

City of Ashland  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
Regular Meeting  
Minutes  
May 22, 2017

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

**Absent:** City Council Liaison Mayor Stromberg

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Gardiner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers, 1175 E. Main Street.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Regular Meeting – April 24, 2017

**Motion:** Heller moved to approve the Minutes for April 24, 2017. Landt seconded.

The vote was all yes with Miller abstaining.

Joint Meeting with Council – May 1, 2017

Landt called for comments regarding the Joint Meeting.

Black noted that there was a comment in the Minutes interring that APRC was to purchase a portion of the Imperatrice Property land from the City; however, the discussion did not include a commitment to purchase the land. Black characterized the conversation as more of a discussion about the process if the City were to require APRC to pay back the funding source that purchased the land. The acquisition was funded through Ashland's Wastewater Treatment Plant fund. Black stated that the Minutes would be amended to reflect that change.

**Motion:** Landt moved to approve the Minutes of May 1, 2017, with the caveat that the Director would make the changes that he described at a later time. Lewis seconded.

The vote was all yes with Miller abstaining

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MINUTES**

Gardiner noted that the Subcommittee and Committee Minutes were approved by the appropriate body, with Commissioners acknowledging such Minutes as information only. They were as follows:

Senior Program Subcommittee Meeting March 28, 2017

Senior Program Subcommittee Meeting April 19, 2017

Trail Master Plan Update Committee Meeting April 21, 2017

Trail Master Plan Update Committee Meeting May 5, 2017

The previously approved Minutes were acknowledged by the Commission.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- *Open Forum*

**Mellissa Mitchell-Hooge** of 271 High Street in Ashland was called forward.

Mitchell-Hooge thanked the Commissioners for their time and consideration. She quickly reviewed background information about past efforts made to convert the playgrounds and playing fields of Briscoe and Lincoln Elementary schools into City parks. The work began in 2004 and was completed in 2007. It was thought to have been a permanent agreement between the City of Ashland, Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission and the Ashland School District. The agreement expired in 2012 and efforts were currently underway by Save our Schools and Playgrounds to achieve a more permanent solution.

Mitchell-Hooge noted that after consideration of APRC's top twenty strategic goals for 2017-2019, it was apparent that converting the two school playgrounds into dedicated neighborhood parks could be addressed under Goal #2: *Update Trails and Open Space Comprehensive (Comp.) Plan*. Mitchell-Hooge explained that the school playgrounds met five criteria listed in the Comp. Plan as follows:

- Neighborhood parks within a quarter mile
- Sufficient land for "athletic" fields
- Active athletic fields
- Neighborhood parks
- Open space

Mitchell-Hooge stated that residents were asking that APRC preserve and protect these lands under their mandate described in the Comp. Plan. She stated that adopting the lands as dedicated parks would protect the lands from other types of development. She conveyed a sense of urgency, suggesting that it was time to bring the City, APRC and the Ashland School District together to resolve the issue.

**Tucker Teusch** of 285 High Street in Ashland was called forward.

Teusch talked about his personal history in Ashland and his conviction that Ashland should be actively working to meet the needs of young families. He stated that in his opinion, allowing development of Ashland's open spaces could create a less healthy environment for families in future years.

**Samae Shlebowski** of 399 Beach Street in Ashland was called forward.

Shlebowski relayed support for a lifestyle that fosters children's play – stating that children should play outdoors every day. She said she and her family moved to Ashland because of the emphasis on parks and open spaces. She asked APRC to preserve the Briscoe and Lincoln open spaces for the children of Ashland.

**Wayne Rolle** of 311 High Street in Ashland was called forward.

Rolle stated that Save our Schools and Playgrounds was focused on supporting APRC in an effort to secure Briscoe and Lincoln as public parkland. He noted members of the group would be pleased to assist APRC in this effort, including involvement in negotiations to acquire the properties, acting as a liaison between the City Council, the School District and APRC and in raising funds for the acquisition if needed.

