

**MINUTES FOR STUDY SESSION**  
**ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**  
**February 1, 2023**  
**Electronic Meeting – 6 P.M.**

Present: Commissioners Landt (Chair), Lewis (Vice-Chair), Adams, Bachman, Eldridge; 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/lf-i6RSpzEU>

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Landt called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

**II. PUBLIC FORUM**

None

**III. PARKS MEMORIAL POLICY AMENDMENT DISCUSSION**

Sullivan reviewed the staff report included in the [meeting packet](#). The presentation included the following items:

- An amendment to the APRC Memorial Policy was approved on November 25, 2019. The approved amendment established the authority of the Current Parks, Conservation, and Maintenance Subcommittee to approve standard memorial requests and make recommendations on nonstandard memorial requests to Commissioners for final consideration.
  - Since then, 20 requests have been approved with no need to make alterations to the requests.
    - The 20 approved memorials have brought in more than \$20,000
- The Current Parks, Conservation, and Maintenance Subcommittee recommended further consideration of this amendment by Commissioners on [November 29, 2022](#).
- Staff would like Commissioners to consider amending the APRC memorial Policy to:
  - Allow the Director to either approve standard memorials or defer authorization to the Commissioners at the discretion of the Director
  - Provide a report to Commissioners on standard memorial requests that were approved or denied
  - Allow anyone denied the ability to appeal the decision to the full Commission

Providing the APRC Director with the authority to approve standard memorial requests will streamline the process and reduce the number of staff hours that go into administering the program.

Discussion

- Eldridge suggested cleaning up the language in section VI.A.2. to make it less confusing regarding which subcommittee reviews and makes recommendations for non-standard memorials
  - Sullivan stated this can be incorporated into the amendment

There was general agreement to bring the amendment back to the Commission at the February 8, 2023 Regular Business Meeting for approval

**IV. CALLE GUANAJUATO 2023 SEASON**

Dials provided the following information on the upcoming Calle Guanajuato Rental Season

- APRC leases space to restaurants and the artisan's market on Calle Guanajuato
- Nine requests to rent space have been submitted and will be brought to Commissioners for approval in March
  - A boundary map identifying rental spaces on Calle Guanajuato and the front of Lithia Park as well as a proposed season (typically mid-March – early-November) of operation will be submitted by staff for approval at the same time
  - Staff will be presenting an optional off-season rental period and fee rates for all rental periods ,between January and March 2024

- The policy states that rental agreements shall be approved by the end of February, so an extension will need to be approved to accommodate a March date for approval
- Dials reminded Commissioners that the fees that were approved by Commissioners last year were then denied by City Council when the fees were brought before them and that the fees that were submitted to Council would have reduced the fees charged to renters during the off-season rental period and raised fees during the regular rental period
  - Black made the following comments regarding the fee schedule process
    - There is an annual requirement to submit a consolidated fee schedule to City Council for approval
    - The City Council is required to ratify fees that the Commissioners approve and the denial of the fees last year was a violation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Ashland and APRC
      - Dials displayed the fee proposal from last year that was approved by Commissioners ([pg. 17-20 in the meeting packet](#))

#### Discussion

- Dials clarified that the Artisan Market Manager spoke in favor of the fees proposed in 2022 and that restaurant owners were also made aware of the fee changes and did not raise objections
- Landt stated that the rental fees charged are not close to market value which results in a small number of restaurants being subsidized and would like to see APRC charge fees at market value
- Adams stated agreement that the fees charged are low and supports raising the fees incrementally
- Lewis stated the improvement and policy to rent out space on the Calle has been a success and supports incrementally raising fees
- Bachman stated market rate would be a difficult amount to set, but would like to see a three-year program to raise fees and ensure all costs are recouped
  - Dials clarified that after a recent analysis, staff determined that the fees collected do not cover the costs to operate the program which is different from initial cost recovery findings
- Dials suggested moving forward with the fee increase that was approved last year, without the reduction during winter months, and then setting increases over a three-year period
  - Bachman stated support for increasing the fees that were last approved by Commissioner (denied by Council) and using those as a first-year base
  - Dials stated that using the Consumer Price Index for the West Coast could be used to determine annual increases
    - Landt stated simply increasing rates based on inflation will not get the fees caught up to where they should be
    - Eldridge stated support for increases in the realm of 7-9% over the next three years
- Dials stated she will report back on what kind of increase would be needed to simply recover all costs
- Landt suggested taking a close look at fees charged to vendors of the artisans market to ensure they are not being overcharged since the use of these spaces are used far less than the spaces used by restaurants

