Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting Agenda

ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

JOINT SESSION PARK COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

Council Chamber, 1175 E Main Street - 6:00 PM

HELD HYBRID (In-Person or Zoom Meeting Access) To attend via Zoom, contact the Parks Department no later than 10:00 AM the day of the meeting.

To provide public input see public participation instructions below.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. PARKS & RECREATION SERVICE LEVELS AND BUDGET CHALLENGES WITHIN THE CITY'S GENERAL FUND

IV. CURRENT ACTIONS TO STREAMLINE CITY OPERATIONS AND POTENTIAL LONGER-TERM STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS GENERAL FUND CHALLENGES

V. NEAR-TERM FUNDING OPTIONS FOR PARKS & RECREATION'S OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL BIENNIUM ENDING 6/30/2027

VI. ADJOURNMENT

If you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact Nancy Mero at nancy.mero@ashlandoregon.gov or 541.552.2256 (TTY phone number 1.800.735.2900). Notification at least three business days before the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to the meeting in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Public Participation Instructions

Written testimony will be accepted via email to nancy.mero@ashlandoregon.gov. Please include “Public Testimony” in the subject line. Written testimony submitted on Tuesday before the meeting by 11:00 am will be made available to the Park Commissioners before the meeting. All testimony will be included in the meeting minutes. The public can view on Channel 9 or Channels 180 and 181 (for Charter Communications customers) or live stream via **rvtv.sou.edu** - select RVTV Prime.

*Agendas and minutes for City of Ashland Council, Commission and Committee meetings may be found on the City website, ashlandoregon.gov.

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340 South Pioneer Street
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JOINT STUDY SESSION
AGENDA REPORT

May 7, 2025

Agenda Item	III. Parks & Recreation Service Levels and Budget Challenges Within the City's General Fund	
Presenter	Rocky Houston	Director, Parks & Recreation
Item Type	Commission Requested ☒ Request for Direction ☐ Information ☐	

A review of Ashland Parks and Recreation Department (APRD) service levels and the challenges to meet these levels.

BACKGROUND

The APRD was established in December 1908, with the formation of the Park Commission. Over the last 116 years, APRD has developed a park and recreation system of 811 acres, with 20 developed parks, a senior center, a recreation center, a community center, a pool, a golf course, multiple sport courts, and 53 miles of trails.

Community expectations are high, given the level of historically stable funding and level of service APRD provided. Since the 1990s, state laws and other community constraints have reduced the funding to general fund programs and services. The City is at a point where reductions in levels of service or alternative resources need to be implemented. APRD has made reductions in levels of services and reduced its budget, consistent with City budget direction, for well over the last decade. However, there is no end to this process. We need to continue to ensure that City programs and services are effective, meet the needs of the community, and are sustainable.

ASSESSMENT

Department Capacity Analysis

The Department completed an analysis of the historical staffing levels and number of acres managed. This identified that staffing levels peaked in 2008 and have been steadily reduced to the current level of 35 FTE. During this time the Department (with direction from the Park Commission and City Council), acquired additional property, developed new parks, added recreational assets to existing parks, and increased the number of miles of trails. This has resulted in an increase in assets of approximately 25% and a reduction in staff of 36%. During this same period, our funding resources has been reduced by 42% (in 2025 dollars).

