

MINUTES FOR REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
November 8, 2023
Council Chambers – 6 p.m.
1175 E Main St

Present: Commissioners Landt (Chair), Bachman (Vice Chair) Adams, Lewis, Seffinger; Interim Director Eldridge, Senior Service Superintendent Glatt, Analyst Kiewel

Absent: None

I. CALL TO ORDER

Landt called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. APRC Study Session – October 4, 2023

Motion: Adams moved to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by Bachman.

Vote: The vote was all yes.

b. APRC Business Meeting – October 11, 2023

Motion: Adams moved to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by Lewis.

Vote: The vote was all yes.

III. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

None

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

None

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- a) Approval of Subcommittee Minutes
- b) RDAC New Committee Member Approval
- c) Approval of Alice in Wonderland Mountain Bike Trail Reroute

Motion: Lewis moved to approve and acknowledge the Consent Agenda.

Seconded by Seffinger

Vote: The vote was all yes.

VI. Director's Report

- Job offers have been made to candidates for Parks Superintendent and Executive Assistant. Both are currently in background check. Each was the first choice for their position. Hoping to have the Parks Superintendent start by early December, and the Executive Assistant by January 2024.
- Staff participated in DEI focus groups being conducted by a contractor hired by the City. Should have an assessment by January.
- Eldridge presented the Commission-approved ordinance regarding Parks Hours to the City Council for first reading. There are questions about how it will interact with the proposed camping ordinance. Therefore, further work with the City and Legal department is forthcoming before a second reading can occur.
- Ice rink is up and open as of November 18, 2023.
- Senior Services attendance has returned to pre-pandemic levels and is the highest it's been since 2018 at 1200+ people a month. Have held 2 Covid & Flu vaccine clinics, providing 459 shots to over 300 people in the target demographic. Thank you to funders Age Plus, Mountain Meadows Community Foundation, Ashland Community Hospital Foundation, 28 volunteers who helped host the clinics, and Superintendent Glatt and staff, Natalie and Shannon.
- Conversation Clusters are in place. Superintendent Glatt is taking an online survey to see what the community thinks of the pilot project,
- Parks has completed beautification and re-landscaping Independence Way.

- Daniel Meyer Pool Liner Replacement Project is underway, after a delay on the part of the contractor, and should be completed by Nov 24, 2023 under supervision by Wes Casale.
- Jason Minica, Forestry and Open Space Manager, and Abraham Consulting removed 25 dead trees (i.e., active fuels removal) from the recently-purchased Liberty Street property, which are cut, limbed and stacked, and will be burnt in March.
- Alice in Wonderland Mountain Bike Trail Re-Route (agreed to on Consent Agenda) will be conducted by Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association and volunteers in November.
- Staff attended Oregon Recreation and Parks Associations (ORPA) conference this week. Many great ideas exchanged about creative partnerships, sustainable funding, liability, accessibility, and more.

Seffinger asked about language in the City's proposed ordinance regarding camping in Parks. Eldridge, Landt and Seffinger agreed that consultation with City Council, formally or informally, is the best way forward.

VII. BUSINESS

a) CIP Discussion (Action)

Eldridge presented the updated BN 23-25 CIP Budget.

- Discussed previously at the November 1, 2023 Study Session.
- Provided two possible scenarios for Commissioners to consider how best to allocate CIP funds to projects. After Commissioner feedback staff is including an additional scenario for consideration.
- Reallocation will compensate for the disparity of \$1.6 million between the actual CIP ending fund balance of \$4 million and the original CIP budget that had been expected to be \$5.6 million (See October 11, 2023 Regular Business Meeting & November 1, 2023 Study Session).
- Bachman asked for clarification: Of the 19 projects listed on the project plan, most of the funds in 14 of them are restricted from adjustment, and only 5 project lines can be adjusted? Eldridge confirmed that only 5 projects can be considered for reallocation of funds.
- Recapping other key points from the November 1, 2023 Study Session:
 - Scenarios are presented for discussion, and are not staff recommendations per se.
 - System Development Charges (SDC) have been removed from the CIP budget entirely, so they can be tracked separately.
 - The East Main Park project is now funded entirely through CIP.
 - The purchase of the Palen property and the additional expenses for the Japanese Garden were paid out in FY23, and no longer need to be funded in the current BN CIP budget.
- Eldridge presented 3 CIP Budget tables representing 3 possible scenarios.
 - Scenario 1 reduces the overall budget by 1 million, most of which would come from seed money for the Daniel Meyer Pool (DMP) rebuild.
 - Scenario 2 keeps \$1 million seed money in DMP, and reduces amounts for All Parks Master Plan, Oak Knoll Golf Course, and trails by varying amounts.
 - Scenario 3 (suggested by Bachman) gives \$500,000 to DMP and increases the budget for Capital Outlay by \$177,000.

