

MINUTES FOR REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
October 11, 2023
Council Chambers – 6 p.m.
1175 E Main St

Present: Commissioners Landt (Chair), Bachman (Vice Chair) Adams, Lewis, Seffinger; Interim Director Eldridge, Deputy Director Dials, Senior Service Superintendent Glatt, Analyst Kiewel, Senior Services Coordinator Mettler

Absent: None

I. CALL TO ORDER

Landt called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) APRC Regular Meeting – August 9, 2023

Motion: Bachman moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by Lewis

Vote: The vote was all yes. Seffinger abstained.

b) APRC Special Meeting – September 6, 2023

Motion: Bachman moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by Lewis

Vote: The vote was all yes. Seffinger abstained.

III. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

None

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

None

V. CONSENT

- a) Approval (Acknowledgement) of Subcommittee Minutes
- b) Commissioner Committee Assignments
- c) Conversation Clusters Seating Project - site adjustment for Glenwood Park

Motion: Bachman moved to approve the consent agenda for acknowledgment. Seconded by Lewis.

Vote: The vote was all yes. Adams raised a point of order regarding Committee Assignments approval; Landt clarified the process.

I. Interim Directors Report

- Moving forward with the hiring on a Parks Superintendent and Executive Assistant:
 - The second and final round of interviews for the Park Superintendent position are scheduled for the week of October 30, 2023. Eldridge thanked Deputy Director Dials for organizing the effort.
 - The Executive Assistant job posting has closed and there are 36 applications that staff is evaluating.

- All APRC staff participated in a de-escalation training that was held by Ashland Police Department (APD) This training yielded helpful tools in how to deal with potentially unsafe or aggressive situations.
- Senior Services COVID and Flu Vaccine Clinic October 13 and October 27: Superintendent Glatt has reported that the 2 sessions were completely full. Thanks to a generous grant from Mountain Meadows Community Foundation, the clinic was able to expand services to 450 shots.
- Daniel Meyer Pool liner project is underway: The pool has been drained, and repairs have been done to the sidewalls and the tiling in order to get ready for the liner installation. Park staff reports the contractor will install the liner the week of October 30, 2023.
- Ashland Rotary Centennial Ice Rink will open November 17, 2023. The ice rink structure will be raised the first week of November. Kaylee Herrick will return as Ice Rink Manager.
- North Mountain Park Nature Center Coordinator, Jen Aguayo, has been providing service-learning programs for Hellman Elementary and Trails Outdoor School.
- Ashland Japanese Garden 1st Anniversary celebration will be held on Sunday, October 22, 2023. Donations collected will go to the Ashland Parks Foundation to support garden maintenance.
- The first conversation clusters were installed at Garfield Park, and the chairs for Lithia Park have arrived. The new benches' configuration for Glenwood Park was approved in the consent agenda. Superintendent Glatt will be receiving community feedback on this pilot project.

II. **BUSINESS**

a) **CIP Discussion (Informational)**

Eldridge presented the CIP Budget Review.

- At the September 6, 2023, Special Business Meeting, Commissioners were provided with the approved CIP Budget for Biennium (BN) 23-25, based on estimates of the CIP Ending Fund Balance for FY 23.
- The budget reconciliation process was still ongoing at that time, but now, the APRC CIP Ending Fund Balance for FY 2023 has been reconciled.
- Variances typically exist between the budget and actuals, due to timing and actual activity of revenues and expenses. For example, projects that occurred but were not planned, or activity that was planned but never occurred.
- A review of the FY23 reconciliation conducted by Parks and the Finance department found a larger-than-expected disparity between the budget versus actual. This will make it necessary for APRC to adjust capital spending for BN 23-25.
 - APRC will need to reduce planned capital spending for BN 23-25.
 - Park's and City's accounting is accurate
 - Discrepancies existed in projections and financial assumptions, not in accounting.
 - Under Oregon law a budget adjustment or transfer is not required.
 - Regular review and reconciliation of budget to actual, with consistent monthly review back to financial statements.
- Actual CIP Ending Fund Balance at FY23 \$1,616,815 less than Budget.
- The discrepancy was discovered to be from:
 - Approximately \$1 million in anticipated grant revenue was not realized.
 - Land sales balance of \$691,000 (from the sale of the YMCA Park and sale of other lands) deposited in a separate account. Park's review with Finance Director Berry and the Finance team found that this balance had been transferred into APRC CIP in 2017, and the account closed. However, due to a miscommunication or other error, APRC continued to believe it existed separately in addition to the CIP balance.

