

**MINUTES FOR STUDY SESSION
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
May 4, 2022
Electronic Meeting – 6 P.M.**

Present: Commissioners Landt (Chair), Lewis (Vice-Chair), Bachman, Bell, Eldridge; Director Black, Senior Services Superintendent Glatt, Supervisors Miller and Casale; Analyst Kiewel; Manager Sullivan

Absent: Deputy Director Dials

This meeting was recorded and uploaded to the APRC YouTube Channel: <https://youtu.be/YrOnwwAO1Vk>

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. E MAIN PARK PRELIMINARY DESIGN PRESENTATION

Black provided the following background on the E Main Park project.

- This park is replacing the YMCA Park which was sold several years ago back to the YMCA
- This project is funded through proceeds on real estate transactions
- The project is in the planning phase. The consultants from Terrain Landscape were present to present the preliminary plan
- A version of this plan was recently presented to the public. Since that presentation, comments from the public and the E Main Park working group have been taken into consideration and incorporated into the preliminary plan

The presentation by Piper von Chamier and Erin Gambacorta of Terrain Landscape begins at [2:47 in the meeting video](#). The [preliminary design plans](#) were included in the meeting packet and the [presentation slides](#) have been uploaded to the web page for this meeting. Highlights from the presentation include the following:

- Commissioners identified developing E Main Park as the number four (4) goal for the biennium
- The first public meeting to collect input on the design of E Main Park was held on October 24, 2019
- Low water use and low maintenance are key considerations in the design phase
- A public listening session was held on August 18, 2021. A basic diagram was displayed at the meeting to get input from the public
- A survey was sent out in September 2021 to provide the public an opportunity to provide input on potential uses and features at the park. The top five most important activities are as following: Pump Track – 53.33%; Walking Paths – 45.39%; Pollinator Plants – 38.04%; Picnic Area – 33.92%; Playground (Ages 6+) – 33.24% (a full list is displayed in the presentation at [17:04 in the meeting video](#)).
- Terrain Landscape and their traffic consultants met with the Ashland Transportation Commission meeting on November 18, 2021, and also met with Jackson County since the section of E Main Street adjacent to the property is a county-maintained road. Transportation planning includes pedestrians, bicycles and vehicular access. Additionally, improvements to E Main to facilitate the future construction of an RVTD (Rogue Valley Transportation District) bus stop will be included in the park development process
- Another public listening session was held on March 3, 2022, where a schematic plan was displayed that was more detailed than what was displayed in August 2021
- The updated plan includes the following features:
 - **Community Garden:** The community garden has grown to half an acre and the design of this will be done through a collaborative process with the public/gardeners
 - **Skill Park and Pump Track:** The location is a placeholder. The design of the pump track is being subcontracted out and will take place in the future
 - **Dog Park:** The dog park is bigger than previous designs. There are two separate areas that share a single shade structure that spans the fence separating the two areas. Storm water will be directed to these areas and will be incorporated into a feature of the dog park
 - **Nature Play/Playground:** The central area will include artificial turf with some wood chips surrounding the play structures. The nature play will be adjacent to a small lawn area that includes covered picnic areas. A split rail fence will separate this area from the parking lot

- **Restroom:** The restroom will consist of a covered portable toilet that has a permanent shade structure built around it
- **Walking Paths:** There are walking paths around the perimeter and interior of the park
- **Sports Court:** A 50' x 94' multi-sport court is located near the central lawn area
- The vegetation included in the park will be planned for lower water use and less maintenance requirements
- Next Steps include the following items
 - Pump Track design
 - Engineering design of the right of way and parking areas
 - Design development of all park areas
 - User group meetings (Community Gardeners; RVMBA [Rouge Valley Mountain Bike Association]; Bee City USA; Sports Court Groups; Ashland Senior Advisory Committee; Neighborhood Associations)
- Black stated the intent of this presentation was to get questions and comments from Commissioners, provide information to the public and allow the public another opportunity to provide input

