

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Minutes
November 26, 2018

Present: Commissioners Gardiner, Heller, Landt, Lewis, Miller; Director Black; Superintendent Dials; Superintendent Glatt; Superintendent Oxendine; Assistant Manuel

Absent: City Council Liaison Mayor Stromberg; Executive Assistant Dyssegard

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Study Session—October 15, 2018

Motion: Landt moved to approve the minutes for October 15, 2018, as presented. Lewis seconded.
The vote was all yes.

Regular Meeting—October 22, 2018

Motion: Landt moved to approve the minutes of October 22, 2018, as presented. Lewis seconded.
The vote was all yes.

OPEN FORUM

Speaker **Arnold Bleicher** talked about the growing sport of pickleball and the need for a year-around court.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Wildlife Refuge at Ashland Pond (Information)

Staff report: Black reported the status of three properties upon which two easements were in process. He said a transaction for a third easement had been completed. The easements were sought out toward improving access to 22.5 acres associated with the Ashland Pond area. Black discussed the possibility of designating the acreage as a wildlife refuge – stating that if agreed, there would be an exclusion for dogs to better protect the wildlife and habitat.

Public Input

Speaker **Bill Kuhn** questioned the intent of the designation as a wildlife refuge, stating that Ashland Pond was manmade and surrounded by invasive species. He stated that humans as well as dogs and cats disturb wildlife. He suggested that the nearby forest was the appropriate natural habitat for wildlife and that in his opinion, the best use for the Ashland Pond area was as an enjoyable location for people and their dogs.

Speaker **Renee Norman** noted that she walked her dog in the area twice per day. She questioned the need to ban dogs from the area, stating that most were well behaved and controlled.

Speaker **Wayne Cameron** also noted a concern about excluding dogs. He talked about a neighbor who walks his dog there regularly from his wheelchair, stating that the ban would impact his quality of life.

Speaker **Pamela Kuhn** weighed in against banning dogs from the area. She highlighted the lack of a suitable alternative for the neighborhood.

Speaker **Laurie True** stated that she was willing to work with the Commissioners to identify a compromise to the exclusion for dogs. She stated that the Ashland area was similar to a neighborhood park – a place for neighbors to recreate.

Speaker **Robert Bell** described his unhappy experience at the dog park with his small dogs, and advocated for a continuation of the current designation as an area where dogs are permitted. He stated that the ratio of dog walkers to other users such as bird watchers was approximately 12-1.

Staff and Commissioner Discussion

Black stressed that the discussion regarding a wildlife refuge was for informational purposes only. He called for direction from the Commissioners prior to addressing the area as a possible wildlife refuge.

Landt highlighted commentary about working with the public to find a compromise for dog walkers, stating that he would like to pursue that. Heller stated that it would be some time before a sanctuary could be planned because of the Public Works project that would be disrupting the area. Lewis and Gardiner agreed, stating that there was no urgency for a decision regarding dogs in the area. Miller supported a compromise, stating that the new project proposed by Public Works could become a wildlife sanctuary – leaving the existing area for dog walkers.

Gardiner directed staff to postpone any action until the Public Works outfall relocation project was further along.

b. Proposed Park Hours – Amendment to Ordinance (Information/Possible Action)

Black reviewed previous discussions regarding Lithia Park’s curfew ordinance and staff’s proposal to apply closing hours to all Ashland parks. He listed five possible exemptions that would allow public access to the parks when closed.

CAP Officers Matt Carpenter and Jason Billings relayed their support for closing all Ashland parklands at night between the hours of 11:30pm and 5:30am. They discussed the need for additional assistance in managing the inappropriate behaviors of people visiting the parks at night.

Public Input

Speaker **Ed Masler** talked about legitimate uses in parks at night and the propensity for profiling in today’s world. He argued against controlling behaviors – emphasizing a tendency to judge people for who they are rather than what they do.

Staff and Commissioner Discussion

Landt expressed a preference for less restrictive hours, suggesting 12:00am to 5:00am for closure. He asked that a permitting process accommodate quick turnarounds and user-friendly applications. Black agreed suggesting also that language defining the transportation exemption be refined.

Black explained the permitting process, noting that it was generally accepted that the applicant assumed liability for any damages. He proposed a waiver of the insurance requirements for some uses.

After further discussion regarding the hours of closure and the need for additional wordsmithing, it was agreed that the approval amending ***AMC Ordinance 10.68.380 Hours of Park Closure*** would be tabled to a later date.

ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS

- ***Japanese Garden Project***

In answer to a question by Heller, Black explained next steps that would move the Japanese Garden project toward approval and eventual implementation. Heller asked about the potential for a donor wall.

Also reviewed was the status of the two Douglas Fir trees and the pros and cons of removing the trees to make improvements to the garden.

- ***Park Views***

Gardiner agreed to arrange for a December Park Views column. Landt volunteered to write the January article regarding the Lithia Park Master Plan, which would include an update on the Japanese Garden project.

Heller suggested that the February news article outline new APRC parks underway and the exchange of property toward achieving the goal.

ADJOURNMENT

After several housekeeping items, with no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Manuel, Assistant
Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission

These minutes are not a verbatim record. The narrative has been condensed and paraphrased at times to reflect the discussions and decisions made. Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission Study Sessions and Regular Business Meetings are digitally recorded; the recordings are available upon request.