss these different visions and whether they can be reconciled. After discussing the differences between the two visions, we concluded that:

1. Mr. Mooney's proposed concept should be presented to the Board in the same form that the video committee received it;
2. The Board should then discuss whether it wishes to:
 - a. Reaffirm the original vision that was approved by the Board;
 - b. Accept Mr. Mooney's alternative vision for the project;
 - c. Attempt to reconcile the two visions by giving its own specific direction.

Both Mr. Mooney and members of the committee will be available to discuss the project. By the time you receive this report, you will have received a link by which you can view the video. We urge you all to watch the video, give the matter some thought, and be prepared to discuss the proposal when you attend the Board meeting.

Attachment A: Teleconference Notes

ATTACHMENT A

APA CALIFORNIA HISTORY VIDEO Teleconference Notes of August 19, 2015

Present: Larry Mintier, Steve Preston, Brian Mooney, David Salazar, Janet Ruggiero, Stan Hoffman. Steve opened the call by thanking everyone for participating, and asking Brian Mooney to outline his work to date and his vision for the video.

1. Brian indicated that he saw the vision as being something greater, with a broader issues focus than what was provided by the Chapter; that the video should be educational and inspirational, and that his focus was on bigger-picture issues of planning, communities of color, and the larger issues of equity. In terms of its use, he described its potential value as a classroom tool, but identified several other ways that it could be employed. He introduced Marcus Bush, a student who was among the participants in the trailer video, and who shared his thoughts in support of Brian's concept.
2. Steve asked the participants for their thoughts after having seen the trailer video and heard Brian's vision. *(The following comments are synoptic, and the reader should be aware that there was much discussion about each, with back and forth between Brian and the commenter responding to each comment.)*
3. Larry noted that he was trying to understand the emphasis a bit better between telling the story of APA and planning in California, and the broader diversity issues Brian described. He wondered how those stories would ultimately intersect, and wondered if the treatment might be reminiscent of the model employed in *The Devil and the White City*, where the story takes two parallel tracks: one telling the story of the evolution of the White City in Chicago, and the second telling the backstory of a spectacular crime. Likewise this story may be told on a timeline with two paths: the history of the development of planning in California on one side and the issues of diversity and communities of color on the other.
4. Janet commented that after seeing the trailer, she came away with more questions than comments. After seeing it, she was unclear on (1) What is the purpose? (2) Who is the audience – professionals? The public? Young planners? She expressed concern that the trailer at present sends mixed messages, and that those messages may not serve the intended purposes of the video.
5. David noted that the thrust is on target in addressing diversity issues, but the video was also intended to provide a historical journey documenting the history of planning in California, which might have two parallel tracks: (1) major milestones in the development of planning and the profession in California; and (2) the contributions of persons of color (both as professionals and communities).
6. Stan noted that his thoughts focused on how to best weave the path, and would echo those offered by Larry and David. With respect to the audience, he agreed that there was value as an educational tool, but also saw the opportunity to make the video the focus of a future PEN panel at the APA California conference. In future conferences, PEN would like to expand the number of panels it conducts with people who are actually a part of that history, so that the audience can learn from their experiences.

7. Steve expressed some reservations about the emphasis on Southern California, and San Diego in particular; the lack of figures actually involved in the California planning movement at the time; the need to include persons of color who have actually been identified who contributed to the evolution of the profession; and a concern that the vision offered on this call was substantially different from the assignment as originally proposed and authorized by the Board, in that it does not actually tell the history of the evolution of planning in California, but mixes a host of other influences in that were not part of the distinctly California evolution of the profession.
 8. There was some discussion about whether a video that relied on historical perspective from an oral history point of view would have validity, and a counter-argument that imposing a modern sensibility on events of the period could also be either suspect or historically inaccurate.
 9. Janet noted that while the focus in the discussion has been on persons of color, we would be remiss if the video did not also document the considerable contribution of women in the formative years of the profession, especially when planning and related fields had few women in positions of power. Steve noted several examples of those individuals.
3. By the end of the call, it was agreed that:
- **The committee and Brian have not reached consensus on the vision for the video, and is not ready to proceed.** This is not to say that the video Brian proposes is not a good idea, but it is not as described here what the committee believes that the Board had requested or expected. For his part, Brian noted that whatever video is produced will probably cost more (\$45,000-\$50,000) than what the Board has budgeted (\$15,000), but he would only be willing to contribute personally above that level if he can pursue the vision he would like to implement, and can certainly pursue that separately if that's not the Board's position.
 - **Steve recommended, and the group concurred, that Steve return to the Board** to either confirm the original vision or secure direction to pursue a different direction; that Board members have the opportunity to see the trailer at the board meeting to get an idea of the vision; and that, if the Board decides to proceed either way, that the Board should discuss whether it is willing to put additional funding on the table to make it happen.
 - **Steve also suggested that we compile a list of some of those figures** who we believe are those who might be contacted or interviewed on the video. Brian made the point that whoever is chosen will represent only a small number of individuals, and they must be carefully chosen on the basis of their ability to help tell the broader story we choose to tell, not simply referencing their personal histories or experiences.

Thanks to everyone who participated in this discussion. It was agreed that Brian has taken on a challenging assignment; we thank Brian, Marcus and their colleagues for their work to date, and suggest that we now go back to ensure that there is a clear direction on the video treatment.

Preview trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jfaz5JsBrAs&feature=em-upload_owner