

City of Ashland  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
December 18, 2017

**Present:** Commissioners Gardiner (7:15), Heller, Landt, Lewis, Miller; Director Black; Interim Superintendent McFarland; Executive Assistant Dyssegard; Assistant Manuel  
**Absent:** City Council Liaison Mayor Stromberg; Recreation Superintendent Dials

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chair Landt called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at The Grove, 1195 E. Main Street.

**APPROVAL OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MINUTES**

Trail Master Plan Committee—November 3, 2017—acknowledged  
Trail Master Plan Committee—December 1, 2017—acknowledged

Study Session—November 20, 2017

**Motion:** Landt moved to approve the Minutes of November 20, 2017. Miller seconded.

Discussion:

Landt requested a correction as follows:

*Page 4, Paragraph 4* Landt “talked about the cost to create Ashland Creek Park”  
*Should be:* Landt “talked about the cost to create the Community Gardens at Ashland Creek Park”

**Motion:** Landt moved to approve the Minutes of November 20, 2017, as amended. Miller seconded.  
The vote was all yes.

Regular Meeting—November 27, 2017

**Motion:** Lewis moved to approve the Minutes of November 27, 2017, as presented. Heller seconded.  
The vote was all yes.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

• *Open Forum*

Sara-Lynne Simpson of 673 Berry Lane in Ashland was called forward.

Simpson stated that she was acting as a volunteer consultant to the Performing Arts Committee of Ashland SOS (Support Our Seniors). She noted that the organization in support of Ashland’s seniors was growing and had recently conducted a flash-mob event on the Plaza.

Simpson led public input in the form of a song, to the tune of “The Twelve Days of Christmas.” The title was “The Twelve Days in Ashland.”

**ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA**

There were none.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- *Second Review of Community Garden Practices and Cost Recovery Discussion* (Information – possible action)

Nature Center Coordinator Jen Aguayo presented a PowerPoint with a proposed updated fee schedule for APRC's four community garden locations. She said her proposal was established around a prior discussion with the Commissioners about updated fee schedule goals for the gardens. Those goals included:

- Balance fee inequities between gardens
- Increase cost recovery (currently at 18%)
- Keep the community gardens affordable to citizens

Aguayo provided examples of fees charged elsewhere, comparing the cost of a 400 square foot garden in Portland, Oregon (\$110 annually) to a 400 square foot garden in Corvallis, Oregon (\$55 annually) to another one in Eugene, Oregon (\$55 annually). Using a fee of \$.60 per square foot in Ashland, a comparable plot would cost \$240 for the season – far outside a median range.

Aguayo said that to achieve equity between gardens, fees for some smaller plots would have to be lower while some larger plots would have to be higher. On that basis, the fee schedule would promote consistency but it would not address the disparity between gardens. Aguayo explained that a suggestion made by gardener Carol Carlson to develop a standard base fee in addition to a fee per square foot was under consideration. Using a point system, gardens could be ranked by the number of amenities provided. The proposed point system would be calculated based on the number of gardeners benefited, the level of maintenance required and the expenses involved.

Aguayo detailed the amenities associated with each garden and talked about staff time and volunteer hours needed for the gardens. A template was created to take into account all of the elements and calculations were developed for fees ranging from \$.25 to \$2.00. Using that model, Aguayo said the most equitable fee was \$.75 cents. Full cost recovery was approximately \$1.40 per square foot by comparison. She asked that the Commissioners consider two options designed to address the disparity between the gardens: a base fee of \$.75 per point and a square foot fee of \$.15 per square foot or \$1.00 per point and \$.15 per square foot. The first option would create a cost recovery ratio of 21%, the second 24%. In response to a question by Heller, Aguayo noted that the proposal was an effort to find an affordable middle ground. To balance the differences between the gardens, the Clay Street plots were described as the most disadvantaged and Ashland Creek Park plots were the most advantaged, given the amenities identified at each location.

### Public Comment

**Ann Cramer** of Ashland was called forward.

Cramer noted that the staff proposals had not been available in advance for public review. She stated that the exercise seemed to be focused on financial matters rather than the community component of the gardens. Cramer described the community ideal as the comradeship in working together and the sharing between members of ideas, seeds and knowledge.

Cramer said the gardeners at Ashland Creek Park had worked hard to establish the garden as it was today, and many of the operational costs for plots, such as the Children's Garden, were absorbed by the gardeners themselves. She noted that gardeners advocated for 24 X 24 square foot plots in order to rotate crops each year.

