

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION
Minutes
May 15, 2017

ATTENDEES

Present: Commissioners Gardiner, Heller, Landt, Lewis, Miller; Director Black; Recreation Superintendent Dials; Interim Parks Superintendent McFarland; Executive Assistant Dyssegard; Assistant Manuel

Absent: City Council Liaison-Mayor Stromberg

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gardiner called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. at The Grove, 1195 E. Main.

PUBLIC INPUT

There was none.

BEAR CREEK GREENWAY UPDATE (INFORMATION)

Black said his earlier memo dated May 10, 2017, indicated that Ashland City Council would not be constructing a vehicular bridge crossing Bear Creek at Nevada Street. Black corrected the record, stating that it was the Transportation Commission that opted not to recommend the bridge to the City Council. Because of that distinction, the matter could be opened for reconsideration. Black explained that the Ashland Public Works Director would approach RVACT (Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation) asking for a pedestrian bridge for Nevada Street as an alternative to a vehicular bridge.

Black said the Bear Creek Greenway Foundation had a goal to extend the Greenway from the Dog Park to North Mountain Park and beyond. He reported that there were a number of options for expansion, including a trail from the Dog Park through the Verde Village development to Nevada Street. This leg of the route would be established at the developer's expense. Once the trail reaches Nevada Street the trail would continue via sidewalks or bike lanes, crossing Bear Creek to Kestrel Park. The trail would proceed along the north side of the creek to North Mountain Park. Black stated that this on-road option was not preferred by the Greenway Foundation.

Black noted a preference for an alternative route (the **green route**) that would provide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity for Ashland's residents and visitors. This too would begin at the Dog Park and end at North Mountain Park. The trail proceeds to Nevada Street and continues south on Oak Street to Sleepy Hollow, with a final leg east by southeast to property number 28 – the Mace property. Black explained that the trail would continue in the flood plain to the Riverwalk property (owned by APRC) to North Mountain Park without crossing Bear Creek. He noted that residents living along Oak Street would be able to connect more quickly to North Mountain Ave, instead of traveling the longer route via Hersey Street. Black also noted that by creating a pedestrian route, the need for additional parking at North Mountain Park would be minimized, encouraging alternative types of transportation such as biking or walking.

In response to a question by Landt about connectivity with the Mace property, Black stated that the trail could conceivably become a sort of Riverwalk type of extension.

Black discussed the **blue route** depicted from the Dog Park to West Nevada Street, continuing alongside private properties on the southwest side of the creek. The challenge would be access along seven private properties until

the Mace property was reached. Establishing easements would take time, if property owners were willing to grant the easements.

The **orange route** begins at the Wastewater Treatment Plant road (WWTP) following one of two options. The trail would follow the WWTP road east to Bear Creek, crossing the creek at the Maclaren property (#6). This trail would follow the creek on the northeast side of the creek through properties 5, 7, and 13 to Kestrel Park. This assumed that easements for those properties could be secured. Continuing south, the trail would traverse through properties 27, 30, and 32.

There followed a brief discussion about the potential for easements through properties 5 and 7. Obtaining the easements seemed likely, but building a trail could be problematic because much of the area is in the floodway. Discussion focused on various solutions for building a trail that could be subject to periodic flooding. Modifications to the channel would require FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) oversight. Keeping the trail in place during flooding would be challenging and maintenance would be expensive. Black stated that he was familiar with building in a floodway; while it can be done with the proper engineering and materials, it is not a best practice.

If the trail continued south, and trail issues on properties 5 and 7 were solved, then property 13 would be the next hurdle to overcome. The property owner there had indicated a lack of interest in granting permission for a trail. Continuing on from Kestrel Park, properties 27, 30 and 32 were slated for development, providing an opportunity for a trail along Bear Creek. Building a trail in that area would be difficult as well because the area is marshy and not easily navigable. In addition, the trail would end on North Mountain Ave, where it would cross Bear Creek to reach North Mountain Park.

Black stated that there were a number of viable options. While each route posed challenges, in his opinion, no option should be ruled out. The green and purple routes could provide alternative transportation routes without traveling along the highway or crossing at Hersey Street.

Commissioner Discussion

Gardiner expressed concern about properties 5 and 7 because of the propensity for flooding – or incurring heavy maintenance costs. He stated that the Greenway Foundation would not be interested in pursuing such areas. He indicated that it was possible to obtain an agreement with the Foundation to use the route along Nevada Street as a temporary option – citing a precedent along Pine Street in Central Point that was once used until a safer alternative was possible.

