

MINUTES FOR SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
February 7, 2024
Council Chambers – 6 PM
1175 E Main St

Present: Commissioners Bachman (Chair), Landt (Vice Chair), Adams, Lewis, Seffinger; Interim Director Eldridge, Deputy Director Dials, Interim Senior Services Superintendent Mettler, Parks Superintendent Caldwell, Executive Assistant Mero

Absent: None

I. CALL TO ORDER

Bachman called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

APRC Study Session – January 3, 2024

Motion: Seffinger moved to accept the minutes. Adams seconded.

Vote: Vote was all yes.

III. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

None

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

None

V. CONSENT AGENDA

None

VI. DIRECTORS REPORT

Interim Director, Leslie Eldridge [Presentation](#)
Administration

- New City Website: Deputy Director Dials and other key staff have been working diligently on the new website. Expected to roll out mid to late May. The process has required months of deciding which web pages to migrate to the new site, working with CivicPlus, the contractor, and all departments in the city. For a time both old and new websites will be live while staff learn the new site.
- Hiring:
 - Currently interviewing for a second full time custodial position. This position will work mostly on facilities. Their schedule will include some evenings and weekends in part to provide a presence during off hours in hopes of reducing vandalism/theft.
 - Administrative Analyst and Senior Administrative Analyst positions have been posted. We want to find someone knowledgeable and experienced, especially in budgeting and financial forecasting. We will be reading applications in the coming weeks.

Bachman: Asked a clarifying question. Is there just one open position, but you posted two different positions hoping to attract a wider range of applicants?

Eldridge: Exactly. The Senior Analyst position has more requirements for skills, experience, and education.

Bachman interjected to announce that Commissioner Landt was attending the meeting via Zoom. Our first hybrid meeting. Kudos to staff who worked literally up to the last minute to make it happen.

- Legislative Initiatives
 - Parks, Trails, and Open Space Map and Technical Support document will be presented to the City Council for first reading on February 20, 2024. Community Development Director Goldman and Eldridge will give the presentation.

Senior Services

- Matt Dorris of the Guitar Society of Southern Oregon performed 19th century guitar music at the Senior Center on January 31.
- Interim Senior Services Superintendent Mettler was interviewed by Jackson County Library Services to discuss the Tech Basics classes for older adults offered at the Senior Center.
- Mettler was appointed by the RVTD board of directors to their Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund Advisory Committee to advocate for the transportation needs of Ashland seniors.

Recreation

- The recreation team and particularly Manager Flora have been working hard to bring adaptive recreational opportunities to the community. February 2 there was an adapted skating clinic and family fun night at the Ashland Rotary Centennial Ice Rink. February 16 there will be a free Deaf Skate Night. No talking allowed. Sign language is encouraged!
- Partnered with Ashland High School Baseball team and Ashland Youth Baseball to create a team room at the batting cage at North Mountain park. Gave the room a total face lift padding the walls, painting, adding padding and astro turf to the concrete floor, and mounting wall attachments for exercise band connectivity. Paid for by the Ashland High School Baseball team.
- Deputy Dials held the annual meeting of Ashland Parks and Rec field users. APRC maintenance staff were included in the meeting. The demand for fields far exceeds current capacity. Challenging for Deputy Dials to meet everyone's field needs.
- System-Wide Smart Irrigation project is one of two CIP projects approved for the current biennium. Last year staff completed Phase I installing the WeatherTrak irrigation in Lithia, Ashland Japanese Garden, and North Mountain Park. Phase II is under way. The current phase includes installing the irrigation in Calle Guanajuato, Clay Street, Garfield, Triangle, Glenwood, and Railroad Parks. The total FY24 CIP budget was \$100,000.00. The projected Expenses for Phase II are less than that at \$88,000.00 which includes a \$15,000.00 contingency fund. Phase III will see the WeatherTrak system installed in Hunter, Sherwood, Garden Way, Scenic, Dog, Ashland Creek, Briscoe, and Kestrel Parks. These improvements are very important for water conservation, efficiency, and the vegetation/natural resources in our community.
- At the recent City Town Hall, Mayor Graham presented APRC Volunteer Carol Carlson the James M. Ragland Volunteer Spirit Community Service Award. Carol was one of the cofounders of the first Ashland Community Garden in what is now Ashland Creek Park. Carlson is a Master Gardener, teaches classes, and staffs the Master Gardener booth at the Grower's Market.

