

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION
Minutes
July 16, 2018

ATTENDEES

Present: Commissioners Gardiner, Heller, Landt, Miller; Director Black; Superintendent Dials; Forestry & Trails Supervisor Minica; Executive Assistant Dyssegard; Minute-taker Manuel

Absent: Commissioner Lewis; City Council Liaison Mayor Stromberg

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gardiner called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. at The Grove, 1195 E. Main.

PUBLIC INPUT

Frank Betlejewski, Chair of the Ashland Forest Lands Commission, was called forward.

Betlejewski said he would be speaking as a private citizen rather than as a representative of the Forest Lands Commission. He noted that the City's recent purchase of Harold Hardesty's land and Public Works' plans for a Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) project could impact Ashland Pond, an area his remarks would address.

Betlejewski commented that the planned improvements for the WWTP might necessitate additional wetland mitigation. He referred to the Lithia Park Master Plan Foundation Report, noting that the document included a section on impacts to Ashland Creek, with the focus on health and preservation of Ashland Creek. He suggested that the impacts and focus could also be in line with wetland mitigation efforts planned in association with the WWTP project.

Betlejewski highlighted portions of the document, including a discussion of natural occurrences such as flooding. He stated that in his opinion, flooding would most likely increase in the future due to climate change. The Foundation Report recommended increasing riparian habitat to mitigate flood impacts. The report also described conditions where a more complex creek channel would be helpful to better manage such acts of nature. He noted that there were a number of ways to improve fish habitat and strengthen the flood plain and he advocated for their consideration.

Betlejewski talked about the ten bridges across Ashland Creek, noting that sediment could build up around bridge supports, creating an environment unsuitable for Coho salmon. He said Public Works' plan to release effluent at the confluence of Bear Creek and Ashland Creek might result in more suitable habitat. Betlejewski voiced agreement with the proposals described in the Lithia Park Master Plan Foundation Report.

ASHLAND POND OUTFALL PROJECT / HARDESTY PROPERTY / WWTP DISCUSSION (INFORMATION, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR)

Black welcomed Public Works Director Paula Brown and said she would be giving a presentation on plans for upgrading the WWTP and addressing properties possibly affected under the jurisdictions of APRC, the Greenway Foundation and others.

Brown explained her background and familiarity with Public Works' plans for the WWTP. She said the planning began in 1995, around the same time she was hired as Public Works Director. After a hiatus from Public Works she returned and now wanted to bring the project to fruition.

Brown outlined five areas possibly affected by the proposed plan:

- WWTP outfall relocation to Bear Creek
- Future WWTP construction of a third oxidation ditch and wetlands mitigation
- Future WWTP construction and relocation of the Greenway bike path
- Development of the Hardesty property, including newly constructed wetlands
- Hardesty property with regard to APRC's maintenance equipment

Brown stated that many studies had been reviewed or incorporated into the plan, including the 2012 Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Master Plan, the 2014 Wastewater Facilities Plan and the 2017 WWTP Outfall Relocation Study. Brown noted that Public Works was partnering with Freshwater Trust to obtain shading credits, wetlands delineation support and water reuse options that could apply to the Billings, Imperatrice and Hardesty properties.

Brown talked about the lengthy process involved in securing a DEQ permit. She said that once obtained, the permit would allow Public Works to move forward with a project to reduce water temperatures beginning January of 2019, thereby creating compliance with DEQ regulations. She said lower water temperatures would also improve water quality. It was stated that all of the planned projects were focused on achieving that goal with the exception of the proposed addition of a third oxidation ditch.

Brown described the areas in and around the WWTP, pointing out current wetlands, the location of the Hardesty property and proximity to Bear Creek Greenway. She said the existing wetlands had been constructed in the late 1990s for studies related to phosphorus functions. While the wetlands did not work for that purpose, they would provide valuable assistance in reaching the current goal of reducing water temperatures.

Brown indicated that there were five elements that together would cool the water. New and enhanced wetlands would allow water to cool for 24 to 48 hours prior to moving into Bear Creek. This option, while helpful, would limit water in a section of Ashland Creek during the summer. Releasing cool water from the Reeder Reservoir would be another option, although it too would be limited during certain times of the year because of its primary use as the source of Ashland's drinking water. Brown stated that temperature credits and shading at the far end of the watershed would also help cool the water as it traveled down the mountains.

