

**MINUTES FOR STUDY SESSION
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
March 3, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.
Electronic Meeting**

Present: Commissioners Gardiner (Chair), Landt (Vice-Chair), Bell, Eldridge, Lewis; Director Black; Recreation Superintendent Dials; Senior Services Superintendent Glatt, Analyst Kiewel, Assistant Sullivan

Absent: None

This meeting was recorded by APRC staff. The recording can be found on the [APRC YouTube Channel](#).

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. PUBLIC INPUT

None

III. BUDGET PROCESS UPDATE AND REVIEW

Black gave a [PowerPoint presentation](#) of a budget summary. More details will be presented at the March 10, 2021 meeting. The following points were discussed:

- The year-end projection for FY21 ending balance is \$444,093
 - It was expected that the City of Ashland was going to reduce the general fund contribution by \$300,000 for FY21, which has not happened at this point
- Central Service Fees charged by the City of Ashland are increasing by approximately \$500,000 per year without an increase in service. The City of Ashland reported that APRC and other city departments had not been paying the total costs for these services in the past
 - The total cost for central services for the biennium is \$2.6 million
- The APRC FTE counts is at 35 FTE positions, which is a reduction from past years. This is a small increase from the previous FY after some staff were laid off due to financial impacts from COVID
- The proposed budget is an increase of \$1 million from the previous biennium
- Central Service Fees are increasing by \$1 million, which is resulting in the admin expense line to increase by 147% from the previous budget
- The Open Space and Forestry budget is increasing because of an increase in fire mitigation work
- Other divisions are decreasing or staying roughly the same to make up for these increases
- The total budget increase represents a 7% increase from the previous biennium
- The City of Ashland has a new policy to maintain a \$1.5 million ending fund balance
 - Black will be proposing to utilize \$1.3 million dollars of the ending fund balance to maintain as many services as possible provided prior to COVID, which would not be aligned with the new policy
- Black clarified that other general fund departments Central Service Fee charges are increasing as well
- Black clarified that Operations is primarily parks and facilities maintenance
 - Black stated that Operations will have an increase in FTEs
 - Parks and other outdoor space demands have increased during COVID and an increase in staff is necessary to maintain park properties
- Eldridge inquired if it is possible for APRC to provide central services rather than relying on the City of Ashland to provide them
 - Black stated that he will inquire with the City of Ashland legal department and report back to Commissioners

- Black stated the fee is calculated on a number of different factors such as number of FTEs, projects supported by finance, and the number of vehicles in the fleet and replacement schedule
 - The City recently went through an evaluation process to determine the costs associated with providing fees. APRC was not provided an opportunity to directly participate in the process. Central Service Fees increased by \$200,000 each fiscal year last biennium
- Black clarified that it would not be possible to internally provide central services without bringing on staff or contracting services out. It may be possible to provide the services at a lower cost, but an analysis by consultants would need to be completed to determine the costs
- Black clarified that the expense lines for Pioneer Hall are for utilities and cleaning fees and are only incurred if APRC rents out the facility in the future
- Black displayed the proposed organizational chart for the upcoming biennium
 - Two Tech I custodial positions were laid off. Those duties are primarily being carried out by a contractor.
 - Three Office Assistant II positions in Rec Admin, Rec Program, and the Nature Center were laid off
 - The Rec Admin position has been filled internally by the staff person who formerly held the Assistant Manager Position at the golf course
 - The Assistant Manager position at the golf course will not be filled. Temps will be utilized for coverage
 - The Parks Superintendent was laid off and will not be filled
 - Black is proposing the following changes
 - Recreation Superintendent Dials would be promoted to Deputy Director, while still maintaining the duties under the Recreation Superintendent
 - Instead of bringing back a Parks Superintendent the following changes would be made. Black clarified that these changes do not preclude bringing back a Parks Superintendent at some point in the future
 - Black is acting Parks Superintendent with support from Assistant Sullivan. Sullivan's title would be changed to Business Manager and would continue to support parks daily administration. Sullivan will be paid partly out of Parks and partly out of Admin. Without the support of Sullivan, Black stated he would not be able to carry out the duties of Director and Parks Superintendent
 - Tech II Casale has been functioning as a Supervisor and would be promoted to a Supervisor position
 - Supervisor Miller and Supervisor Minica will remain in their current positions
 - Additional vacancies in the chart that need to be filled are as follows
 - With the promotion of Tech II Casale to Supervisor, that Tech II position will need to be filled
 - The Tech I position under Bill Miller is in the process of being filled at this time
 - The Tech II Irrigation Position is being carried out by a Tech I and would need to be filled permanently in the upcoming biennium
 - Black is in the process of determining who will be supervising the Irrigation and Boulevard Crews
- The proposed changes to staffing would result in a decrease in staffing expenditures compared to the previous biennium.
- Temporary employees are planned to increase. This will allow greater flexibility in the near term to react to budget reductions or increases
- There are no proposed changes to Senior Services Division at this point, which is remaining at 2.75 FTE
- If the proposed budget does not move forward, it would be necessary to make alterations to the staffing plan