Staff will bring this item back to Commissioners in March

#### V. MID-LITHIA PARK ADA IMPROVEMENTS

Black displayed some images of the stairs across from the pickleball courts in Lithia Park and gave a presentation included the following items:

- The landing and stairs were recently damaged when an oak tree fell in the recent windstorm
- The stairs, made out of large river rock, do not meet safety standards and are in the process of being replaced with concrete that will meet safety standards
- Black displayed a sketch of possible ADA improvements to add a ramp to the south of the stairs which could serve as more assessable access to the Japanese Garden
  - This idea will need to get reviewed as part of the approval and implementation of the Lithia Park Master Plan
- Eldridge asked if there is a way to use more natural materials, such as the large river stones, and still be ADA compliant
  - Black stated this is not likely, but natural stone steps could be installed and meet ADA standards and noted it would take more time and money to complete
  - Eldridge stated this is main entrance to the Japanese Garden and would like to see a price difference between concrete steps and using natural stone
- Black clarified that the steps in question on not the steps that are directly in front of the Ashland Japanese Garden and those steps will be blocked off and no longer used as steps

- Landt pointed out that the Japanese Garden was designed with the thought that the steps in front of garden entrance would not be functional
- Black noted that the stairs do not line up with the sidewalk across the street and it may be desirable in the future to line up the stairs with the existing sidewalk across the street to facilitate a cross walk that meets safety standards
- Black stated he will look into stone steps for the damaged steps across from the pickleball courts, that would be more in line with what is in the Japanese Garden and will bring back the cost difference
  - Multiple Commissioners stated a preference for reviewing full replacement of the stairs in the context of the Lithia Park Master Plan and that repairs made in Lithia Park should be reviewed with a range of options from using basic/standard materials to more natural/higher end materials.

Landt stated he hears general consensus coming from Commissioners to do the bare minimum to repair the damage from the tree while a longer-term solution is determined.

Black stated staff will work on the basic repairs.

## **VI. WILDLIFE HABITAT ZONES**

Dials provided the following information on this item: At the July 6, 2022, Regular meeting the Commission directed staff to work on maps that outline specific areas to designate as Wildlife Sanctuary areas. During the discussion there was agreement that taking this approach may give pause and education to users as to why certain rules are in place and how certain activities can have a negative impact on wildlife. The areas included in the discussion were North Mountain Park, Riverwalk, and Ashland Pond.

On September 7, 2022, staff presented maps for North Mountain Park, Riverwalk and Ashland Pond. Feedback included:

- Referring to these areas as “Wildlife Habitat Zones”
- A suggestion to designate Rocky Top (in NMP) as a distinct, separate park since it is generally understood.
- Clarification that new rules for those zones would not be adopted. This program would be an educational program about existing rules regarding wildlife.
- Staff has prepared a draft map of Oredson Todd Woods.

### Discussion

Eldridge stated concern that the identification of these lands as wildlife habitat zones did not use the best available science to qualify why these areas should be identified as such. Eldridge added that designations lands for wildlife often come with increased protections which is not the case with this proposed program because it is an education campaign and not a habitat protection program. Adams stated support for the points made by Eldridge.

Black stated that unless a majority of Commissioners direct staff to continue working on this program, staff will cease working on it.

After discussion among Commissioners, it was determined that Ashland Pond will serve as a pilot project by installing educational signs to urge parks users to follow existing park regulations and see if that makes a noticeable difference on rule compliance.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Sean Sullivan, Business Operations Manager