- ***Outfall Relocation***

Brown reviewed two options for outfall relocation, highlighting probable requirements that would include moving away from Ashland Creek into Bear Creek. She stated that there was an existing 12-inch sewer line that could be utilized. It currently went from Ashland Pond to the WWTP and could be extended to travel from the treatment plant as well. A proposed upper line would follow the creek-way and drop down into Ashland Pond, an option that was preferred by the engineers. If implemented, there would be some significant impacts, including creek crossings and possible issues related to close proximity of Bear Creek. The lower option would follow the 12-inch sewer line to Ashland Pond. Unlike the upper line, coverage would not need to span the circumference of Ashland Pond and

there would be a more comfortable 30-ft. distance from Bear Creek. The impacts would be minimal and it would be a good fit for the enhanced wetlands.

Commissioner Discussion

Landt questioned the creek crossing closest to the treatment plant, noting that the sewer line crossing might already be in place. If that were the case, then only one new crossing would be needed, thereby causing only one creek disturbance.

Landt talked about the goal of improving lands impacted by the proposed project, noting that mature trees could be affected by the piping. He suggested staying above the creek-way and away from most of the trees that connected hydrologically with the pond. Landt stated that even though there might be only one creek crossing, piping around Ashland Pond could create more disturbance than necessary because it would be so close to the water.

Brown said the plan would call for piping closer to the surface. She indicated that if there were too many disturbances to native trees, the upper route might be preferable. Brown said the goal was to engineer gravity-fed lines. If there were too many disturbances to mature trees, the upper route would be more strongly considered.

Landt recommended a cost-benefit analysis to assess the impacts and the cost of replacing native trees. He suggested having APRC's arborist collaborate with Public Works to determine the best possible outcome.

- ***Third Oxidation Ditch***

Brown stated that when the current WWTP was built in the 1990s, APRC authorized Public Works to use a portion of APRC property for wetlands. With a growing necessity for a third oxidation ditch adjacent to the current ditch, APRC property would again come into play. The BMX Park at the south end would probably need to be moved and used as a construction staging area. In addition, cooling requirements called for several more acres of wetland in addition to those on the west side of the treatment plant. Brown displayed a map depicting the proposed third (and future fourth) oxidation ditch location, noting that trails and walking paths, native trees and shrubs could become components of the enhanced wetlands area.

Brown discussed the Ashland portion of the Bear Creek Greenway that includes a freeway connection. She commented that moving the bike path to the other side of Ashland Creek with connections to the Greenway might be advantageous. If that were to occur, Public Works would construct the redirected bike path.

In response to a question by Heller, Black said the APRC property in that area was slated for development as a park space but not yet master planned. He noted that if Public Works utilized the area, the WWTP plan called for wetland areas that created a parklike setting, similar to Ashland Pond. Brown agreed, noting that the area would be able to sustain birds and wildlife. She explained that the pond was typically shallow with some deeper areas of approximately four feet.

Landt talked about the parkland needed for the project, noting that it would be used primarily by Public Works. He proposed a possible trade between APRC and Public Works in which the parkland for enhanced wetland mitigation was traded for APRC's acquisition of a portion of Imperatrice property (some acreage above the TID Ditch). He stated that in his opinion, such a trade would be a win-win as Public Works would obtain property close to the WWTP facilities and APRC would be able to ensure that species on the undeveloped section of Imperatrice were secure, with the land used for some trail development. Brown agreed, noting that Imperatrice encompassed approximately 900 acres and it would be appropriate for the City to consider using some of it in that way.

There followed a discussion regarding City-owned properties and APRC-owned properties. Black stated that Public Works and APRC tended to use different funding sources dedicated for specific uses. He indicated that if APRC owned the property it would be used as parkland, barring a comparable trade. Brown agreed, noting that the Imperatrice property was originally purchased for development of a new wastewater treatment plant and the plan was later vacated. She added that the Imperatrice upland should be considered for recreational uses.

Black stated that APRC had a goal to master plan the Imperatrice property for trails and, in his opinion, there was enough land for all proposed uses. He suggested that the City, APRC and Public Works collaborate on all those uses. He expressed his appreciation for the WWTP overview and indicated that he was looking forward to working with Public Works on the opportunities for both entities.