IV. APRC 2021-2023 BIENNIUM GOALS DISCUSSION

Black provided a [PowerPoint presentation](#) which included the following points

- Black displayed the [goals from 2019-2021](#) – The goals highlighted in the slides are goals that are being proposed to not move forward to the next biennium:
 - #3 Ashland Ponds Easements – There is no way to move forward at this point. Black recommended that this be an objective rather than a goal and can move forward on this if opportunities with adjacent landowners arises

- Landt stated he has supported this for years and understands why it should not be listed as a goal, but acquiring this easement is still included in the Open Space and Trails plan and could be carried out under that plan
 - #7 – Pump Track & Skills Park Location – This goal is not being removed, but will be included under the East Main Park goal where these facilities are planned to be located
 - #8 – Explore Pickleball Locations – Staff carried out the planning process to build courts at Oak Knoll Golf Course which could be utilized in the future, but would be fully dependent on funding and not likely to be completed over the next couple of years. When funding was lost for the Oak Knoll courts, dedicated courts were provided at Lithia Park. If the pickleball community could raise funds to construct the courts at Oak Knoll, they could approach the Commissioners to move forward with construction
 - Landt stated another way of tracking this item would be to include it under his proposed goal to collect data on the need and location for court sports
 - #13 Centralized Recreation Center – Black stated this is a great goal and could be added under the Comprehensive Master Plan but does not see it as being feasible to complete as a stand-alone goal
 - #16 Mace Property Trail – Trail construction has begun, and Black will continue to work on completing this project
- Black suggested moving toward adopting goals that support master plans and then carry out individual projects identified within those master plans and stated there are projects that APRC works on that are supported by master plans, but not listed as an individual goal
- Black stated that if Commissioners disagree with removing these from the list, he can reinstate them for consideration
- Black clarified that the golf course does not have a master plan and that the pickleball court plans could be brought to the Commissioners for inclusion in a plan for the golf course or a system wide master plan so as not to lose track of it
- Landt stated that removing the fire mitigation goal would fit into Black’s rational for not including individual projects in the goal list and that the work will continue on even if it is not listed as a goal
 - Black changed the goal to say “mitigate” rather than “explore” fire vulnerability and advised mentioning fire mitigation in the goals because of the sensitivity of the situation and to clearly express that APRC is dedicated to fire mitigation. Keeping this goal also supports the increase in the Open Space and Trails budget for fire mitigation activities
 - Black stated that this goal could be an objective under a more over arching goal on how to manage open spaces, but reiterated that fire mitigation should be listed clearly in the next biennium goals
- As part of the process Black will group goals into categories to help review, refine, and combine goals where applicable

Public Input (in video at 54:56):

Rebecca Kay of Ashland spoke on behalf of Southern Oregon Aquatic Community advocated to keep the current pool operational until the new pool is constructed and to construct the new pool as quickly as possible. [See full comments.](#)

Kristina Lefever of Ashland spoke as a citizen of Ashland and as a representative of Ashland’s Bee City USA sub-committee [referenced written comments](#) that advocated for the funding of North Mountain Park Nature Center and for the implementation of various sustainability initiatives.