Rolle highlighted a meeting sponsored by the Ashland School District that provided a platform for establishing next steps for preserving the schools as public spaces. He invited the APRC Director and Parks Commissioners to attend a second meeting and engage in discussions regarding this issue.

**Noel Chatroux** of 75 Hersey Street, Ashland was called forward.

Chatroux described the value of Briscoe's playground and playing field, noting that not only did the grounds provide space for families to play and gain athletic skills, it also facilitated connectivity between neighbors. He stated that Briscoe school and grounds were a valuable resource, acting as a lively neighborhood community center.

Chatroux highlighted his appreciation for Melissa Mitchell-Hooge who was leading the volunteer effort to find a permanent solution for preserving the playgrounds and playing fields. He stressed the importance of outside time for healthy growth, by sharing a statistic that indicated that adults in jail spend more time outside than the average American child.

**Beverly Thurston** of 103 Laurel Street in Ashland was called forward.

Thurston noted that she was one of the group that pioneered the original agreement between the Ashland School District and APRC. She indicated that the acquisition of Briscoe and Lincoln school playgrounds and playing fields would help APRC meet the mandate for a neighborhood park every quarter mile, emphasizing that the grounds were the only available open space in the north side of town that would meet that goal.

Thurston relayed a concern regarding liability issues associated with the Briscoe School building. She stated that changing the use for the building – such as converting the building to a community center – could keep the building safe and secure. She suggested ways to acquire the property such as leasing to own, and she volunteered support from the Save Our Schools and Playgrounds group, highlighting the diversity of skill sets represented by members.

Gardiner explained that a discussion regarding Briscoe and Lincoln would be addressed in a public meeting held by APRC at a later date. He stated that the Commissioners were interested in the matter. He reminded the group that all of the entities involved were a part of Ashland's constituency as was each Commissioner.

Landt proposed that a discussion of the properties be listed as an agenda item at the next regularly scheduled business meeting. He advocated for using the time to craft a statement of position by APRC. Lewis agreed, stating that he had thought about this issue and would appreciate further dialogue with the Commissioners.

#### **ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA**

There were none

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#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was none.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### ***a. Bike Polo Special Event Discussion (Action)***

**Eric Michener** of 492 Willow Street, Ashland was called forward.

Dials introduced Michener, who would be presenting an application for a second annual Jefferson Joust scheduled for September 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2017. She stated that organizers would like to use two of the courts at Hunter Park (numbers five and six) from September 1, 2017, through September 4, 2017. The extra day before and after the event would be used for setting up for the event and taking down and cleaning up after the event. This year the plan was to hold the games on court #5, with court six # used for equipment, registering teams and on/off court access. Dials reported that the Joust was asking for megaphone and music amplification during the event and requested permission to provide food truck sales from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. She noted that Michener would be happy to answer any questions that the Commissioners might have.

Michener reported that last year's event was successful and without issue. He noted that the City Council had received (unsolicited) comments praising the group's clean-up efforts. There were no noise complaints nor injuries. Dials added that the seasonal Park Patrol monitored the event and were happy to report that the event proceeded without incident. Michener stated that the group would work hard to repeat those stellar results at the next Joust.

#### Discussion among Commissioners

Heller stated that he was playing tennis nearby when the event was held, and had initial concerns about damage to the tennis courts. He noted that he had since noted little damage. Michener replied that the group wanted the court to be smooth and even, same as the tennis players. Although bikes do crash, he said organizers do what they can to minimize damage by requiring bike bolts and bars to be capped. In reply to a question by Heller, he stated that tennis nets are taken down and the holes are plugged during play.

Lewis indicated support for the sport. He noted that there were occasional exceptions to APRC rules when warranted.

Landt inquired about the actual hours of play. Michener replied that the hours of play were 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. He explained that the hours varied somewhat, with Sunday a shorter day because of double elimination games. Landt called for a start time and end time for amplification.

**Motion:** Landt moved to approve the Jefferson Joust planned for September 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> with set up and take down on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of September – with allowances for food truck sales from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and amplification from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Lewis seconded.

