

**MINUTES FOR REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
December 8, 2021
Electronic Meeting – 6:00 p.m.**

Present: Commissioners Gardiner (Chair), Landt (Vice-Chair), Bell (left the meeting at 8:00 pm), Eldridge, Lewis; Director Black; Deputy Director Dials (joined meeting at 7:16 pm); Senior Services Superintendent Glatt, Analyst Kiewel; Nature Center Manager VanWyhe, Manager Sullivan

Absent: None

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 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

APRC Study Session – November 3, 2021

Motion: Landt moved to approve the Minutes from November 3, 2021. Seconded by Eldridge.

Vote: The vote was all yes (Bell was absent)

APRC Regular Business Meeting – November 10, 2021

Motion: Landt moved to approve the Minutes from November 10, 2021. Seconded by Lewis.

Vote: The vote was all yes

III. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

None

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

None

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- a) Subcommittee Minutes Acknowledgment
 - Bee City USA – September 1, 2021
 - Ashland Senior Advisory Committee – September 13, 2021
 - Trails Master Plan Review Subcommittee – November 1, 2021

Motion: Bell moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Lewis.

Vote: The vote was all yes (Landt was disconnected momentarily and did not vote on this item)

VI. DIRECTORS REPORT

Black reported on the following items:

Details on Facility Re-openings

- The Grove and Ashland Senior Center did a soft reopening as of Monday, December 6. Initially, reception desks are open MWF, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., while the rest of each building remains closed to the public. Most services are still provided over the phone and online All APRC and City Offices will be closed for the holiday on December 24 and December 30
- Nature Center will look to reopen the office on the same schedule as the Grove sometime after the holidays
- Pioneer Hall will start taking bookings again after January 1 with some changes to the way reservations are booked due limited staffing
- Outdoor facility and ballfield reservations are being taken for 2022

Senior Services

- Senior Services will host a Holiday Lunch Drive-Through on December 23
- with lasagna lunch provided by Village at Valley View, gift cards from Rotary for first 50 seniors, small donated gifts for the rest, and holiday music by members of Ashland High Band. There are already over 80 people signed up, the largest response yet to a drive-through. Commissioners who want to volunteer may contact Superintendent Glatt at (541) 488-5342.

First Frost at The Ice Rink

- The annual FIRST FROST, a community event on ice, is scheduled for Saturday, December 18, 2021, from 4 to 9 p.m. This celebratory evening culminates the spirit of the outdoor rink and the holidays
- Discounted family skate, 4 to 5:30 p.m.
- Ashland City Band live performances, beginning at 4:30 p.m.
- Southern Oregon Figure Skating Club (SOFSC) performances, starting at approximately 5:45 p.m.
- Public skating resumes with holiday music performed by the Ashland High School band members, from approximately 6:15 – 9 p.m.
- Hot drinks and snacks will be provided by the local Lions Club
- APRC Recreation Division staff will also be tabling at the Ice Rink event from 4:30-6:30 p.m. to showcase upcoming recreation programming and volunteer opportunities.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) APRC Funding Update/Discussion (Possible Action)

Black provided the following updates on the APRC funding situation:

- Commissioners made a motion to make a recommendation to City Council to place a funding levy of \$2.09/\$1,000 of assessed value on the May 2022 ballot
- A presentation to the Commission on the ballot process was scheduled for December 1 with the Council scheduled to take on the issue at their December 6 meeting, but it was determined that there was a lack of support on the City Council at that time and that the lack of support was due to timing and not necessarily the proposal itself
- Black would like Commissioners to discuss funding options and timelines and stressed that a resolution has not been achieved and that funding for APRC is still uncertain and if funding is not identified APRC is facing a cliff on July 1, 2023
- Black mentioned the possibility of scheduling strategy meetings in the near future to provide final direction to staff

