

**AGENDA FOR STUDY SESSION  
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
October 7, 2020  
Electronic Meeting – 6:30 p.m.**

Present: Commissioners Gardiner (Chair), Landt (Vice-Chair), Lewis; Director Black; Recreation Superintendent Dials, Senior Services Superintendent Glatt, Supervisor Minica, Assistant Sullivan

Absent: Commissioners Bell, Heller; City Council Liaison Mayor Stromberg

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

**II. PUBLIC INPUT**

None

**III. RAILROAD PARK BLACK LIVES MATTER DISPLAY DISCUSSION**

Black provided the following update on this issue:

- Staff is working with organizers of the temporary “Say Their Names” display on the possibility of installing a permanent display
- Black and City Attorney Lohman will meet with a larger community group to express support for a permanent display while expressing challenges with the temporary display. The meeting will also cover the following items:
  - Removal of temporary display
  - Approval process
  - Management of the installation
  - Possible locations for a permanent display
    - Railroad Park will be considered as a potential location
- The installation will be referenced as “Say Their Names” by APRC staff moving forward (the agenda referenced the installation as the “Black Lives Matter Display”)
  - The installation which was later vandalized was titled “Sat Their Names” by the original organizers
- Lewis stated that this item could be brought before the Current Parks, Conservation and Maintenance Subcommittee and stated support for a permanent installation to be located in the Railroad District
- Heller stated that the public art commission should be involved
  - Black stated that there are certain paths this could go down and one of them could be to the Public Arts Commission. It has yet to be determined which public process a permanent installation will go through
  - Gardiner stated that the Public Arts Commission membership includes at least one City Councilor and one Parks Commissioner

**IV. OPEN SPACE MAINTENANCE DISCUSSION**

[Public Input](#) from Barbara Schack was received for this item.

Black introduced Minica who Supervises APRC Open Spaces and reviewed the staff report included in the [meeting packet](#). Black [displayed a map](#) identifying APRC Open Space Inventory from 2017. In addition to the items listed in the staff report, the following items were discussed:

- Black stated there is over 800 acres of land that is controlled and managed by ARPC, included 600 acres of land designated as Open Space

- Concerns from the community about maintenance practices have increased after the Alameda Fire
- Black has directed staff to take every concern seriously and to review each concern. Some of the concerns raised are regarding properties that APRC does not control
- All APRC properties are maintained annually based on standards adopted by the City of Ashland. These standards include limitations on how and when maintenance activities can be carried out, such as restrictions in riparian areas
- Black stated that APRC properties are generally better maintained than what is required by municipal code
- Minica presented on current maintenance practices:
  - Properties that are an acre or less the entire property is mowed (if possible, based on terrain)
    - Some larger properties, such as E. Main Park, are mowed in its entirety
  - Properties that are larger than an acre require a 15-foot barrier be mowed around the perimeter
    - APRC strives to mow a 30-foot barrier when possible
    - Adjacent property owners are required to have a 15-foot fire mitigation buffer as well
  - Restrictions during fire season restrict what kind of activities and equipment can be used
  - Maintenance activities are mainly undertaken by APRC staff with the assistance of Jackson County Community Justice crews
  - Mechanical equipment cannot be used in riparian zones within 50 feet of high-water mark
  - Bird nesting season limits when maintenance activities can take place in riparian areas
  - Maintenance activities on larger and more forested properties include weed abatement such as scotch broom removal and thinning activities that includes piling and burning thinned vegetation
  - APRC staff maintenance practices often exceed what is required when possible
  - APRC staff does rely on the community to relay some issues to staff and will address the issues as they arise
- Minica reported on the following APRC properties:
  - Riverwalk/Mace property
    - 3-5 acres of blackberries were removed with heavy equipment when the Mace property was acquired by APRC
    - Buffers around the perimeter of the property were established and are now maintained
  - E Main Property
    - The entire property is mowed annually
    - Blackberries were removed
    - Reestablished the TID ditch
    - Reduced the fuel hazards
  - Cottle Property
    - Thinned out pine trees and will reevaluate if additional thinning is required
    - Blackberries were removed
- Landt made the following comments:
  - Stated support for mowing the entirety of the E Main property even though it is larger than one acre. City of Ashland standards only require that a 15-foot buffer be mowed around the perimeter
  - Appreciative that the entirety of the Mace Property/Riverwalk was not mowed because it is one of the few remaining examples of native grasses in the community
- Minica clarified that the Ashland FireWise program works with homeowners, not public landowners
- Black stated that exceptions have been made in the past regarding leaving some vegetation adjacent to private property at the request of the private property owners and that these exceptions will be reviewed and will not likely be made in the future
- Black clarified that collaboration with AFR (Ashland Fire and Rescue) will be moving forward to review ordinances that restrict wildfire mitigation efforts during fire season to see if there are opportunities to better address imminent fire dangers throughout the entire year

