

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Lithia Park Master Plan Meeting Minutes
December 6, 2017

SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

- Rick Landt, APRC Commissioner
- Matt Miller, APRC Commissioner

MIG CONSULTING TEAM MEMBERS PRESENT

- Lauren Schmitt, ASLA, AICP, Principal-In-Charge
- Laurie Matthews, ASLA, Project Manager
- Dennis Meyer, ASLA, LEED AP, Landscape Architect
- Melissa Erikson, RLA, ASLA, Landscape Architect / Site Assessment
- Dean Apostol, Environmental Planner / Restoration Ecologist
- Casey Howard, ASLA, Landscape Designer

MIG CONSULTING TEAM PARTNERS PRESENT

- David Goram, PE, Water Resources Specialist / Ecological Engineering, LLC
- Kerry KenCairn, RLA, Landscape Architect / KenCairn Landscape Architecture
- James (Jim) Love, RLA, Landscape Architect / KenCairn Landscape Architecture
- Danelle Pruett, CPESC, Civil Engineer / KPFF Consulting Engineers
- Stuart Finney, PE, SE, LEED AP, Structural Engineer / KPFF Consulting Engineers
- Jack Williams, Fisheries Biologist / Environmental Consultants

APRC STAFF PRESENT

- Michael Black, Director
- Jeffrey McFarland, Interim Parks Superintendent
- Rachel Dials, Recreation Superintendent
- Betsy Harshman, Administrative Analyst
- Bill Miller, Western Division Supervisor
- Jason Minica, Forestry, Trails and Open Space Supervisor
- Dorinda Cottle, Promotions Coordinator
- Joe Hyde, Lithia Park Maintenance Manager

ABSENT:

- None

GUESTS:

- JoAnne Eggers
- Gwynnevere Black

I. CALL TO ORDER

Director Black called the meeting to order at 8:51 a.m. in the Lithia Park Admin Office conference room located at 340 S. Pioneer Street, Ashland, OR.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

JoAnne Eggers attended and participated throughout the day.

III. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was none.

V. NEW BUSINESS

a. Project Background and Site Introduction (APRC Director)

Director Black welcomed participants and said how exciting it was to finally be starting this important project. He shared a newspaper article about the Lithia Park Master Plan and noted the accuracy of a quote by MIG project manager, Laurie Matthews that read: "Our team is honored to be helping the community envision what the next 100 years will look like. To that end, we are not focused on proposing major new changes but enhancing what resonates and changing things that will benefit the character and health of the park."

b. Project Introduction – MIG

1. Project Goals and Approach

Matthews explained that the information gathered during the day's planned site tour sessions would help to form the foundation report, one of MIG's next deliverables in the master planning process. She encouraged their team to tap APRC resources and added that it was critical to understand the park like APRC does to be helpful in looking toward the future.

Matthews said they expected to uncover a whole host of people with a special interest or knowledge of the park. Schmitt added that local partners were a great resource because even with the list that's been developed, others are likely out there. Matthews said that if there are recommendations of people with certain expertise, let MIG know and they will determine the best way to reach out to them.

Landt said there were several groups with interest in the master plan including those from SOU, the high school and grade schools. He asked if MIG would be providing information that he and fellow commissioner Miller could use as a tool kit when reporting information to these types of groups. Schmitt said they had started working on materials to include in the next iteration of the public engagement plan.

ii. Project Schedule and Engagement Plan:

Black suggested highlighting the public engagement dates on the schedule and posting them to the website. Schmitt said once timing for design week was established, the schedule would be publicized. Matthews added that once MIG completed new iterations to the public engagement plan, it would be distributed to the group for feedback.

iii. Communication Guidelines:

Eggers asked where the best place would be to find out about meetings. Cottle said meetings were posted on the web at ashland.or.us/lithiaparkmasterplan and that there were also links to it from hot topics on the City home page, the Parks home page, the About Parks home page and the

Lithia Park home page. There were also posts on Facebook. Cottle said she would look into creating a dropdown menu for meetings and adding a hot topics section to the Parks home page. Schmitt asked if anyone had thought about buying a domain name. Miller said he thought it would be a great solution. Black agreed to look into it and stated “our goal is to be as transparent as possible and get the word out.”

Matthews said she wanted to make sure everyone felt comfortable contacting anyone on their team so the information was free flowing. When emailing anyone on their team, Matthews and Schmitt said they would like to be cc'd to make sure there was always someone within range who could respond. Matthews often worked in remote areas of national parks, such as Yosemite and Denali, where she might not have coverage at all. Schmitt said that with such a high-profile project, things were likely to come up that were time sensitive.

