

Date: Dec 5, 2009
To: Pacific Grove Museum Board
From: Sharon Blaziek and David Shonman

Subject: **The Monarch Grove Sanctuary and the PGMNH
- A Brief History**

The Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History has been intimately involved with the Monarch Grove Sanctuary ever since the property was purchased by the City in 1992. In a 1996 letter to then-Museum Director Stephen Bailey, Mayor Sandy Kaufmann asked the Museum Department to oversee the newly created Sanctuary and the docent program. Dr. Bailey agreed and requested that Friends of the Monarch (FOM) personnel operate the Sanctuary docent program.

When Dr. Bailey retired, Museum Director Paul Finnegan continued to monitor all activities and programs related to monarchs and the Sanctuary. Finnegan actively participated in every FOM meeting, offering advice, ideas and support. He routinely met with Sanctuary volunteers and helped ensure that necessary tasks (i.e. clean-ups and debris removal, pathway repair, installation of portable toilets, and meetings of docents) were accomplished.

Based on the advice of both the Museum and FOM, the City hired conservation biologist Dr. Stuart Weiss to develop a plan for restoring, protecting and managing the Monarch Grove Sanctuary (1998). The City implemented Dr. Weiss's plan and used him as a consultant from time to time.

As a result of the City's on-going budget crisis, a series of job cuts, lay-offs, and early retirements resulted in the loss of many experienced personnel, including the City arborist. The impact on the Museum was especially severe. By January, 2008, the Museum had lost all of its professional staff, including Director Finnegan, the City employee who was the Sanctuary's most ardent and knowledgeable supporter. The Museum operated for one month with only volunteer help, and then for six more months with an Interim Manager who focused primarily on long-term planning. In August 2009, the Museum Foundation of Pacific Grove began operating the Museum for the City, under an agreement which limited the Museum's responsibilities to providing interpretive services (see below).

During the past year-and-a-half, three events occurred that may have adversely impacted the City's Sanctuary and its monarchs. In 2008, FOM was dissolved. At that time, it was understood that the Museum Association would carry out FOM's monarch advocacy activities, but the Museum Association itself is now in the process of disbanding. At present, there is no group or organization to serve in

this important role.

Also in 2008, a private volunteer group called “Trees for PG” planted new trees in the Sanctuary, without consulting the Weiss report or receiving input from the Museum. And recently, contractors hired by the City’s Dept of Public Works trimmed trees in and around the Sanctuary without approval of the City Council.

It is not known how these events have impacted the Sanctuary or the local monarch population. What is clear is that the monarchs who annually stay in Pacific Grove represent an important part of our town’s natural heritage. While these butterflies are subject to the vagaries of natural forces, it is our responsibility to ensure that they and their habitat are treated in a manner that enhances their safety and protection. To accomplish this, the City must have a management plan that guides all activities in the Sanctuary. In addition, there must be a strong sense of advocacy and stewardship on the part of our citizens, public officials and City staff. These iconic visitors deserve no less.

Portion of the Museum Foundation Agreement that pertains to the Monarch Grove Sanctuary

**PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP
OPERATING AGREEMENT AND LEASE
BETWEEN THE CITY OF PACIFIC GROVE CA
AND
MUSEUM FOUNDATION OF PACIFIC GROVE, INC.**

Section 5.07 Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary. Foundation shall recruit, train and coordinate volunteers for the Museum and for City's Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary and, through such volunteers, shall provide interpretive services for visitors to the Sanctuary. Foundation shall also provide reasonable interpretive signage for the Sanctuary. Foundation shall have no other obligation with respect to the Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary. All donations received at or for the Sanctuary Facilities shall be the property of the City.