

MINUTES FOR REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
November 18, 2020
Electronic Meeting – 6:30 p.m.

Present: Commissioners Gardiner (Chair), Landt (Vice-Chair), Bell, Lewis, Heller; Director Black; Recreation Superintendent Dials; Manager Oropallo; Analyst Kiewel, Assistant Sullivan; Forestry Division Chief Chambers

Absent: City Council Liaison Mayor Stromberg

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. APPROVAL OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MINUTES

APRC Study Session – October 7, 2020

Motion: Landt moved to approve the Minutes from October 7, 2020 as presented. Lewis Seconded.

Vote: The vote was all yes

APRC Regular Meeting – October 14, 2020

Motion: Landt moved to approve the Minutes from October 14, 2020 as presented. Lewis Seconded.

Vote: The vote was all yes

Bee City USA Subcommittee – January 8, 2020

Landt stated the Bee City USA subcommittee Minutes should be revised to state who was in attendance and brought back for acknowledgement at the December 9, 2020 Regular Business meeting. No objections were raised.

Ashland Senior Advisory Committee – March 9, 2020

The minutes were acknowledged as presented

III. PUBLIC FORUM

Dan Van Dyke of Ashland provided [written comments](#) regarding the management of the Mace property (also known as Riverwalk)

IV. DIRECTORS REPORT

Black provided the following information in the Director's Report

- Japanese Garden Updates
 - Construction has started. The perimeter fence is now in place and wood chips are being spread
 - The tree protection plan is being implemented and overseen by APCR Arborist Pete Baughman
- Governor's "Freeze" Order
 - The freeze minimally impacts APCR operations because the City of Ashland and APCR did not open facilities under Phase II
 - Sports courts can stay open, but it is necessary to monitor and ensure that OHA orders are being followed. The Lithia Park Tennis/Pickleball Courts have been signed to limit the number of people on courts and requiring those waiting to do so outside of the fenced area in cohorts no larger than 6 people
 - The ice rink was scheduled to open in November and was postponed when the Governor issued the earlier "pause" order. If the freeze extends beyond December 2, Black stated the best course of action would be to keep the ice rink closed for the season
- Winter PlayGuide
 - The guide will be abbreviated, digital and will not include recreation classes due to the uncertainty of planning programs. Any programs that will be available in Spring will be in a future PlayGuide

- Pool Consultant Draft Design Report
 - The consultants have finished their report and would like to present it to the public on December 8, 2020 at 5:30pm. This will be informational meeting for the public. Commissioners are welcome to attend, but discussion or decisions will not be made at this meeting. The public will have an opportunity to make comments at the meeting
 - The draft report will be presented to the Parks Commissioners for approval as early as January 2021
- Siskiyou Mountain Park Thinning Project
 - APRC is working with Ashland Fire and Rescue on thinning treatments in Siskiyou Mountain Park using contractors as well as APRC Forestry staff

V. **ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA**

The Alameda Fire Restoration Report was pushed back to the December 9, 2020 Regular Meeting

VI. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. **Drone Wildfire Monitoring Review/Final Approval (Possible Action)**

Black referenced the staff report included in the [meeting packet](#) (further along in the discussion Black made a correction to the staff report that should not have included a recommendation to expand the program to APRC lands along Bear Creek) and introduced Forestry Division Chief Chambers who gave a [presentation](#) which included the following items:

- The Alameda Fire was a prime example of the destruction that wildfire can cause and why it is necessary to reduce or quickly find potential fire starts
- The City of Ashland has had watershed monitoring activities in place in one form or another since the 1980s
- The drone launches from the Acid Castle property in order to keep the drone within line of sight to patrol City of Ashland and US Forest Service land
- The drone maintains a pre-programmed route to ensure that it does not enter private property (unless permission is granted by private property owners)
- The drones uses infrared heat detection cameras during patrols and launched early in the morning before the land heats up. Video can be switched on to identify points of interest detected by the infrared camera
- Ashland Police enforces illegal camping issues
- Nine incidents were detected and reported in 2019
- Seven incidents were detected and reported in 2020 – illegal activity ceased after 24-hour notices were issued
- Fire starts have not occurred in patrolled areas
- Only one public complaint about the drone flight has been received over the last two fire seasons
- The Wildfire Safety Commission has recommended increased coverage, including over the Bear Creek Greenway
- Medford has started using drone monitoring along the portion of the Bear Creek Greenway that runs through Medford
- Chambers is planning to take this back to Council early in 2021 and hopes to get permission to extend the program on a multi-year basis