Black pointed out some key staff members with APRC including Rachel Dials for recreational programming; Bill Miller and Hyde for both of the duck ponds, the irrigation and their knowledge of the many challenges being faced in Lithia Park; Minica and McFarland who were experts in forestry (McFarland was also on staff during the '97 flood) and Cottle who was responsible for promotions.

VI. SITE TOUR PART I

Landt asked for clarification of the site tour area and if the swimming reservoir and Calle Guanajuato would be included. Black said he thought it would be best to cover the main sections of the Park and then if anyone wanted to see something more specifically, APRC staff would be available throughout the following day.

The Calle was previously studied so it would not be included in the study. Black asked, however, that it be included in the maps drawn to show the connection. He said the Calle was a critical part of the park.

Participants were split into two groups and led on walking tours by APRC staff, giving the consultant teams the opportunity to see Lithia Park through caretaker and stewards' eyes.

Lunch Break

VII. SITE TOUR PART II

Afternoon sessions gave each group the chance to complete their tours of the park.

VIII. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS DISCUSSION

Matthews explained that opportunities/constraints and programming had been broken up into two sections, with the realization that they would often overlap. Major discussion points and ideas were pooled and captured on flipcharts.

The location of the maintenance shop was discussed in both groups. Landt said an opportunity existed in the parking lot next to the maintenance shop, where more parking spaces could be achieved with a design change. Black agreed and added that probably 75% of the spaces were currently used by APRC staff. If the location of the shop was moved, the spaces probably wouldn't be used as much.

Schmitt said the location could be a potential site for a youth or activity center. Meyer added that an activity center would attract more people to the upper section of the park, possibly moving people from overused

areas. While observing from the hillside, he saw that the park was large and long and that the upper section might be a resource, currently unknown by many.

Black said the administrative office buildings and parking area should be evaluated to be determined if a few offices should remain there, if it made sense for the location of the big turnaround and if it was being used as the best use of space. In the past, it housed a museum and also served as a skills bank where people traded services, as described by Eggers. Black said he'd heard the living museum had a beehive surrounded by glass that could be seen into. Past ideas for the space had also included a wedding space, an interpretive center or partnering the office with another organization such as the Chamber (who at one point expressed interest).

Matthews said they wanted to generate as many ideas as possible and talk about options. During design week, MIG would put a range of ideas in front of the public for feedback.

Matthews asked if APRC had use of other buildings in the lower section of the park such as the Cabin (Pioneer Hall). Black said it was currently managed by APRC via Recreation Superintendent Dials and her staff. Additionally, it was used by the City as a homeless shelter three nights per week. APRC leased the Community Center from the City.

Landt expressed his view of the park and described that he saw different zones within it. The entryway was a hub and gathering area, with more activity and noise. When preferring more solitude and contemplation, he moved further into the park, knowing there were quieter and more natural feeling settings. Matthews agreed and said there was a noise or design component to look at where different areas had their own unique essence or spirit about them. She said it was important to capture those locations and determine their boundaries.

Black said that in his opinion, the areas in the upper park were not underused and he saw people walking through it and past his office all the time. Those people seeking a quieter experience and a different kind of use. When an activity center was brought up for the upper area, he questioned if it would be necessary. If considered, he felt it should be fully vetted in terms of whether it would enhance or change that area of the park.

McFarland said the upper park had less development and was more natural. The hardened walkways stopped near the turnaround above the upper duck pond; from there, the trails were chip barked. Most of the picnic areas were located above the upper duck pond and it was a different type of experience, especially when the lower park was being used for special events and Winburn was closed.

Schmitt talked about the hardened walkways in terms of their good points and bad points. She asked for thoughts about their locations and if there should be more or less of them. Were they in the right spots and where else might they be needed? Landt said they should be located for ADA accessibility and where people needed them, such as at the Bandshell and Butler-Perozzi Fountain. McFarland said he didn't know of any ADA-accessible trails from Granite Street down into the Bandshell area, and that the existing contoured walking trails were greater than 5%. Handicapped park users had to be dropped off below, on Winburn Way, with the majority of parking occurring above, in the neighborhoods.

Apostol asked if parking in the neighborhoods created a problem during special events and the response was yes, it became very crowded. Residents with on-street parking often found it difficult to park near their homes. Eggers suggested exploring creative ways of using Winburn Way that might be different but still in

character with the park, such as a shuttle service. Apostle said that closing Winburn Way and creating a shuttle service to move people was an idea that also created an opportunity. Realizing there would probably never be “enough” parking, if Winburn Way were turned into a one-way instead of a two-way street, parking could be generated on both sides of the street. Doing so would create enough spaces and allow removal of the ones that encroached on the creek.

Being that the master plan was a 100-year plan, Eggers encouraged thinking about a community that wouldn’t involve so many people in cars, taking climate change into consideration and planning for a community that did not depend upon individual private cars.