Bachman noted he was a co-manager of the Ashland Community Garden and enjoyed working with Carol. She is a true Master Gardener and community builder.

VII. BUSINESS

a) **Ashland Parks Foundation (APF) Butler-Perozzi Fountain Restoration Project Update/Request for Action on the RFP (Action)**

Mike Gardiner, Board President of APF [Updated Fountain Goal Chart](#)

Gardiner spoke to the project. Has two goals for tonight:

- First, to give a brief update on fundraising campaign. Currently the campaign has raised \$626,566 (78%) of their \$800,000 goal. \$200,000 of the goal money is for the restoration of the fountain. Another \$275,000 is for the restoration of the terrace and stairs, the electrical and water systems being redone, and \$200,000 allocated to maintenance of the fountain. They have raised the money to start the project and will continue to fundraise until the \$800,000 goal is reached. This will be handed over to APRC when the project gets underway.
- Secondly, Gardiner asked APRC staff and Commissioners to consider the timeline of getting the project on the Lookahead and started. Probably require an RFP for planning and construction. Technically have the funds to pay for the project.

Questions/Discussion

Landt: Asked where the design costs are coming from.

Gardiner: The cost of the design is covered in each section of the estimate(s) noted on the pie chart.

Bachman: The design costs are contained within the \$800,000 funding goal/estimate, correct?

Gardiner: Yes. Eighteen months ago, the APF commissioned an extensive evaluation of each component of the fountain. The estimated costs came from that evaluation.

Seffinger: Noted that the project has been in the fundraising mode for some time. It would be good to get it on the books. Donors would like to see the project completed.

Gardiner: Getting the restoration started might also help in raising the remaining funds of the goal.

Seffinger: Do you think the project should be completed in phases or all at once?

Gardiner: All at once after the design is completed. Believes APF has the funds available now.

Adams: Asked staff for a reasonable time frame to get the fountain project on the Lookahead and begin to utilize the generously donated funds.

Eldridge: Being short staffed/new staffed, predicts a minimum of six to nine months of backlogged projects. May want to consider phasing to keep the project under/within budget.

Landt: Who will be the project manager for the fountain? Is that cost included in the plans? Or is it assumed that APRC staff will manage the project?

Gardiner: Thinking it would be APRC but for staff to decide.

Eldridge: Staff has been thinking this as well. Other options are open for discussion.

Landt: APRC has hired outside project managers in the past. Might help move the project forward. The new Parks Superintendent is capable of managing the project but that would take him away from his other duties.

Bachman: There may be money in the budget for hiring a project manager. How long will the project take?

Gardiner: Original estimate was for about one year. May depend partly on if some of the work must be done in a particular season.

Lewis: This is an action item. I am on the steering committee. A lot of people have been working hard on the project. Believe we must add one more item to our full plate. Invited Parks Superintendent to sit in on a steering committee meeting to talk about next steps.

Motion: Lewis moved to direct staff to generate an RFP for the Butler-Perozzi Fountain Restoration. Seffinger seconded.

Lewis: The project will require a lot of lead time. If passing this motion gets it started that's a good thing. Has faith that APF will be able to raise the remaining funds in their goal to cover ongoing fountain maintenance.

Seffinger: Agrees getting the momentum going is very important.

Roll Call Vote: All yes. Motion passes.

Gardiner: Glad to move this project closer to the front. Realizes it will require a lot of lead time and that there is currently a heavy load on staff.

Bachman thanked Gardiner for his presentation and for all the work the APF does for APRC.

b) Resolution of Support for Extending/Connecting the Central Bike Path (CBP) (Action)

Interim Director, Eldridge

APRC has been moving an updated Parks, Trails, and Open Space Map (Map) through the legislative process for inclusion into the Ashland Comprehensive Plan. (ACP) The Map identifies property for acquisition focusing on small neighborhood parks and trail/bike/ped connectivity. Citizens and local action groups have contacted APRC and the City's Planning Commission in support of prioritizing extending/connecting the CBP. The CBP is identified in the Transportation System Plan (TSP) and the Trails Master Plan which are part of the ACP. The CBP is also identified in the Map through a GIS layer called "Trails Master Plan Corridor." It is also stated on the Map, "This map is intended to be used in conjunction with the TMP which identifies critical connectivity corridors for acquisitions or easements." Under the TSP, extending the CBP would fall entirely to Public Works to realize. Though APRC will not be the lead on extending/connecting the CBP, the Commissioners decided to create a Resolution to demonstrate their support.

