

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION
Minutes
September 18, 2017

ATTENDEES

Present: Commissioners Gardiner, Heller, Landt, Lewis, Miller; APRC Director Black; APRC Recreation Superintendent Dials; APRC Interim Parks Superintendent McFarland; APRC Executive Assistant Dyssegard; Assistant Manuel

Absent: City Council Liaison Mayor Stromberg

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gardiner called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. at The Grove, 1195 E. Main.

PUBLIC INPUT

Gardiner said the public input portion of the meeting provided an opportunity for participants to speak about topics not listed on the agenda. It allowed the commissioners to hear comments from the public but was not a time for speakers to engage in an open dialogue with them.

Candy Barnhill of 947 Cypress Dr. in Ashland was called forward.

Barnhill called for clarification of remarks made by APRC Director Michael Black and APRC Chair Mike Gardiner during the City Council meeting on September 5, 2017. She said Black had talked about the reorganization of APRC generally and the Senior Program specifically in terms of better serving the senior population. Barnhill stated that Gardiner had stressed that maintaining the Senior Program was for the benefit of the City of Ashland.

Barnhill spoke about transparency in the meetings and the process of advertising public meetings. She indicated that statements made at the City Council meeting were interpreted to mean that the meetings were advertised *if appropriate*. Barnhill asked for clarification, noting that it seemed that meetings that might be considered contentious were not adequately noticed and some individuals were not sufficiently informed.

Marilyn Clark of 170 Reiten Drive in Ashland was called forward.

Clark intimated that a discussion regarding Director Black's age and experience would be pertinent with respect to the Senior Program.

Gardiner reiterated that the Public Input portion of the meeting was not a venue for dialogue. He encouraged Clark to express her concerns in a letter to the APRC Director.

IPM POLICY – RODENT CONTROL DISCUSSION (INFORMATION)

McFarland presented a list of buildings and sheds in the APRC system that experienced problems with rodent infestations. He said one of the areas particularly prone to rat and mouse problems was the North Mountain Park Varsity Baseball building. McFarland noted that school teams using the facility would sometimes leave food in the building, thereby attracting vermin. He relayed that APRC had talked with the coaches and asked them to take steps toward removing food from the building. He said APRC partnered with the schools for a clean-up.

McFarland reported that a contract with Integrity Pest Control ended on June 30, 2017, and was not renewed. He said staff looked into the products used by Integrity and determined that they did not meet the standards laid out in

APRC's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policy. Integrity had used bait traps in some areas, which posed a violation of IPM standards.

McFarland talked about current treatment methods such as snap traps. He listed areas where they were placed, including the Senior Center, Bandshell bathrooms, Lithia nursery shed, the attic of Daniel Meyer Pool as well as administrative offices in Lithia Park. He stated that there were active infestations at the Nature Center in the kitchen and barn – both areas where children were present. He stated that community garden practices at Ashland Creek Park encouraged infestations. McFarland noted that APRC's in-house certified pesticide operator, Rob Parks, had developed an APRC treatment plan and was actively monitoring problem areas. Community garden volunteers were asked to find alternatives to leaving compost in the gardens.

Commissioner Discussion

In response to a question by Heller, McFarland stated that Rob Parks was able to adequately manage the rodent treatment program. Parks was a member of the downtown maintenance crew, a group of APRC maintenance workers with busy schedules during spring and summer months. Parks indicated that the slower fall season would be the time to increase rodent treatments.

Black explained that rats were typically described as a public nuisance, similar to yellow jackets and other bees identified as pests. Such pests often created public safety concerns in parks and on trails. Miller stated that in his opinion, the health risks associated with rodents was not as immediate as bees nesting in a baseball dugout. He noted a preference for snap traps as a treatment plan rather than poison. Lewis agreed, stating that poisoned rodents could become problematic. He expressed confidence in the APRC pesticide operator and his ability to implement a treatment program. Lewis said costs associated with staffing for extra duties around this matter might be offset by funds no longer in use by Integrity Pest Control. Heller advocated for continued work with the Ashland School District to ensure that APRC facilities used by the schools remained clean and free from stored food.

