

**AGENDA FOR SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING**  
**ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**  
**July 28, 2021**  
**Electronic Meeting – 6:00 p.m.**

Present: Commissioners Gardiner (Chair), Landt (Vice-Chair), Bell (joined the meeting at approximately 6:15 pm), Lewis; Director Black; Recreation Superintendent Dials; Senior Services Superintendent Glatt, Manager Sullivan.

Absent: Commissioner Eldridge; Analyst Kiewel

This meeting was recorded by Rogue Valley Television (RVTV). Links to recorded meetings can be found on the [City of Ashland website](#).

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm

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

**III. PUBLIC FORUM**

None

**IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

**a) Greenhouse Gas Reduction – Expenditure Approval (Possible Action)**

Black reviewed the staff report included in the [meeting packet](#), which included the following items:

- Commissioners allocated \$150,000 in the current budget for greenhouse gas reduction efforts with the stipulation that specific expenditures be approved by Commissioners
- Black displayed the FY22 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Budget Estimates document included in the [meeting packet on pg. 6](#)

**Electric Mowers:**

- The total cost of purchasing three mowers and spare parts is estimated to cost \$82,215
- The mowers have a battery run time that will not reduce productivity and also have the capability to easily lower and raise the deck height, that is not available with the existing gas models
- Parks staff is requesting the purchase of two 60" inch mowers for increased maneuverability
- Black clarified that as technology improves for smaller maintenance tools, such as string trimmers and walk behind mowers, APRC will look into continuing to expand electric tool inventory as commercial grade tools, that do not greatly reduce productivity, become available

**Discussion:**

- Gardiner stated making this investment on clean technology is a direct response to the community and APRC is leading by example
- Lewis added that reduced maintenance could reduce the overall costs
- Landt stated support for clean energy initiatives such as this proposal and inquired if other users of these specific machines have been contacted to get input on performance
  - Black stated that this is the only company that could be identified that provides a battery life that meets the maintenance requirements of APRC
  - Sullivan clarified that specific users have not been contacted at this point, but there are municipalities around the country using these machines
  - Landt suggested purchasing one machine for a 6-month test run before purchasing the other two machines
  - Lewis suggested contacting existing users to get feedback
    - Landt stated support for contacting existing users or purchasing one machine and waiting six months before purchasing the others
    - Bell stated support for moving forward with purchasing all three if positive feedback is provided from existing users

**Motion:** Landt moved to approve the purchase of three electric mowers as presented by staff conditional upon recommendations from users with at least six recommendations with a majority of those being positive. Seconded by Bell.

**Discussion:** Landt clarified that staff can move forward with the purchase of the three mowers if four positive recommendations are provided by existing users.

**Vote:** The vote was all yes.

### **HVAC Replacement**

Black stated that staff have been looking into switching from gas to electric HVAC systems in our facilities. The immediate focus is the Senior Center and Golf Pro Shop because these systems need to be replaced. Staff is estimating that the Senior Center will take \$30,000 to replace. A quote to replace the HVAC system from the Golf Pro Shop came in at \$19,000. Additional contingency funds have been added to the budget to account for electrical work and the potential for other unforeseen costs, bring the total to \$27,500. Black stated staff is requesting approval to move forward with the replacement of HVAC systems for these two facilities at a cost not to exceed \$57,500.

#### **Discussion:**

- Sullivan stated the quote for the Pro Shop would replace existing compressor units and not installing so called “mini-splits”
- Landt stated a concern that the quotes received are not for the most energy efficient systems and that it may turn out that the most efficient systems would cost more than what is presented, but may have reduced costs over time
- Black clarified that staff has been working under the existing budget and is seeking quotes accordingly
- Lewis stated the “mini-split” systems are typically installed in some residential settings where ducts are not feasible and also suggested ensuring that smoke filtration be taken into consideration when designing the systems. Lewis added that taking advantage of existing ducting in these facilities would be ideal and that it is likely that the costs of replacement will be below \$30,000 per building
- Bell stated support for moving forward to find the most efficient system possible with existing funds and added that when considering the social cost of carbon, the cost to switch from gas to electric is justifiable

**Motion:** Bell moved to allocate the requested funds for staff to purchase the most appropriate systems. Seconded by Lewis.

**Discussion:** Bell stated pride in APRC addressing greenhouse gas emission reductions with these initiatives and understands that staff will carry out additional due diligence before moving forward and that it is likely that these systems will come in below what has been projected.