Questions & Discussion

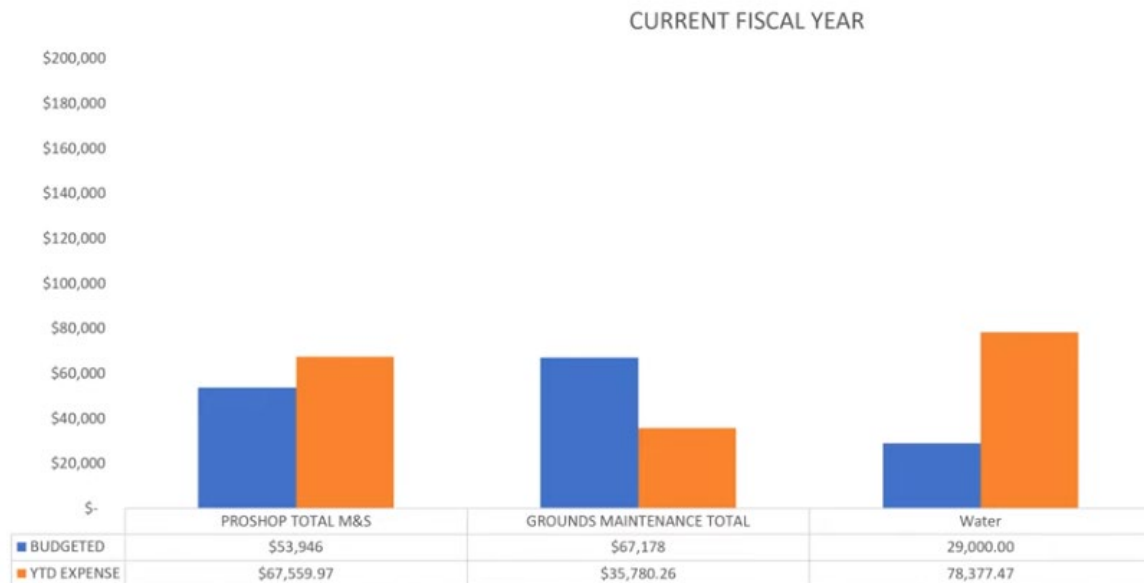
- Eldridge stated that there was a conversation, months back clarifying that there are not enough resources to extend the central bike path to connect to this park, but is happy to see that a sidewalk will be added to E Main Park and inquired about the extent of the new sidewalk
 - Von Chamier stated that right-of-way improvements along E Main are required, including sidewalks, that will extend from Clay Street (west) to Croker Street (east). Additionally, Clay Street is slotted to be a bike boulevard and will be striped accordingly
- Lewis stated that the public presentation in March was productive and at one point, 80 people were in attendance (electronically). Lewis added the design covers all the bases and will be a great addition to the community
- Bachman stated that this process is a fabulous example of public engagement and hopes this is used as a model for future projects and had additional inquiries about transportation issues on E Main. Von Chamier clarified the following point:
 - The large ditch on E Main will be covered from Crocker St to Clay St and will be incorporated into the sidewalk on E Main St
- Black clarified that there is not a clear connection from the central bike path to this park. It would be necessary to span the railroad tracks to improve this connection. Clay Street will become more accessible to bikes when it is striped and signed as a bike boulevard
 - Bachman stated concern about bikes on Clay St and would like to see a connection to the central bike path. Bachman noted that this connection is beyond the scope of this project/discussion, but wanted to put it out there
- Von Chamier clarified that the improvements for the RVTV bus stop would not encroach onto park property and would not include cut outs/pull outs for buses
 - Black added that improving public transportation is complimentary to the transportation plan by increasing options to travel to the park
- Bell asked if it is possible to set up a charging station for electric bikes
 - Black stated this could be discussed further. Von Chamier added that the next phase of the design will include utilities, and this could be wrapped into that process
- Von Chamier clarified that code does not require a minimum number of restroom stalls. Black added that he would like to accommodate people as best as possible
- Bachman asked if local bicycle organizations will be assisting with the maintenance of the pump track and skills park
 - Von Chamier clarified that the pump track will be designed by a national group (Velo Solutions). The skills park will be built by RVMBA. There will be little to no maintenance required for the pump track because it will consist of artificial turf and asphalt
 - Black reiterated that RVMBA will be a partner in design, construction, and maintenance of the skills park. APRC is currently working with RVMBA to re-design the dirt jumps adjacent to the dog park
- Eldridge stated that the multi-generational aspect is extremely important for this park. Eldridge has heard comments that there is too much going into one area but sees this as a benefit rather than a negative. Eldridge noted that it is not uncommon for pump tracks to be isolated from other amenities and this park provides a wonderful opportunity for families to engage in multiple activities in one location. Eldridge stated that it is good for the community to bring different types of park users together and this park will be a place that reflects the diversity of Ashland

III. OAK KNOLL GOLF COURSE DROUGHT IMPACTS / BUDGET DISCUSSION

Black reminded everyone that this is a work session, and the information is being presented to inform and get input. No decisions will be made at the meeting. The presentation of this item begins at [1:00:08 in the meeting video](#). The presentation and discussion included the following points:

