

The Gorge Preservation Society (GPS) Board reviewed the Sunset Commission Review of the Guadalupe Blanco River Authority (GBRA) and its relationship with GPS. Since this document is a public record, the GPS Board felt obligated to respond, clarify, and correct misconceptions in the report. We represent a large number of volunteers and community leaders who are committed to the Canyon Lake Gorge and have devoted time and hard work to the GPS organization.

Since inception, the Gorge Preservation Society has worked closely with GBRA. GPS required extensive support initially from GBRA and would not be here today without that support. We have valued that relationship and feel closely connected to GBRA. By providing education, promoting conservation, scientific study, and Gorge tours we are enhancing the public's view of GBRA. The goodwill we promote cannot be measured in a profit loss column, but is measured by public view over time and the immediate demand for service and access to the Gorge. Both partners benefit in this endeavor and we will continue our focus to disseminate information that educates the public on the role of GBRA. The support we have had from GBRA is basic to our existence and we recognize and appreciate this fact. As the Sunset Commission reported in their Executive Summary, GBRA has had a strained reputation in the past. The GPS 12-year partnership with GBRA has contributed to improved GBRA community perceptions and will continue to present positive outcomes to the public.

The report implies there was an objective for GPS to become independent from the beginning and throughout the report there is a theme of enhancing services to achieve that goal. We have never had that as our goal for we recognize the limitations in reaching that position. We have relied on GBRA for staff and facilities support and will continue to require that support. The GPS Board does not feel employees reporting to GBRA and working with GPS creates or presents a conflict of interest, but view this as an advantage to facilitate the partnership. This can be a model of enhanced communication if use appropriately.

The Sunset report addresses the need for a more detailed MOU that clarifies the relationship with detailed reporting to ensure we are working on and achieving our mission through performance measures. We cannot agree more, for this has been an area of concern for us. We have discussed this with the new GBRA management as a method for them to become familiar with how we operate and to enhance our relationship. We have had a strategic plan since our initial years of development. We have updated this plan and made adjustments on an ongoing basis. This is reflected in our monthly Board of Director's meeting minutes and has been reported to GBRA management in a chain of command format. In recent years we have reported to the GBRA Board of Directors the need to formalize this process and are looking forward to working with new management to develop a method of communication that will address this concern. This will eliminate any perception of unclear expectations and create a long-term system of reporting method.

The Sunset Review indicates that GPS was partially culpable for the failure of the proposed environmental learning center. This is simply not the fact and is an egregious error in the report. When the additional property was acquired, GBRA took over the responsibility for fundraising for the environmental learning center and established a separate non-profit to manage fundraising for this project. GPS was simply a support to this effort and frequently requested status reports and presentations to the GPS Board and volunteer meetings.

The GPS Board views the Sunset Commission report as a vehicle or guide to improve our relationship with GBRA. This can be achieved by developing an advisory committee to establish more

specific guidelines and an improved method of reporting. Our main philosophical concern is the emphasis for independence. We are devoted to our mission of education and recognize we cannot continue to meet that mission without the partnership of GBRA. We have had remarkable success and are proud of our achievements. We would not have been able to accomplish this without the support of GBRA.

Success however carries with it the realization of our limited capacity for services as an organization reliant on volunteer manpower. As the demand increases with public and private Gorge tours and the fifth-grade field trips, the volunteer reliance creates limitations. This lays the groundwork for a new era in the relationship with GBRA and is fortuitous we have new management to work with as we embark on this next phase of our organization.