Landt advocated for a bridge at Nevada Street, noting that it is already heavily used and it would provide connectivity to Ashland's downtown.

Heller noted that cyclists would prefer that option to traveling along Oak Street. He stated that the property owner of parcel 13 might be more amenable to granting an easement if approached again. Heller encouraged further discussion of the possibilities – noting that floodplain issues might be solved by moving the trail a few feet here or there. He volunteered to talk with the property owner again in an effort to secure an easement for that area.

Lewis stated that the green route could be the key for development.

Further discussion focused on the costs of a pedestrian bridge, ways to approach private property owners, and other hurdles inherent in each of the options.

Black stated that the Greenway Foundation, Ashland Public Works and APRC had agreed to set money aside to hire a consultant to review the options, identify the priorities and assess the issues. The consultant would address a pedestrian bridge – where it should be located and why.

Landt suggested that the consultant review the options in an effort to discover the most cost effective location for a bridge that would support APRC and Greenway goals efficiently. Gardiner commented that primary focus should be to uncover a location that would best meet APRC needs.

Landt replied that in his opinion, there were only two places where a bridge would be warranted – either on property 6 or at Nevada Street. Black stated that the consultant should consider all alternatives.

In response to a question by Landt, Gardiner stated that the options for property 6 were apparent – one option depicts the trail going through the property, with the other option going around the property. He noted that the analysis would facilitate the Greenway's goal for expansion and assist with identifying funding sources. The consultant's documentation would outline a concept plan for the trail - a necessity for obtaining funding from grants.

Landt asked about the norms for trails that go beyond the City's boundaries. Black replied that Ashland worked with others for trail connectivity outside the City. However, the portion of the Greenway trail that APRC would concentrate on would be from the Dog Park to North Mountain Park.

Landt suggested that APRC focus on the green and purple options for the short term – noting that other options could be years in the making. Black agreed, stating that APRC should move forward on all fronts as they become available, not wait for the studies to be done.

Gardiner stated that the possibility of retaining funding meant for a vehicular bridge to build a pedestrian bridge was unlikely. Lewis added that no one option was ideal; however, in his opinion, all opportunities should be explored.

Landt indicated that his preferred option would be the orange route from the WWTP Road.

The Commissioners continued to debate the possibilities. Landt proposed supporting the Greenway while moving forward from the terminus of the Greenway to North Mountain Park with the option that works best for APRC. Lewis noted that the green option would come to fruition sooner than the orange route. He highlighted the data collected by APRC to date, suggesting that there was enough data to make a recommendation.

McFarland advised a more conservative approach – stressing the value in combining APRC information with the consultant's. He cited an engineering study previously done from Nevada Street to North Mountain Park. At that time, a scenario was prepared that considered the floodplain and drainage area where it converges with Bear Creek. McFarland stated that two options for bridges were identified at that time.

Lewis noted that the Kitchen Creek area had yet to be discussed and examined for possibilities there. McFarland noted that there was a utility option throughout the Bear Creek area set back a little further than a proposed trail would go.

Black noted that the consultant would evaluate the options with the idea of adding to the TSP (Transportation Master Plan). Once adopted into the TSP, opportunities would become available for funding trails that provide connectivity and developing alternative routes for transportation.

Gardiner noted that the Greenway Foundation's plan to connect with Ashland's trails would benefit Ashland citizens. Once North Mountain Park was reached, the Foundation would focus on continuing the trail through to Emigrant Lake – a process that could take many years. In the meantime, Ashland, with assistance from the Greenway Foundation, could focus on the southern portion of the Greenway that would traverse through the City.

WASP SPRAY DISCUSSION (INFORMATION)

Black stated that there had been some concerns regarding the use of a synthetic wasp spray during the yearly update for the IPM (Integrated Pest Management) report. He asked that staff research the issue.

McFarland relayed that APRC's pesticide/herbicide expert, Rob Parks, researched alternatives to using the synthetic spray currently used by APRC. He reported that the spray used to combat yellow jackets and various types of wasps was called Sprayon Blast Em. While not organic, the primary ingredient was pyrethroid – a chemical that is less harmful than neonicotinoids. The compound is similar to a chemical found in marigolds (a natural repellent). McFarland commented that APRC had yet to find an alternative that would function effectively when wasp spray was needed.

Commissioner Discussion

Lewis noted that there were different types of repellents – a version that works on the nervous system of the insect and another that is less harmful. He expressed a concern about the amount of wasp spray used at the Golf Course and the ball fields.