Landt asked if the funds had been deposited into the Food and Beverage Fund, and if there were a few different accounts that made up the CIP. Eldridge and Berry confirmed to the Commission that there is just one CIP account, not separate accounts.

Eldridge thanked Berry for all her expertise and support on this work.

- APRC staff will work with Finance going forward to present an updated CIP budget for BN 23-25 in November bringing APRC finances into alignment with finance standards and protocols.
- This includes accounting for System Development Charges (SDC) separately, with payments for specific expenses as per APRC SDC Methodology. Parks has an existing SDC methodology written in the early 1990s that will be updated or replaced accordingly.
- Recognize the change in internal accounting that resulted in the closing of the land sales account earmarked for East Main Park and ensure that there is adequate funding in the revised CIP to build East Main Park.

Bachman commented that he is glad to see staff working closely with the City Finance department.

Seffinger commended Eldridge and Berry for their communication and working to be in alignment on language and terms, so that there will be better understanding of Finance issues going forward.

b) Park Hours (Action)

Eldridge introduced Police Chief O’Meara, who expressed support of reasonable limitations being put on overnight use of all City Parks. As opposed to ticketing and draconian enforcement policies, an adjustment in Park Hours will give Ashland Police Department (APD) the ability to make contact and inquire about whether somebody’s in the park for legitimate reasons at night.

Eldridge introduced a proposal to amend the Ashland Municipal Code (AMC) to establish Park Hours for all City Parks.

- Parks have experienced increased vandalism and damage to public property. There are public safety concerns, and many of these incidents occur during nighttime hours.
- Mandating hours of parks closure can potentially improve public safety and reduce the financial and maintenance burden associated with vandalism and damage.
- The Current AMC10.68.380 provides a “Curfew” for Lithia Park ONLY from 11:30PM to 5:30AM.
- Staff proposes amending AMC 10.68.380 to establish hours of parks closure in all city parks between the hours of 12:00AM (midnight) and 5:00AM. (See packet for exact language change to the ordinance.)
- Staff recommends that the ordinance apply broadly to all park lands, open spaces, trails and trail network, not just to discrete parks within Ashland (e.g., Lithia, Garfield, Hunter, etc.), as per the definition of “parks” in AMC 10.68.10.

Bachman asked for clarification of the process. Eldridge confirmed that, if approved, the Commissioners are recommending the ordinance to City Council for consideration. City Council would then have a first reading, a second reading, and then potentially approve the ordinance.

Seffinger asked if Bluebird Park in the Plaza is covered by the ordinance. Eldridge confirmed that it is covered.

Motion: Bachman moved to recommend to the City Council amending section 10.68 of the Ashland Municipal Code to establish Hours of Park Closure in all City Parks. Seconded by Adams.

Discussion: Bachman expressed support for the APD helping with the unhoused situation and the coordination with Parks.

Adams compared the concept behind this ordinance to posting a no trespass order at La Clinica that might risk alienating the population one means to serve. He appreciates the sensitivity of staff and Chief O’Meara in crafting this ordinance to serve the entire community respectfully.

Landt pointed out that the amended ordinance will expand Lithia Park Hours by 1 hour. In addition to protecting public safety and aiding APD, park closure will provide much-needed resting time for wildlife. Though restricting park access is hard to be in favor of, the trade-off for wildlife of less human interaction is a positive.

