



AGENDA FOR SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

January 6, 2022

Electronic Meeting – 10:00 AM.

Public Participation Instructions

This meeting will be held electronically via Zoom Webinar. Registration is required to view the meeting. A link to the meeting will be sent to you once registration has been completed https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_sFZA3LWXSL2JEsWBIG8Bdw

Written testimony will be accepted via email sent to sean.sullivan@ashland.or.us. Please include "**Public Testimony for January 6, 2022 Special Meeting**" in the subject line. Written testimony submitted before Wednesday, January 5, 2022, 12:00 pm will be made available to the Parks Commissioners before the meeting. All testimony will be included in the meetings minutes.

Oral Testimony will be taken during the electronic public meeting. If you wish to provide oral testimony, send an email to sean.sullivan@ashland.or.us, preferably before Wednesday, January 5, 2022, 12:00 pm. Late requests will be honored if possible. Please provide the following information: 1) make the subject line of the email "**January 6 Speaker Request**", 2) include your name, 3) the agenda item on which you wish to speak on, 4) specify if you will be participating by computer or telephone, and 5) the name you will use if participating by computer (Zoom Name) or the telephone number you will use if participating by telephone. Staff will provide information necessary to join the meeting upon request.

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA
- III. PUBLIC FORUM
- IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS
 1. APRC Long-term Organizational & Funding Strategy Discussion (Possible Action)
- V. NEW BUSINESS
- VI. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF
- VII. ADJOURNMENT

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Administrator's office at (541) 488-6002 (TTY phone number (800) 735-2900). Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to the meeting (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title I). Parks Commission meetings are broadcast live on Channel 9, or on CHARTER CABLE CHANNEL 180. Visit the City of Ashland's website at www.ashland.or.us.

ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

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PARKS COMMISSIONER STAFF REPORT

Date: January 3, 2022
To: Ashland Parks and Recreation Commissioners
From: Michael A. Black, Director
Subject: Long-term Funding Discussion for APRC – Special Meeting of 1.6.22

The Parks Commissioners adopted the following goal as their number one priority:

“Investigate, develop and implement a dedicated permanent funding source to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission.”

SITUATION

A request from the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission (“APRC”) Board of Commissioners (the “Commissioners”) for a ballot measure regarding a special levy for APRC general operations was recently left without answer by the City of Ashland, which in essence was a denial of the request. Commissioners must now meet to determine their “next steps” in determining the long-term funding for APRC.

BACKGROUND

Specifically, the Commissioners requested that the Council refer a levy in the amount of \$2.09/\$1,000 of assessed property value – the traditional funding level for APRC – to the voters for the May 2022 election. The request asked the Council to add the request for a May ballot referral to their Jan. 4, 2022 City Council meeting, due to urgent timing considerations. The request was not added to the City Council meeting agenda.

The traditional level of funding has been \$2.09/\$1,000 of assessed value. In 2019, the formulation for funding changed to \$1.89/\$1,000 of assessed value, which was a decrease in funding for APRC equal to \$500,000 per year.

In 2022, the formulation will change again, and APRC will receive less funding from property tax and more from Food and Beverage Tax. The result of the new funding will still equal \$1.89/\$1,000 of assessed value, which continues to be less than the traditional funding allotment.¹

Additionally, the funding allocation for 2022 reduces APRC's CIP by \$562,000 – another cut to our budget.

The outlook for future biennia shows that APRC is in danger of further budget cuts that will exacerbate the current situation and would require reductions in services that are traditionally provided by APRC such as potentially shuttering some recreation programs and reducing maintenance in parks and open spaces.

ASSESSMENT

The situation of determining next steps at this juncture is complicated. The City Council is working on a plan that they believe will gather information from the public and inform them as to which direction the citizens choose to proceed regarding levels of services and funding options for those services if the general fund cannot accommodate all the priority municipal services.

The Council has generally been supportive of APRC and the services we provide to the community, but they have made it clear that their preference is to let their plan roll out before APRC launches into any endeavors that require community wide support. One Councilor stated that they were concerned about the potential for dual efforts by the City Council and Parks Commissioners that could confuse the public and lead to a reduced likelihood for the success for both efforts.

Furthermore, a public initiative for the May ballot, being the Commissioners stated second option from the December 23, 2022 meeting, does not seem feasible from my perspective. The thresholds that are required for petitioning the County, gathering signatures and formulating the ballot title and supporting language are not likely to be met for the May election considering we have not started this process.