McFarland noted that 95% of the time, the issue was yellow jackets, but that bald-faced hornets were also a danger not only at the Golf Course and ball fields but also on woodland trails. He stated that hornets and other wasps were particularly aggressive and dangerous.

McFarland detailed other methods used to eradicate wasps. He stated that early in the morning, when bees are still in their hives, APRC crews remove them and place them in a tarp for disposal. Fine screens are sometimes used to stop in-ground bees. Pheromone traps are used at times to attract yellow jackets. McFarland stated that staff were advocating for continued use of Sprayon Blast Em to ensure the safety of APRC visitors, residents and crews.

Landt acknowledged that while there are times when chemical spray must be used, additional steps can be taken as well. He recommended the use of pheromones in the spring as an effort to capture the queens. Landt stated that in-ground bees could be doused with soapy water if hives were contained. Another option might be to place a glass jar over the opening to prevent bees from leaving the hive.

Landt stated that use of synthetic spray should be added to the IPM Policy by amendment. He emphasized that use of the spray should be a last resort and listed as an exception in the Policy.

STAFF UPDATES

- ***Meeting with Budget Committee***

Black reported that APRC's 2017-19 budget had been tentatively approved by the Budget Committee. He highlighted positive comments about the Oak Knoll Golf Course, stating that people were pleased with the improvements.

Gardiner stated that there seemed to be a question about the proposed Daniel Meyer Pool expansion. Black explained that the fundamental processes for large projects were basically similar and he was confident that APRC

was engaged properly in the process. Landt reported that Black had replied to Budget Committee concerns and that his answers were validated.

Black stated that he brought the pool project up for discussion with the Budget Committee because it would be APRC's largest project for the biennium. He said he was looking forward to justifying the APRC budget so that Ashland's citizens could see the value of APRC's programs and services to the community.

Black reviewed changes to the budget regarding staffing. APRC's FTE was stated as 37.25, when in fact it was 40.05 if unfunded positions were added.

- ***Garfield Park Project***

Black reported that Garfield Park improvements were close to completion. The Splash Pad company would be on site to train APRC personnel on use of the system before the scheduled opening on the Friday before Memorial Day.

There followed a discussion about sand for the volleyball court and minor finishing details not yet completed. Black noted that some of the concrete pathways proved to be redundant and were not installed. He said a second wall would be installed around the Splash Pad to both minimize the change in grade and add seating. Drainage pipes along the basketball court would be placed under concrete.

In response to questions from the Commissioners, Black indicated that the new wall would add \$16,000 to the cost of the project. He explained that the contingency fund for the project had been used for lights and trash cans not accounted for. He noted that the entire project was 3.03% over budget. Black noted that the additional wall would fit in aesthetically and increase functionality.

- ***Annual World Music Festival***

Dyssegard announced that the second annual Ashland World Music Festival would be held on Saturday May 20, 2017. The Festival would feature entertainers, family-friendly music and dance.

- ***Cost Recovery***

Landt stated that cost recovery for the Golf Course had led him to realize that capital improvement costs impact the cost recovery data. He noted that the long-term expenses for infrastructure and programs are not factored in and that it would be helpful if the Commissioners could consider the direct costs as well as the capital costs when making decisions that might affect programs and infrastructure in the future.

Black agreed, stating that master planning would greatly assist APRC. He used the Golf Course as an example – stating that what is known – such as irrigation and building issues – does not necessarily take into account future needs. The Master Plan process looks at the long term. He noted that the upcoming Master Plan for Lithia Park would look at maintenance needs for the future – with a recommendation as to what the priorities should be. Lewis added that a timeline of work that needs to be done would be helpful as well.

Landt stressed the importance of understanding the full extent of the long-term ramifications of capital projects and programs. He stated that care must be taken not to undertake programs or projects that could stretch beyond available funding. He noted that the Ashland's 20,000 residents provide APRC with a limited base to work within. Landt highlighted the need to look at APRC as a whole – including land acquisitions and programs – that are outside of our basic range of services.

- *Article for the Daily Tidings*

Heller reported plans to write his Tidings article based upon his viewpoint as an APRC “newbie” Commissioner. He asked for permission to discuss the Greenway extension in that context. Black replied that information discussed in public meetings is appropriate for comment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Manuel, Assistant

These Minutes are not a verbatim record. The narrative has been summarized to reflect the discussions made. Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission Study Sessions, Special Meetings and Regular Meetings are digitally recorded and available upon request.