DISCUSSION

- Gardiner stated that although the timing for Council may not be ideal, Commissioners should continue to move forward to identify path(s) forward to secure funding for APRC and added the following
 - APRC should seek a funding level that would allow for the continuation of the level of service that Ashland residents have become accustomed to
 - Residents continue to contact APRC to continue programs and maintain parks, but future funding is still not secure
 - Commissioners have communicated in the past that having the Council place a funding levy on the May 2022 ballot is the preferred path forward
 - Gardiner proposed a planning session to take place on January 5, 2022 in lieu of a Study Session (post meeting note: This meeting was re-scheduled for January 6, 2022)
- Bell stated that the crux of the matter is trying to gauge the amount of community support for APRC activities and that placing a levy on the ballot would allow residents to directly answer that question. Bell added the following:
 - The easiest path forward would be to have Council place a levy on the ballot, but that if the Council does not act, signatures could be gathered to place an initiative on a future ballot
 - Black clarified that APRC (the organization) could organize public meetings to educate the public on funding options and that there are funds budgeted for consultation services. Black added that the Council seems to be working on a timeline that would see a levy placed on the ballot in November 2022 and that APRC staff would like to see that happen in May to allow more time for budget planning after the vote
- Eldridge inquired when the citizen survey on funding priorities that the Council is planning on releasing would be put out and is it possible for APRC to be involved with the process of finalizing the survey
 - Black stated he believes there is an intention for APRC to participate in the survey and that a timeline has not been established by the City of Ashland. There is potential for the City Council to discuss this item on December 21, which could provide more information for Commissioners to consider
 - Gardiner stated that it would likely take a significant amount of time to put out a survey, analyze the data and then act on the findings

- Bell asked if there is a general sense of whether if it would be better to work directly with City Council to advocate for APRC funding or go directly to the residents on Ashland via a ballot measure
 - Gardiner stated that this is a question that could be addressed at the January planning session
- Black stated that if a ballot measure were to be placed on the November 2022 ballot, that it would provide less time for budget planning after the vote, but may be the only option available
- Landt stated that City Council has different priorities than the Commissioners and that if APRC waits for the survey results before acting there is a risk of not getting on the November ballot at all. Landt added that he would like to see Commissioners work toward solutions where Commissioners have more control over the process. Landt stressed that the gold standard for surveys are elections
- Lewis stated concern that it has been difficult even getting to a Council-level discussion between both elected bodies on APRC financial needs and added the following:
 - The initiative process takes some effort to accomplish, but would allow APRC to disconnect from the Council process
 - Noted that staff or other organizational resources could not be used to campaign for a ballot initiative
 - The Charter created an autonomous body, which has not changed, but a change that has occurred is APRC has been stripped of funding
 - Would like to be informed on all available options
 - Black outlined the following options he is aware of in no particular order
 - City Council process of going forward with a survey before putting a measure on the ballot. This process has not started yet (The Council has yet to vote on this)
 - Make a motion to forward a levy proposal to Council and have them vote whether or not to place it on the ballot
 - Start an initiative process to gather signatures from registered voters who live in Ashland city limits to place a funding levy on the ballot
 - Explore the formation of a district, which Commissioners have already directed staff to do. This would create a fully independent governing body. This process would take longer to put together, but could be ready to be placed on the November 2022 ballot
 - Landt stated the last option would be to do nothing and hope that the City Council allocates sufficient funding for APRC, but based on the last two budget cycles it seems unlikely that APRC would receive enough funding to maintain operations
- Gardiner stated that these and any other options presented can be reviewed in-depth at a January planning meeting
- Bell stated the intent of establishing a separate Parks Commission in the Charter included providing a dedicated funding source that is separate from other City of Ashland funds and that going directly to the voters to decide on APRC funding maintains the spirit of how APRC was initially created in the City Charter
- Black clarified that staff would be able to prepare a proposal to create a district in time to have it placed on the November 2022 ballot
- Bell stated his support with moving forward on asking the Council to place a levy on a ballot in May while at the same time preparing to gather signatures to place an initiative on the ballot
- Lewis stated support with starting with requesting the Council place a measure on the May ballot and then falling back on the citizen's initiative process
- Landt stated the initiative process takes a significant amount of work and should only be undertaken once and noted that establishing a district is more work than getting a levy passed, but establishing a district may be the most ideal scenario
 - Black clarified that he has already begun the fact-finding process to establish a district and can continue that work based on past direction from Commissioners
- Gardiner stated this discussion will continue at a special planning session and Commissioners can provide final direction on how to proceed

b) Contract Award to HydroPoint – Irrigation Central Controller for Lithia Park and North Mountain Park (Action)

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

- At the November 10, 2021 APRC Regular Business Meeting staff reported to the Commissioners about the central irrigation control system
- APRC staff published an Intent to Bid on the City of Ashland's website on November 1, 2021 to replace the central irrigation controller in Lithia Park and North Mountain Park
- One bid was received from HydroPoint for parks and installation totaling \$144,316.62
- There is \$150,000 included in the CIP budget for this project