Bachman: Read the [Resolution](#)

Questions/Discussion

Eldridge: The draft language of this resolution was presented to the Planning Commission. They added a whereas to the Parks, Trails, and Open Space Map ordinance. It has nothing to do with this draft Resolution. It is simply a side note.

Landt: They stated to the Planning Commission that the resolution was a draft.

Bachman: The resolution stands alone from what the Planning Commission is doing.

Eldridge: That is correct. The draft resolution was presented to the Planning Commission to further demonstrate that the APRC Commissioners understand the importance of extending/connecting the CBP and are listening to the citizens of Ashland.

Motion: Adams moved to approve as presented the Resolution in support of expanding multi modal transportation routes in Ashland. Lewis seconded.

Adams: All on APRC are supportive of various forms of transportation in Ashland and want the CBP extended.

Lewis: Stated previously that the resolution is somewhat superfluous. The Parks, Trails, and Open Space Map mentions connectivity repeatedly. A lot of work went into creating the Map including many revisions. The Map is extensive, and he hopes people will read the full document.

Seffinger: Goes to wanting more diversity in Ashland and attracting more young people as well.

Roll Call Vote: All yes. Motion passes

c) Volunteer in Parks Yearly Report for 2023 (Information)

Sulaiman Shelton, Volunteer and Events Coordinator [Volunteer in Parks Presentation](#)

Shelton: Has been the Volunteer and Events Coordinator for APRC for four years. Sulaiman was hired after Lori Ainsworth retired. Lori had built the volunteer program over the previous ten years. Several months into his tenure, the COVID pandemic shut down many of the programs and they have been rebuilding ever since. Shelton thanked other APRC staff who also work with volunteers including Coordinator Aguayo at the Nature Center and Interim Senior Services Superintendent Mettler and Interim Senior Services Coordinator Shannon Holt at the Senior Center. It is a true team effort. Shelton recognized that volunteers play a key role in the success of APRC.

Shelton showed a slide listing a few of the many volunteer opportunities separated by Division, such as Parks, Senior Services, etc. He also highlighted the longstanding Adopt-a-Park Program. A collaboration between local businesses, faith organizations, schools, etc., and APRC to maintain Ashland's parks.

In 2023, 893 volunteers gave 12,048 hours of service. This translates to nearly six full-time staff at a dollar value of \$389,994.

Between 2022 and 2023, the number of volunteer hours went up while the number of individual volunteers went down. Primarily because the Bear Creek Salmon Festival didn't happen due to staffing issues, and service-learning programs were reduced for the same reason. Still, the total number of volunteer hours at North Mountain Park went down only slightly.

Volunteer hours were up in general Parks maintenance primarily because of a new volunteer program in the Ashland Japanese Garden. (AJG) In addition to the volunteers doing maintenance in the AJG, there is a docent program boasting about 40 docents.

Senior Services saw a sharp rise in office volunteer support.

Bachman: Noted that fewer people are doing a lot more work. Volunteer numbers were down, but volunteer hours were up 20%.

Shelton noted awards were recently given to some of the outstanding volunteers.

Volunteer Program in 2024: Ashland Japanese Garden development might include offering to host events there and increased tours so more opportunities to volunteer. The Bike Program run in collaboration with Rogue Valley Transportation District continues to grow. They put on the Bike Swap each year and offer weekly bike repair at the Grove. All run through volunteers. The efforts go to support a bike education safety program.

Community events took a major hit during COVID but are recovering.

Hoping to have enough staff/volunteer support to regenerate the service-learning offerings. Eager to have the kids back in the parks.

Questions/Discussion

Bachman: The number of volunteers we have represents one sixth of our total Parks headcount. A wonderful number and Shelton does a great job motivating the volunteers. Thank you.

Adams: Thanked Sulaiman. Commented that volunteer trail work days might be missing from the report, particularly the trails that are on Parks land. Adams helped with the recent Mimsy reroute estimating there were 50 – 70 volunteers present. Suggested in future volunteer reports it would be neat to mention trail work volunteer hours on Parks and Forest Service Land including the organizations that organize some of the work days, DEVO, RVMB, and the AWTA.

Shelton: We work hard to capture the volunteer work of partner organizations, and some are captured in the report. There is room for improvement, however, so thank you.

Seffinger: Senior Services are all in Parks, they are really not in the City. We are the only one that's providing services to one of the biggest demographic groups that is rapidly increasing in size in our community; those 85 and older that drastically need those services to be able to live in Ashland. Many seniors use the Senior Center for assistance using technology because they can't figure out their lives so easily anymore. This helps people stay in their homes, which has an amazing financial benefit on the young families here.

Lewis: Was on the Commission and was in favor when previous Director Don Robertson recommended hiring a Volunteer Coordinator. Believes the connection and bonding that happens between the volunteers is priceless. Thanked Ashland Parks Foundation for helping to fund the volunteer appreciation dinner. Very special to get together as a group and to hear about each other's volunteer efforts.

d) SmartRec Online Registration (Information)

Deputy Director Dials [Presentation](#)

Dials: Since 2003, APRC had used the same facility rental/class registration software program called Activenet. It was time for an upgrade. The SmartRec program is more user friendly. Four staff from Recreation and Senior Services (the project team) went through three months of training including backend and interface training. The project team had to input all the class offerings and facility rental information into SmartRec. The new system was launched on January 3.

The SmartRec system is imbedded in the City of Ashland's website. It is easy to go to the website and register for classes. So far feedback has been positive. There are always some community members challenged by technology. APRC staff are providing support in person and over the phone to help get people familiarized with the new system.

Renting facilities has a color-coded calendar on the back end. Makes it easy for staff to see what's happening at a glance.

Staff Feedback: One great new feature is that they can easily create a contract for a facility rental, email it to a customer for an e-signature, and then the customer can pay for it on their end.

Activities can be tailored to collect customer info such as allergies and special forms. Instructors can then access this information online, reducing time staff need to communicate with them.

Entering activities is easy due to the ability to make mass edits to schedules and activity descriptions.

There is more to learn but so far so good. SmartRec should interface very nicely with the new City of Ashland website, CivicPlus.

Questions/Discussion

Bachman: A quantum leap forward doing more with less. Could SmartRec be expanded into event management? Like in Lithia Park?

Dials: We are still figuring out the full capabilities of the program. Will look into it. Will also learn if SmartRec could be used for volunteer management.

e) Ivy/Waterline Project (Information)

Caldwell, Parks Superintendent [map](#)

City of Ashland's Public Works Department has developed and bid a project for a new waterline that traverses APRC's newly acquired Liberty Street property. The project has been in the works for many years. At last night's City Council Meeting, the project was awarded to a contractor, so work is expected to begin sometime this spring and conclude by the end of June of this year.

Caldwell's goal is to partner with Public Works and have staff on site during construction to help minimize impacts to resources.

Questions/Discussion

Bachman: What sort of oversight is needed on a project like this?

Caldwell: It is Public Work's project so the responsibility of minimizing impact to resources falls to them. There are some required consultations with APRC staff arborists around tree protection. Public Works will have erosion/sediment control plans, access restrictions, etc.

Bachman: Just trying to understand what our responsibility is. Protecting trees, the environment?

Caldwell: Yes.

Adams: Love the example of great cooperation with City government. Highlights that acquisition of additional land for Parks can add multiple benefits to the community. Appreciated Caldwell's report and the highlighting of 9 items we are paying special attention to for maintenance of this beautiful space even while we have a Public Works project coming through it.

Landt: Will the equipment and work be within the easement of right of way?

Caldwell: As far as I'm aware, yes. There are two easements across the property. As far as I'm aware, the intent is to construct the project within the two easements.

Landt: Does that mean there will be a barrier between the easement and the rest of the park land.

Caldwell: I don't know for sure. I could request that.

Landt: I would strongly urge you to do that. It goes back to other projects, Ashland Pond, and Ashland Creek Park. Both were Public Works projects on Parks land and in both cases more property was accessed with soil compaction and scraping than was required to complete the work. With the easements at the Waterline project, it seems like it would be no problem to put up orange construction plastic fencing.

Caldwell: That's a valid point and I can have that discussion with Public Works.

Landt: Thank you. Without clear guidelines it is easy for contractors to expand their area of work.