In response to a question by Landt, Black highlighted the similarities between the discussion regarding bees and the discussion addressing rodents. With regard to bees, the Commissioners had authorized synthetic products as the treatment of last resort.

Landt talked about the elimination of rodent havens – places that provide nesting materials for rodents. McFarland agreed, noting efforts to eliminate access to buildings.

Gardiner complimented APRC staff for their treatment plan to date. He suggested that if the treatment plan proved inadequate, Commissioners could discuss alternative plans and advise accordingly. McFarland stated that the recent successes in managing rodents could be related to work completed by Integrity Pest Control. He asked for authorization to use synthetics as a last resort for the eradication of rodents, particularly for rats and mice. He stressed that APRC's maintenance staff focused on implementing the IPM policy as it was intended by using organic methods and treatments; they would not use synthetics unless absolutely necessary.

Landt added that, in his opinion, no changes to the IPM policy were needed at this time. He indicated that rodents differed from bees in terms of becoming an imminent threat to public safety. Lewis commented that synthetic pesticides in Ashland parks were banned primarily because they included glyphosates. He suggested that if the rodent population became unmanageable, Commissioners would reconsider the use of synthetics and direct staff accordingly.

Landt reviewed the IPM policy wording, quoting a passage as follows: "The Commission authorizes staff to replace synthetic pesticides in all parks with organic products." Black summarized that the current use of snap traps was

authorized and if it became necessary to use synthetic products, APRC staff would bring the matter forward to the Commissioners for approval.

It was agreed that no further discussion or action was needed at this time and the topic would be removed from the business meeting agenda.

TENNIS COURT / PICKLEBALL UPDATES (INFORMATION)

Black reviewed the discussion held by the Commissioners in July regarding using tennis courts as pickleball courts. He stated that the issue was under consideration because of the number of pickleball players experiencing significant wait times for access to a court in Lithia Park. Currently there were four courts available to pickleball players at the park. At a previous meeting, APRC staff was directed to determine the demand for courts, recording peak hours and dates for analysis. It was noted that the preferred timeframe for pickleball was in the morning before the heat of the day.

Black described steps taken to mitigate the lack of sufficient courts for players by preparing two courts at Helman Elementary School. Equipment for the games was brought in and a storage area installed. He stated that after monitoring the use of the Helman courts, it became apparent that the players preferred the courts at Lithia Park. Black said further discussion could focus on how best to meet the needs of pickleball players, given their preference for the courts at Lithia Park.

Heller acknowledged the preference for Lithia Park and proposed that two additional courts be added to Lithia Park as a short-term fix. He recommended that the first and third courts of the upper tennis be striped for pickleball so it could be an additional option for pickleball should the lower courts be unavailable.

Heller stated that pickleball players were meeting at the Ashland Library to discuss solutions for decreasing the wait times. He indicated that the group might also choose to lobby APRC Commissioners for their preferred locations.

Miller talked about his experience with pickleball at courts that accommodated a limited number of players. He noted that at the time of his games, there were 50 to 60 pickleball players in attendance, a situation that could have led to extended wait times. Instead, the play was organized for doubles, thereby accommodating 32 players. With the two-game limit, the turnaround time of players was faster, resulting in a significant decrease in wait time.

Miller advocated for two additional courts in Lithia Park to reduce wait times for pickleball players.

Lewis also expressed support for the addition of two more courts in Lithia Park, noting that such an increase would represent a 50% increase. He suggested that Heller advise the pickleball group of the proposed change and obtain feedback. He stated that the information would be helpful to APRC in determining next steps.

Black advised that use of the courts could be further managed if play were allowed on specific days with defined hours. Players currently played in the mornings on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Landt asked about tennis players on the court and whether the play should be first come, first served. Heller replied, stating that there were occasions when tennis players were present prior to those who came to play pickleball. Without the availability of additional courts, players would have no other option for play.

Black recommended that further discussion should include feedback from groups of both tennis and pickleball players.

