



Planning Commission Minutes

Note: Anyone wishing to speak at any Planning Commission meeting is encouraged to do so. If you wish to speak, please rise and, after you have been recognized by the Chair, give your name and complete address for the record. You will then be allowed to speak. Please note the public testimony may be limited by the Chair.

November 28, 2023

SPECIAL MEETING

Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Verner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Civic Center Council Chambers, 1175 E. Main Street.

Commissioners Present:

Lisa Verner
Kerry KenCairn
Doug Knauer
Eric Herron
Gregory Perkinson
Russell Phillips
Susan MacCracken Jain

Staff Present:

Brandon Goldman, Community Development Director
Derek Severson, Planning Manager
Michael Sullivan, Executive Assistant

Absent Members:

Council Liaison:

Paula Hyatt

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Community Development Director Brandon Goldman made the following announcement:

- The December 26, 2023 Planning Commission Study Session has been cancelled. The City Council will be holding an event to acknowledge and show appreciation for City Commissions and Committees on December 18, 2023.

III. PUBLIC FORUM - None

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Approval of Findings for Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities Parking Code Amendments, PA-T3-2023-00006

Commissioner Knauer noted several typos within the headers of the Findings. Mr. Goldman responded that these would be corrected before being presented to the Council. He also noted that





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the corrections suggested by Commissioner Phillips and the rest of the Commission at the November 14, 2023 meeting had been included in the Findings.

Commissioners Herron/Knauer m/s to approve the Findings with the corrections suggested by Commissioner Knauer. Commissioners KenCairn and Perkinson attested that they had reviewed the November 14, 2023 Planning Commission meeting materials and video before casting their vote. Roll Call Vote: All AYES. Motion passed 7-0.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Parks, Trails, and Open Space Map Update

Senior Planner Derek Severson informed the Commission that the City Parks and Recreation Department had developed this Parks, Trails, and Open Space map amendment over the course of two years, which would replace the current map that was adopted in 2002. He noted that an amendment to the map was proposed in 2012, but was never adopted.

Presentation

Interim Parks and Recreation Director Leslie Eldridge began by outlining the development of the map update, which started with the creation of a subcommittee two years ago. This subcommittee met six-seven times and provided a recommendation to the Parks and Recreation Commission in the form of the current proposal.

Ms. Eldridge informed the Commission that a study conducted in 2002, which helped inform the current map, showed that the City had less land per capita than cities like Roseburg, Medford, and Klamath Falls, and sought to rectify this by acquiring land and ensuring that there was a park within one quarter miles of each resident. Ms. Eldridge stated that this target was largely achieved, and that the goal has shifted to one of conservation and preservation of land. She commented that the Croman Mill site is the only space not within a quarter mile of a park.

Ms. Eldridge described the various ways in which this goal could be achieved, including the purchase of land, securing easements, and the donation of land. She mentioned that the proposed update is primarily based on the 2012 map that was never adopted, and that her team is seeking recommendations or suggestions before moving forward with adoption. She added that the map update contains redundancies, and that not all spaces within the proposal would need to be acquired in order to achieve its goal.

Questions

Commissioner KenCairn noted that some of the proposed areas on the map update are unnumbered, and Ms. Eldridge responded that those exclusions are based on the older map.





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Commissioner KenCairn pointed out that area #18 on the proposed map is privately-owned and may potentially be developed in the future. She asked if this space was included in the proposal due to its proximity to a riparian area, and Ms. Eldridge responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Perkinson expressed appreciation for the clarity of the map, and asked how the Parks and Recreation Department envisioned the integration of forest management evolving in the future. Ms. Eldridge responded that her department has a good working relationship with Chris Chambers, Forestry Division Chief of the City's Fire and Rescue Department, and the City's Wildfire Division which advises her department on wildfire issues, but that this relationship is not codified. She stated that her department has a small forestry program, but that it is not as extensive as the Fire and Rescue Department's Forestry Division. Commissioner Perkinson suggested that this update could provide an opportunity for proactive messaging relating to smoke and wildfire, and recommended that this be included in the update.

Commissioner Knauer asked how the conservation of the south side of Grizzly Peak falls within the scope of the Parks and Recreation Department. Ms. Eldridge responded that the view of Grizzly Peak is of value to the City, so preserving the south side of it from development was included as a goal. Commissioner Knauer asked if the proposed conservation of undeveloped areas was to protect them from future development, or if these spaces were being preserved for later recreational use. Ms. Eldridge responded that many of the spaces outlined in the map update have potential recreational use, but that the conservation of these spaces would also be considered. She stated that if the presence of pets, such as dogs, had a negative effect on local wildlife of recreational areas, then they would be prohibited from those spaces. Commissioner MacCracken Jain suggested that this topic be heavily considered as the Parks and Recreation Department becomes more involved in the conservation of land.

Commissioner Knauer asked if the Parks and Recreation Department is ever in conflict with other conservation groups. Ms. Eldridge responded that she is unaware of any such conflicts, and that conservation groups are primarily interested in larger tracts of land.

Commissioner MacCracken Jain inquired if the subcommittee considered the Chamber of Commerce's concept of the City being used as a future hub for outdoor activities in the region. Ms. Eldridge responded that the use of parks as staging areas was considered, and that her team is aware of the Chamber's Economic Diversification plan and is excited about the prospect of turning the City into a hub for outdoor recreational activities.

Commissioner MacCracken Jain asked if the Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association provided any recommendations for the map update. Ms. Eldridge responded that representatives from the Ashland Watershed Trails Association and the Ashland Woodland & Trails Association provided feedback on trails and mountain biking. City Councilor Eric Hansen also represented the mountain





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biking community on the subcommittee and helped develop the proposal. She stated that Councilor Hansen and herself worked with the Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association and are aware of their sustainability plan, and believe that their interests have been represented in the proposal.

Commissioner MacCracken Jain asked why the map update in 2012 was never adopted. Mr. Goldman responded that the 2012 map was largely aspirational regarding the properties it proposed be obtained for future recreational development. However, many of these properties were purchased subsequently, leaving the map outdated and rendering it largely obsolete. He added that the City's comprehensive plan indicates that staff work with owners to acquire properties, which are pursued if the land is available. There was also a general consensus at the time that the 2012 map update did not go far enough in identifying new opportunities for the acquisition of land.

Commissioner MacCracken Jain commended the aspirational aspects of the proposed map update, particularly with regards to the connectivity of existing trail systems. She suggested that more information be included regarding the future of recreation in the area and the fostering of a relationship with the Forest Service. She added that there was a typo within that document that incorrectly labeled Roca Canyon as "Roca Cannon."

Commissioner MacCracken Jain inquired if area #18, the Croman Mill Site, would be excluded from the map update. Mr. Goldman responded that it is not being excluded, but that Townmakers LLC, the group interested in purchasing and developing that property, have contacted the Parks and Recreation Department to discuss the parks and riparian area and if area #18 can be removed from the list.

Commissioner MacCracken Jain requested clarification regarding the use of the designation "no fiscal impact" within the proposal. Ms. Eldridge responded that this refers to the fiscal impact of developing the plan and updating the Comprehensive Plan with the map update proposal.

Commissioner Knauer directed the Commission's attention to a public comment received by Amy Gunter which expressed concern that the proposed map update includes the property at 755 North Mountain Avenue, the inclusion of which could preclude the property from being redeveloped (see attachment #1). Commissioner Knauer asked if the proposal included any language regarding designating areas of interest to the Parks and Recreation Department that would preclude it from being redeveloped. Mr. Goldman responded that the City could seek to purchase the land or request an easement, but that the owners are not compelled to comply with that request. Commissioner KenCairn asked if there is a right-of-way (ROW) through the property in question, and if the existence of one meant that a street connection would be developed if the existing structure was removed. Mr. Goldman responded that no new dwelling could preclude that ROW access, but that the installation of a street connection would not be compulsory.





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Ms. Eldridge remarked that she is hoping to rework the Systems Development Charges (SDCs) taken in by the Parks and Recreation Department in the near future. She stated that they likely have not been updated within the last 20 years, and don't appear to have a cohesive methodology in how they are calculated.

Mr. Goldman stated that a draft ordinance of the proposed map update will come back to the Commission at its December 12, 2023 meeting for a recommendation to the Council.

VI. OPEN DISCUSSION – None

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

*Submitted by,
Michael Sullivan, Executive Assistant*