Public Comments

Mark Heller thanked Commissioners for the enormous amount of volunteer time put in on behalf of parks. Citizens have been hoping for a new city pool ever since SOU shut down their pool a very long time ago. A new pool wouldn't be just for the master swimmers, it's for the high school swimmers, the high school water polo players, summer, and for the safety of kids learning to swim. He hopes too much money won't be taken out of the pool budget.

Rebecca Kay President of Southern Oregon Aquatic Community (SOAA) represented Dr. Paul Rostykus and Todd Lantry who were not able to attend the meeting but sent emails in support. Lantry is the head swim coach for Ashland High School swim team as well as the president for Rogue Valley Masters. Kay read his email in support of DMP.

Motion: Bachman moved to direct staff to make equal percentage cuts in the line items that they have deemed as not critical—and/or not shovel-ready—to align the CIP plan with reconciled available funds.

Seconded by Landt

Discussion:

- Landt noted that the motion was different than the motion in the packet, but similar to Scenario 2.
- Bachman reiterated that only 5 projects can be changed, and the 3 different scenarios presented are an attempt to spread the \$1.1 million across projects to align with the corrected CIP. In consultation with Landt, Bachman realized that a fair alternative could be a straight percentage allocation of about 37% reduction across 5 projects. This proposal is similar to Scenario 2, but spreads the reductions evenly, instead of only reducing funding to the pool. The 37% would amount to approximately:
 - DMP-\$715,950 (still leaving \$1.2 million seed money)
 - All Parks Master Plan-\$92,500
 - Oak Knoll Golf Course-\$203,500
 - ACP Sports Court-\$37,000
 - Trails-\$55,500
- Bachman noted that the CIP is a working document and is dynamic and flexible. It communicates to the Commission the budget for capital projects during the BN. However, Commissioners can modify allocations during the BN, if project priorities change.
- Landt stated that perhaps the different scenarios have made it more challenging than it needs to be, since changes can be made later if needed. Doing the cuts by percentage, everyone shares the cut. Landt also noted that despite the discrepancy, there is more money in this biennium for CIP than usual, due to having received 98% of the Food and Beverage revenues in one year, rather than the typical 25%. This is not a bare bones budget. As a result, extra money was allocated to Oak Knoll, DMP, etc. Parks is not in an emergency, there is enough money to address huge maintenance issues and more. Landt encouraged Commissioners to approve the modified Scenario 2, even if there may have to be adjustments later for shovel-ready projects, etc.
- Adams felt uncomfortable that a scenario different from the 3 included in the packet was being presented at the last minute without opportunity for consideration. He questioned the impact of the changes on projects, e.g., does \$63,000 to the ACP Sports Court mean no sports court, because it will actually cost \$100,000 for that project, or does it mean a smaller sports court? Understanding that things can be changed later, the decision now seems deliberative. Adams will be voting against the motion.
- Seffinger agreed with Adams and was concerned about future impacts on projects. She had been comfortable with Scenario 2 and was going to support it. Additionally, Seffinger is committed to rebuilding the pool, and thinks seed money for the pool is very important. A public pool is important for many reasons. Seffinger will not approve the proposed motion.
- Landt noted that the actual costs of projects are unknown because Staff has not yet had the time to research true costs. The budgets of the 5-line items are guesses, because they're down-the-line projects, and can be reduced now, but changed later once Staff has had time to complete their work. This motion is close to Scenario 2, and it is fair to equally reduce projects by the same amount.
- Lewis stressed the importance of the flexibility that's in the budget. We can't foresee the future, but this lays out some of the priorities. The pool is the biggest number, and the Commission has said Ashland must have a municipal pool, over and over. It's a top goal and has been for years. It involves a ballot measure presented to the public and is dependent on the liner to extend the use of the existing pool. Lewis acknowledged the hard work done, and also the complications, but the current motion is a good place to start and move forward.
- Adams thanked the members of the aquatic community for showing up and making their voices heard, and offered wholehearted support for everything Coach Lantry was asking for.

Vote: Seffinger No, Adams No, Bachman Yes, Lewis Yes, Landt Yes

Motion passed

b) East Main Park Plan (Action)

Eldridge introduced Piper von Chamier from Terrain Landscape Architecture and presented the proposal for the final approval of the East Main Park design.