**Kathy Stashy** of 133 Orange Avenue in Ashland was called forward.

Stashy recommended that the fees per plot be left as is, with the exception of the Ashland Creek Park garden fees. She suggested increasing those fees incrementally until they were more aligned with other gardens. She offered the analogy of rural property versus City property, noting that larger parcels of land tended to be less expensive than smaller City lots. Stashy also noted that the larger plots at the Ashland Creek Park used approximately the same amount of water as the smaller plots due to pathways and infrastructure.

With regard to the list of amenities, Stashy stated that those outside the gardens such as parking lots, shelters and restrooms should not be counted, while amenities within the garden such as spigots and sheds should.

Stashy proposed that the four-hour commitment by volunteers be counted as a portion of the cost recovery ratio. At \$20 per hour that would be an additional \$80 toward cost recovery.

Stashy suggested having the gardeners at Ashland Creek Park take responsibility for the Children's Garden and the Pollinator Garden, with the volunteer hours spent on those amenities factored in.

#### Commissioner Discussion

Heller stated that it didn't make sense to lower the fees for some gardens if the goal was to raise the percentage of cost recovery.

Lewis acknowledged the donated contributions to the Children's Garden that were in addition to the personal costs of gardening. He noted that cost recovery would rise if there were no discounts or decreases in fees at the smaller gardens. He agreed that the fees for the Ashland Creek Park gardens should be increased as appropriate.

Miller noted that the Commissioners had asked staff to equalize the costs between gardens – with an emphasis on achieving equity rather than increasing cost recovery.

Gardiner advocated for small increases that could be applied incrementally. He stated that in his opinion, the proposed increases were reasonable given annual increases in operating costs for utilities and maintenance.

Lewis noted that the details should include the cost for raised beds, since the expenses for creating them were absorbed by the gardeners themselves. He stated that it was also reasonable to increase the percentages of cost recovery given inflation and rising operating costs.

Black indicated that the cost of \$.48 per square foot—the median fee at Garden Way—could be used as a guide and other fees per square foot could be raised incrementally until they were equitable. There would be relevance in doing so and the logic would be apparent to those considering fees in the future.

Miller stated that, in his opinion, plots of land measuring the same size should have identical fees.

Heller pointed out the significant waiting list for Ashland Creek Park plots, which he felt could be—in part—because of the lower fees. He noted that the cost of growing a garden was a significant expense for a gardener.

Landt said APRC wanted to innovate with regard to fees but if they were to charge what the market would bear, it truly would be all about the money. He said there were other values at stake as exemplified by efforts to keep the costs down, hence the periodic reviews of cost recovery for APRC programs and services. Landt referred to the Ice Rink as an example, stating that over the weekend he had observed it teeming with people enjoying the day and the skating. Ice Rink cost recovery was at 64%, yet the fees for use of the Rink did not present a barrier.

Landt spoke in favor of maximizing the number of people with access to the gardens. He stated that although large plots were desirable, they posed limitations to the number of people who could participate. Landt indicated that the Parks Commission was in agreement that getting to equity was important, yet it would be difficult to achieve using the existing model. He stated that staff had done a great job of proposing a system that demonstrated possibilities for achieving equity and advocated for the square footage model, given that there were waiting lists and no apparent dissatisfaction. He proposed beginning with a square footage fee of \$.45, then gradually increasing fees

incrementally until equity was achieved and the square footage fee was at \$.60. For Ashland Creek Parks plots, it might mean a three or four-year process of gradual increases.

Aguayo noted that Clay Street Park gardeners had expressed dissatisfaction about the lack of amenities. She stated that in her opinion, Clay Street Park plots were overpriced and had been for some time.

There followed discussion about the cost per square foot and what various scenarios would look like. Lewis proposed adjusting the discounts to bump the proposed 21% cost recovery to 24%. Black stated that raising the cost of the plots at Clay Street Park to \$.60 per square foot would increase the cost by \$2. Discussion focused on the possibility of a hybrid solution. Landt agreed, stating that a 20 X 20 plot should cost no more than \$120.

Gardiner stated that he was in favor of small increases such as those outlined in Table B. He debated the impact of the point system – noting that even if not utilized at this point, the data was important for future discussions because garden differences had been quantified. He commented that his preference would be 21% with a cap of \$120 for the largest plots.

Heller suggested a system of adjustments that would accomplish APRC goals garden by garden. Black noted that equity could be achieved eventually once improvements were made to gardens with fewer amenities.

**Motion:** Heller moved to increase the fee to \$.45 per square foot for Clay Street Park plots, with Scenic Park and Garden Way Park plots remaining at \$.60. The Ashland Creek Park plots would be changed to .45 per square foot with the exception of the largest plots that would be limited to \$120 per season. Miller seconded.

#### Discussion

Landt proposed a friendly amendment that would increase fees for Ashland Creek Park plots incrementally over a three-year period, with a resulting 27% cost recovery.

In response to a question by Heller, Aguayo noted that Davis, California, had charged \$120 for 400 square foot plots. Amenities included tools, shade structures, cubbies and garden sheds, among others. She contrasted that with Clay Street Park where gardeners had to share water spigots.

After consideration of various fee schedules, Landt highlighted a comparison of the cost of 20 X 20 plots with the cost of 10 X 10 plots, suggesting that the 20 X 20 plots be capped at \$100 and the 10 X 10 at \$80. He proposed that those costs become part of the friendly amendment to the motion.

**Motion:** Heller moved to maintain the fees per garden plot for Scenic and Garden Way at \$.60 per square foot, with the fees at the Clay Street Park lowered to \$.45 per square foot and the Ashland Creek Park plots receiving gradual increases over a three-year period to arrive at \$.45 per square foot.

#### Discussion

Landt stated that an amendment to the motion had been made that would limit the cost for a 10 X 20 to \$80 per plot and the 20 X 20 to \$100 per plot, with Ashland Creek Park reaching \$.45 per square foot incrementally over three years.

Further discussion led to additional amendments to the motion to include a dollar figure of \$54 for the 10 X 12 plot at Ashland Creek Park.

**Motion:** Heller moved to maintain the fees per garden plot for Scenic Park and Garden Way Park at \$.60 per square foot; to lower the fees at Clay Street Park to \$.45 per square foot; and to set the plots at Ashland Creek Park

as follows: 10 X 12 at \$54 per year; 10 X 20 at \$80 per year; 20 X 20 at \$100 per year, with Ashland Creek Park fees applied incrementally over three installments.

The vote was yes by Gardiner, Heller, Miller and Landt  
Lewis abstained

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- ***2017 CUFR Review and Approval (Information – action)***

Black noted that a financial audit conducted each year resulted in a comprehensive audit report called the CUFR. The 2016/2017 audit report was unqualified, meaning there were no irregularities. He called for adoption.

Heller inquired about the areas where there were significant changes. Black explained that there were changes to the way property was valued. He described the example of a lease of property to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival each year. In previous years that property was not counted as a value. Due to changes in the reporting rules, the value of the land and improvements were now counted – resulting in a significant change in the value of assets. The second substantial change was with the reporting for PERS. APRC was now required to report future liabilities. It was believed that doing so would provide a clearer picture of future financial positions. Those changes resulted in the difference between \$2.568 million in liabilities and \$6 million.

**Motion:** Gardiner moved to approve the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission CUFR for the period ending June 30, 2017, as presented. Miller seconded.

The vote was all yes.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS**

- ***Irrigation Division Annual Report (Information)***

Irrigation Supervisor Bill Miller noted that some changes had been made to the irrigation system over the past year. Specifically, nozzles and irrigation heads were exchanged and low-volume replacements installed. Because of the improvements and a lack of catastrophic pump failures, in addition to the wet weather, water consumption decreased by 1.2 million cubic feet. In response to a question by Heller, Miller noted that TID and domestic water uses were combined for the total.

Miller stated that approximately 75% of the water for Lithia Park flowed through the APRC pump system. With less down time this year, there were significant savings. Because of the wet spring, more water came from TID, further reducing domestic water use.

Miller reported that during the current winter, staff would focus on changing irrigation heads in the larger grassy areas. He stated that the purchase of an additional pump would reduce downtime and promote more efficient use of the water system. He stated that the Upper Duck Pond was operated with a three-pump system and in a good water year, two were sufficient, leaving the third pump as backup.

Miller highlighted communications, noting current use of a Motorola radio system. He stated that if the irrigation system developed a problem, staff had to respond in person whereas with a Smartphone and a cloud-based system, systems could be reset remotely during off hours. Talks were underway to determine whether the new system would be feasible.

Heller commented that at SOU they were able to measure soil saturation levels to determine watering needs and monitor the irrigation system more closely. Miller indicated that the system was worth discussing but it might be difficult to apply given the different climate environments cared for by APRC. He expressed interest in learning about the new technologies.

Black stated that the budget for water was \$350,000. If changes resulted in a 20% savings, those funds could be used for other purposes.

Miller stated that Western Division staff had started restoration project of the bandshell area in Lithia Park. Excavation had uncovered live galvanized pipe that was not connected to the system. Capping those could result in additional savings. Also under renovation were the planters on each side of the bandshell. Because they were made of old concrete, soil and water tended to deteriorate the planters. Renovations would include a rebuild of the planters and placement of potted vegetation instead of soil.