#### Discussion

Gardiner inquired about equipment advances such as the use of plastic pedals. Michener replied that people are encouraged to use such gear but the supply was limited and difficult to find.

Lewis asked about the regular polo season – noting that bike polo is played on a Hunter Park tennis court each week. Michener reiterated that the game is played every Monday night from 5:00 to 10:00 p.m. Lewis commented that any extensive damage should be apparent over the course of the year and that it was probable that little damage occurred.

Landt noted that tennis players had objected to the proposed event the prior year because of concerns about the condition of the court surfaces. He asked about complaints regarding damage to the surface. Dials relayed that there were no specific complaints, only occasional concern about the overall condition of the Hunter Park tennis courts. Black stated that there were a significant number of complaints about bike polo during the trial period, because of fears that there would be substantial damage to the courts. He confirmed the lack of complaints, stated that the tennis players had decided not to continue with complaints or there was little impact from bike polo.

**Motion:** Landt moved to approve the Jefferson Joust planned for September 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017, with set up and take down on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of September – allowing for food truck sales from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and amplification from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Lewis seconded.

*The vote was all yes.*

#### ***b. Wasp Spray in Parks: APRC IPM Policy Exemption Request (Action)***

McFarland referred to the previously detailed discussion about the use of wasp spray during the May Study Session. Several methods commonly used by APRC staff were scrutinized. McFarland emphasized the dedication of APRC staff in adherence to the IPM approach.

McFarland reviewed customary methodology that includes pheromone traps in the spring, the use of fine screens and hive removal where possible. New protocols would include jar traps and the use of soapy water when appropriate situations arise. He noted the existence of non-synthetic alternatives, and the continued research of staff into their efficacy. With no viable alternative yet on the market, staff recommended an exemption for the use of synthetic wasp spray in areas where public safety is threatened. McFarland stressed that the wasp spray used contained no noenicitinoids.

**Motion:** Landt moved to approve the use of synthetic wasp spray in parks as a last resort for public safety. Lewis seconded.

The vote was all yes.

***c. COLA (Action)***

Black noted that APRC cost-of-living adjustments were based upon the Consumer Price Index West (CPI) for a rolling year – from March to March. In 2016 the CPI for the Western Region was 1.5% for that period of time. For the 2017 rolling year the CPI came in at 3.1%. Black asked that the Commissioners adopt a budget that included the 3.1% increase. He stated that the rise in wages would be effective July 1, 2017, for all employees with the exception of three exempt personnel.

Discussion among Commissioners

Landt asked about the anticipated percentages assigned to the budget and how the percentages were adjusted from year to year. Black explained that the anticipated rate was 2% for the next two years – 2018 and 2019. He noted that the anticipated rates were taken into account when managing the budget process and that there were a number of ways to adjust for unanticipated increases. Two ways to save money would be to leave open employee positions unfilled or adjust employees from full-time to part-time. Black noted that 2% was typically used as a budget balancer, unless there was a specific contract that dictated otherwise. He expressed confidence in absorbing enough funding to meet the 2% obligations for both years of the biennium.

Black stated that if there was a shortfall, he would recommend that the Commissioners review the guidelines. Lewis agreed, stating that if APRC's rate did not agree with the City's rate, the guidelines should be reviewed and a possible change discussed.

Gardiner asked about budgeting with higher margins rather than using lower projections. Black replied that it had to do with personnel negotiations and expectations as well as other factors. If an employment contract was specific, then the amount budgeted was precise. If not, then a minimum CPI was budgeted. He noted that APRC had not yet adjusted for the high end of 5%.

Landt acknowledged the difficulties when projecting the CPI. He indicated that a closer look might be necessary during the budget cycle. He noted fiduciary advantages of the CPI when low rates of inflation were prevalent. He also highlighted the City's take on rates when inflation was low and how that could cause a disparity in rates if artificially adjusted. He advocated for further thought about the effects of inflation on wages and how to best achieve equitable increases and fair wages.

