

DRAFT MINUTES FOR STUDY SESSION
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
May 3, 2023
Electronic Meeting – 6 P.M.

Present: Commissioners Landt (Chair), Eldridge (Vice-Chair), Adams, Bachman, Lewis; Deputy Director Dials, Senior Services Superintendent Glatt, Analyst Kiewel, Manager Sullivan

Absent: Director Black

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. PUBLIC FORUM

None

III. NON-STANDARD MEMORIAL REQUEST – LITHIA PARK, LOWER DUCK POND

Sullivan reviewed the information included in the meeting packet that included the following items:

- The Parks Memorial Policy includes two types of memorials. Standard memorials for benches and tables are managed by staff. Non-standard memorial requests are brought to the Current Parks, Conservation, and Maintenance Subcommittee to make a recommendation to the Commission for approval.
- The non-standard memorial request before the Commission is from Jossie Ivanov to dedicate a plaque at the Lower Duck Pond for Mary and Dick Maintain. This memorial includes a donation of \$26,000 which would be used to upgrade the circulation and filtration system at the pond.
- When contacted for non-standard memorials staff try to match a needed project with a donation amount for a memorial.
- On November 29, 2022, this non-standard memorial request was reviewed by the Current Parks, Conservation, and Maintenance Subcommittee which approved the plaque for consideration by the Commission. The plaque would be on a boulder next to the pond. The donation would cover the majority of the cost of the upgrades based on a quote of \$33,875. The requested timeline for the placement of the plaque is 25 years or the life of the circulation/filtration system, whichever is longer.
- If approved a plaque would be adhered to the boulder it would be necessary to have another plaque installed after this memorial expires as a rededication.

Public Testimony

Jossie Ivanov provided the following information. Her grandparents Dick and Mary Maintain lived on Granite Street. She has found memories of feeding the ducks in Lithia Park with her grandparents. Mary Mastain was a volunteer that gave Parks walks. By donating to the restoration of the Lower Duck Pond, their children, in-laws, and grandchildren want to honor their memory with another contribution to the community and the park they both loved so much.

Discussion

Eldridge asked if it is normal for sunset dates for memorial. Sullivan explained that the Parks Memorial Policy was updated 2019 for standard memorials to have a sunset of 10 years. The policy was amended because there was an expectation that memorial benches and tables would be kept at a certain standard in perpetuity for a small donation which was not feasible with the number of memorials in parks. Adding a sunset date allows loved ones to honor a person while also providing a public service. The donations for tables and benches will pay for the replacement. The typical lifespan of benches and tables in the Parks is approximately 10 years.

Sullivan stated that this request would typically be brought to a Business Meeting for action but was brought to this meeting so the requestor could participate. Staff is asking for direction.

Bachman thank Josie and her family for the donation and expressed concern using the natural feature of a boulder and inquired if the plaques could be placed in another location on a man-made structure.

Adams had the same concern as Bachman regarding the plaque location and the inscription on a boulder and expressed appreciation for the family's donation and memorial request.

Lewis thinks the value of this donation is very important for the park. The lower duck pond has a hard bottom and it's and a new filtration system will improve the pond. Lewis said there are many plaques on rocks in the park.

Sullivan provided background on plaque placement. The boulder near the pond and a pedestal were discussed and the boulder was the preferred location for the applicant.

Landt read the criteria for memorial placement from the Parks Memorial Policy

- Criteria D - memorials placed outdoors should be part of a design plan and part of the fabric of the site not a feature.
- Criteria G – conservative approach will be taken regarding memorials in Lithia Park in order to maintain balance of memorials versus the preservation of the park's natural and historic character.

Landt said this is a very generous donation and supports working with the applicant and staff to come up with alternatives. Requests that that this request go back to the subcommittee for review. Landt also had concern regarding the plaque inscription that mentioned the swans that used to be in the park and isn't sure if this would be an issue. Landt asked if this went back to the subcommittee if the group could come back with a resolution. Sullivan reviewed the issues raised as the placement of the plaques on the boulder and the inscription. Sullivan will discuss this with the applicant and see if there is a way forward and then meet with the subcommittee for a recommendation to the Commission.

Eldridge expressed concern in delaying the application and would like to have the process move as swiftly as possible. Sullivan thinks the subcommittee can meet and that this could come back to the Commission in June.