Bill Miller talked about care facility buses and vans transporting people through the park to see the blossoms in the spring and summer and the leaves turning color in the fall. Those vehicles traveled through the park at about five miles an hour, allowing passengers to view and enjoy the park in their own way.

Landt said he was very supportive of ADA compliance and wanted to make sure APRC offered the right amount of legal ADA access while keeping the character of the park in mind. Schmitt stated that the ADA laws were Federal civil rights laws that gave people choices and allowed park managers to respect the character of each individual space while providing equitable experiences for all park users. As an example, if picnic areas were provided, accessible equivalents must be provided for disabled persons. A variety of surfaces might be allowed in outdoor areas, not just concrete. She explained that with hiking paths, people needed to know what they were getting into. Signage would be needed to say, for example, that the trail had a 10% slope and gravel. This allowed users to choose, in advance, based on their abilities.

Hyde agreed with Meyer’s analogy of the park wherein it consisted of several rooms. Landt added that in addition to rooms, the park has “closets” where individuals or couples could have quiet moments for walking in and sitting on a boulder along the creek, in their own space. Matthews spoke of the kaleidoscope of journeys throughout the park, relating it to its linear shape along the creek, and said it was one of the things that kept people returning.

Landt requested a true, short brainstorming session in which ideas could be generated without any particular advocacy discussion. The following thoughts and ideas emerged:

- Shakespeare structure is a grand opportunity for the park’s front door
- Hierarchy of lighting styles throughout the park
- How are invasive species going to be dealt with?
- Increased activity in the form of a designated outdoor wedding venue
- Close Winburn Way from the turnaround to the Bandshell
- Designated bird watching area
- Policies related to alcohol in the park and memorials
- Stormwater runoff management
- Location of bear-proof trash cans
- Various design standards including surfaces for cans and benches
- Drinking fountain access
- Abandon or fix fountains; provide the right number of strategically placed fountains
- Design standards for park furniture, signage, picnic tables and trash cans
- Integration of the Butler-Perozzi Fountain
- Forest maintenance monitoring; add to the diversity

- Signage guidelines
- Rose garden and fence
- Tree replacement program
- Riparian zone policy design and spacing standards as far as planting, width and species, replacement and enhancement
- “Creek friendly” creek access
- Creek access and non-creek access
- Repurpose volleyball court
- Turn old maintenance shop into a coffee kiosk or ice cream shop
- More permanent, year-round structure for the ice rink, restroom, support building
- Safety in terms of vegetation management (homelessness and potential for hiding things)
- Deer
- Come up with a way to get more flowers back in the park
- Dog hours to run off deer
- Flood resiliency management and planning
- Provide flood planning
- Let the creek go where it wants to go
- The upper park is a series of rooms, entryways, duck grass, playground, then all of a sudden, you’re in the woods and not in rooms anymore. The middle part of the park has nooks and crannies. Different things are happening but they’re not organized in a logical way; not sure if this is good or bad. Is there a better transition of spaces?
- Hierarchy of spaces
- For events near the Bandshell – provide a group space hardscape area
- Is the Bandshell a keeper? – YES!
- How to move dogs around the park
- Determine what should be hardscaped and softscaped everywhere in the park
- Hardscape the front of the park, maybe by the flood wall, and possibly put vendor spacing there
- Design standards for everything
- Improve pedestrian connectivity to Granite Street
- Hardscape issue is important – high usage events, i.e., after 4th of July, 20,000 people hammer the lawn
- The bluff is an untapped resource
- Reclaim the entry where the maintenance shed is
- Restore the stream and associated wetlands to maximize habitat for fish. Enhance the side channel habitat and associated wetlands to get a higher diversity.
- Invasive species, especially ground cover – find a functional native species to replace them.
- Wildland fire – appears to be a non-issue as it’s an ongoing maintenance issue.
- Standardize/revamp restroom facilities and reconsider locations
- Fire pits and BBQs = standards and policies
- Plan Nutley and Granite triangular parcel
- Tree replacement policy and preservation of open spaces
- 100-year plan for the Sycamore Grove
- Japanese Garden concerns about direction for growing the garden
- Lawn assessment
- Water conservation
- Leaf fall management