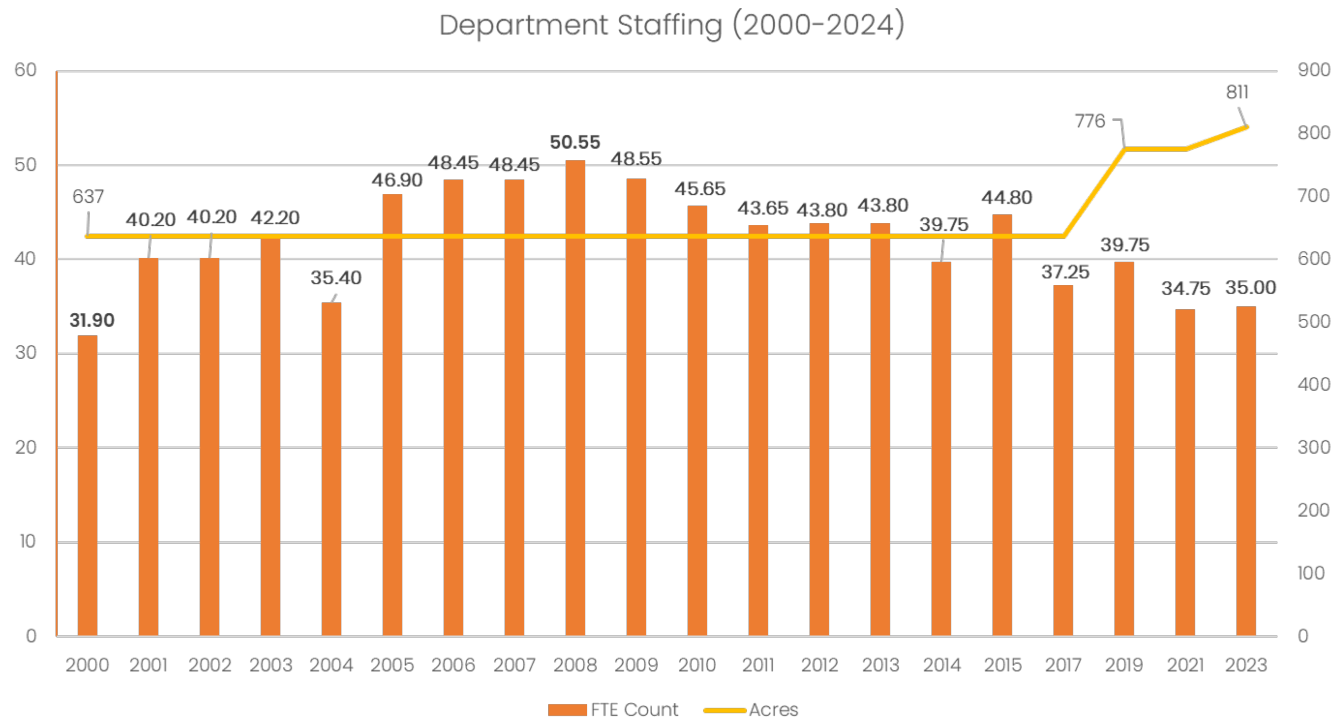

Figure 1 - APRD Staffing & Acreage 2000-2023

Budget History:					
30 yrs ago, 20 yrs ago, 10 yrs ago to present					
BIENNIUM	**1997-1999***	**2007-2009***	**2015-2017**	**2023-2025**	**2025-2027**
FTE COUNT	35.8	50.55	44.80	37.00	35.00
ADOPTED OPERATIONS TOTAL	**$ 11,153,674**	**$ 16,346,131**	**$ 12,165,057**	**$ 14,155,312**	**$ 14,397,635**
AVERAGE COST PER FTE	**$ 85,502**	**$ 128,407**	**$ 172,282**	**$ 252,219**	**$ 263,620**
Adopted Operations *(2025 Dollars)*	*$22,223,886*	*$ 25,211,854*	*$ 16,699,962*	*$ 14,856,661*	
AVERAGE COST PER FTE (2025 dollars)	$ 171,863	$ 202,871	$ 235,747	$ 269,611	
* These are (2) fiscal years combined. The budget was on an annual basis during this period.					

Figure 2 - Parks & Recreation Budget History

APRD programs and services require staff to complete the work. We have assessed our operational capacity. This was completed utilizing a Maintenance Management Plan (MMP). An MMP identifies the resources needed to complete routine maintenance. Routine maintenance includes tasks like mowing, cleaning restrooms, and emptying trash cans.

We used the MMP tool used by Oregon Parks and Recreation Department that is taught to NW Parks and Recreation departments at the Pacific Northwest Resource Management School in Port Townsend, WA. An MMP starts with an inventory of assets (acres, buildings, etc.). The maintenance level of service (tasks to complete and frequency) was based on the 2012 level of service standards for the Department.

The MMP identified that we have 45,760 hours of staff time dedicated to park maintenance. That is supplemented by contracted services, temporary employees, and volunteerism. All resources combine to just under 70,000 hours per year available to complete routine maintenance.

The MMP identified that there are 139,343 hours of routine maintenance tasks to accomplish. This results in the Department having 33% of the staff required to complete the routine maintenance tasks at our current level of service. With all resources, we are still at 50% of the capacity needed.