IV. DISCUSSION REGARDING RESTRICTIONS ON ALCOHOL IN PARKS

Dials lead the discussion regarding restriction regarding alcohol in parks. APRC staff and Commissioners have received requests from the business community as well as other committees like the Japanese Garden Advisory Committee to investigate changing the municipal code 10.68.090 Intoxicating Liquor Prohibited to include service of alcohol within some park locations. Currently the only exceptions to this code are the Calle Guanajuato and the Oak Knoll Golf Course. In January and February of 2020 staff at the request of the Lions had presented to the Commission regarding alcohol in parks. Due to the pandemic this item had been put on hold.

Discussion

Landt stated that this municipal code that the City Council would need to change. The Commission can request this change. Eldridge asked is all that is required is proposed language and a vote change. Dials explained that staff can bring back to the commission some potential language and procedures and policies regarding alcohol in parks and recommended locations.

Bachman asked if this would be limited to Lithia Park or other locations be considered and supports a comprehensive look into this for consideration.

Adams asked for insight on permitting special events for alcohol and how it could potentially work. Dials explained that we currently have a Special Event Permit. Public events could have permitting for certain areas with which would also require an OLCC permit. Staff will gather more information regarding open areas for alcohol in certain locations in conjunction with an event. Dials said that business owners are looking at putting on concerts and selling alcohol.

Lewis stated that in 1917 when the Parks opened was during prohibition. Calle Guanajuato and the Golf Course are currently exceptions to the alcohol policy. Lewis supports a review and discussion about alcohol in parks in a controlled way.

Eldridge supports further discussion and that this would be supporting the biennium goal of bringing together the community through events, recreation, and cultural events in parks.

Adams thinks that this would be a good addition and in alignment with the Commission goals and expressed support of permitted events in all parks that would allow the sale and consumption of alcohol.

Dials stated that staff has direction needed and will bring this back to Commission at a Study Session.

V. DISCUSSION ON THE UPDATE TO THE PARKS, TRAILS, AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

Landt lead the discussion for the update to the Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan

- On May 1, 2023, the subcommittee met and discussed additions to the plan, properties proposing to be removed and the accompanying narrative language for the plan.

- The comprehensive plan was first adopted in 1991 and at that time Ashland had less park land per capita than Roseburg and Klamath Falls. Now after efforts for the last 30 years supported by the city's meals tax Ashland's parkland per capita ranks among the states leaders.
- The current emphasis is to maintain and rehabilitate current parklands and structures. Removing parkland from the plan is consistent with this approach. Properties remaining on the plan will focus on trail connectivity, high natural resources, and recreational value.
- The subcommittee proposed to remove the following properties from the plan
 - Billings property around 100 acres because former possible uses may not be feasible
 - Helman Street property has been developed and is not feasible for athletic field usage
 - Willow Wind property is currently owned by the Ashland School District (ASD) property next door will be retained on the plan for possible future athletic fields
 - Properties that have been developed have been removed from the plan
 - YMCA park has been removed because it has been sold to YMCA
 - Properties adjacent to YMCA are no longer needed due to the acquisition of the East Main Properties
 - A property near Oak Knoll Golf Course is no longer required because it does not fit in with current planning
- When the original was enacted, the approach was to include more property than was needed. Property can only be obtained from willing sellers and there is currently a better understanding of what property is needed for current goals.
- ASD currently has construction of many of their properties making athletic field availability limited. We will have a better understanding and assessment of athletic field needs after ASD construction is completed and it is known how many fields will be available for community use.
- The subcommittee will meet again to finalize the plan and narrative

Adams asked once school projects done and we understand sport field capacity where the plan has potential for athletic field sites. Hearing from constituents that there are currently not enough fields to meet demand.

Landt stated that Helman Street property is not ideal for sports fields and Willow Wind is owned by ASD and they have no plans to sell the property. Landt said the strategy was to remove properties from the plan that are unlikely to be used. Currently there is one property suitable for sports fields in the plan

Adams wanted to know if there was potential for sports fields at the Billings Ranch. Landt stated more due diligence may be needed to determine if sports fields could be feasible at that site.