Vote: The vote was all yes

c) Ashland Fire Department Wildfire Division fuels reduction on parkland (Information)

Chris Chambers, Ashland Fire Department Forestry Officer discussed Prescribed Burning on APRC Forestlands and Forestland Climate Change Adaptation—Siskiyou Mountain Park

Prescribed Burning on APRC Forestlands:

- Chambers commended APRC for maintaining a fire safe community for open space and working closely with APF.
- Fuels reduction on Lithia Hillside and elsewhere had been done previously that reduced fuels when fires were set last year.
- Prescribed burns reduce fire severity by reducing available fuels. Part of the Ashland Forest Plan and the draft Lithia Park 100-year Strategic Plan is to implement prescribed burning on Lithia Hillside, Acid Castle, Hald-Strawberry, and Westwood properties.

- Prescribed Fire Objectives:
 - Reduce fire severity by maintaining low fuels.
 - Reintroducing frequent, mild fire as an ecosystem process of fire, recycling nutrients, guiding vegetation, etc.
 - Facilitate successful fire suppression by keeping low fuels in strategic areas.
 - Reduce non-native species using fire, i.e., fall burning.
 - Reduce smoke exposure to the community, both by keeping the fuel low and burning under conditions when smoke can move away.
- Grayback Forestry will continue to conduct prescribed burning in Ashland and has had their contract renewed by City Council.
- Chambers recommends prescribed burning of 5-10 acres of Lithia Hillside at the very top this fall, minimizing negative smoke impact on the community. Also, the southern tip of Hald-Strawberry, if conditions are right.

Seffinger asked about the Cottle property. Chambers said it could be addressed in the future.

Lewis said in the past there have been grants available and wondered if there were any available at this time. Chambers said right now the prescribed burning would be under the AFD Wildfire Division Budget.

Adams asked for clarification of the Lithia Hillside area: Chambers confirmed that it's the area below Glenview, above Pioneer and closest to Fork Street.

Landt clarified that the Commission has endorsed and embraced fuels reduction in Lithia Park, including prescribed burns.

Forestland Climate Change Adaptation—Siskiyou Mountain Park:

- The changing climate can contribute to unpredictable forest conditions and forecasts predict increased climatic stressors affecting our municipal forestlands, which are governed by the 2016 Ashland Forest Plan (AFP). Recent insect outbreaks have reached epidemic levels, with Douglas-fir (DF) tree mortality measured at 20% in the lower watershed and Siskiyou Mountain Park (SMP),
- SMP was particularly hard-hit this spring. Results from the City's drone-based survey of forest health in July of this year showed SMP DF mortality (aka The Douglas-fir Decline Spiral), creating an elevated fire danger. As of July, 30% of DF are dead or dying (probably 40% by now) and die off is continuing. Many dead trees are near trails. Additionally, climate studies predict most lower elevation sites in SW Oregon will be inhospitable for DF by 2055.
- The 2023 Climate Change Addendum to the Ashland Forest Plan lays out a strategy and objectives associated with climate change.
- Through the Forest Lands Committee and in consultation with the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy (SOLC), the City is proposing a 6-part Proposed Course of Action, including a helicopter-based thinning project to remove dead and dying trees, transition to resilient species of trees in forests, thin green trees to reduce competition and build resiliency to future drought and heat in surviving Douglas Fir.
- Lomakatsi Restoration Project will work with AFP on this project, helping to identify which trees to remove, and which to keep.

Adams (a member of the Forest Lands Commission) commended the leadership in this area to make these decisions early before anything bad happens. He encouraged people to explore the watershed and see for themselves the dying trees and impact of the beetle infestation attacking the trees.

Seffinger commended Chambers work on the AFP, and asked about what species of trees would replace DF. Chambers said at present the plan is to take locally grown varieties of Ponderosa Pine and Sugar Pine, and a mix of Black Oak and Pine. SOLC will assist with this determination.

Landt asked what percentage of trees are currently dead in SMP, and which are alive? Chambers answered that the exact number won't be known until the trees are marked, but approximately 50% DF in SMP are dead or dying. Landt asked Chambers to bring the justification, for why such a large percentage of the trees will be taken out alive to the next meeting.

Chambers noted that there is a need to act quickly because if the dead and dying trees aren't removed now, they will lose their value at a mill, resulting in negative financial implications for the project.

d) Salmon Safe Certification (Information)

Eldridge introduced Lulu Brazeau, a recent SOU graduate from the Environmental Science, Policy and Sustainability Department, who is an intern for Terrain Landscape Architecture through SOU's Institute for Applied Sustainability.

- APRC has the opportunity to achieve system-wide Salmon Safe Certification through a Pacific Northwest region peer-reviewed certification program.
- Research and feedback from APRC staff led to the conclusion that the Salmon Safe Certification was the best fit for the East Main Park project.
- Salmon Safe is a peer-reviewed eco label that focuses on preserving water quality and protecting salmon habitat on the West coast from Alaska to California. The company is a nonprofit that is based in Portland, Oregon and was founded by Pacific Rivers in 1996.
- Park System Certification is performance based and non-prescriptive. Salmon Safe works on a case-by-case basis to provide a set of park management practices that are site specific.
- Salmon Safe works in collaboration with the Parks department to develop strategies that would enhance watershed protection, and to determine which solutions are attainable and which are not feasible.
- Assessments of management issues such as irrigation efficiency, stormwater management, pesticide reduction, conservation of night-native biodiversity and management of stream sides and wetlands.
- The evaluation will be carried out by 2-4 qualified independent experts hired by Salmon Safe. This team will help to set management standards to protect the ecology found within Ashland's park system that would enhance watershed function.
- Certification would be valid for five years and subject to annual verification of adherence to salmon safe performance standards.

Cost estimates: Dr. Vince Smith, Director of the Institute of Applied Sustainability, was excited about the opportunity of working with Salmon Safe and has made a commitment to cover half of the costs of the initial certification and extend the additional support of staff resources from the Environmental Science Department. Furthermore, Salmon Safe also expressed strong interest in wanting to work with APRC as their Park System Certification was developed with Ashland parks in mind over 20 years ago, when Salmon Safe was still operating as Pacific Rivers in collaboration with the World Wildlife Federation. As a result, estimated costs for certification of the entire Ashland Parks system would be similar to certifying just East Main Park, with Salmon Safe offering their services at cost.

- Park Systems Certification: pre-assessment \$5,000, certification \$15,000 for a total of \$20,000 to certify the entire Ashland Parks System. One-time fee for the 5 years, including the cost of annual verification.
- Individual Park Certification (i.e., East Main Park): pre-assessment \$5,000, certification \$13,000 for a total of \$18,000.

Brazeau further outlined Salmon Safe maintenance and development strategies, and proposed design features for East Main Park, as well as ecological reasons for helping salmon.

Landt thanked Brazeau for the presentation and will work with staff to put it on a future meeting agenda.

Eldridge emphasized the excitement and educational benefit of partnering with SOU on Salmon Safe Certification.

e) Alcohol Use in Parks (Action)

Dials presented the proposed ordinance change for alcohol use in parks:

- Supports Commission Goal #9 by encouraging event organizers to choose Ashland parks for their events
- Enables revenue generation that makes holding these events economically feasible to organizers.
- APRC has received feedback from small business owners, the public and event organizers that alcohol service in parks is desired.
- Creating the ability to serve alcohol during events within the Ashland parks system will create more opportunities for revenue generation for event organizers and in turn will attract more events to Ashland, supporting the local economy
- Currently, the Ashland Municipal Code 10.68.090 does not allow any person to take any intoxicating liquor or beverage into any portion of the public parks within the City with only a few exceptions such as the Calle Guanajuato and the Oak Knoll Golf Course.
- *Staff proposes amending AMC 10.68.090 to allow for alcohol use in parks as authorized by the Ashland Parks and Recreation Director or designee, consistent with established parks rules and regulations.*

- Specific changes to the list of rules in the packet: item #11 now specifies that a permit will not be issued for event hours prior to 11 a.m. or later than 9 p.m. as per AMC 9.08.170. Item # 16 now contains a specific checklist of items that the event organizer is responsible for.
- The next step after approval by the Parks Commission is to take the ordinance to the City Council for a first and second reading in November.