Lewis talked about other instances where more than one user group competed for space within APRC facilities. His examples included the Daniel Mayer Pool by groups of different disciplines, the leasing of spaces at the Calle

Guanajuato, bike polo players at Hunter Park and others. He stated that the goal of negotiations should be to balance the needs with a willingness to make allowances. Lewis advocated for the addition of two courts on specific days with specified times so pickleball players could depend upon a venue for their sport.

Landt recommended having a trial period to establish whether extra courts at Lithia Park and the courts at Helman Elementary School would fulfill the need. He reasoned that incremental changes would help determine how to best accommodate a new sport.

Heller stated that pickleball players were willing to do their part and cede courts not specifically set aside for pickleball. If the pickleball courts were filled and there were people waiting, the option of the two upper courts would be welcome. In response to a question by Black, Heller indicated that most pickleball players came together as a group rather than individually.

Black stated that set times would help to manage expectations. There followed a brief discussion regarding authorization for specific changes such as limited hours and times. Landt suggested that the two upper courts be striped for play but not reserved. It was agreed that both sets of stakeholders should be consulted and the initial action to stripe the two upper courts would take place.

Dials stated that changes were also taking place at the Ashland Tennis & Fitness Club. She indicated that the new director was a certified pickleball instructor who might wish to contribute to the discussion. Black highlighted Dials' efforts to collaborate with the Tennis Club for an indoor venue when the need arose. He also suggested that agreement could be sought with the Ashland School District for additional courts.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

- ***Lithia Park Master Plan Subcommittee***

Black reported that a Lithia Park Master Plan consultant was hired and a process for procurement and other housekeeping measures developed and approved by Ashland City Council. He detailed the next steps that included contacting stakeholders and gathering base data for analysis.

- ***Real Estate Subcommittee***

Landt stated that the process to procure easements for connectivity to Ashland Pond was nearing completion. He noted that although there were no longer plans to add a bridge, other goals such as designating the property as a wildlife preserve could move forward.

Landt reported that there were several other acquisitions also underway including two that were awaiting appraisals. Once the appraisals were received, the Real Estate Subcommittee would begin its work. Black added that APRC would soon hold an executive session to talk about properties.

- ***Signs, Plaques and Memorials***

McFarland stated that the Vogel family requested a memorial bench at Ashland Creek Park for the family patriarch. Two possible sites were identified: one at the end of the trail loop (replacing an existing bench) and one near Ashland Creek.

Landt noted that memorials should fall within a plan. He suggested that potential donors be advised if no planned space for memorials was available in an APRC park. Landt also cautioned against creating new gardens – adding to the long-term costs of maintenance. McFarland agreed, noting that the existing bench could easily be removed and replaced with a metal bench as requested by the Vogel family.

Lewis recommended accommodating the family, given their previous ownership of the land. He said he was grateful that they were agreeable to a memorial at Ashland Creek Park since Lithia Park was at capacity for memorials.

Lewis gave the Commissioners a heads-up that the Subcommittee would be proposing changes to the Signs, Plaques and Memorials Policy. He noted that it was time to revitalize discussion regarding a memorial wall in Lithia Park -- in conjunction with the Lithia Park Master Plan, which would soon be underway.

Black highlighted plans to work with a major donor who was proposing significant upgrades to the Japanese-style garden in Lithia Park. He stated that talks were underway and the Ashland Parks Foundation would be receiving and managing donations for the project. Black intimated that a Request for Proposal had been completed because of the need to appoint a qualified landscape designer for the project.

There followed discussion centering upon integrating the upgrades into the Lithia Park Master Plan and managing the long-term maintenance costs for the Lithia Park upgrades, given that it would be a labor-intensive project. Landt expressed concern about the impact on the APRC budget due to the complexity of managing a more extensive Japanese Garden – even to the point where it might require an additional dedicated staff member. Miller reported that he had asked the donor about those extra expenses and the donor addressed them in terms of his commitment to the garden's long-term success. Miller stated that the donor was aware of the potential expenses and was committed to providing contributions for maintenance, if not in perpetuity, then for the long term. Black added that the scope of the project was currently unknown but he had confidence that the donor was aware of the potential impacts and was prepared to follow through with appropriate funding.