Heller commented that moving the Greenway connection in that location sounded sensible. Landt agreed, noting that the project had been a long-term goal. Black stated that it would be a preferred option for the Bear Creek Greenway extension.

- ***Hardesty Property***

Brown said the City's purchase of Harold Hardesty's land would allow Public Works to determine uses for approximately 21 acres of EFU land – property spanning two tax lots. Approximately 55% would be used for wetlands, creek and riparian shading and an additional 7.5% would be used for fire and rural lands training. Other options could include a Public Works utility facility and space for miscellaneous community uses.

Brown said the plan for developing the Hardesty property must be approved by Jackson County. In response to a question by Black, Brown indicated that the B Street property, currently used as a service center and for City vehicle parking, was tentatively slated as a location for affordable housing.

Landt initiated a brief discussion about housing proposed for B Street and whether it was in keeping with the Transportation Systems Plan. Brown highlighted the longer commute to the Hardesty property, noting that it was negligible, and said the site was small but had the advantage of good circulation.

Brown concluded the presentation, stating that Public Works was looking forward to partnering with the City of Ashland and APRC to engineer wetlands to cool creek waters by providing shade trees and an attractive area hosting flora and fauna native to the area. She stated that moving the bike path and collaborating with the Greenway Foundation could also provide value for other projects. Brown suggested that APRC might want to relocate maintenance equipment from Lithia Park to the proposed utilities yard on the Hardesty property.

Black stated that the goal for Lithia Park called for the maintenance yard to remain in Lithia Park, but equipment serving the outer parks might work for the Hardesty land. He stated that from a land-use perspective, providing multi-family housing along B Street would be advantageous because of its proximity to walking and biking trails as well as the center of town.

Brown expressed appreciation for the opportunity to present the WWTP proposed upgrade and said a collaborative effort would enhance the project.

REQUEST FOR SECURITY CAMERAS ON APRC LAND DISCUSSION (INFORMATION, CHIEF OF POLICE)

Black welcomed Ashland Police Department (APD) Chief of Police Tighe O'Meara and said the Chief would be initiating a discussion about cameras for the APRC Skate Park. Black said the Skate Park was a small, heavily used facility on Water Street. He noted that Skate Park rules were largely unenforced and typically un-monitored.

Chief O'Meara said it became apparent, during a five-year strategic planning session, that there was a predominant perception about decreased safety at the Ashland Skate Park. APD had been receiving anecdotal evidence that kids and their parents had safety concerns in the area. He cited comments from a fifteen-year-old who said he and his friends were afraid to skate at that park so they used other Rogue Valley skate parks.

O'Meara noted that there was a Recycle Center adjacent to the Skate Park that attracted people who appeared "off-putting." He highlighted a recent, collaborative effort between APRC, the Ashland Fire Department, Public Works and APD to clean up the area, with the intent that it would become less vulnerable to negative behaviors and "off-putting" people.

O'Meara said that installing safety surveillance cameras focused on the Skate Park and adjacent areas might help. The cameras could be electronically monitored so parents could check on their children. O'Meara called for guidance from APRC. If APRC was supportive of the project, APD could pursue next steps.

O'Meara noted that APD might be able to offset the cost of the cameras and said there would be other elements to discuss such as the need for physical infrastructure to secure the cameras and details regarding the distribution of photos.

Commissioner Discussion

Miller asked about the intent and reach of the coverage – asking whether the goal would be to monitor the area and enforce the rules if negative behaviors were displayed. O'Meara replied that APD would not be able to monitor the cameras themselves. He said he envisioned no "big brother" activities; the idea was to increase a sense of safety and give parents a tool toward alleviating safety concerns.

Black noted that there were other ways to use the information provided by the cameras; for instance, users could determine what the availability was, similar to a tennis player checking to see if courts were full. He said APRC used cameras in other locations for informational purposes or to assist employees, such as lifeguards monitoring the pool area for safety. Those uses were less focused on enforcement of rules and more focused on the need to ensure a safe environment.

Miller said a still camera or webcam could be substituted for the more expensive video equipment. O'Meara agreed, noting that for informational purposes, that type of setup would work well. However, he said it would be less effective for reducing negative behaviors while surveillance cameras would allow the police to review recorded data so as to reduce negative behaviors or assist in crime investigations.