- If approved by Commissioners, City Council will be reviewing this contract at the December or January Council Business Meeting. Per City Ordinance, the City Council must provide final approval for all contracts that exceed \$100,000
- This project would support goal number seven of the 2021-2023 APRC Biennium Goals.
#7 EXPLORE AND IMPLEMENT, AS FUNDS ALLOW, CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS THAT WOULD REDUCE LONG TERM MAINTENANCE COSTS WITH A GOAL FOR THE IMPROVEMENTS TO PAY FOR THEMSELVES.
- Staff recommended approval of the contract

Motion: Bell moved to approve the contract as written by staff. Seconded by Lewis

Discussion: Gardiner stated that the ease of use and the ability to detect leaks will greatly improve the irrigation system

Vote: The vote was all yes

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

a) Q1 Budget Report (Action)

Kiewel reviewed the [staff report included in the meeting packet](#) and gave a [presentation with slides](#) which included the following items:

- The report being presented at this time is the monthly budget report for October 2021. The City financial report for FY 2022 First Quarter can be reviewed here https://www.ashland.or.us/SIB/files/Quarterly_Financial_Report_FINAL_A.pdf
- The target percent of general fund expenses for October is 33.33%. We are trending slightly over budget at 34.50% year to date
- Revenues for general fund, which includes property taxes, are currently 25.3% of budget at \$2,142,793. Included in the general fund revenue is recreation revenue which is budgeted at \$642,592 for the year and is currently 33.70% of budget
 - Black noted that the revenue budgeted for recreation is much less than what it typically generated in a regular year
- The preliminary ending fund balance from FY21 was \$1,793,398 and is a result of several cost cutting measures taken by APRC last biennium to deal with the reduction of recreation revenues due to COVID-19 mandates
 - The current ending fund balance is \$1,554,817
- Food and Beverage Tax (F&B) revenue was estimated to be \$562,000 for this fiscal year. F&B is collected quarterly and will be reflected in the next quarterly update to the Commission
- \$8,333 a month is paid into the equipment fund for a total of \$100,000 for FY22. The current Equipment Fund Balance is \$426,887. This fund is restricted to the purchases of replacement vehicles
 - Black noted this amount is insufficient to replace equipment on a standard schedule. Replacement is deferred because of a lack of available funding
- Dials clarified that the Nature Center has not brought in revenue, because educational programming has not been able to run as previously hoped for when the budget was being put together

Motion: Landt moved to accept the report. Seconded by Bell

Vote: The vote was all yes

b) Presentation on Invasive Species Management and Request for Expanded Herbicide Use for Test Plot Program at Riverwalk/North Mountain Park (Possible Action)

Dials introduced Nature Center Manager VanWyhe who reviewed the [staff report included in the meeting packet](#) and gave a [presentation with slides](#). Eugene Weir from the Fresh Water Trust was present.

- Staff is seeking permission to use herbicide for treatment of two blackberry removal test plots
- Given the interest in blackberry control for fire mitigation in our bioregion, the Nature Center staff are conducting a study to compare a variety of control methods
- Eight 30' x 30' treatment plots within North Mountain Park have been established to compare four different blackberry control strategies:
 - 1) brush-cutting the blackberry to the ground annually in the spring, 2) brush-cutting to occur annually in the fall, 3) volunteer maintenance with hand tools to remove the root-balls, and 4) herbicide control
 - Additionally, there are two control plots with no treatments
- Through partnership with The Freshwater Trust, Service-Learning students, and University interns, staff plans to treat and monitor these plots for the next three to five years

- Staff is recommending that the Commission approve an 1,800 square foot expansion of the previously approved herbicide treatment area within Riverwalk Park. The Freshwater Trust will manage the application of herbicide on this additional 1800 square foot area in accordance with the IPM (Integrated Pest Management) approach previously approved for use within the riparian restoration project