- Eldridge recapped the years-long process to build East Main Street neighborhood park, including the dog park, bike-skills, and pump track (BN Goal #3)
- Since the plan was last presented to the Commission in January 2023, about 14-15 small changes have been made to the design, which von Chamier went over in detail (see packet).
- Seffinger asked if the water fountains are the type that don't freeze. Von Chamier answered that everything that's not winterized or shut off during the wintertime would be frost proof.

- Von Chamier went over a tentative timeline for completion of project. Some adjustments are reliant on Jackson County and can take anywhere from 3-5 months. Revisions have been made based on Commissioner and community input. Once the property line adjustment has been approved by the County, the plan can move forward to 100% completion with the site plan review.
- Once the permit for the site plan review is obtained, the annexation and the zone change, the near-completion construction document set will be reviewed by APRC staff and peer reviewed from a technical standpoint, after which final tweaks will be made to the construction document set. Cost estimators will price the entire project, and then submit it to APRC.
- Landt thanked the design team for the bathroom placement. Additionally, Landt noted that it would save money and preserve existing natural areas (e.g., the dog park and community garden), and wanted to be careful not to compact and degrade the land during construction. Von Chamier agreed, and assured Landt that civil engineers would do a staging plan, and wherever possible, preservation of existing natural areas and reutilizing topsoil would be a priority.
- Seffinger noted her approval of a second dog park in Ashland, which has been a long-time goal of the Commission for 10-12 years.

Motion: Adams moved to approve the East Main Park final design as presented. Seconded by Seffinger

Discussion:

- Adams thanked Terrain and staff, and expressed great enthusiasm for the Park, and all the ways it will serve the community.
- Landt asked if the Commission will see any further construction drawings. Kiewel stated that the Commission would see final construction documents when the request for proposals is presented to the Commission.
- Lewis complimented the changes as very reasonable and noted that EMP would be lightyears ahead of the YMCA park that had been sold and is excited by all the ways EMP will positively affect the community.

Vote: All yes

c) Advisory Committees (Action)

Eldridge recapped presentation from November 1, 2023 Study Session (see packet for minutes)

- City Council recently approved a reorganization of its advisory bodies into either Advisory Committees or Management Advisory Committees, often termed MACs. Staff recommends that APRC model its advisory groups similarly.
- For APRC, an Advisory Committee would be subject to public meeting laws, always have staff support, and must have a quorum. An Advisory Committee would make recommendations directly to the Commissioners on policy issues.
- A Management Advisory Committee (many APRC groups could be MACs) would be formed at the request of the Parks Director, and make management recommendations to the Director, who would present them to the Commissioners, if applicable.
- MACs do not require strict adherence to public meeting laws, although as much transparency and predictability as possible is certainly recommended. If APRC chooses to adopt this model, Commissioners could advise that any MAC meetings be publicly noticed on the website and include a meeting recap. Not as formal as minutes, but perhaps post the 5 top outcomes that came out of that meeting.
- When looking at the costs and benefits of adopting this model, the 4 main issues Staff see are:
 - **Transparency.** A MAC doesn't require the same rigorous level of posting, reporting, and transparency as an Advisory Committee, though that can be ameliorated.
 - **Commissioners or Director?** Considering if an advisory body needs to address high level and/or long-standing issues where it's important for Commissioners to be involved with the community directly. Or is it a management issue that can be resolved in a shorter time more directly?
 - **Staff Support.** Making more committees MACs will reduce the burden on staff, which is a struggle for the City and Parks (i.e., having so many committees and not enough staff).
 - **Flexibility.** MACs will still have staff support yet will allow for more flexibility. Flexibility of members to meet in smaller groups without a quorum, to produce work products that go straight to the Director through email or shared Docs, rather than having to have additional staff present at every meeting.

Staff is proposing three standing advisory committees that have accountability to the community and need a high level of transparency, as well as direct and consistent involvement with Commissioners.

- **Advisory Committees**
 - Ashland Senior Advisory Committee (ASA)
 - Recreation Division Advisory Committee (RDAC)
 - Ashland Trails Advisory Committee (ATAC)

Staff is proposing four advisory bodies be converted to Management Advisory Committees.

- **MACs**
 - Bee City USA
 - Current Parks, Conservation, and Maintenance
 - Ashland Japanese Garden
 - Oak Knoll Golf Course

Staff is proposing dissolving four advisory bodies that have completed their work.