- Black [displayed a chart](#) showing the actual monthly water charges for the golf course for FY19, 20 and 21
 - Black noted that in June 2021 expenses drastically increased due to TID (Talent Irrigation District) water becoming unavailable due to drought conditions. Black added that the golf course used too much city water for irrigation when TID became unavailable
 - Black stated that continuing to use culinary water (which is significantly more expensive than TID water) is not feasible from a budgetary or natural resource management perspective
- Water costs continued to be higher than typical, and in the current fiscal year this is a major expense APRC cannot afford
 - Actual expenses for water at the golf course are as follows: FY19 - \$15,899.76; FY20 - \$26,247.98; FY21 - \$49,046.02
 - Projections for the current and next fiscal years were presented as follows: FY22 - \$96,377.47 / FY23 - \$89,451.08 (if culinary water is used to meet the irrigation needs of the golf course)
 - A typical year of expense for irrigating the golf course (primarily with TID water) is \$15-30K
- Black displayed the YTD for Budgeted vs. Actual Expenses

Budgeted vs Actual Expense YTD



- In a typical year water would take 19% of the materials and supply budget (when TID water is fully available). For the current fiscal year water is already at 43% of the budget
- Black reiterated that the golf course is already over budget and continuing to use culinary water for irrigation purposes would exacerbate the situation
- Black displayed the recommendation that was made by the Golf Course Subcommittee at the last subcommittee meeting after reviewing the information that Black presented to Commissioners:

Deforest moved that the Golf Course Subcommittee recommends maintaining the golf course long-term and in the short-term find ways to keep operations going while looking into alternative solutions for future droughts. Seconded by Rothermel.

The vote was all yes (Landt was absent at the time of the vote)

- Black clarified that culinary water has been used at the golf course in the past, but not to the level seen recently and what it would take with TID not available as it has been in past years
- Black reiterated that if culinary water is used for irrigation, it would require Commissioners to reallocate funds from a different budget area to cover the cost to irrigate the golf course
- Black clarified that even if culinary water was used in high priority golf areas, such as tees, it would still result in going over budget
- Black reviewed solutions discussed by the golf course subcommittee

- **Effluent** – This is a great idea to use this resource on an area such as a golf course. It would be possible to use effluent for irrigation purposes, but it would require securing permits and a significant amount of infrastructure would be needed to implement. Installing pipe from the treatment plant to a property for irrigation is a multi-million-dollar project that would take multiple years. Black has approached the Public Works Director to start the conversation about developing a long-term plan to better utilize effluent
- **Wells** – It is questionable that the state would allow the use of groundwater to irrigate a golf course when other uses may be a higher priority (such as agriculture). This is not an immediate solution but could be considered for a long-term solution. Black clarified that APRC does not operate any wells for irrigation on park lands. The former YMCA park contains a well, but it was never owned by APRC. The YMCA allowed APRC to use the well when this park was owned by APRC
 - Eldridge stated that groundwater and surface water are hydrologically connected, and it is problematic to simply state that since surface water is not available, ground water should be used. Eldridge does not see this option as a viable solution
 - Eldridge posited if xeriscaping the golf course may be an alternative solution, but a transition of this may be too expensive
 - Black stated that there is no such thing as a xeriscape green and a golf course will always require irrigation. This could be looked at as a longer-term solution
 - Eldridge added the need to determine how important the golf course is to the community to better evaluate APRC priorities
- **City Water** – This option is too expensive and is not in the budget
- **TID** – There is still the possibility of TID water becoming available to get the course through the season or until direction from Commissioners says something different. Staff will know more once the Talent Irrigation District decides how much water will be available

Black summarized that the budget situation is not good. The water supply is low and not where it typically has been in the past. This item is intended to better inform the public and the Commissioners about the dire situation, rather than not talking about it and hoping for the best

Questions/Discussion

- Bell stated that there is only so much water in the valley available and the current drought situation is a result of climate change and that the amount of water available now is likely to continue into the future
- Eldridge stated that it is likely that a cost recovery analysis will show that the golf course benefits a small group of people and is highly subsidized by City funds
 - Lewis noted that many programs are subsidized, and each program needs to be evaluated based on the benefit to the community
- Black stated the future of the golf course will need to continue to be discussed in public meetings until a decision is made
 - Bell stated a desire to move quickly on the decision on what to do with the golf course
- Staff was directed to put this item on the agenda of the next business meeting so Commissioners can vote to cease using culinary water at the golf course for irrigation

Public Input

[Written comments](#) were received prior to the meeting

Jim Hatton of Ashland stated he has attended both subcommittee meetings and provided comments at both meetings. He stated concern about the management and maintenance of the golf course. All programs are subsidized, but golfers pay to play. The course could be closed temporarily and rehabilitated so golf can continue as a use.

IV. PARKS IRRIGATION PLAN

Black stated there needs to be an acceptance that brown is the new green. The reality is that we do not have enough water to water all park areas. Staff has evaluated water options and prioritized park areas as high, medium and low (as well as trees and shrubs) as described in the [staff report](#).

- Lithia and North Mountain Park are the highest priority because of the uses and their importance to the community. These parks will see little to no change in irrigation through the irrigation season. Some dry areas may be visible depending on weather conditions

- Medium parks, such as Garfield, Triangle and Hunter Park will see a reduction in irrigation; moderate visible impacts likely to be present. The splash pad at Garfield parks re-circulates the water and will be functional over the summer
- A majority of parks are listed as low priority. These areas will see significantly reduced irrigation and expect severe visible impacts with the potential for partial loss of lawns in some instances
- People will need to change expectations similar to how the expectations about weeds needed to change when APRC stopped using herbicides
- Lithia Park & North Mountain Park will be watered five (5) days a week as usual; Garfield formerly watered five (5) days a week and will now be watered four (4) days a week; run times will also be reduced in medium and low priority parks
- Actual expenses and projections have been included in the staff report. The reductions in irrigation will seek to reduce the projected \$89,424 overage for the current biennium as much as possible
- Miller stated that irrigation will be adjusted continually based on weather patterns, the condition of parks, and budgetary considerations
- Black stated that it is likely that curtailment will be necessary this summer
- Black asked Commissioners to communicate to staff if there are any issues with the categorization of specific parks as high, medium, or low
 - Bell stated the plan is appropriate under the circumstances and appreciates the work put into it. No other comments from Commissioners were provided

V. NUTLEY EASEMENT – EXPANDED USE

Black stated there is a request from a property owner at 108 Granite Street for an easement through APRC property. The property owner is adjacent to 114 Granite St on the corner of Nutley and Granite Streets, who already has an easement through APRC property. Back displayed a map of the easement (included in the [staff report](#)):

- The easement would provide vehicular access on through APRC property to reach 108 Granite St via a privately held easement on 114 Granite St
- Approving the easement request does not negatively impact APRC property and would provide equal access to both property owners
- Staff will determine the cost to secure the easement and is seeking direction from Commissioners on whether to continue pursuing the easement or not

Discussion

- Bell, Bachman and Lewis stated support for the easement
- Landt clarified that final approval will happen at a future meeting once an agreement has been drafted and that staff has received direction and should continue working on the easement request

VI. OPEN SPACE PLAN MAP REVISION DISCUSSION *(discussion lead by Commissioner Landt, no background materials provided)*

This item was removed from the agenda and will be on the March 11, 2022, agenda

VII. PROPOSAL FOR SECURITY CAMERA USE AT PERIMETER OF JAPANESE GARDEN

Black gave a presentation about the extent of vandalism, displaying images of vandalism/graffiti (the slideshow starts at [2:10:04 in the meeting video](#)) to justify the use of security cameras at the Japanese Garden. The presentation included the following points

- The level of vandalism and graffiti in parks, system wide, has greatly increased recently. Staff is continually in the process of cleaning up graffiti; doors and restroom fixtures are damaged or destroyed on a regular basis; The David Grubbs Memorial on the central bike path was recently destroyed (it has since been rebuilt)
- Miller stated he has been with parks for over 20 years, and this is the worst that it has been. Staff finds new graffiti on a weekly basis. The graffiti on the Perozzi Fountain was not able to be fully removed. Miller added that he recently testified in front of the grand jury regarding expenses incurred by APRC to mitigate vandalism
- Casale reiterated an uptick in vandalism including cutting locks and illegal dumping. This activity negatively impacts the experience park users
- Black stated that there is a camera at the Skate Park, which was approved by Commissioners. Ashland Police was recently monitoring the camera and was able to make an arrest through the use of the camera. Black is not proposing installing cameras everywhere, but there is justification for pinpointed use of cameras. Restrictions on when cameras are operable can be developed

- Black displayed the site plan identifying the placement of cameras at the four corners of the Japanese garden (as included in the [staff report](#))
- The poles and structure housing the cameras would be decorative and would fit the design of the garden
- The cameras would operate at night only
- The cost of the installation will be covered through private donations made to the Ashland Parks Foundation

Landt stated that this item will come back to Commissioners at the next meeting

VIII. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF

None

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Sean Sullivan, Business Operations Manager