VIII. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF

Bachman explained that he has asked staff to put a standing Liaison Report on the agenda. Whenever a Commissioner attends a Management Advisory Committee or other committee meeting, he would like them to report back to the rest of the Commissioners. This will keep the Commissioners informed and show the public that we have a lot of people working out there, many volunteers.

a. **Commissioner Liaison Report:** Bachman Ashland Senior Advisory Committee (ASAC) January 8 Meeting

It is a great group chaired by Mike Gardiner. There is very good programming at the Senior Center. This was the first ASAC meeting run by Mettler as the Interim Senior Services Superintendent, and she did a great job.

- Cassie Rose from the Community Volunteer Network (CVN) gave a [presentation](#). The organization is housed in Medford at 1 West Main Street. A few highlights from her presentation:
 1. Call A Ride is looking for volunteer drivers. This free service transports people to and from medical appointments.
 2. They also need bilingual/Spanish speakers/writers to translate and produce written material in Spanish as well as to work with Spanish speaking clients.If anyone is interested in volunteering with CVN they can get contact information from the staff at the Senior Center.
- As the liaison from APRC to the ASAC, Bachman spoke to them about building a pool. Informed them that once we get the Daniel Meyer Pool designed and financed there will be a lot of noise and disruption in the area, issues with parking, etc. The construction will take a year or more. The pool will be closed during construction.
- City Council ASAC liaison Bob Kaplan's report:
 1. Spoke about City ordinances passed by Council, namely no camping in parks, alcohol permitted in parks under specific conditions, and establishing park hours.
 2. Spoke about the new City water treatment plant that will be located near the Wonder trail.
 3. Spoke of Council's wanting to reduce the cost of water in Ashland, particularly for citizens with low income, such as some seniors.

- o Livable Ashland Alliance. A coalition of several organizations. Anne Bellegia is the chair of the steering committee and has asked Bachman to join as a liaison for ASAC. He likely will. Livability is a good lens for how to make decisions in Ashland.
- b. Seffinger: Adding on to Senior Services she is currently the president of the Ashland Community Food Bank (ACFB). She wants seniors to know that it is there for them. There is a satellite pantry at the Senior Center. A main need ACFB sees is in the senior population. The Food Bank is a nonprofit and is low barrier. It is available to citizens of Talent and Ashland.
- c. Landt asked Bachman if he had a preliminary employment statement. Bachman answered that he does, it is coming. He will speak about the hiring process for the APRC Director when we get to the Lookahead.

IX. UPCOMING MEETING DATES

- a. APRC Study Session March 6 Electronic Meeting 6:00pm
- b. Ashland Senior Advisory Committee March 11 in person at the Senior Center 3:30pm
- c. APRC Regular Business Meeting March 13 in person at Council Chambers
- d. Recreation Division Advisory Committee March 21 in person at the Lithia Cabin 4:00pm

Bachman spoke to the upcoming robust job search for the hire of a permanent APRC Director. He has given the rest of the Commissioners an updated job description for their feedback. Once it is ready he will meet with City HR staff to get it posted. They will also have an evaluation of some sort of Interim Director Eldridge. Intend to have the entire process completed in 60 days.

Adams: When you say 60 days do you mean from the date of posting or from today?

Bachman: Sixty days from today. Important because Eldridge is on leave from SOU.

X. LOOKAHEAD

Eldridge: Mentioned she had changed what was previously titled "Parking Lot Topics" on the Lookahead. Staff asked to make this category a list of tasks currently in the works, calling it, "Ongoing APRC Projects and Work." By no means exhaustive, the list provides a snapshot of what staff is working on. Could be used to inform items for Study Sessions. Eldridge went on to review agenda items for the March 13, APRC business meeting.

Adams: Would like to see updates on Daniel Meyer Pool (DMP) and East Main Park (EMP) on the Lookahead as agenda items soon.

Eldridge: Gave brief updates:

- a. DMP: By request, Robertson Sherwood is doing research and preparing an assessment for the options/cost of adding a cover to DMP. Might take a month to six weeks. Might be an April agenda item.

- XI. EMP: We are very close to applying for annexation of the land into the city of Ashland. Once submitted, the process will involve Eldridge shepherding it through the various hoops until it finally gets to City Council for approval. Maybe it will take two to two and a half months.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Bachman adjourned the meeting at 7:43 PM