DISCUSSION

- VanWyhe clarified that similar studies have been done by other entities, but this study would be specific to methods that could be undertaken by APRC and will be specific to this watershed
- Weir clarified that communication with adjacent homeowners has been undertaken and there are have not been any complaints submitted to date
- VanWyhe clarified that the test plot treatments will focus on eradication of blackberries and revegetation is not currently part of this study
- VanWyhe clarified that the two new plot areas for herbicide application were chosen for the following reasons: 1) proximity to North Mountain Park so this study can be included in educational programming; 2) this area experienced mechanical removal of blackberries, which are similar to the areas treated this way in North Mountain Park
- Landt stated concern with staff being able to manage a long-term study such as this because of a lack of time
 - VanWyhe stated that staff put in a significant amount of time getting the study set up and that it was set up in a way that the management of it could potentially be handed off to student interns
- Landt stated that the experimental design includes mowing plots once and year and stated the outcome of this type of treatment will not work and that it would be better to increase the number of times the plots are mowed annually
 - VanWyhe concurred and stated that there seemed to be staff limitations on the number of times the areas could be mowed annually
- Landt stated it looks like the project was modified from what best practices may be because of labor limitations and pointed out that the request would modify the project by making an exception to the no herbicide policy
- Wier stated if this approved as an ongoing study it would be necessary to apply herbicide more than once. The restoration project that already received permission to spray herbicide nearby is currently in year one of three of the timeframe when herbicide can be used. Applications of herbicide within the restoration area and on the test plots after the three-year period ends would need to be approved by the Commissioners if additional applications were desired
 - Wier added that Talent has a more restrictive IPM policy compared to Ashland, but included that they have moved to a waiver system that allows the City Manager to make exceptions to use herbicide
- Lewis stated support for approving this exception and hopes that ultimately grant money can be secured to increase blackberry removal and revegetate with native species
- Landt stated that it is already known that herbicides are the cheapest method to remove blackberries and that new information is not being learned from this study. Landt added that he does not support expanding herbicide use for this reason
- VanWyhe stated the desired duration of the project would be five years and that once regular activities resume (post COVID) the project could be managed by an SOU student

Motion: Lewis moved to approve an 1,800 square foot expansion of the previously approved herbicide treatment area within Riverwalk Park. The Freshwater Trust will manage the application of herbicide on this additional 1,800 square foot area in accordance with the IPM approach previously approved for use within the riparian restoration project and that herbicide use will be limited to the previously approved three-year time period. Seconded by Eldridge

Vote: Lewis, Eldridge and Gardiner voted yes; Landt voted no; Bell left the meeting prior to the vote.

The motion passed

c) 2022 APRC Meeting Schedule

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

- The dates for the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission public meetings to be held in 2022 need to be finalized and approved
- Black requested that Study Sessions be held electronically for the entirety of 2022, even if in-person meetings begin again
 - Business Meetings will be held electronically and will transition to in-person when it is determined safe to do so
- Staff recommends maintaining the schedule of holding meetings on the first and second Wednesday of the month with a start time of 6:00pm

DISCUSSION

- Sullivan clarified that the contract with RVTV to stream Regular Business Meetings only is \$5,000 and that other meetings held electronically can be viewed live through the Zoom webinar feature and the recordings are also posted to the website after the meeting
- Sullivan stated videos are typically posted to the website within 24 -48 hours after the meeting
- Landt stated that holding Study Sessions electronically increases public access to these meetings
- Lewis stated a general preference for in-person meetings

Motion: Landt moved to approve the 2022 meeting schedule as presented. Seconded by Lewis

Vote: The vote was all yes

Landt stated that it is important to hold the Study Sessions electronically all year because people plan around these dates and the meetings are listed in advance. Changing them to in-person mid-stream could cause confusion and an inability for some to attend. Eldridge agreed with this sentiment and added that APRC should look into providing the ability for people to attend in-person meetings remotely.

Black clarified that the Council allows people to call into the meeting, but a fully hybrid solution for Council Chambers has not been set-up as of yet. Black will continue to monitor the situation.

IX. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF

Landt would like an agenda item added to a meeting to determine the use of the Community Center and Pioneer Hall by APRC and added that because of the uncertainty surrounding those buildings in general, APRC should provide a transparent and clear statement about future involvement.

Gardiner stated the Ashland School District (ASD) recently approached the City Council asking for fees to be waived and stated that APRC delayed the project when determining permission to utilize Hunter Court, which created financial hardships. Gardiner stated that this statement was categorically incorrect and that staff leadership from APRC, City of Ashland and the Ashland School District are meeting and he hopes for a retraction of this statement as well as all entities forming a mutual understanding on how to work with each other professionally in the future.

X. UPCOMING MEETING DATES

- a) Trails Master Plan Review Subcommittee—December 14, 2021
 - Butler Bandshell, Lithia Park—12:00 p.m.
- b) Recreation Division Advisory Committee—December 16, 2021
 - Electronic Meeting—6:00 p.m.
- c) APRC Study Session—January 5, 2021 – (This meeting may be replaced with a special planning meeting regarding APRC funding)
 - Electronic Meeting—6:00 p.m.
- d) Senior Advisory Committee—January 10, 2021
 - Electronic Meeting—4:00 p.m.
- e) APRC Regular Business Meeting—January 12, 2021
 - Electronic Meeting—6:00 p.m.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Sean Sullivan, Business Operations Manager