Miller commented that the Ice Rink had been set up in record time this year. He complimented the crew, noting that they worked tirelessly to complete the project in three days instead of a week. Miller noted that arborist Pete Baughman worked in Lithia Park every Wednesday during the fall months, pruning back dead and dying trees. Miller extended an invitation to watch Baughman at work. He also highlighted Western Division staff, noting that Trever Coster and Mark Reaves worked to maintain the grounds and did a great job, given the number of acres under their care. He said Robbie Fletes and Hanns Niedermeyer maintained the irrigation systems and it was inspiring to see the pride they showed in their work.

Miller reported that he and Joe Hyde conducted a tour of Lithia Park in December for the Lithia Park Master Plan consultants and it was a pleasure to offer such assistance.

- ***Q1 Goals Update and Performance Audit Recommendations Update (Information)***

Black briefly reviewed progress on APRC goals. He asked that the Commissioners consider an amendment to the top goal which was *"to pursue the evaluation of and funding for a re-build of Daniel Meyer Pool into a year-round eight-lane competitive aquatics pool."* He stated that APRC understood all that goal encompassed because extensive discussions about the potential project had taken place during the past three years. Black noted that the goal statement seemed to be somewhat misleading – especially for those who had not followed the process. He stated that it sounded like the community pool was going away and would be replaced by a competitive pool only. He proposed that the Commissioners reword the goal to more clearly convey the intent – i.e., that the project was intended as an enhancement to the Daniel Meyer community pool and changes would benefit the community at large *as well as* providing a place for competitive aquatics.

Landt commented that a second goal to *"facilitate a partnership between Parks and Recreation and a community partner such as the YMCA, SOU, and Ashland School District"* could be deleted. Black agreed, stating that the partnership element could be added to the aforementioned goal. It was also agreed that the updated goals would be placed on the January Regular Meeting Agenda.

In reference to the 2017 goals, Black noted that the goal to *"negotiate with the Ashland YMCA to rid APRC of the restrictive deed that currently governs the use of APRC's YMCA Park"* had been completed.

Black asked that the Commissioners review the recommendations from the Performance Audit and discuss the timing and importance of implementing Audit proposals. He explained that each recommendation was multi-faceted and a decision as to which elements were priorities and which were not would be helpful. It was agreed that a work session would be set aside to review the Audit recommendations and to suggest proposed rankings.

- ***Set 2018 Study Session and Regular Meeting Dates (Information)***

Dyssegard said APRC Study Sessions were generally held on the third Monday of each month and Regular Meetings on fourth Mondays. In 2018, for the months of January, February and May, national holidays would occur on those Mondays, interfering with the regular schedule; therefore, staff was suggesting alternate Mondays. Black said it was difficult to have a Regular Meeting on the fourth Monday in December due to the close proximity to

Christmas. He stated that the December Regular Meeting was typically held on the third Monday of the month, with no Study Session held in December.

Landt asked whether the Commissioners would be willing to move the December Regular Meeting to the second week of December; others concurred.

There followed additional discussion about the 2018 meeting schedule. Heller asked that future annual meeting schedules be determined in November—rather than December—for planning purposes. It was agreed that the Study Session tentatively scheduled for January 8, 2018, would be cancelled. It was further agreed that the December meeting would be held on December 10, 2018, and the February Study Session on February 12, with both May meetings occurring a week earlier than usual. With those changes, the Commissioners agreed to their 2018 meeting schedule, with all remaining meetings held as presented.

#### **ITEMS FOR COMMISSIONERS**

- ***“Park Views” Columns***

Gardiner asked for clarification about the writing assignments for *Tidings* “Park Views” columns. It was agreed that Commissioners Landt and Miller would write the January article about the Lithia Park Master Plan process. After that, each Commissioner would assign himself to two columns in 2018.

Heller asked about a possible article about the Ad-Hoc Senior Program Advisory Committee and its recommendations. Gardiner stated that the Committee was working hard to complete its process; however, an article should be deferred until ASPAC recommendations were received by APRC, discussed and adopted. He estimated that timeline to be April or May of 2018.

Landt said it was his understanding that “Park Views” assignments were flexible. If a topic became more timely than the assignments could be shuffled. Miller noted that there were regular topics to schedule as well – such as the awarding of the annual Ashland Parks Foundation grants. Dyssegard suggested scheduling the Ashland Parks Foundation “Park Views” column for April so readers could be notified and encouraged to submit grant applications.

#### **UPCOMING MEETING DATES**

Regular Meeting, January 22, 2017 @ Council Chambers, 1175 E. Main – 7:00 p.m.

#### **ADJOURNMENT INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

By consensus, Vice Chair Landt adjourned into executive session at 9:20 p.m.

*Executive Session: Real Estate Discussion and Disposition, ORS 192.660 (2)(e)*

#### **ADJOURNMENT OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION**

By consensus, Vice Chair Landt adjourned out of executive session at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Betsy Manuel, Minute-Taker

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