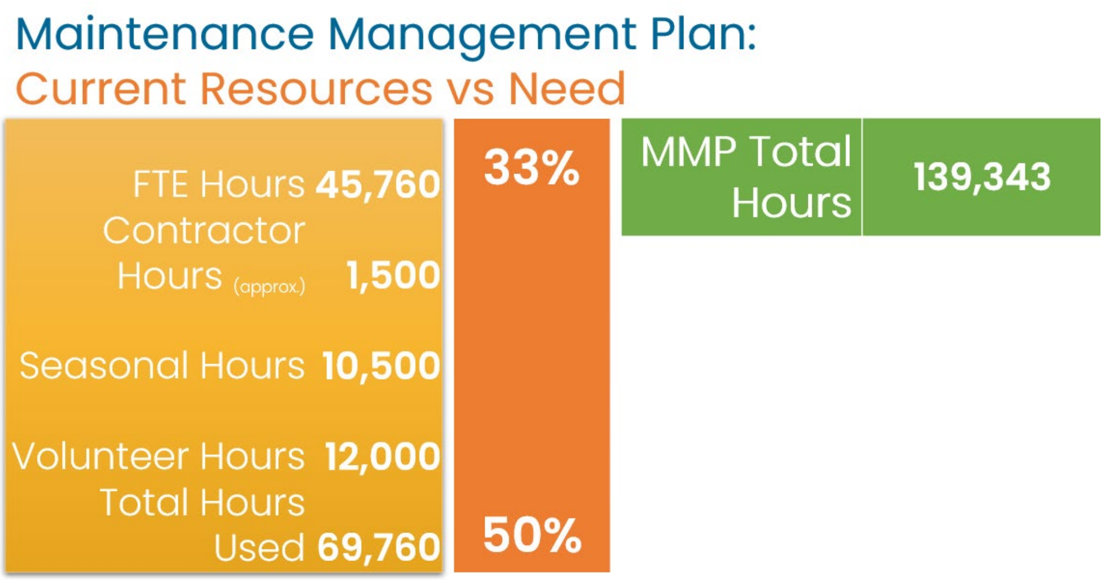

Figure 3 - Maintenance Management Plan Data

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

1. Are there any questions on this historical summary?

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

Biannual budget process

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

PREPARED BY: Rocky Houston

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Better Together

JOINT STUDY SESSION
AGENDA REPORT

May 7, 2025

Agenda Item	IV. Current Actions To Streamline the City Operations And Potential Longer-Term Strategies To Address General Fund Challenges	
Presenter	Rocky Houston	Director, Parks & Recreation
Item Type	Commission Requested ☒ Request for Direction ☐ Information ☐	

A review of current streamlining actions and long-term strategies.

BACKGROUND

Agenda item III is foundational to work that occurred prior to this fiscal year on the Department's status. The ten-year strategic plan (PROS) will provide community wide input on long-term goals and priorities for the Department.

ASSESSMENT

Department Efficiency Examination

Staff are currently reviewing reductions in operational activities to determine if the potential savings can minimize some recreational programming reductions. Here are some examples of items we are investigating:

- Assessment of workflow and team structures to assure teams are in alignment with current work priorities (awaiting class and compensation study results).
- Relocating program staff to consolidate customer service location and improve level of service with reduced resources.
- Reducing irrigation to reduce the cost of water and reduce property maintenance requirements.
- Nature scaping model (non-manicured) at appropriate sites to reduce maintenance requirements.
- Hardscaping medians and other areas to reduce workload and improve staff safety.
- Reduction in trash cans and mutt mitts to reduce trash collection and disposal costs.
- Assessing partnerships for the operation of some programs.
- Fleet inventory assessment to determine the necessity of items and reduce items to minimize future fleet costs.

- Assessment of programs to determine the minimum level of services to reduce operating costs.
- Implementation of task management program to allow better data on tasks assigned, completed, and not completed. In addition, the program would assist in better evaluating location and program costs.
- Establishment of cost recovery policy to assist in setting fees for programs.

Future Funding Work

The structure deficiencies placed upon the general fund by Measure 5's tax limits and the permanent tax rate set at the 1997 level by Measure 50 are real. Looking beyond the park fee's needed assistance to maintain next biennium's programing needs for parks, the Department is developing and exploring other ideas. There is only a handful of core revenue sources available to the city.

Revenue Type	
Taxes of Goods & Services	**Food & Beverage**, General, fuel, **TLT**, Construction
Taxes on Income	Personal, Business, Payroll
Taxes on Property	Levy, Special District, Bonds
Fees and Charges	**Franchise fee, Municipal service fees**, **Fee for services, SDCs**, **Fines**
Sponsorships/Partnerships	**Events**, Naming rights, Services, Private/Public partnerships
Bold text = Existing resource used by City	

Specific concepts identified through brainstorming efforts to date include:

- Citywide Facilities Assessment Plan – goal is to determine right size and number of facilities and properties.
- Parking Fees
- Business Plan for Golf Course to improve utilization and reduce general fund support
- Review of non-general fund sources to operate the Parks & Recreation Department
- RFPs for private/public partnerships
- Naming rights/sponsorships
- Park Foundation utilization to improve equity and inclusion (as fees increase)
- Food & Beverage re-authorization
- Transient Lodging tax increase
- Levy or District concepts

Many of these ideas require engagement with community members, other departments, and both elected bodies. Some would require a vote of community members to enact.. We look forward to the ongoing discussion and actions to ensure stable funding to support general fund programs and services.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

1. Are there additional ideas to streamline the Parks & Recreation Department?
2. What other funding concepts need to be explored?

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

Biannual budget process

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

PREPARED BY: Rocky Houston

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JOINT STUDY SESSION
AGENDA REPORT

May 7, 2025

Agenda Item	IV. Near-Term Funding Options For Parks & Recreation's Operations And Maintenance Budget For The Fiscal Biennium Ending 6/30/2027	
Presenter	Rocky Houston	Director, Parks & Recreation
Item Type	Commission Requested ☒ Request for Direction ☐ Information ☐	

A review of future funding options and impacts for the Ashland Parks & Recreation Department (APRD).

BACKGROUND

The general fund has struggled to provide the funding resources to address the programs and services that the community wants. The FY25-27 biennium budget direction was to hold a flat budget from the FY23-25 biennium budget. However, an updated forecast from Finance identified that an additional 5% reduction for general funds departments was needed to reduce about $8.4 million in general fund expenditures.

The City Manager has discussed the need to consider utility meter fees and/or fee increases to address the gap between general fund resources and service expenditures. On March 30, 2025, a park fee was proposed by the City Manager at a City Council study session. City Council directed staff to bring the item back for consideration at the April 15, 2025 City Council meeting. At that meeting, City Council decided not to approve the park utility meter fee. Key takeaways for staff on the decision made were that it was a surprise, the desire to determine if all other avenues were explored, the level of engagement with the Park Commission, and the process being used to consider the park utility fee.

ASSESSMENT

Budget Reductions Process

P staff developed a budget consistent with budget direction, with the exception of the resources needed to manage new responsibilities for the department (Community Center, Pioneer Hall, and East Main Park) and to meet the needs of the Senior Center. To reduce the budget request, staff utilized existing funding sources to reduce the funding request. For example, recreation programming funds were used from the ice rink and pool to offset the increased cost of hiring a recreation coordinator to assist with the addition of the Community Center and Pioneer Hall.

After reviewing the proposed budget with Finance and the City Manager, staff received revised budget direction to make an additional 5% in reductions for all general fund departments. The revised proposed budget for APRD was $15.2 million with the addition of a $5 monthly utility meter fee for parks. Without the fee, it would be $14.4 million.

Staff developed two reduction targets: $600,000 and $1.4 million, based on the two budget alternatives. Staff began the review by determining what the required or mandated programs, services and/or operational requirements are for the department. Those include the management of wildfire fuels, invasive weeds, and ensuring that our barrier free recreation (parks) are open and safe for community use. The next identified reductions to reduce impacts to the least number of users.

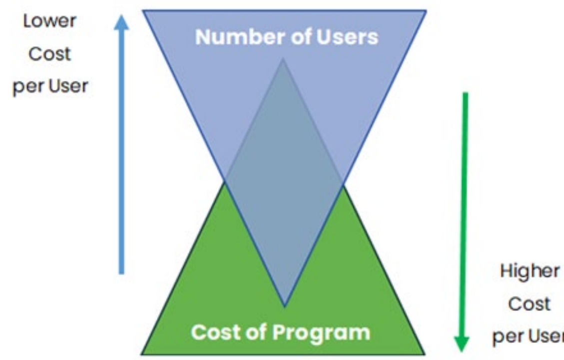

Figure 1 - Utilization vs Costs

Staff identified that the lowest barrier (no fee) recreational program is our parks and trails. These align with mandates for maintenance of these properties. As such, staff prioritized keeping the developed parks open for the community.