- Trail surface management – granite and mulch, is it a run-off problem for the creek?
- Integrated pesticide management program needs to be considered
- Boulders are beautiful
- Black Oak leaves
- Sequence, transition and journey
- Revenue opportunity – memorial wall or brick walkway
- Tree replacement plan and climate change model built into it
- Designing for reduced water consumption
- Resource management in general
- Limited staff in terms of maintenance
- Using sustainable energy
- Electric vehicles
- Consider “fire wise” structures
- Consider “fire wise” plantings
- Entryway signage
- More yes signs than no – more positive
- Incorporate climate, energy and action plan
- Assess flood wall
- Understand future trends moving forward
- Addition of sidewalks on Granite and the perimeter of the park
- Look at “steps to nowhere”
- Replacement of bridges
- Consider a kayak course
- Recreation programming
- Opportunity to work with OSF
- Nature play in upper Lithia
- Native plants of Ashland brochure
- Interpretation for public education
- Evaluation of electricity – more accessible for events
- Impact of events
- Wildlife management – bear, deer, turkeys, cougars, fish
- Pollinators
- Slope evaluation
- Erosion evaluation
- Fence evaluation (standards)
- Building evaluation
- Seismic evaluation
- Loop driveway by upper pond
- Parking and circulation evaluation
- Sprinkler and water use evaluation
- Block egress of vehicle access onto sidewalk areas such as near the Bandshell, Cotton Memorial Area, picnic areas and the pickleball/tennis courts – make it obvious where people shouldn’t drive

IX. PROGRAMMING DISCUSSION

Bill Miller said assigned maintenance staff for Lithia Park included two employees and one supervisor. In addition to Lithia, that crew was responsible for mowing four other parks, managing those leaves and weeds and providing ongoing maintenance for the five parks while also maintaining a seasonal ice rink. He said the list of ideas was wonderful but extra projects were difficult for the crew because they didn't have extra time. Meyer said that as lists were created and discussed, additional resources could also be discussed. Matthews said there seemed to be a lot of volunteers helping in the park. Miller agreed that Lori Ainsworth (APRC Volunteer Coordinator) and the volunteers did an incredible job but there were constraints and limitations as to the types of work volunteers could perform.

Landt said he saw the list a little differently and didn't view the items as adding extra work for staff. He felt that when things were designed well, less work resulted. As this team worked, it would ensure maintenance issues were a top priority. He was very encouraged by the extent of knowledge MIG had with regard to maintenance. Moving forward with a plan, and as improvements were made, maintenance requirements should be reduced.

Howard said revenues were mentioned earlier and she asked if a plan should be created for revenues or if the current system would support suggested changes for the next 100 years. Black said that the APRC operations budget grew tighter with every new budget year and it would be important to look at revenues.

Apostle said that unlike parks, nature wanted to change. If you put in a lawn, it would remain as a lawn. He said Lithia was a mixed park that was partly garden and partly nature. He said he was pleasantly surprised to see some young Western Red and Incense Cedars during the walk, despite the deer. Minica said there were Oaks but possibly not in the lower riparian areas of the park. He said management of the trees had mainly been focused on Pines and Oaks.

Referring to the climate change issue, Apostle asked what plant/tree species were regenerating and what the bluff might look like in 20, 50 and 80 years. Current practices included favoring certain species and clearing others. These were fire-dependent ecosystems and, since burns were not conducted there, what could be expected in the absence of fire? In doing a 100-year plan, he felt this group had to be thinking about substitutes for fire and whatever else needed to be done. He asked if there was any scenario in which a controlled burn could happen in Lithia Park. It was stated that the next day, part of this group would meet with Fire Department and Forest Service personnel and they could ask this question then.

Minica said he and McFarland thought prescribed burns were great and people were used to seeing the burns around town; however, he was skeptical about burning so close to town. Black said this park was the peninsula into the urban portion of town. Apostle said he was from Chicago and the nature conservancy there was doing prescribed burns in neighborhoods but the difference was that it was flat land. McFarland said it was also important to consider the prevalence of poison oak and the problems the smoke created when it burned.

McFarland said this year was the first year a prescribed burn was conducted on any APRC property and it was located at Siskiyou Mountain Park. In all the years past, the Fire Chief was strongly against the burns and they had not been allowed.

Additional questions this team would be investigating included: If there's no practical way of doing a burn, are there species composition changes that should be done in terms of plant succession? What happens to the riparian areas and what happens to the bluff? In doing a 100-year plan, are there substitutes that should be considered?

X. FIELD WORK COORDINATION

MIG coordinated with APRC to schedule appointments for more in-depth site investigations and stakeholder interviews taking place the following day.

XI. SET NEXT MEETING DATE

MIG would check with their teams and provide potential dates for design week. Once a date was confirmed with APRC, a new schedule would be updated and made available.

XII. CLOSE OF REGULAR MEETING

The regular meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m. and various team members joined the Listening Post Session at the Siskiyou Room in the Community Development Building, 51 Winburn Way.

COMMUNITY LISTENING

The listening session provided citizens with an opportunity to meet with some of the consultants and express their ideas and concerns. Local project representatives Kerry KenCairn and Jim Love of KenCairn Landscape joined the MIG team to hear questions and respond to feedback.

MIG supplied materials that allowed participants to provide input by posting feedback on corresponding maps and poster boards.

Respectfully Submitted,

Betsy Harshman, Administrative Analyst
Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission