

June 2021 Park Views

By APRC Commissioner & Chair, Mike Gardiner

APRC Goals & Budget 2021-2023

Every two years the City of Ashland reviews its priorities and negotiates a two-year budget that is recommended by the Citizens Budget Committee and ultimately adopted by the Ashland City Council. That process has just been completed and all city departments and the Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission (APRC) have an established budget for the *first year* of the next biennium budget that starts July 1, 2021. The allocation of funds for the second year is not yet clear, but we are all working toward the goal of reallocating the city's general fund resources, and the Food & Beverage tax, to accommodate a reasonable benefit for APRC and the other city departments (police, fire and community development) that are supported by the city's general fund tax dollars.

While this biennial budget process was taking place at city hall, the APRC board of commissioners were also diligently prioritizing our goals for the coming two years. The goal ranking reflects a list of community projects and priorities that APRC intends to tackle, and ultimately complete, during this budget period. During this multi-meeting exercise we arrived at 15 goals that reflect both the desired results of various citizen constituencies and also goals of individual elected APRC commissioners and APRC staff. APRC staff compiled this list and the board of commissioners took on the challenge of ranking them from 1-15 in order to prioritize the work time and efforts of APRC staff and to guide our organization in allocating the funds that are available this biennium. Because it would be likely impossible to start and/or complete every goal on our list, let's explore the top five goals as ranked by the board of commissioners.

Not surprisingly our #1 goal this biennium is **“Investigate, develop and implement a dedicated permanent funding source to ensure the longterm financial sustainability of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission.”** I believe that one of the top considerations for why the majority of we Ashlanders moved here, or grew-up here and stayed, is the natural beauty of our surrounding area and the commitment of our town to promote parks, trails and open spaces. Ashland promotes the natural beauty that surrounds us and we offer the outdoor experience that other communities wished they had. APRC is, in large part, responsible for enhancing this community value. So it goes without saying that sustainable funding in these difficult budget times is our top priority.

#2 on our priority list is developing an **“Environmental Sustainability and Implementation Plan.”** Components of this goal include performing a greenhouse gas inventory of APRC's equipment and facilities, initiating a comprehensive energy audit and obtaining a quote for and analyzing the benefits of covering the swimming pool to reduce energy use.

The #3 goal has been on our list for the past five years. **“Improve public aquatic recreation and competitive option in Ashland consistent with the findings and recommendations of the Pool Ad-Hoc committee and ensure that continuous operation of an adequate recreational pool in Ashland during the summer months, at a minimum, until construction begins on a new pool.”** Folks, Ashland needs a public pool option going forward. The current Daniel Meyer Memorial Pool is on its last legs.

#4 is a replacement park for what used to be the publically owned “YMCA Park.” Four years ago APRC sold that public park to the Ashland YMCA for private use so that we could build a new community park at a new location with better access for the community. **“Build East Main Street Neighborhood Park including the dog park, bike-skills park and pump track.”** APRC currently owns 6.5 acres on East Main Street at the south end of Ashland and is in the final development stages for building this park with the aforementioned amenities, including a community garden site.

And rounding out the top five goals is #5, **“Explore the feasibility of and make a decision on all trails and proposals by the Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association (RVMBA).”** This goal has two main components; review and decide on the requested low-angle mountain bike trail in upper Lithia Park and review proposed trails in the submitted, *Trails Sustainability Plan for Mountain Biking in Ashland*.

The APRC board of commissioners and APRC staff believe it is important that the community knows and understand how we prioritize the work that we do for our community. This set of 15 goals was adopted by the board at our May 12, 2021 APRC Regular Business meeting and can be reviewed by searching the meeting minutes on the City of Ashland website, or view directly at ashland.or.us/APRCgoals.

Please enjoy the many outdoor amenities Ashland has to offer this summer. And don’t forget, when you meet a park employee out there teaching a class or maintaining a park, tell them thanks for a job well done. It will brighten both of your days.

Submitted by:

Mike Gardiner

Chair – Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission

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