

MINUTES FOR STUDY SESSION
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
January 3, 2024
Electronic Meeting – 6 P.M.

Present: Commissioners Landt (Chair), Bachman (Vice Chair) Adams, Lewis, Seffinger; Interim Director Eldridge, Deputy Director Dials, Senior Service Superintendent Glatt, Analyst Kiewel, Executive Assistant Mero

I. CALL TO ORDER

Landt called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

II. PUBLIC FORUM

Ashland Senior Advisory Committee (ASAC) Chair Mark Gardiner expressed gratitude to Superintendent Isleen Glatt for all her hard work, especially in transforming the Senior Services Division of APRC. Message specifically comes from Mike and Anne Bellegia who both served on the Ad Hoc Senior Advisory Committee (ASPAC). They were tasked with setting goals for the Senior Services Division in 2017-18. Glatt's accomplishments went well beyond their recommendations for the restructured program. Glatt and her staff have given the Senior Services Division a very sustainable future.

III. CONVERSATION CLUSTERS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT – FINAL REPORT

Goals:

1. Provide outdoor, age-friendly seating for people to gather at COVID-safe distance.
2. Encourage conversation and connection in public spaces.
3. Test three styles of conversational seating in three APRC parks and solicit community feedback.

Three locations of clusters are at Lithia Park with stackable chairs, three benches at Garfield Park, and a circle of four benches at Glenwood Park. Space left between benches for wheelchair access.

Funding: Commission supported funding with \$6,000.00 set aside from the APRC CIP Budget. Total cost was \$3285 plus in-house labor.

Did lots of publicity with good outcomes. Gained positive publicity for APRC from Channel KDRV Newswatch 12, Rogue Valley Times, and Oregon Health Authority News.

Survey: Only open for two weeks. A very small sample, mostly people from Ashland.

- Only 15 Responses partly because the Clusters were launched late in the year when weather wasn't great.
- Mostly older visitors
- Heavy on Lithia Park users

Improvement

- Put clusters in more parks, keep solo benches and picnic tables, redirect the money designated for the Clusters to fixing the duck ponds.

Conclusion

- Project was well received by the community, mostly positive, all 20 movable chairs at Lithia are still there though some were defaced with stickers.

Questions/Comments

- Seffinger passes by Glenwood Park frequently, once saw a group of college students using the Cluster for discussion.

IV. PARKS, TRAILS, AND OPEN SPACE MAP TECHNICAL SUPPORT DOCUMENT

Eldridge not going to spend too much time on the history. The Parks, Trails, and Open Space Map (Map) has been presented to Commissioners on multiple occasions after going through a lengthy public process. The Commissioners approved the Map, and we began working with the team in Planning. The Map was presented at a Planning Commission Study Session on November 28, 2023. Ultimately the Map will be integrated into the Ashland Comprehensive Plan. There are two maps, the original had text, the comparison map removed the text. Commissioners asked that the text be put in a technical support document to be used in conjunction with the Map. The document was displayed, and the Commissioners were asked for feedback/discussion.

Landt asked if the Map would come back with the Technical support document next week at the Business Meeting. Eldridge answered yes. What was approved a couple of months ago was the comparison map, not the official map that will be included in the master plan.

Adams asked Eldridge to share some of the many public comments that were sent regarding the Central Bike Path. (CBP)

Eldridge: We have an Ashland Trails Master Plan that was created by working along with the City Transportation Committee. The City will be the primary entity working on the ped/bike trails. The Map focuses mostly on parcels. Want to emphasize that continuity of the ped/bike trails is a priority. Many citizens want to see the connections on the Map.

Lewis: Many emails came from the Streets for Everyone Action Team (SEAT). Does anyone know anything about this group? Landt mentioned the email sent today that included information from and about the Streets for Everyone Action Team.

Eldridge: SEAT nonprofit is an outgrowth from some of the Climate Action groups and RVTD heavily advocating to City Council to add bike lanes separated from car traffic.

Landt: There are two issues: Extension of Central Bike Path and connection with Bear Creek Path. Already a path from 4th and A Streets to the Greenway trail. It would be a street trail shared with automobiles. It needs signs and striping, and other safety measures. All connections will be on City-managed streets.

Landt would like to draft a Resolution to the City Council stating Commissioner support of making the connections. Direct staff to draft the resolution. Have it for the February Meeting. No one is opposed to the idea.

Eldridge: Text on the Map has not been changed. Changes to the Map since it was last seen by Commissioners: Updated the number of acres (277) of land to be removed from the Map. Added a final explanatory paragraph talking about the relationship of the Trails Master Plan and the Map meant to be used in tandem.