Lewis noted that the twenty-four-month budget was relatively new and somewhat problematic. He contrasted a negotiated wage increase with a COLA increase, noting that unions approached wage negotiations differently. Lewis suggested that because the two processes were different, APRC had the option of adjusting the guidelines. He recommended using the CPI as intended for this budget cycle with a future discussion about the impact of adjustments.

Heller asked about the COLA adopted two years prior. He stated that the CPI was 1.4% but employees received 2%. Black replied that staff presented some data that implied that the proposed increase was out of step with the increase provided to City of Ashland employees. The Commissioners then decided to use a 1.5% CPI with an adjustment of .5.

**Motion:** Landt moved to approve a 3.1% COLA increase for all APRC staff. Miller seconded.

The vote was all yes.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS**

- ***Ashland World Music Festival Update***

Dials reported on the Ashland World Music Festival held on May 20 in Lithia Park. She highlighted the work of the Festival Committee that included staff members Lonny Flora, Lori Ainsworth and Dorinda Cottle as well as Committee member John Williams and the Rogue World Ensemble.

Dials reported that the Festival was successful in every way despite losing power halfway through the event. She complimented staff on their quick action in finding a generator and rectifying the situation.

Dials said approximately 600 and 800 people attended and food vendors were kept busy.

- ***Garfield Park***

Black announced that the Garfield Park Splash Pad would be open by Friday, May 26. The new and improved basketball court and volleyball court would also be open in time for the Memorial Day weekend.

Heller asked about an early opening of the water feature in future years, weather permitting. Black stated that the new system should be better able to respond to an early opening and Commissioners would be able to decide to relax the deadline for opening on a case-by-case basis.

Heller inquired about construction fencing. Black indicated that there would be fenced areas, including a long, narrow area separating the Splash Pad from the grounds. He said this area would be blocked until a barrier could be set in place.

There followed a brief conversation about specific areas of the park and whether they were open to the public or blocked. Black noted that treatment of the unfinished parts of Garfield Park were similar to those when Ashland Creek Park opened. People were accommodating and patient as the project moved toward completion.

- ***Senior Center Subcommittee***

Black reported that the Senior Center Subcommittee recently brainstormed about ideas for revenue generation along with ideas for increased activities and increased participation at the Center. He intimated that it was a productive meeting and recommendations would be available for Commissioner review before long. In response to a question by Heller, he indicated that the recommendations would be vetted by the Senior Program Subcommittee prior to coming before the Commissioners.

- ***Trails and Open Space Update Committee***

Gardiner stated that the Committee was meeting every two weeks and making good progress.

- **SOLC Award**

Black announced that Interim Parks Superintendent Jeff McFarland would be honored for his career-long contribution to conservation at Southern Oregon Land Conservancy's annual award ceremony. Black praised McFarland for his thirty years of work within Ashland's parks and trails and noted his tremendous contributions.

The SOLC annual meeting and member picnic would be held on Saturday, June 3, 2017, at the Rogue River Preserve. Retiring SOLC Executive Director Diane Garcia would also be receiving an award.

### **ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS**

Gardiner said Lithia Park nature walks began in May. He said this was the 29<sup>th</sup> year in which the volunteer-guided walks were offered. The program ran from 10:00 to approximately 11:30 on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays from early May to the end of September, with Saturday walks offered in the months of July and August.

Gardiner told the story of coming to the Park for a walk and discovering garbage strewn throughout the Park. He said an APRC custodial crew member worked to clean up the mess and indicated that a bear had visited the Park.

### **UPCOMING MEETING DATES**

Study Session, June 19, 2017 @ The Grove, 1195 E. Main—5:30 p.m.

Regular Meeting, June 26, 2017 @ Council Chambers, 1175 E. Main—7:00 p.m.

### **ADJOURNMENT INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

By consensus, Gardiner adjourned into executive session at 8:15 p.m.

Executive Session for legal counsel pursuant to ORS 192.660 (2) (i)

### **ADJOURNMENT OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION**

By consensus, Gardiner adjourned out of executive session at 9:50 p.m.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

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 are available upon online.