Gardiner talked about the vandalism in the Skate Park restroom and illegal camping as well as other types of occurrences apparently prevalent at the Skate Park. He asked about issues related to the Recycling Center and how best to let people know that the area was under surveillance.

O'Meara noted that the system worked best if clearly communicated via signage to alert those at the site. He stated that there had been no incidents at the Recycling Center that he could recall.

Landt remarked that the Recycling Center was fenced and open only when staff were present. He noted that in the past, the Skate Park had been monitored periodically by an on-site police cadet. Landt inquired about the cadet program and the reasons for disbanding the effort. O'Meara replied that the program had been disbanded prior to his tenure. He stated that it was most likely a staffing issue. That said, O'Meara emphasized that controlling negative behavior by having enforcement personnel in place was known to be less effective than problem solving

through physical design and other security measures. He stated that he would be willing to revisit the issue and research best practices.

Heller asked about a survey in addition to anecdotal evidence. O'Meara acknowledged that there was little hard evidence other than the calls for service, which were numerous. He stated that the location was known as a hot spot because of homeless activities along the creek. With a homeless gathering place so close to the Skate Park, the park had become a focal point.

Landt stated that he was not entirely supportive of a "big brother" type of surveillance system. He talked about the positive attributes of living in a small town such as Ashland and the relative lack of crime due to a dedicated police force and active citizenry. Landt indicated that he would prefer an alternative security solution at the Skate Park if possible.

Gardiner thanked the Chief for his presentation, stating that speaking for himself, he would like to explore the cameras and other ways to move forward so that the recent cleanup could be maintained and equipment would not continue to be misused or broken.

Black pointed out the differences between monitoring public spaces versus private spaces, noting that the *big brother* concept had come from a story depicting personal privacy invasions in people's homes. He stated that people were expected to be on their best behavior in public spaces and demonstrate respect for posted rules.

Black commented that retaining information captured by cameras and restricting access to the information was the antithesis of using information for multiple positive purposes. Giving parents access to check on their kids or the ability to check out the weather or enabling users to ascertain whether friends were present could become possibilities from the data captured by cameras. He distinguished between governmental control (restricted) and data available to everyone (unrestricted).

Heller suggested a one-year trial to gather feedback and experience. He asked about the cost of setting up the infrastructure and purchasing the cameras. Chief O'Meara replied that while the exact figures were unknown, the project would entail expenses for pole installation, power / connectivity and others. He noted that if the collective decision makers decided to move forward, funding would be found.

Black differentiated between Skate Park users and the negative behaviors of others in the area, stating that the difficulties arose partially because of its isolated location and close proximity to those using the Recycling Center.

O'Meara said he would continue gathering information and would let people know that the matter was under review and an improvement plan had been proposed.

In answer to a question from the audience, Gardiner replied that while he supported the project personally, no vote had been taken.

ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF

- ***Lithia Park Master Plan***

Landt said several additional items needed to come under consideration with the consultants assisting APRC in developing a Lithia Park Master Plan. He advocated for listing a desired acquisition of the property at the top of Ashland Creek as a goal in the 100-year Master Plan. Landt noted that the property was currently privately owned but if that were to change, it could be considered for APRC ownership.

Landt also stated that there was a piece of private property in Lithia Park on Nutley Street and he had never heard a definitive answer about its status. He said it might be helpful if the consultants recommended a best practice for privately held property within park boundaries.

- ***Pickleball***

Heller stated that as pickleball use continued to grow in Ashland, conflicts regarding use of tennis/pickleball courts occurred. He talked about a group of approximately 25 women who used the courts in Lithia Park regularly on Wednesday evenings. Because of the number of participants, there were no additional courts available for tennis players wishing to play during that timeframe. Heller said he encouraged the group to inquire about reserved times for playing in Lithia Park. Black replied that he was under the impression that use of the courts was first come, first served.

- **OLLI OPEN HOUSE**

Gardiner announced that there would be an OLLI Open House on Wednesday, July 25, from 1 - 4:00 p.m. at Southern Oregon University's Stevenson Union. He relayed that APRC would have a table at the event and he encouraged the Commissioners to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Manuel, Assistant

These Minutes are not a verbatim record. The narrative has been condensed and paraphrased at times to reflect the discussions and decisions made. Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission Study Sessions and Regular meetings are digitally recorded and the recordings are available upon request.