Bachman found the extra paragraph a good, connecting addition.

Moving on, the Map will come up for a vote on Jan 10 at the Business Meeting.

V. SUMMARY OF DANIEL MEYER POOL REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Eldridge presented a PowerPoint of the history of Daniel Meyer Pool Replacement Project (DMP). It is included in the packet and can be viewed through the City of Ashland Web Site on the Agenda posted for this meeting.

Improving aquatic recreation in Ashland is Goal #2 of the Commissioner's APRC Biennium Goals.

There are energy slides that can be looked at in depth depending on what the Commissioners want to discuss. She will go back to the slides if necessary.

Initially budgeted 5 million plus, now budgeting about 10.2 million for the project. Just an estimate.

Landt: Initially weren't thinking of an all-season pool and that's why the higher estimate was made to include a 'brick and mortar' cover due to smoke, winter, etc.

Eldridge: Designers Robertson Sherwood included space in the design for a cover. Staff does not recommend using a removable cover like the one at the skating rink.

Staff Assessment of Robertson Sherwood Recommended 3A plan option pros and cons:

Pros: Support the recommendations of the Pool Ad Hoc Committee; once funding is secured and project is bid, timeline is approximately 10 months to build; most likely lower cost (not lowest) option; reduces GHG emissions from current levels by 88%.

Cons: Seasonal pool cover; still uses some amount of natural gas; is a pool-only option (not an aquatic facility).

Bachman: Original Ad Hoc committee did a great job. Don't want to renegotiate that, tinkering not needed with exception of adjusting numbers for the cost. Realizes the all-gas option is the cheapest but does not want to go there.

Adams: Heat pumps are a very efficient way to heat air or water but necessitate a backup heating system to achieve certain temperatures. Difference between options 3A and 3B is the backup heating source. Options 3A and 3B are the best options. Heat pumps cost more up front but over time will result in less cost to heat the pool.

Landt noted that the timeline slide doesn't include the replacement liner that was installed last month. Fulfilled the goal of having pool running during the summer season. In fact, pool can now operate year-round. The mechanical parts could still fail but the pool won't. Gives us time. Keep the layout of the pool – what the public wanted. He thinks location and heat source need to be considered. Use the water treatment plant for heat exchange. Also consider that it was an effort to squeeze the new design into the existing space. Gave an example of squeezing two baseball fields into North Mountain Park. There wasn't enough space, and one was abandoned. Should consider location in assessment.

Leslie: The geo tech, renewable energy, and schematic elements of the design are all site specific. Not able to just pick the design up and move it to another space. All the reports would need to be done again. She is not familiar with any entities that use wastewater effluent to heat a pool. The wastewater effluent's heat might not be high enough to heat a pool to 72 or 82 degrees as is specified.

Landt: Agreed a lot of work would need to be done to consider moving the pool to a different location. Reiterated the size/layout of the pool doesn't need to be revisited.

Adams: Familiar with some of the process of the pool project. Appreciates the work the Ad Hoc Committee has done. Likes the shape and size of 25 meters by 25 yards – the correct size. Absolutely feels the pool needs to be housed. Noted fire season smoke is guaranteed. Also noted the pool would be used more in the winter if it were enclosed. Needs to be more than a tent. Should be able to filter the air and potentially warm it. Would like to investigate raising 10 million in the community. Doesn't think Rogue X obviates the need for a four-season pool in Ashland.

Seffinger: Remembers the tent for the first ice rink became unusable. They explored a tent for the pool at that time. Learned that others had problems with tents over pools due to sweating and humidity. Climate change is inevitable. Need to plan for it so the community can use the pool for years to come, including those who don't have their own pools to temper the heat in summers.

Landt: Thanked staff for putting together the summary of where we started and where we are.

Adams: Asked the Commissioners who have been around a long time if there had been other projects of this magnitude and how were they funded?

Landt: Suggested Land acquisition for parks which has been spread out over 30 years but cost even more money than this project. The money came from the meals tax. Nothing this huge as a single project.

Bachman: This large project falls into a different category. Believes City Treasurer/Finance Director should be responsible for financial aspect of the project. Because it is a City need, he thinks the City Council will recognize this and the financing will be handled by the professionals.

Eldridge: We need design/construction documents before we get to the funding mechanisms. Thinks APRC should have a funding proposal to bring to the Council/Finance and not just ask them to figure it out. Would appreciate some direction from Commissioners about next steps for staff to advance this project.

Landt: Suggested maybe reactivating the Ad-Hoc Committee. A public forum for the issues discussed.

Seffinger: Remembers asking the schools for a partnership in funding. Wonders if we should try to reconnect with the schools to help with the funding.