Eldridge stated the golf course could potentially be a future site for sports fields

This item was brought to Commissioners as an informational item and will be presented to Commissioners again once the subcommittee makes a final recommendation

VI. MASTER FEES AND RATE SCHEDULE

Dials displayed slides and provided the following information:

- The goal tonight is to present to the Commissioners potential fee increases for certain programs and rentals that would begin on July 1, 2021. Staff will bring back to the Commission for potential action next week. All APRC fees need to go to City Council annually to include in the City Fee Schedule
- APRC project team for cost recovery and financial sustainability plan that has been meeting since September of 2020. The project team is Deputy Director Dials, Superintendent Glatt, Analyst Kiewel, and Manager Sullivan. The project team has been analyzing true cost and revenue of all programs and services offered.
- The Cost Recovery continuum is what staff has put together as a strategy to categorize all programs and services offered at APRC. Common good programs and entry level programs are more subsidized than programs that benefit individuals or commercial activities. The continuum identifies program and service categories and their desired cost recovery goals
- Based on cost and revenue data combined with cost recovery goals staff is recommending fee increases for facility rentals, special event application fee.
- The Cotton Memorial rental fee was shown as an example. The current fee is \$75.00 with a cost recovery of 21%. Staff is recommending raising the fee to \$125.00

Eldridge asked for examples of events that happen at the Cotton Memorial. Dials said the area is rented for weddings, meetings, parties. Eldridge inquired if there is an agreement with rentals that the space is cleaned when the event is over. Dials said there is a

permit with a space use agreement for rentals. For special events are larger events that require insurance because they are inviting attendees to participate in an event on public property. Eldridge asked for clarification if people know that they need to rent spaces or permitted. Dials clarified that outdoor rentals are first come first serve and there are plenty of areas in the parks for public use including the rentable areas. If someone wants to have exclusive use of a rentable area for a specific day and time that is when a rental is used.

Landt inquired how fees were determined and why staff was not recommending increasing the fees to full cost recovery. Dials said the project team looked at several factors for fee recommendations and is recommending increasing fees over time rather than all at once.

- Staff is recommending fee increases for some fees at the Daniel Meyer Pool and discontinuing the season passes because they are underutilized.

Landt said that this is a logical approach and recommended not having fees that are not whole dollars and to possibly not raise the fee for youth pool admission. Dials said the project team had discussed this.

Eldridge asked what the recommended fee was for cost recovery of general admission and agrees with Landt to not raise the fee for youth swim. This is a common good program that is important to have access that is appropriate. Kiewel stated that cost used for fee analysis was from 2018 and that there have been fee increases and inflation since that time.

Adams question on difference of expense between kids and adults using the pool. Landt mentioned that the logic is that it's a societal choice that Commissioners would make and that this is a common practice to give youths and seniors discounts for the same services.

Adams recommended that we provide punch cards in school offices at reduced rates for kids where the cost of the pool may be prohibitive to access so students with lesser means can still have access to the pool. Dials stated that there are events each year for reduced rates at the pool and ice rink and staff will look at including this recommendation into the fee proposal.

- Ice rink fee recommendations from staff is to increase fees to hockey and private lessons. These programs are specialized recreation programs that benefit a smaller number of people
- Kiewel stated that there are different ways to meet cost recovery. Rising fees, reducing costs and increasing participation of a combination of all of these.

Eldridge asked for clarification regarding the adult hockey fee increase and it is due to lower participation. Thinks the increase may be prohibitive to this small group of users. Dials stated that charging higher fees with specialized recreation programs that are discretionary allows other activities for the common good like pool admission to be more subsidized.

Adams suggested that staff monitor participation on programs that have had fee increases to determine impact to participation.

Landt said that we can not be everything to everyone. There could programs that not many people are using with a high cost that might have to be discontinued. Ideally, we wouldn't drop any programs but with budget constraints this could be a possibility that needs to be explored.

Landt would like to have staff give a presentation on how cost recovery and methodology of the data was compiled to have a better understanding on how staff determined fee recommendations.

Dials told the Commission that staff has had several community members that would like to rent pickleball and tennis courts for private use and staff will bring this back to the Commission with a recommendation.

VII. LOOKAHEAD REVIEW

- Eldridge asked to have the Lookahead go farther into the future
- Bachman would like to see this as a planning tool suggested to have the lookahead include up to six months of meetings
- Landt suggested Commission goals be included
- Bachman suggested Staff memos should include a section in the header that identifies what goal the item addresses

VIII. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF

Eldridge reported that in partnership with the Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association a new trail on the westside of the Wonder Trail is being built and should be completed in three weeks.

Dials reported that annual Bike Swap was held last weekend with a good turnout. Proceeds from this event goes to the Ashland Parks Foundation to fund bike safety education in the schools.

Dials reported that long time staff member Libby VanWyhe Manager of the Nature Center is leaving APRC and there is a going away gathering at the Nature Center on Friday at 1:00 pm.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Tara Kiewel, Administrative Analyst