Discussion:

- Chambers stated that monitoring does not occur daily during the fire season because of limited financial resources. The current budget for watershed patrol is \$13,000 annually. Days patrolled are selected at random and weather conditions are taken into consideration
 - Chambers is constantly looking for additional funding sources or partnerships to increase the number of days patrolled
- Chambers clarified that the program is a deterrent to illegal camping activities
- Chambers stated that he will be recommending the City Council to expand the program to include properties over the Bear Creek Greenway following the Wildfire Safety Commission's recommendation
 - Lewis referenced [public comments provided by Van Dyke](#) regarding encampments near the Mace Property, which is adjacent to Bear Creek
- Chambers stated that it would be unlikely that a drone patrol over Bear Creek in the early morning would have identified the start of the Alameda Fire, but the monitoring program seeks to limit the overall possibilities for fire starts

- Landt stated this is clearly the time to do everything possible to prevent fires and that monitoring APRC lands was approved on a trial basis, without significant objections raised and should now be made permanent
- Landt asked where the launch point would be to monitor properties along Bear Creek
 - Chambers stated it could be conceivably reached from Acid Castle or Hitt Road
 - Landt stated a concern about flying over private property and would like to see the launch point be on city land adjacent to Bear Creek
 - Chambers stated it is not illegal to fly over private property and could be done at an elevation that would be less noticeable, but it is not a best practice to fly over private property
- Bell stated wildland fire is significantly attributed to people and asked if removing people from the Bear Creek Greenway would reduce the likelihood of fire starts
 - Chamber stated approximately 75% of all fires are caused by humans and stated moving people out of the greenway would raise the question of where people will go. Chambers stated that there will likely to be less patience for camping along the greenway next fire season and stated a hope for a collective community solution for homelessness along the greenway and provide an alternative site
- Chambers stated that the City Council has given a year to year approval for the program to date, but hopes to receive approval for a three to five-year operating period
- Chambers stated that it would be ideal to make annual reports to the City Council and APRC, but he is willing to report back whenever the Commissioners would like
- Black recommended approving the program for at least three years and to not exceed five years
- Heller stated support for approving the program for a three-year period
- Landt advocated for approving the program without an end date and stated the Commissioners have the ability to review and revoke permission at any time
- Bell stated he would like to have staff provide an annual report to Commissioners. Lewis also stated support for an annual report on the program
- Heller stated he would vote against a proposal that did not include a time limit
- Black made a correction to the staff report, which should not have included a recommendation to expand the program to APRC managed properties along Bear Creek. Staff supports continuing the program as approved by Commissioners on August 19, 2020, which includes APRC lands in the watershed for a longer period of time
 - Black stated the proposal to patrol land along Bear Creek should be fleshed out, with the inclusion of a map, and presented to the City Council before the Commissioners act to expand the program to properties along Bear Creek
 - Black also stated a concern that there are areas of dense housing near Bear Creek and the public should have an opportunity to respond to the proposal before the Commissioners make a decision. Black added that it is likely staff would support the expansion to Bear Creek properties, but more public discourse is needed
- Gardiner suggested approving the current program and scheduling a discussion on the expansion at a future meeting
- Landt stated a desire to have this issue come back in early in 2021 to keep the momentum going

Motion: Landt moved to approve continuing the drone program as it has occurred during the past two fire seasons. Overflights of private property for all drone flights shall be avoided to the greatest extent possible. APRC permission can be revoked with one-year notice. Annual reports required after fire season. Seconded by Bell.

Discussion: Lewis supported making a decision on the Bear Creek properties at a future meeting and would like to send a message to the Council to look closely at an extension of the program. Landt clarified that the motion does not include an end date, but that the motion does include the provision to revoke permission with a one-year notice.

Vote: Commissioners Gardiner, Landt, Bell and Lewis voted in favor of the motion. Heller voted against the motion. The motion passed.

Gardiner addressed Chambers stating he can let the City Council know the expansion of the program to Bear Creek was discussed and that the issue will be taken up again by APRC in 2021. Chambers stated that it may not be until February or March until he is ready to present to Council.

2. Employee Handbook Update for Insurance Premium Increase (Action) –

Black reviewed the staff report included in the [meeting packet](#). The following items were discussed.