Motion: Adams moved to recommend Ordinance 3227 to allow use of alcohol in city parks go to City Council for consideration. Seconded by Seffinger.

Discussion: Adams thanked staff for their time and stated that this is a good first step.

Seffinger liked this as a first step and would like to see it available for weddings in the future. Eldridge said that staff is supportive of future growth. Dials said plans for Pioneer Hall and the Community Center should allow for that.

Vote: The vote was all yes

Motion: Adams moved to approve the APRC rules and guidelines for alcohol use in parks as presented. Seconded by Lewis.

Discussion: No comments

Vote: The vote was all yes

f) Parks, Trails, & Open Space Plan Map (Action)

Eldridge thanked the Parks, Trails, & Open Space Plan Map Subcommittee members, Torsten Heycke, Katie Larsen, Joanne Eggers, Eric Hansen, GIS Manager Leah Richards and Analyst Kiewel for all their work on the map.

Eldridge presented the Parks, Trails, and Open Space Map Update Draft #9—part of the City of Ashland’s Comprehensive Plan—included in the packet and highlighted the history and recommendations of the Subcommittee as outlined in the packet, and discussed in detail at the October 4, 2023, Study Session.

- The Park, Trails, and Open Space Map is a guide for APRC land acquisition and designates properties for different usage including neighborhood parks, potential sports fields, open spaces, trail connectivity, and riparian areas.
- Guide for land acquisition for long term planning that makes sure that Ashland has the facilities, connectivity, and ecological protection that it needs as it grows over time.
- Strategic long-term planning has evolved over time from creation of discrete city parks to:
 - protection of significant natural areas, such as streams and riparian areas
 - lands on wildland urban interface critical for fuels management
 - trail connectivity (either through outright purchase, donation, grants, or easements)
- Subcommittee recommends 200 acres of property that had been formerly identified for purchase be removed from the Map
- Subcommittee recommends additional Properties Designated for Purchase or Easements and Projected Use

See packet for map draft and lists of properties by name.

Eldridge explained that as part of the City of Ashland’s Comprehensive Plan, if the Commissioners approve the Draft, it will next go to the Planning Commission.

Landt stated this update is the first time since the Map was drafted in the early 1990’s that properties are being removed.

Seffinger noted that eliminating properties that we no longer need, because we’ve gained so much parkland, is fiscally responsible.

Eldridge added that priorities have changed as well and are emphasizing ecological protection and trail connectivity.

Motion: Adams moved to recommend the Parks, Trails and Open Space Map Update and Summary Language as presented, for review by Planning Commission and consideration by City Council. Seconded by Bachman.

Discussion: Adams thanked Landt for the historical context and appreciated APRC’s successes over the last 30 years and making parks a priority for all the citizens of Ashland.

Vote: The vote was all yes

III. **ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF**

None

IV. **UPCOMING MEETING DATES**

- a) Recreation Division Advisory Committee - October 19, 2023, Lithia Cabin 4:00 pm
- b) Parks Commission Study Session - November 1, 2023, Electronic Meeting via Zoom 6:00 pm
- c) Parks Commission Business Meeting - November 8, 2023, Council Chambers 6:00 pm
- d) Council Business Meeting - Park Hours and Alcohol in Parks Ordinances - November 7, 2023, Council Chambers 6:00 pm
- e) Ashland Senior Advisory Committee— November 13, 2023, Electronic Meeting via Zoom 3:30 p.m.

V. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judy Plapinger
APRC Temporary Office Assistant