Additional comments include the following:

- Lewis reiterated that the filtration systems be reviewed to mitigate smoke issues common in the valley
- Gardiner stated that the top-of-the-line systems for residential areas are not inexpensive and sees that projected costs as not out of the ordinary
- Landt stated a preference for staff to provide more options on available systems to identify what would be the most efficient over the life of the system, resulting in lower lifetime costs.
- Bell stated APRC has numerous buildings with natural gas and that equipping these two facilities with electric HVAC systems will provide valuable information and supports staff moving forward without having to come back to Commissioners
- Landt stated that he originally made the motion to allocate the \$150,000 for these initiatives and fully supports the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions but would like to have information to that would provide more assurance that APRC will be installing the best systems available in terms of initial costs and long-term costs. Landt stated he will vote no on this motion because this information has not been provided
- Black stated that in a typical scenario where an HVAC system needed to be replaced, he would move forward with the replacement without consulting Commissioners. Black added that staff will take all the discussion into consideration as more due diligence is done in the process of replacing these two HVAC systems

**Vote:** Bell, Lewis and Gardiner voted yes. Landt voted no.

### **EV Charging Stations**

Black stated that staff will come back to Commissioners if funds are available to install EV Charging Stations.

#### **b) APRC Dedicated Funding Source Discussion (Possible Action)**

**Public Input:** Written public comments were received and have been [uploaded to the APRC website](#).

Black reviewed the staff report included in the [meeting packet](#) and displayed [presentation slides](#) which included the following items:

- The top Commissioner goal for the current biennium reads: *Investigate, develop and implement a dedicated permanent funding source to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission.*
  - Black stated that APRC has historically received \$2.09/\$1,000 of assessed value from property taxes
  - Recently the City of Ashland has reduced APRC's allotment to \$1.89/\$1,000 (Approximately \$680,000 loss) in the previous biennium to address shortfalls in the City's budget
  - It was initially stated that this change was temporary and that APRC's funding would revert back to the \$1.89/\$1,000
  - The budget for the current biennium also funds APRC at \$1.89/\$1,000 and it is possible that APRC's allotment will continue to fall in future budgets
- There are multiple dedicated funding source options to consider:
  - The current budget document calls for APRC to receive all funds collected from the Food and Beverage (F&B) Tax along with the adoption of an ordinance or resolution that dedicates a certain level of funding to APRC from the City's collected property taxes
    - The funds typically received from property tax would be reduced by the funds projected to be collected through the (F&B) tax
  - Consider the formation of Parks and Recreation District, as allowed by ORS 198 and 266
    - This would be voted on by the voters within the proposed district
  - Local Parks and Recreation Levy to provide gap funding
- Black is recommending that Commissioners focus on the plan that exists in the current budget to dedicate F&B Funds and along with the adoption of an ordinance or resolution that dedicates a certain level of funding to APRC from the City's collected property taxes
- Black stated that during a recent City Council meeting it was stated that the F&B funds and/or the funding ordinance/resolution should not be discussed while APRC is discussing the formation of a district
  - Black stated that because APRC would not have the agreed upon funding in the second year of the current biennium without the change to the F&B distribution, he recommends ceasing discussion on the district
- Black clarified that there are certain steps that need to be taken by the City Council to implement the plan within the budget and that if those steps are not taken APRC could lose those funds
- Black stated that although the F&B funds are more volatile than property tax funds, APRC is in a better position to reduce operations if funds fluctuate as compared to City Departments such as streets or police
- Black clarified that the F&B allocation plan would not increase funding for APRC beyond the \$1.89/\$1,000 that is included in the approved budget
- Black displayed a table that shows a decrease in Charges for Services (Property Taxes) and an increase in Taxes (F&B Allocation) by approximately \$2,000,000 that would occur if the F&B plan were to be implemented
- Black displayed a slide that lists the recommended proposal that would be sent to City Council of approved by Commissioners
  - 25% of Tax Remains for Major Maintenance and New Projects at the Commissioners' Discretion
  - 73% of Food and Beverage Tax to be Used for Operation at the Commissioners' Discretion
  - Food and Beverage Tax Must be Extended 10 Years (at least until 2040)
  - Adopt an Ordinance Dedicating a Specific Millage of Property Tax to APRC Equivalent to \$1.89/\$1,000 Minus New F&B Contributions
  - Evaluate and if possible, designate APRC as a Contracting Review Board
  - COA will provide central services to APRC on a contract basis, which shall be renegotiated and renewed every two years
- Black clarified that the Charges for Services category includes property taxes and recreation revenue (typically \$1,000,000 per year)

**Motion:** Landt moved to approve these conditions/requests (on screen as listed below) when Ashland Parks and Recreation submits the recommendation to Council. Seconded by Bell.

- 25% of Food and Beverage Tax Remains for Major Maintenance and New Projects at the Commissioners' Discretion
- 73% of Food and Beverage Tax to be Used for Operation at the Commissioners' Discretion

- Food and Beverage Tax Must be Extended 10 Years (at least until 2040)
- Adopt an Ordinance Dedicating a Specific Millage of Property Tax to APRC Equivalent to \$1.89/\$1,000 Minus New F&B Contributions
- Evaluate and if possible, designate APRC as a Contracting Review Board
- COA will provide central services to APRC on a contract basis, which shall be renegotiated and renewed every two years

**Vote:** The vote was all yes

Black reviewed the items outlining the intent of the meeting to Commissioners (included in the meeting packet) and provided his recommendation on what the resolution is for each item.