- **Dissolve**
 - East Main Park
 - Lithia Park Master Plan
 - Parks, Trails, and Open Space Map Update
 - Long Range Planning

Full policy documents providing consistent, coherent direction to all standing Advisory Committees and MACs are in the packet.

Landt noted a few suggested changes and corrections to the policy document.

- Correct Roman numerals in the document: there are two Section II's, should be Section II and III
- In section II C, remove language on "alternative members" and "alternate members".
- In section II L, remove "by recommendation of Commission Liaison." add "in consultation with the Park's Director" to end of paragraph.

Motion: Bachman moved to approve the Parks Commission policy on Advisory Committees and Management Advisory Committees as presented with the changes outlined by Chair Landt

Seconded by Adams

Discussion:

- Bachman said the proposal was a great move towards making the management of Parks more efficient and pointed out that it was good to see in these memos the goal it addresses, tying the work to prioritized goals that the commission set for the Biennium. This is goal #1, which is to employ best management practices.
- Adams offered support for the motion and added that when it comes to work done in government, *how* things are done often has a great influence on *what* gets done. Proposal is in alignment with City Council to make an appropriate change to how things are done with Parks committees.
- Seffinger pointed out that prior to the reorganization, the City had 19 or 20 groups, all of which required a full-time staff member to attend every meeting. Proposal is an excellent way of giving Park staff more time to work on Park business.
- Lewis encouraged community members to volunteer for all these commissions, positions, and committees because you can make a difference in the City's future by volunteering.

Vote: All yes

d) Ashland Fire Department Wildfire Division Fuels Management on Parklands (Information)

Public Comment

Casey Botts: Representing two groups, Ashland Devo, a nonprofit youth mountain biking program and Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association (RVMB), the local advocacy and trail building maintenance organization that takes care of watershed trails in conjunction with the City and U.S. Forest Service. Both organizations annually provide hundreds of hours of community service to help keep the City's trail system running and provide recreational, instructional, and competitive opportunities for the mountain bike community and others. Thank you to Chris Chambers for presenting several opportunities for public comment and public information meetings on this project you're about to hear about, assuring our organizations that he is listening to our concerns.

Ashland Devo and RVMB both rely heavily on using the watershed trails. Our concerns are with the potential project timing, and subsequent closures occurring during busy usage periods in the late spring when the sun and warm weather come back, and people want to get outside. It's when we run our youth programs, and the end of the trail work season, because when trails dry out, we can't work on them. We need the winter

rains to do so. So potential trail damage that could occur during this project would go unfixed through the summer, affecting tourism and recreational use by locals. Both RVMBA and Ashland Devo submitted public comment letters listing several ways to minimize these impacts to our programs and constituents. And I want to make sure that the tone of the comment came across as intended. Oftentimes, when we list items out, it can sound like a list of demands or ultimatums, and that's certainly not our intention. We presented these more as compromises, ideas, and solutions to work together to create something that works for everyone in partnership with the City and APRC. Both RVMBA and Devo consider ourselves partners with all watershed stakeholders, and we'll certainly benefit from long-term health and safety of the forest. We want to make sure that all options are considered and highlighted to minimize impacts on the outdoor rec community that relies on use of the City trails.

Chris Chambers, Ashland Fire Department Forestry Officer discussed Forestland Climate Change Adaptation in Siskiyou Mountain Park. (SMP) Chambers recounted extensive history regarding wildfire and forestry, especially in this area and climate.