- ***Senior Ad-Hoc Subcommittee***

Black informed the Commissioners that the process for developing the ad-hoc Subcommittee was underway. Applications for membership had been received and the makeup of the Subcommittee would soon be finalized.

Black proposed that a facilitator be hired to manage the meetings. He stated that a facilitator could oversee the process and ensure that the group remained successful. At the first meeting, the schedule and the frequency as well as other housekeeping items would be addressed.

- ***Trail Master Plan Update Committee***

McFarland detailed the progress to date in terms of updating the Trail Master Plan. He commented that the existing document had divided potential trails into corridors. The update included evaluation of the existing corridors as well as the development of new possibilities. Also under evaluation was the connectivity with other elements such as the Bear Creek Greenway, Ashland's Central Bike Path, the TID Ditch Trail and others.

McFarland estimated that the corridor discussion was 85% to 90% complete. Some properties would be held for future consideration while others were more imminent. McFarland explained other opportunities for trail development such as the Imperatrice Property. Although this property was so new that development could not be accurately forecast, it would become a valuable addition to the Ashland trail system. He listed other properties that would become new chapters in the updated plan, including those outside of Ashland's jurisdiction.

McFarland talked about next steps, noting that once the corridor discussion was exhausted, subcommittee members would be assigned to specific chapters to update the existing document and incorporate new chapters. In addition, staff has been tracking changes and recording data into tables that could be used as reference points for future integration into the Trail Master Plan.

Landt asked about development of the Trail Master Plan in terms of the open space component. Black replied that once two or three of the current projects were retired, updates for the Open Space Master Plan could begin, possibly as soon as spring 2018.

- ***Bee City USA Subcommittee***

Dials reported that the Bee City USA Subcommittee would be meeting on Monday, September 25.

STAFF UPDATES

- ***Beach Creek Project***

Black noted that the Beach Creek project became a high priority in the fall of 2016. The project was developed with the assistance of Roxy Ann Rock and a geologist. The implemented plan was based upon a professional design. Unfortunately, the fall and winter of 2016/2017 produced a series of high water events that dismantled the completed project.

McFarland stated that repairs were instituted in September of 2017 with assistance from the original contractor and an engineering firm. He described the outflow section that had been armored with fabric and rock in an effort to displace the hydraulic energy of significant high-water episodes. Heavy equipment was brought in to place rocks on the newly repaired streambed that had been prepared with rebar and concrete. McFarland explained that the concrete would function as an energy dissipater.

In response to a question by Landt, McFarland listed the contributions of the two firms. He noted that the engineering firm had contributed a survey team and developed new plans for an improved system. The contractor contributed labor, a large excavator and pumps to bypass the creek channel so material could be put into place. APRC paid for the new materials – i.e. rock, concrete and seal and the rental of a mini-excavator. APRC forestry crews provided labor and Ashland Public Works donated daily inspections. All of the repairs were properly documented.

Landt questioned whether City engineers should have inspected the work. Black explained that the engineering firm would have billed APRC for the service and Ashland Public Works staff were experienced enough to provide the oversight needed.

Landt indicated that in an ideal world, APRC would have been fully compensated but the compromise solution was reasonable given the potential cost savings from litigation. McFarland relayed that there were additional cost savings by working within the timeframe of the existing permits.

- ***Applegate Trail Marker***

McFarland commented that installation of the Applegate Trail Marker had resulted in a potential safety issue. The situation was ameliorated by the judicious placement of boulders that prevented cyclists from possible injury.

- ***Daniel Meyer Pool***

Dials reported that the Daniel Meyer Pool had closed for the summer season for a short time in early September, allowing for minor repairs to be made. The pool opened again on September 18 for the special user groups.

- ***Park Views***

Gardiner stated that Dials would be writing the "Park Views" column for the September 28 *Ashland Daily Tidings*. He asked that the Commissioners volunteer for the months of October and November. He suggested that the Lookahead provide ideas for new articles.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Manuel, Assistant

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 meetings are digitally recorded and available upon online.