

MINUTES FOR STUDY SESSION
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION (APRC)
November 3, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.
Electronic Meeting

Present: Commissioners Gardiner (Chair), Landt (Vice-Chair), Bell, Eldridge, Lewis; Director Black; Deputy Director Dials; Senior Services Superintendent Glatt; Analyst Kiewel; Manager Sullivan

Absent: None

This meeting was recorded and uploaded to the APRC YouTube Channel: <https://youtu.be/7IMkav9sqn4>

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. PUBLIC INPUT

None

III. DISCUSSION ON LONG TERM FUNDING OPTIONS FOR APRC

Black [displayed slides](#) and referenced the [staff report included in the meeting packet](#). The presentation on this topic included the following items:

- There is a City Council meeting on December 6, 2021 to continue discussions on APRC funding. Parks Commissioners and Director Black will participate in the meeting
- The City Council has adopted a resolution that provides funding through the end of the current biennium. Funding for APRC in the next biennium is uncertain at this point (the source and level of funding has not been determined)
- Recognizing this issue last year, the Commissioners adopted a goal that states: "Investigate, develop and implement a dedicated permanent funding source to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission."
- An increase in Food and Beverage Taxes represent a significant portion of APRC funding for the next fiscal year in this biennium. Property tax dollars from the General Fund are being decreased to fund other City of Ashland operations
- Black presented slides outlining the history of APRC funding
 - 1908 – Charter Adopted - Parks Commission established – Separately elected from the City Council with
 - "power to formulate and adopt rules and regulations for their government," to exercise "control and management of all the lands for park purposes," and "control and management of all park funds, whether the same is obtained by taxation, donation or otherwise, and shall expend the same judiciously for beautifying and improving the City's parks."
 - Millage dedicated to APRC – Separate from City Funding to prevent competition for funding
 - Historical millage has been \$2.09/\$1,000 of assessed value - About \$6,135,000 per year
- Black outlined the history of APRC funding levels
 - Historically APRC's funding level was \$2.09/\$1,000 (assessed property evaluation) - Approximately \$6,100,000
 - Current funding level is \$1.89/\$1,000 - Approximately \$5,550,000
 - Difference of \$.20/\$1,000 - Approximately \$550,000
- Black stated there are not enough resources to cover "non-essential" services funded through the City of Ashland General Fund
 - Although the City Charter was supposed to prevent competition for funds, Measure 50 required all property tax funds to be combined and distributed by the Council
 - Black stated the following areas are at risk if APRC funding is not secured
 - 18 Developed Parks; 781 Acres of Open Space; Recreation programs for all ages; Three PlayGuides per year (100 programs in each guide); Promoting healthy aging, well-being, dignity and independence
- Black is proposing that the Commissioners support staff in continuing to explore:

- Potential Levy dedicated to the funding of the Operations of Parks and Recreation
- Evaluation of Parks and Recreation District
- Next steps include
 - December 6 Council Meeting
 - Committee to explore formation of a district
 - Consultant services for evaluation of a district
- Black stated securing a Levy, which is allowed under Oregon Statute, to support the operations of Ashland Parks and Recreation would get back to what the City Charter intended when the funds for Parks were separated from other City operations

DISCUSSION:

- Black stated there is an immediate threat to APRC funding. Securing a levy will address that immediate threat. Once funding is secure, the process to form a district can begin which will take longer than putting a levy on the ballot in May 2022
- Black stated he would like the Commissioners to propose a plan for APRC funding at the December 6 Council Meeting
- Black clarified that forming a district would remain in place indefinitely. The levy would last as long as the levy is approved
- Black stated that there will be a need for the City of Ashland to reduce the amount of taxes they collect so the full amount of the approved levy is not a 100% increase to taxpayers
 - The City may decide to not reduce taxes collected by the amount included in the levy to address any budget shortfalls they have
 - If a district is eventually approved by the voters, the levy would be replaced by the tax collected through a district
- Black clarified that the levy would be against property valuation
- Black stated the Council would need to approve the ballot language in February so the City Recorder can submit it for the election in May 2022. The Parks Commissioners do not have the authority to tax, so the Council would need to approve putting the levy on the ballot
- Landt recommended that the amount that is asked for in the levy should be the same amount that would be asked for when forming a district
- Landt stated support for utilizing the Food and Beverage funds for operations because APRC can better react to changes in funding levels by more easily scaling back operations when compared to other general fund departments and stressed that allocating these funds to APRC is not an increase in funding. Landt later added that this levy is consistent with the intent of the Charter
- Gardiner stated that in recent years APRC has taken on more tasks to assist the City without a funding increase and the efforts to secure historical funding levels now will ensure the continuation of providing those services and park amenities
- Lewis stated support for going out for \$2.09/\$1,000 to bring back staffing positions that were impacted by the decrease in funding and to better maintain existing infrastructure and that this level of funding would reestablish historic funding levels and would not constitute an increase in funding for APRC
- Black clarified that if a levy were approved by the voters, APRC would not seek more than 25% of the Food and Beverage tax, which is consistent with historical funding levels
- Bell stated support for \$2.09/\$1,000 so APRC is in a better place to maintain existing infrastructure and replace the pool
- Black stated that because of the increase in Central Service and Fleet Fees charged by the City, staffing levels and the ability to carry out CIPs (Capital Improvement Projects) would not necessarily be at 2018 levels (the last year APRC was fully funded at \$2.09/\$1,000 and 25% of Food and Beverage Tax)
- Landt stated support for the following:
 - Work towards a \$2.09/\$1,000 5-year levy, consistent with the voter approved City Charter
 - Plan to form a district to replace the levy as soon as feasible with the same \$2.09 base
 - Continue the 25% of Food and Beverage even if a district is formed, consistent with past voter approval
- Gardiner clarified that the Food and Beverage Tax sunsets in 2030 and would need to be renewed by the voters
- Lewis stated support for Landt's 3 points and advocated for a simple measure to be placed on the ballot

- Black stated he would like to continue working with the City and put this item on the agenda for the next business meeting for Commissioners to provide clear direction to staff on what they would like to see in a ballot measure with the goal of making a presentation to City Council on December 6, 2021
 - The City still needs to state how much they would reduce what they collect in property taxes if the levy were to be approved by the voters
 - The voters would then be in a position to accept or reject an increase in taxes so services provided by the City and APRC would not need to be cut

Gardiner stated a Special Business Meeting on December 1, 2021 will be held to continue the discussion prior to the December 6, 2021 Council Meeting.

IV. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF

None

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Sean Sullivan, Business Operations Manager