- Black referenced the [updated goal table](#) in the amended packet and displayed slides listing a [summary of the goals](#) listed in the table as well as proposed working groups for further refinement of the goals. Black reviewed each goal. Highlights from the presentation are below. The entire discussion begins at [1:05:54 in the video](#).
 - #1 Permanent Funding Source – One potential funding sources would be to explore the feasibility of forming a special taxing district
 - #2 Update Open Space Plan – The key update necessary for this plan is the identified lands map and that GIS support is covered under central services provided by the City of Ashland
 - #3 Parks Standards -- Work on this goal will take staff time with assistance provided by Commissioner(s) on a working group
 - #4 E Main Park -- has dedicated funding of \$950,000; the skills park pump track will be included in the design phase for the park; the skills park and pump track would be funded through grants and in-kind donations

- #5 Improve Aquatic Recreation – Includes all steps related to operating the current pool and constructing a new pool
- #6 Basketball Court at ACP (Ashland Creek Park) – not necessarily a goal, could be made a priority if included in the CIP (Capital Improvement Projects) budget; Includes striping the court for pickleball
- #7 Mitigate Fire Vulnerability– includes \$25K per year for temporary staff for wildfire mitigation treatments
- #8 E Lithia Hillside Trail – funding would come from grants or in-kind contributions
- #9 ASD (Ashland School District)/SOU (Southern Oregon University) School Gym Agreements – This has been altered to add SOU as a potential partner
- #10 Oak Knoll Pocket Park – could be an objective under master planning or left off completely and added to a parking lot to be completed if funds are found; The engineering has been completed for this project.
- #11 Reduce Long-Term Maintenance Costs – Items such as converting from City water to TID (Talent Irrigation District); The goal to update the irrigation system could be moved under this goal as an objective
- #12 Complete and Implement Lithia Park Master Plan – The Ashland Parks Foundation has \$243,000 available for Lithia Park improvements
- #13 System Wide Master Plan– funding this item could lead to an increase in SDC (System Development Charges) fees charged to new developments in the City of Ashland
- #14 Restore Butler Perozzi Foundation – This could be included under the Lithia Park Master Plan goal. The Ashland Parks Foundation is dedicated to raising funds for this project
- #15 Green House Gas (GHG) Inventory/Sustainability Assessment – There is an opportunity to utilize community volunteers to work on this goal
- #16 Promote Outdoor Tourism – APRC is participating with a group working on this lead by the Ashland Chamber of Commerce; Meetings have been on hold recently
- #17 Review and Update APRC Policies – There may be an argument to put this goal off until a feasibility study on creating a district has been complete. Creating a district would require a more detailed and extensive approach to reviewing and updating APRC policies
- #18 Complete Japanese Garden – This could come off the list since the construction is underway
- #19 Evaluate Property Maintenance and MOUs – This will ensure we are charging appropriate fees for services provided to the City, ASD and other groups
- #20 Update the Irrigation System – This could be moved to move this to #11 above
- #21 Improve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – important to bring in an outside consultant to provide an outside perspective
- #22 Collaborate with Ashland Soccer Club– This could be expanded this to say sports clubs, including the soccer club, to maximize space for all users
- Black clarified that he grouped the following goal proposed by Landt in the System Wide Maser Plan goal as an objective as included in the [detailed table](#) included in the packet
 - *Gather data on usage of APRC tennis and pickleball courts over the next nine months. Let the data drive allocation of existing courts and determine the need for additional courts*
 - Landt stated that this should happen over the next 9 months since numerous people from the community have contacted APRC about this issue
- Black suggested grouping the 22 goals above into categories and then split them up amongst staff and Commissioners to refine and potentially combine and also include objectives that need to be completed to reach the goal
 - Landt added that some of the goals and objectives should have timelines for completion associated with them to provide clear direction to staff by establishing priorities
- Gardiner assigned Commissioners to work with staff to refine goals groups by the following categories:
 - Planning Goals: Lewis/Eldridge
 - Operations Goals: Landt/Bell
 - Recreation Goals: Gardiner; Landt or Eldridge could participate if desired
 - DEI Goals: Gardiner; Landt or Eldridge could participate if desired
- Black stated that he expects the goals can be finalized by the April business meeting and should be finalized before the budget process is over in May or June. Black stated the budget can be amended if goals that would require more funding are prioritized by Commissioners

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

The Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission held an Executive Session after the Study Session concluded to hold deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions, pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(e).

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:13 p.m.

II. EXECUTIVE SESSION REAL PROPERTY DISCUSSION – PURSUANT TO ORS 192.660(2)(e)

III. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sean Sullivan, Executive Assistant