- This item was presented to the Commissioners at the [October 14, 2020 Regular Business Meeting](#)
- Cost saving measures are necessary to deal with both short-term and long-term budget issues
- Increasing the employee share of the monthly health premium from 5% to 10% would save \$18,375 this fiscal year. The estimated savings for next fiscal year is \$55,550
- Black stated health insurance benefits provided are in line with other comparable cities and are better than many private businesses in the region
- All APRC employees have been notified of this recommendation to Commissioners
- Black made the following recommendation:

Commissioners approve the following change to the employee handbook regarding an increase in the employee's contribution toward health insurance consistent with recent bargaining agreement with two of the City's five union groups and the non-represented employees of the City of Ashland. APRC employees will increase their contribution toward healthcare progressively from 5 to 7.5 percent on January 1, 2021, and again from 7.5 to 10 percent on July 1, 2021.

“Health and Dental Benefits Overview: *On the first of the month following completion of 90 days of continuous employment with the APRC, the employee and family members may, at the discretion of the employee, be enrolled in APRC's health benefits program through the current provider of medical and dental insurance services. Effective January 1, 2021, the employer pays 92.5% of the cost of premiums with the employee paying the final 7.5%, which is deducted from employee's pay pre-tax. Effective July 1, 2021 the employer pays 90% of the cost of premiums with the employee paying the final 10%, which is deducted from employee's pay pre-tax.”*

- Gardiner stated there are two ways of reducing health care costs: 1) reduce the level of coverage 2) increase the premium cost to employees. Gardiner stated maintaining the level of health coverage is a longer-term benefit to the employees

Motion: Heller moved to approve the recommendation regarding insurance changes given by staff. Seconded by Lewis

Discussion: Heller stated that the reality is that the budget situation is not going to get any better quickly and this is a step in the right direction. Lewis stated that the insurance offered by APRC is the gold standard when compared to the private sector and would like to maintain the level of coverage.

Vote: The vote was all yes.

3. Alameda Fire Restoration Report (Information)

This item was delayed and will be rescheduled for the December 9, 2020 meeting

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Cost Recovery Project Discussion (Information)

Dials reviewed the staff report included in the [meeting packet](#). The following items were discussed.

- Since 2007, APRC has been reviewing cost recovery in some form every one to two years
- Throughout the years of preparing and reviewing Cost Recovery for APRC, there has not been a consistent course on preparing the data to analyze, defining what indirect and direct costs truly are, pricing programs and how to fully account for just what our program and service expenses are
- APRC is participating with other Parks and Recreation organizations in Oregon in a cost recovery workshop provided by a consulting firm lead by Jamie Sabbach
- There are five phases in the process that combine educational training, recorded webinars, interactive digital work sessions and one-on-one meetings.
 - Educating staff on cost recovery. Including direct and indirect costs
 - Organizing cost recovery ranges and service categories so there are clear budget expectations moving into the budget process beginning in January/February 2021

- Collecting and analyzing data that shows the departments current cost recovery levels and then utilizing this information to set future budget and cost recovery goals
- Organizing cost recovery ranges and service categories that will provide clear expectations so APRC can respond to market changes and community needs and effectively react in times of change
- Dials [presented slides](#) on the cost recovery model being used in the workshop
- Dials stated later in the process, APRC will engage in a beneficiary of service exercise where service categories will be ranked on the cost recovery continuum, which will help determine the level of subsidy for specific programs. Advanced classes will likely be identified as an individual benefit and would receive a lower level of subsidy when compared to kid swim lessons, which will likely be identified as a community benefit and would therefore receive a higher level of subsidy
- APRC began this process in late September and currently we are in Phase 1 & 2 of the process, which includes staff development and training
- Staff will continue to update Commissioners as the process unfolds and will be making a presentation once the analysis is complete

VIII. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF

Heller stated there are cracks on the Pickleball Courts and that the red paint appears to be bleeding into the court. Heller added the courts are well utilized by regular and new players. Black stated that signs prohibiting skateboarding/scooters have been reinstalled at the Lithia Park courts. Gardiner stated there may be a safety concern with the opening between the upper and lower courts.

IX. UPCOMING MEETING DATES

1. APRC Regular Business Meeting — December 9, 2020
 - Electronic Meeting—6:30 p.m.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

The Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission will hold an **Executive Session immediately following the Regular Meeting** to review and evaluate the performance of an officer, pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(i).

The Executive Session was called to order at 8:20 p.m.

The Executive Session adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Sean Sullivan, Executive Assistant