- Black stated that APRC and Chris Chambers, AFR Forestry Division Chief, work closely on numerous projects and have collaborated maintenance and thinning projects on APRC properties including Hit Road, Acid Castle, Siskiyou Mountain Park and the Lithia Hillside
- Heller stated APRC should increase public education on wildfire mitigation and land management practices
- Lewis stated the need to establish a city-wide plan that includes public land and private residences. Winds often come out of the south and could push fire through large portions of the city depending on the ignition point
- Bell made the following inquiry: Fire seasons are now longer, and we are facing worsening conditions. APRC's budget is already stretched. It is necessary to do things differently or is there a need to increase the maintenance staff?
  - Black stated the budget allows APRC to manage the amount acreage currently in the system using the current standards. If standards increase it will be necessary to take another look and it will likely be necessary to increase staff
- Landt stated the following:
  - Every time the fire progressed that it was stopped by an irrigated field and shows a need to put barriers in the way of wildfire
  - The Almeda Fire was able to rapidly move through the valley by way of the Bear Creek Greenway and is concerned that some may want to dramatically reduce vegetation in this natural area
  - Greenway restoration should include an aggressive approach to eradicating invasive, non-native blackberries, which were a contributing factor to the spread of the fire by allowing the fire to burn hotter and creating embers
  - It is worth making a real effort to change the future fire regime by changing the plant regime along the greenway
    - Black agreed about the need to review the methods used to remove blackberries and find solutions to more permanently remove this and other problematic non-native vegetation
- Black clarified that transportation grants from the State of Oregon do not currently fund anything other than the hard surface of greenway paths and there may need to be a discussion about providing funding for the management of the land surrounding bike paths (Black currently sits on the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee)
- Gardiner stated he recently participated in a ride-along the greenway, sponsored by Jackson County Parks. Gardiner observed areas where blackberries were mowed on a regular basis, but come back quickly Gardiner also stated that enforcement of non-sanctioned activities such as camping is difficult to achieve
- Lewis stated that over the last 20 years APRC and the City of Ashland have received numerous grants for wildfire mitigation efforts and encouraged to continue pursuing grants to fund this work
- Gardiner stated that an upcoming Parks View article could be submitted to detail wildfire mitigation efforts
- Minica stated grants were awards that helped fund the following activities on Hald Strawberry over the past year:
  - Thinning, piling and burning the entire 30-acre property and APRC trails funds were used to remove scotch broom
- Minica stated that a recent donation from Avista allowed the thinning, piling burning on entire Lithia Hillside (approximately 48 acres) and was also used to treat another eight acres on the Westwood property
- Minica reported that there is work being undertaken by private property owners adjacent to Siskiyou Mountain Park and that he is working on a plan with AFR to do some treatments within Siskiyou Mountain Park

## V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

The Executive Session called to order at 7:4 p.m. and adjourned at 9:00 p.m.