- 1. Provide information on discussions and actions of the City Council to date related to APRC funding sources and district formation.**
  - The formation of a district has been discussed at the City Council level and how it would relate to the F&B Tax allocation. Black recommended passing a motion stating that APRC is focused on implementing the F&B Tax plan outlined in the adopted budget
- 2. Discuss all dedicated funding mechanisms as listed above.**
  - The options were discussed at the beginning of this agenda item
- 3. Request action from the Commissioners to form a Parks and Recreation District Feasibility Analysis Committee.**
  - Black recommends forgoing this request to fully focus on the F&B Tax plan outlined in the adopted budget
- 4. Request action from the Commissioners to enter a contract with a local attorney with specialized experience in district formation and operations.**
  - Black recommends forgoing this request to fully focus on the F&B Tax plan outlined in the adopted budget

Black stated that district formation will always be in the tool kit, but official action to start the process of district formation has not been taken. Black added that there has never been any intent to increase the funding level APRC receives.

Gardiner made the following statement (paraphrased):

*APRC went through the goal setting process earlier in the year with the number one goal being securing long-term, stable funding for APRC. Funding had been in place for over a century. It has only been in recent years that funding for APRC has been suspect and our goal is to not have to deal with a moving target so we can make serious, competent financial decisions and the only way we can do that is if we know there is stable funding source in our future. That is why I agree 100% with Director Black's recommendation at this point and I hope when we have a motion that can be agreed upon unanimously on that as well. It is important to not only send a message to the community, but to the City Council that our goal for stable, long-term funding, is basically set out in the budget that was just adopted a couple months ago... Food and Beverage Tax coming to APRC and an agreement on the other items listed by Director Black, with the most important being how much APRC is going to reduce our portion of the general fund in relationship to the Food and Beverage Tax allocation. This will allow the City to accomplish the goals that were recommended by the Citizen's Budget Committee and staff... I am hoping for an open and honest discussion with the City Council as this moves forward.*

Landt made the following statement (verbatim):

*I have read the public comments panning the idea of APRC creating a parks district. I want to be clear that I have never advocated for increasing Ashland citizens' overall property taxes. Nor have I heard other Commissioners or staff advocate for that. I and others may have an interest in the future of pursuing a park district with taxing authority IF there is a mechanism that ensures that the City's property tax assessment to citizens would be reduced by an equivalent amount to what the new district would be assessing. Without that ironclad assurance, I, like the persons who provided input, would not favor an initiative that resulted in an overall increase in property taxes.*

*The rationale for an independent, sustainable revenue source would mean that APRC would have a dependable funding source like the City Charter provided.*

Lewis made the following statement (paraphrased):

*I look at the three schemes and since all of them would have to go to the citizens of Ashland for a vote, my heart would go to the parks district because that is the intent of the City Charter, to keep the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission somewhat autonomous from the politics of the Council. That was the intent of the early 1900s and so my heart sees that as getting back to what the intent was. Being practical, my head says we probably want to go with the meals tax scheme because it already has some pre-discussion and some small amount of acceptance from the Council, and it is already a tax that exists. Part of me hopes that in the future we could get back to having our own millage and decision-making process but would now follow staff's recommendation.*

Bell made the following statement (paraphrased):

*In response to the feedback from the public, the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission provides a huge amount of value to the City and there is a maintenance cost to that. I think that the Commissioners and staff provide that maintenance in a very lean and efficient way and I don't think anyone is recklessly spending money or recklessly imposing improper fees on the residents of Ashland. I think that the residents of Ashland value their parks and appreciate the way that they are maintained, and I think that we are doing an efficient and thorough job of it.*

**Motion:** Landt stated, in support of the number one APRC goal of finding a dedicated funding source, I move to direct staff to focus on ensuring that the transfer of Food and Beverage taxes as outlined in this biennium's City budget is accomplished. Seconded by Lewis.

**Discussion:** Landt added that district formation is not straight forward and is time consuming. Since the funding for next fiscal year is dependent upon the change in allocation of Food and Beverage Tax funds, it is prudent to focus on getting that plan implemented so APRC can continue to provide service to the community.

**Vote:** The vote was all yes

#### **VI. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF**

None

#### **VII. UPCOMING MEETING DATES**

- a) Current Parks, Conservation, and Maintenance Subcommittee – July 29, 2021
  - Electronic Meeting—2:00 p.m.
- b) APRC Special Business Meeting Session — August 4, 2021
  - Electronic Meeting—6:00 p.m.
- c) Recreation Division Advisory Committee — August 12, 2021
  - Electronic Meeting—4:00 p.m.
- d) APRC Study Session — September 1, 2021
  - Council Chambers—6:00 p.m.
- e) APRC Regular Business Meeting — September 8, 2021
  - Council Chambers—6:00 p.m.

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:51pm

Respectfully Submitted

Sean Sullivan, Business Operations Manager