

City of Ashland  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
July 24, 2017

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

**Absent:** Commissioner Lewis

### CALL TO ORDER

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

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

#### Study Session—June 19, 2017

**Motion:** Landt moved to approve the Study Session Minutes of June 19, 2017, as presented. Heller seconded.

Miller amended the Minutes as follows:

*Page 4, Paragraph 3*      *“measurement would be 25 meters by 25 feet”*  
*Should be:*              *“measurement would be 25 meters by 25 yards”*

**Motion:** Landt moved to approve the Minutes of June 19, 2017, as amended. Heller seconded.  
The vote was all yes

#### Regular Meeting—June 26, 2017

**Motion:** Miller moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of June, 26, 2017, as presented. Landt seconded.  
The vote was all yes

### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- *Open Forum*

Noel Chatroux of 75 Nursery St. in Ashland was called forward.

Chatroux thanked the Commissioners for adopting a resolution in June 2017 that supported efforts to ensure that the fields and playgrounds of Briscoe and Lincoln schools remained designated as neighborhood parks and open spaces.

Chatroux noted that he was representing Save Our Schools and Playgrounds. He indicated that the City of Ashland was considering a plan to utilize Briscoe Elementary as office space for the City of Ashland. Chatroux reported that Save Our Schools and Playgrounds did not object to using the buildings for that purpose but there were concerns about provisions for adequate parking.

Chatroux submitted four conceptual diagrams depicting potential options for parking, noting that the drawings were intended to facilitate discussion. He stated that paving a portion of the playing fields was the least desirable option.

Chatroux highlighted the commitment made by members of Save Our Schools and Playgrounds to assist APRC in keeping the fields open. He also noted that the citizens' group had devoted 10.5 hours to weeding the Briscoe and Lincoln playgrounds and would continue doing so as needed.

**Celine Buchek** 355 High Street in Ashland was called forward.

Buchek detailed the original effort to secure the playing fields and playgrounds of Briscoe and Lincoln schools, noting the collaboration of the entities involved in the negotiations at the time. She applauded APRC's focus on the City's Comprehensive Plan regarding the mandate to set aside the school grounds as neighborhood parks and open spaces.

Buchek said multi-generations of families remained vested in preserving the fields and playgrounds. She stressed the importance of retaining such green spaces. She stated that there were alternatives to using the fields as parking spaces, noting the potential for shared parking at a nearby church as an example.

#### **ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA**

There were none.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was none.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

- ***Tennis Court Discussion (Information)***

Black introduced the topic, noting that pickleball was growing in popularity and there was a dilemma in sharing the courts with tennis players. He relayed that the current use as pickleball courts was restricted, resulting in more pickleball players than places to play.

Black stated that the eastern side of the tennis courts at Lithia Park were designated for pickleball while the other courts at that location were designated for use as tennis courts. He indicated that there were times when a tennis court was available and could be utilized by pickleball players who were waiting to play should the Commissioners expand the number of pickleball courts.

Black noted that courts at Helman School could be used as pickleball courts as well as tennis courts but public use was limited to times when school was not in session.

#### Discussion

Heller noted that he and others enjoyed both sports – tennis and pickleball. He acknowledged that tennis players were somewhat constrained as well, as tennis courts at Southern Oregon University were no longer available.

Heller reviewed statistics relating to pickleball nationwide, noting that pickleball was becoming an established sport. He stated that SFIA (Sports and Fitness Industry Association) estimated that there were 2.46 million pickleball players as of 2015. ASBA (American Sports Builders Association) estimated that there were 2 million players in 2016. It was projected that the number of players would increase to three million by 2018. Places to play the sport were also growing at an estimated 67% per year. Heller stated that until dedicated courts could become a reality, additional flexibility in places to play would be helpful. He said there were times when courts were available at other locations such as those at Hunter Park.

Black noted that one tennis court could accommodate up to four pickleball courts. He said pickleball lines were added to a court at Helman School. Heller expressed concern about lack of shade at the school and advocated for expanding the Lithia Park courts as an alternative.

There followed a brief discussion about the pros and cons of the sites. Black asked the Commissioners to consider whether an expansion of pickleball sites was warranted and, if so, how many courts should be made available and where they should be located. He noted that \$55,000 had been set aside for resurfacing both tennis courts and pickleball.

- ***Open Forum***

**Dale Swire** of 233 Clay St. in Ashland was called forward.

Swire noted that as a former fitness educator, he was respectful of the choices people made to recreate and maintain fitness. He stated that the issue in Ashland was how to provide adequate and appropriate space for both tennis and pickleball.

Swire contrasted tennis and pickleball, noting that pickleball was a new sport while tennis was a well-established sport. He indicated that in his opinion, pickleball had not yet earned status as a trend, and must earn its place. Swire discussed the locations of available courts, highlighting the loss of the SOU courts and the need to accommodate the high school tennis team, summer youth classes, the annual Big Al's tennis tournament and recreational play.

Swire suggested that a court or two be set aside for pickleballers and other sports such as bike polo, so that tennis players could play on courts that were exclusively designated for tennis.

**Dave Ferguson** of 995 B St. in Ashland was called forward.

Ferguson spoke about his experiences as a newcomer to Ashland. He stated that there were many things to do in Ashland, making it easier to become involved. He talked about the most welcoming people – tennis players – noting that they included all ages. Over the past thirty years, tennis community members had developed into an informal group of like-minded sports enthusiasts. He championed Ashland's emphasis on health and fitness, noting that players often participated well into their 80s. Ferguson stated that in his opinion, providing places to play tennis was an ideal use of public space.

**Sally Jones** of 881 S. Mountain Avenue in Ashland was called forward.

Jones stated that as a former physical education teacher, she was all about maximizing activities. She commented that in her opinion, both groups – tennis players and pickleball players – could be accommodated.

Jones expressed a concern about the increased need for additional courts due to the closure of the University's courts. She said a needs assessment could be conducted to determine how many courts were needed to accommodate pickleballers as well as tennis players. Jones stated that striping the tennis courts for pickleball was disruptive and suggested that pickleball courts be located in one area, such as at the Lithia Park location.

**Gail Patton** of Ashland was called forward.

Patton noted that Ashland had a large group of serious tennis players in addition to recreational players. She relayed that some players also enjoyed pickleball. Patton noted that 50% of the courts in Ashland had been lost – downsizing from 26 courts to 12 only. She emphasized that the existing courts were often in bad shape and that alternative uses for the courts was a contributing factor. Patton suggested that a multi-use court with space for two pickleball courts could be built at the newly renovated Garfield Park, with Hunter Park designated for tennis only.

Patton explained that pickleball lines should be painted in a lighter color of the court's surface and asked that the stripes at Helman School be removed and painted appropriately. She stated that the condition of the courts was detrimental to the success of the nationwide tournament held each year in Ashland.

**Sharon Laskos** of 1420 Fielder St. in Ashland was called forward.

Laskos advocated for separate facilities for tennis players and pickleballers. She stated that pickleball lines were confusing and distracting for tennis players. She asked that an email from Chip Blackmon - a certified pickleball and tennis pro for the Ashland Tennis Club – be admitted into the record as follows:

"It has been my experience, as a certified tennis and pickleball instructor, that when putting down pickleball lines on a tennis court, we always use a lighter version of the color of the interior tennis court. This is the best way to see the pickleball lines while not overpowering the tennis court lines. With pickleball growing as a sport, they now have a US Open for pickleball and we will need to be responsible to both groups of players until they can build standalone pickleball courts."

**Bruce Barnes** of 132 Blue Heron Ln. in Ashland was called forward.

Barnes introduced himself as "one of those over 80 guys" who plays tennis. He stated that the courts were often full and people waited for a turn to play. He noted that APRC conducted tennis lessons for youth, ensuring continued growth of the sport and increased need for tennis courts in Ashland.

**Luther (Louie) Lyman** of 321 Clay # 101 in Ashland was called forward.

Lyman reported that he had observed courts at Helman School that were empty of pickleball players based on observations conducted on Sunday, July 23, 2017, at approximately 10:00 a.m. Later in the day, the courts were half full. He suggested that the lack of shade at Helman might be one reason the courts were not fully utilized.

Lyman talked about the restricted times for use at Helman, (use is permitted only when school is not in session), and lack of storage for nets. He noted that the University's courts were gated and not maintained although three were potentially usable. Lyman talked with the Athletic Director at SOU who relayed that the University had not yet made a decision regarding the use of the tennis courts, although there had been some contact with APRC regarding them. Lyman encouraged APRC to continue to negotiate use of the courts – particularly when one of the courts would be ideal for pickleball. He relayed that the courts were gated, a constraint that could be addressed while discussing use of the courts.

#### Discussion

Heller responded to some of the concerns relayed during Open Forum. He stated that a storage locker had been delivered at Helman School that day, which would facilitate storing equipment at the courts.

Black relayed that the courts at Helman School were there as a result of negotiations with APRC. He stated that educators at the school had proposed alternative uses for the space, resulting in the negotiations. APRC renewed a commitment to maintain the courts for use as intended, an essential part of the negotiations. He stated that the pickleball lines has been painted to match school colors.

Heller agreed with public comments regarding the inclusivity of the tennis and pickleball groups in Ashland. He stated that both sports promote healthy social interactions as well as enhancing physical well-being.

Heller stated that he was encouraged by public commentary that leaned toward more pickleball in Lithia Park. He noted that APRC would continue talks with SOU, particularly now that colleges across the nation were beginning to facilitate intercollegiate pickleball tournaments. Heller cautioned that it might be some time before SOU made a decision about use of the courts.

Heller stated that he would be amenable to painting more courts in Lithia Park for pickleball, noting that it was the least invasive option. He noted that while the sport of pickleball was growing rapidly, tennis was a venerable sport with an incredible history and he supported the tennis community as well as pickleball players.

Landt suggested that pickleball statistics be balanced with equivalent statistics about tennis to provide an apples-to-apples comparison. A member of the audience noted that the number of tennis players from 2014 to date had expanded from 14 million players to 18 million. Black recommended using the same source of information for context. He stated that there were actions that could be taken to add to anecdotal information.

Black stated that discussion should focus on wait times to determine whether an expansion of pickleball courts would be appropriate. He talked about wait times for other sports such as basketball, and the limited number of courts for that particular sport. Black asked whether an empty court should be made available to pickleball players, if one was available.

Landt highlighted the suggestion by former Parks Commissioner Sally Jones to conduct a needs-assessment, noting that the information gathered would be helpful. He indicated that there were other factors to consider as well such as the availability of courts at certain times of the day versus availability at ideal times to play. He talked about the scheduling of soccer teams, which had assigned fields throughout the day because the number of teams wishing to play soccer outpaced the preferred times for play. Landt noted that there would be several options to consider once the assessment was completed.

Gardiner asked about the cost of building a dedicated pickleball court. He noted that there was \$55,000 set aside for pickleball in the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan).

In response to a question by Gardiner, Black clarified that the \$55,000 was for resurfacing tennis and pickleball courts. According to the latest bid received, the cost to resurface one court was approximately \$11,000. There followed a brief discussion about the number of courts in need of resurfacing, the number of courts requiring re-striping and the overall condition of the courts at Lithia Park.

Gardiner reiterated that the Helman court had been prepared for pickleball players. Heller commented that the addition of a new storage unit for sports equipment might encourage pickleballers to use the Helman courts.

Landt explained the *permaculture principle* – a tool espoused by APRC to raise efficiencies and provide more value for the community. He stated that using a facility for more than one purpose was a cost-effective way to meet that standard. Landt acknowledged that there were exceptions to the general rule, such as the use of Hunter Park for tennis tournaments. In that case, the addition of pickleball lines would be confusing and counterproductive.

Gardiner highlighted partnerships with other entities that maximized the sports infrastructure. He noted that Helman School, as an example, was open to the public only when school was not in session. Gardiner acknowledged that when partners reduced sports facilities, there was increased pressure on the public infrastructure that remained in place. He cited closure of the SOU swimming pool as an example. Gardiner stressed that APRC continually looked for solutions to alleviate those pressure but noted that there were costs involved as well as the depletion of resources.

Landt noted that it was his preference to be operationally conservative. He intimated that a step-by-step approach would ensure that all the courts are being used to capacity. If pickleball courts remained a priority, then striping an additional court or two at Lithia Park might be appropriate.

Heller replied that the reason all courts were not fully utilized was that weather affected active play, particularly in the heat of the summer. He stated that the courts at Lithia Park were shaded and there were benches for players to sit while waiting to play.

There followed a discussion about a needs assessment and how to gather information in a timely manner. Black suggested that APRC staff could collect data regarding the use and the times when people were waiting for an available court. Landt suggested that the data collected should be comprehensive and include all hours of the day.

Once the information was reviewed, Black suggested that the Commissioners focus on the demand for pickleball and whether there was adequate space within the APRC system for expansion of pickleball courts.

Miller asked about ways to shade existing courts. Black acknowledged the possibility with the caveat that funds were limited and must include tennis improvements as well. Landt called for a future discussion at a biennial goal setting session about shade structures. He asked staff to place the topic on APRC's list of topics (i.e., the parking lot) that had not been voted on but were considered important to consider for possible future implementation.

- ***CIP Update (Information)***
  - *Ashland Creek Park*

McFarland reviewed the status of current projects beginning with Ashland Creek Park. He stated that APRC staff had laid a new patio slab and installed a shade structure over new picnic tables. In response to a question by Landt, McFarland noted that the picnic tables were in excess of those needed for Garfield Park and therefore did not affect the project's budget, which represented a cost savings.

- *Garfield Park*

McFarland stated that finishing touches were in progress. He said a new retaining wall had been poured, adding to the aesthetics. Black noted that the additional retaining wall was serving a dual purpose as a seating wall.

- *Oak Knoll Golf Course*

McFarland displayed a photo of attractive new yardage and greens signage. He noted that there had been an irrigation failure at the first hole that was currently under repair. Irrigation improvements were a top priority and sprinkler heads would be upgraded to a more rugged and versatile type of equipment. The main advantage was that the inner workings could be replaced if necessary without replacing the entire unit.

Landt led a discussion regarding head-to-head coverage. McFarland noted that head to head coverage would be possible with the new equipment – conserving water while increasing efficiencies. Black explained that the Golf Course irrigation improvements would become part of a master plan, as opposed to replacing heads in a haphazard manner.

In response to a question by Heller, McFarland noted that irrigation came primarily from a pond holding TID irrigation water, with a pump delivering water to the irrigation system.

➤ *Second Dog Park*

McFarland reported that a survey of the area had been completed and the planning process would begin soon. Black stated that the Real Estate Subcommittee would need to meet soon to discuss new developments regarding the Dog Park. He explained that an agreement with the YMCA included a recreational component, necessitating a multi-faceted park rather than a dedicated dog park. An evaluation of the uses for the property would be an important first step.

➤ *Ashland Pond Easements*

McFarland noted that a survey for public easements (that would provide access to Ashland Pond) was underway.

➤ *Verde Village Bike Path*

Development of the bike path for Verde Village was reported as underway. Fencing had been installed as well as silt barriers that would extend to the Dog Park. McFarland reported that the project was roughed in.

Landt asked about plans for a retaining wall in areas where there was a substantial grade change. McFarland stated that he would contact the developers to ascertain the plans for the area.

➤ *Beach Creek Repairs*

McFarland commented that APRC was working with the engineer and the contractor to repair the outflow area below the pipe. He stated that the original project had been permitted because the area was designated a non-historical fish habitat, according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

In response to a question by Landt, McFarland stated that the partial failure downstream would be a separate project. He stated that the repairs downstream had more complications and would require a specific permit. Landt replied that another wet winter could destroy the pedestrian bridge resulting in higher repair costs. Black indicated that the process for obtaining the permit would begin soon. McFarland stated that he would research whether a temporary solution could be found to forestall further damage. He explained that Public Works was working with the entities involved for permission to clean the sediment trap that would protect the bridge.

In response to a question by Black, McFarland clarified that preparations included measuring rocks that had been washed downstream and were in line with the contract specs required by Public Works Engineering. The results would support findings regarding cause and effect of the catastrophic failure.

Black noted that APRC was participating in a process to determine how the fix would proceed. APRC was striving to collaborate with the designer, contractor and staff to arrive at an agreeable solution.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS**

- *Lithia Park Master Plan*

Black reported that the Lithia Park Subcommittee was in the process of reviewing the three proposals received in response to the RFP (request for proposal) for the Lithia Park Master Plan. An interview had been scheduled with the applicant scoring the highest on the criteria matrix. A walk-around had been scheduled as well. Once the review was completed, the subcommittee would present recommendations to the Commissioners.

- *Ribbon Cutting*

Dyssegard extended an invitation for a Garfield Park ribbon cutting ceremony scheduled for Thursday, July 27 at 1:00 p.m. The Chamber of Commerce would be on hand to assist with the ribbon cutting and dessert would be served along with family friendly activities. This event would celebrate the recently completed improvements at Garfield Park.

- ***Golf Course Meeting***

Gardiner announced that a Golf Course Subcommittee meeting was scheduled for Thursday, August 17.

### **ITEMS FOR COMMISSIONERS**

Gardiner stated that the July "Park Views" article was not submitted to the Ashland Daily Tidings, as the topic was not yet ready for release.

### **UPCOMING MEETING DATES**

*Study Session*, August 21, 2017 @ The Grove, 1195 E. Main, 5:30 p.m.

*Regular Meeting*, August 28, 2017 @ Council Chambers, 1175 E. Main, 7:00 p.m.

Gardiner noted that the Study Session might be canceled due to lack of a quorum, since that was the day of the solar eclipse.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Manuel, Assistant  
Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission

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