- Since the last time Chambers presented, he hosted several outreach opportunities and comment opportunities for the public, including two public tours and a public meeting.
- The project plan is based on very recent and sound science, and research on the topic of climate change and forests and wildfire.
- Siskiyou Mountain Park (and other parts of the lower watershed) has large patches of dead trees that are spreading. [Chambers displayed a map] all the red and yellow dots are trees that are dead and dying, and 6 areas that are circled have severe mortality. This encompasses one half of Siskiyou Mountain Park.
- Siskiyou Mountain Park has some areas that are not as highly impacted where it's hoped to retain Douglas-fir as a species for a longer timeframe, but there are a lot of areas that are significantly impacted and will need to transition to a better climate adapted vegetation and forest type.
- Forest Service has tracked data on tree death and Douglas-fir mortality going back to the 1970s. There was an enormous spike in the last year due to drought and heat waves, etc. with 50% severe die off.
- July 2023 drone survey of SMP found 30 % of Douglas-fir were dead and dying, and likely more were infested with beetles—the Douglas-fir Flat-Headed Borer—and could die within 6 months.
- There are multiple factors escalating wildfire hazards and risk of losing the forest entirely. There are a lot of smart people thinking about this, tracking what's happening in various forest types across the West.
- Prior experience with helicopter tree removal, but situation now is more dire. More urgency to act now, including future cost increases.
- Public outreach, field tours, public meetings, draft review, and comments occurred between October 25-November 7, 2023. Concerns from the public included:
 - Snags and downed logs for wildlife habitat—want to strike a balance between wildlife habitat and healthy soil, and fire danger (provided extensive detail on best practices for particular areas and species).
 - Impacts to trails via closures and damage to trails.
- Hoping to have approval for Lomakatsi Restoration Project to partner on project from the City at the November 7, 2023 Council meeting.
- Further timetable will include final editing and review by Forest Lands Committee, review by Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, and tree marking in December. Bidding for work in early January 2024, Contractor selection and work schedule for winter/spring in late January 2024, begin revegetating those areas that have been most impacted by the die-off in April-May 2024, and helicopter thinning phase complete by June 1, 2024.
- Landt asked for clarification about alternative location for helicopter landing that came up at the November 1, 2023 Study Session. Chambers will meet with residents who will be most affected by noise and traffic if the helicopters land at the bottom of SMP. During the contract phase, will see what the price would be to avoid that landing and just fly everything to the main city granite pit landing. However, it's a long flight and would cause more trail closures vs using the SMP proposed landing site, and it might be cost prohibitive for them to fly that far.
- Lewis asked what the policy is for the mills for accepting beetle kill trees. Chambers answered it will be a challenge to mark trees that have sound wood in them, and not mark the trees that have been dead for too long. May have to do a lot of handwork on the ground through pile cutting and pile burning.
- Seffinger and Adams voiced support for the project and dedicated work. Adams noted the rapidly changing conditions and changes to the watershed and encouraged citizens to visit the forests to see for themselves.

e) Salmon Safe Certification (Action)

Eldridge recapped information presented at the November 1, 2023 Study Session and October 11, 2023 Regular Meeting

- Spring/summer 2023, APRC, SOU Institute for Applied Sustainability, and Terrain Landscape Architecture partnered to explore third-party environmental certification to advance Parks goals for ecological stewardship in East Main Park with the hire of a paid intern, Lulu Brazeau.
- Brazeau presented her research on Salmon Safe Certification, and the potential to certify the entire parks system, not just EMP, at the October 11, 2023 Regular Meeting. Dan Kent, Executive Director of Salmon Safe, presented information on their organization at the November 1, 2023 Study Session.
- Salmon Safe Certification can help APRC with parks management decisions to protect and restore in-stream riparian and wetland habitat, track and reduce water use, make smart irrigation management decisions, and achieve surface water runoff management goals and decisions. They can help with reduction in erosion and sediment control, review pesticide reduction and water quality protection, and contribute to the enhancement of ecological function.
- Extensive benefits (see packet). Salmon Safe certification can provide leverage for acquiring grant funding for restoration or other projects, and the added benefit of having a solid collaboration and partnership with Southern Oregon University and their students and faculty in the Institute for Applied Sustainability.
- The cost of the five-year certification process is \$20,000. The Institute for Applied Sustainability is offering \$10,000 cost match, plus additional paid interns, capstone project possibilities, and faculty engagements.
- APRC's portion—\$10,000—would come out of the professional services fund.
- There are written letters of support from the Institute for Applied Sustainability, the SOU Environmental Science Policy and Sustainability Program, the Rogue River Watershed Council, Terrain Landscape Architecture, and the Freshwater Trust.
- Seffinger noted that having scientists help determine best practices regarding environmental health is welcome.
- Lewis complimented the fit with similar efforts and the partnership with SOU.

Motion: Bachman moved to approve APRC to pursue a system-wide Salmon Safe Certification

Seconded by Seffinger

Discussion: Bachman applauded the partnership with SOU. Also appreciated the tie to goal number 5, to develop an environmental sustainability implementation plan.

Vote: All Yes

VIII. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF

Seffinger complimented the Senior Center staff and volunteers on the immunization clinics. Thank you.

IX. UPCOMING MEETING DATES

- a) Ashland Senior Services Advisory Committee – Monday, November 13, 2023 via Zoom 3:30 p.m.
- b) Recreation Division Advisory Committee – Wednesday December 14, 2023 Lithia Park Cabin 4:00 p.m.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judy Plapinger
APRC Temporary Office Assistant