I believe that the City Council and Parks Commissioners generally desire the same outcomes, but each want to pursue those in their own way. At another time, I think it has been assumed, the City Council would be very supportive of the efforts of the Commissioners to identify and implement a dedicated funding source for APRC.

There are several facts that must be considered as we move through this process, I have listed the most important ones, based on my perspective, below:

1. APRC needs certainty in their funding for the upcoming biennium (July 2023) and cannot wait until the eleventh hour for planning and implementation of a viable funding scenario.

¹ People have asked why APRC refers to a millage, ie: dollars per thousand of assessed valuation, instead of a dollar amount. The easiest response to that is tradition. Article 19, Section 3 of the current City Charter refers to our funding terms of millage, and therefore APRC has always done the same.

2. APRC has an elected Board of Commissioners, which was established by a vote of the electors on December 15, 1908 and has a charge to “control and manage” all funding, lands, programs and services entrusted to and provided by APRC.²
3. There is a history of funding APRC through a levy on City property value, and that historic amount was \$2.09/\$1,000 until 2019 when this funding was "temporarily" reduced to \$1.89/\$1,000 to balance the city budget.³ Then in 2021 APRC funding was again reduced to \$1.89 with all indications that this was now the "permanent" funding level.
4. Although APRC is an elected body and was elected by the same body of electors as the City Council, and although APRC has control of all funds once they are dedicated to APRC through the budget process, the City Council reserves the right to make decisions as to the level of funding that APRC will receive from the general fund, as it is.
5. The City is experiencing shortfalls in their general fund and has reduced APRC’s funding to \$1.89/\$1,000 and will likely reduce that funding further if specific funding enhancements are not implemented for the biennium beginning in July 2023.
6. Additionally, the City Council controls referrals for ballot measures and can decide whether to allow, or not allow measures on the ballot. The APRC Board or Commissioners do not possess the power to refer matter to the voters.

With those facts in mind, I will offer that APRC will be more successful in our endeavors for future funding efforts if we have a majority of the Council backing us. This does not change the assertion that I stated in my previous memo, which was:

“To sustain the current level of services and restore other services that have already been reduced or eliminated, APRC Board of Commissioners must act quickly to provide the best set of options available for funding APRC operations outside of the City’s general fund.”

I believe that APRC must continue to actively explore all of the options that are available to us for dedicated funding. However, we need to acknowledge the uphill battle this will be without the support of the majority of the Council. I think the issue could be even more daunting if there is a majority of Council members who are opposed to our efforts.

I also believe that the majority of the City Council and the Commissioners desire the same outcome – to provide the services the community values and to fund those services in a way that is supported by the community and will be sustainable into the future.

RECOMMENDATION

Considering the recent request to the City Council and their subsequent rejection of that request, I have the following recommendation:

APRC should continue to consider their options for determining a dedicated funding source; however, in deference to the City Council and their power and authority in this matter, the Commissioners should consider giving the Council time to implement their program and engage with them to identify,

² Ashland City Charter, Article 19 – Parks Commission.

<https://www.ashland.or.us/SIB/files/Charter/ARTICLE%2019%20Park%20Commission.pdf>

³ Ashland City Charter, Article 19 – Parks Commission, Section 3 – Funding.

<https://www.ashland.or.us/SIB/files/Charter/ARTICLE%2019%20Park%20Commission.pdf>

investigate and propose a scenario to the voters that will meet the Commissioner goal to *“implement a dedicated permanent funding source to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission”*

To follow through on this recommendation, should the Commissioners agree, I suggest the Commissioners relax their stance for action on the May ballot. A ballot measure in May is not likely to happen, given the recent reaction, or lack of action, from the Council.

I am not recommending that the Commissioners acquiesce to an unspecified public process or concede defeat in accomplishing their number one goal. I am suggesting that the Commissioners defer to some extent and work with the Council for a time to see if both elected bodies can reach their goals together, without opposition – again, I believe both bodies are seeking the same financial resiliency.

I recommend that the Commissioners continue to focus on the long-term financial plan for APRC and continue to consider what options are available for the November election. If we can work in conjunction with the City Council, I think there is more of a chance for success; however, the Commissioners should also explore and become acquainted with all the options and processes to achieve dedicated long-term funding, which could include gathering signatures to place a citizen’s initiative on the November 2022 ballot to form a special taxing district.

Additionally, I recommend that the Commissioners establish their own thresholds for action and subsequent reactions if those thresholds are not met. This I recommend in order to keep an eye on the November ballot to ensure that we position ourselves for action to accomplish the goal of *“implement[ing] a dedicated permanent funding source to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission.”*