Bachman: Can't go forward without an Ad Hoc reconvening. Perhaps a new committee of a similar make up. Need input on financing but not reasonable to do it entirely on our own. Agreed it would be good to ask the schools again. Need to fine tune the final plan. Then we can talk about financing.

Eldridge: Questions an Ad Hoc might address: Seasonal cover, siting of the pool, changing footprint on existing design. These are seemingly technical questions. Would a citizen advisory committee be equipped to answer these types of questions?

Adams: Agreed with Eldridge. If a covered pool works at current site, there are a lot of advantages to do so. Could staff investigate the core questions then bring their findings to the Commissioners? This would help the project move ahead more expeditiously.

Bachman: Agreed with most of what Adams said and takes Eldridge's point that if the questions are mostly technical it doesn't make sense to bring them to a citizen committee of lay people. Landt's suggestion of moving the pool might be brought before a citizen committee. Original pool design includes possibility of a cover, the question is what kind of cover. Landt's reference to relocating the pool meant moving it closer to the Senior Center.

Eldridge: Staff could absolutely do research and work with Sherwood Robertson on housing the pool. Ad Hoc subcommittee did not want to engage in the potentially long and arduous process of looking for other sites that would include land acquisition costs, infrastructure costs, etc. Ad Hoc subcommittee strongly recommended moving forward with all haste at the current location.

Landt: That's true, but at the time people were feeling desperate because they did not want to be without a pool. The liner has given us time that we didn't have at the time the recommendation was made.

Eldridge: Respectfully disagreed with Landt's last statement. The state of the boiler and of other mechanical elements of the pool do not give us a safe zone.

Adams: Haste is relative. The project is going to be a long one. Replacing the liner was a good project and may give us a bit of time but the citizens want us to move ahead with replacing the pool. Remarked that the schools and SOU were previously approached for help as partners but were not interested at that time. Still could ask again.

Lewis: Focus should be on the feasibility of covering the pool in its current location. There are plenty of steel covered buildings in the Valley. That's the main element. Need to get at least a guesstimate of the cost. A cover would have some effect on heating/cooling the pool. Important to discuss thoroughly and do this right. Ashland needs a municipal pool.

Landt: Can staff at least move forward with what has been discussed?

Caldwell (Parks Superintendent): Wanted to comment but had technical difficulties. He will get his message to Leslie to share with the Commissioners.

Leslie: Yes, staff can work with Robertson Sherwood to look at options, do some research, and bring their findings back to the Commissioners.

VI. LOOKAHEAD REVIEW

Eldridge projected a spreadsheet of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission Lookahead. Mentioned the Commissioners will be receiving the packet for the January 10 business meeting soon. Went over what is on the Lookahead. Asked Commissioners to look at the upcoming months. Will add the Resolution in support of developing the Central Bike Path (discussed tonight) to the January 10 meeting.

Dials: Already added the draft Resolution to the February 7 Study Session and the Resolution (action) to the February 14 Business Meeting. Also pushed the Smart-Rec online registration system software to February 14 Business meeting as it just went live today, and they need time to work out the kinks.

Adams: Asked if we want to put the next DMP discussion on the Lookahead.

Eldridge: She is ambitiously thinking about March.

Bachman: Upon reflection would like to have February 14 free. Asked about not having the study session in February and moving business meeting to Feb 7.

Adams and Seffinger: Both supportive of that idea.

Landt: Asked that if the agenda seems too long, staff move some flexible items to the next meeting. Confirmed there would be no Study Session in February and the Business Meeting would be moved to the 7th. Landt emphasized the importance of alerting the public to the change. Need to find out if Chambers are available on February 7.

Dials: That would mean that the regular meeting would be held on the 7th and would be a Zoom meeting, correct?

Eldridge: Recommends that it be a Special Meeting held in person.

Dials: Must check on availability of the room.

Landt: Let us know as soon as possible. It would be okay to have a Zoom meeting if necessary.

Seffinger: Wondering when we are going to discuss the process of looking for a permanent Director. Also, will we evaluate the Interim Director before that.

Eldridge: Noted there will be an Executive Session next week. Originally scheduled to discuss real estate but an employee discussion has been added for which she will not be present.

Seffinger: Wants to make sure they are being fair to Director Eldridge by looking at the job she is doing. Will help decide if they are going to have a local/regional look for the permanent position. Have an evaluation process for her because she's doing a great job.

Bachman: The second purpose of the Executive Session is set up for just that purpose and is the appropriate place for discussion.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Landt adjourned the meeting at 7:45 PM

Respectfully Submitted, Nancy A. Mero, APRC Executive Assistant