A rubric was developed to assist in informing additional reductions for recreational assets. It reviewed the expenses, revenues, and annual utilization of each program and assessed the operational impact (how much work it takes). The results are below:

Program	Pool	Ice Rink	Golf	Env. Ed.	Seniors
General Fund Need	**100-200k**	**under $100k**	**under $100k**	**Over $500k**	**Over $500k**
Number Served (Utilization)	10,000	20,000	30,000	5,000	20,000
Park Operations Impact	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium

Figure 2 - Program Analysis Rubric

Staff initially reduced new asset items (Community Center, Pioneer Hall, & East Main Park). This reduction, due to the combining of existing funding resources, led to a reduction in service to the pool and ice rink. To ensure that the Senior Center services were not reduced, we reduced seasonal employees to a minimal level along with other contracted services. This led to reductions in restrooms and other operational reductions. This still did not address the budget reduction initial target of $600,000.

The environmental education program has the next highest level of need from the general fund, has the lowest utilization level identified, and the program is in a transition phase, as the historical model of service of being a school educational destination is broken, and we are in a period of developing a new model. This led to the decision to reduce the environmental education program by 50%, which resulted in laying off an employee.

As the reduction targets went from $600,000 to $1.4 million, it became clear that more would be needed. We chose to reduce the new position for the Senior Center and make no additional reductions there. To meet the reduction target, we made further reductions to the environmental education program (layoff of another staff member), reductions to the pool and ice rink, and elimination of the East Main Park development project. We had to further reduce operational tasks to meet the $1.4 million target.

FY25-27 Biennium Budget Update

Staff have received significant input regarding the potential reductions and the proposed increases in fees. The comments consistently identify that the park system is a vital part of their experience as a citizen of Ashland. Each program and service is critical to many community members. A park fee is supported in a majority of the comments received.

Since the April 15, 2025, City Council meeting, staff have been working with the City Manager's office and Finance to review the data presented. The data has been updated to determine that the amount of revenue generated over 18 months is different than presented and that the budget with or without a park fee has changed. The figure below outlines those changes:

Item	April 15, 2025	As of today
Park Fee Revenue ($5) 18 months	$750,000	$1,125,000
Park Budget with Park Fee	$15,219,635	$15,522,647
Park Budget without Park Fee	$14,450,000	$14,397,635

Figure 3 - Budget Numbers Update

Based on these revised numbers, the park fee required to ensure that programs and services are maintained at the proposed budget of $15.8 million has been reduced to $6.50. Comparables for the different park fees are shown below:

Park Fee	Revenue	Revised Budget
$5	$1,125.000 18 months	$15,522,647
$6	$1,350,000 18 months	$15,747,647
$7	$1,575,000 18 months	$15,972,647

Figure 4 - Park Utility Fee Revenue

Option #1 – General Fund & User Fees (current strategy)

This option is outlined in detail earlier in the agenda report. This option would ensure that the general fund expenditure is balanced to revenue projections. This option will result in the reduction of the level of service for programs, services, and park maintenance.

Staff are developing a season-by-season approach to determine if the savings projected in reductions result in the Department maintaining some programming for the pool, ice rink, and restrooms. Based on budget year 1, we would increase or decrease program service levels.

Staff would continue to complete the strategic plan, restructure the Department, and implement streamlining efforts to improve efficiencies for the programs and services it provides.

No Park Fee	
Revenue(18 months)*:	**$0**
Park O&M budget:**	**$14,397,635**
Reductions:	**$1.4 million**

Impacts:

- Layoff 2 staff
- Eliminate Environmental Education Program
- Recreation Programming Reductions
  - Pool, Ice Rink
  - Community Center and Pioneer Hall not opened
- Reduction in Park Operations
  - Restrooms
  - Maintenance of parks
- East Main Park not developed
- Senior Center services reduction

Option #2 - $5 Park Utility Fee

$5 Park Fee	
Revenue(18 months)*:	**$1,125,000**
Park O&M budget:**	**$15,522,647**
Reductions:	**$273,278**

Impacts:

- Recreation Programming Reductions
  - Community Center and Pioneer Hall not opened

This option is consistent with the proposal submitted by the City Manager on March 30th and April 15th, 2025. This option would permit the Department to reduce the number of layoffs and operate most restrooms, the splashpad, the pool, and ice rink. The Department would move forward with East Main Park to replace the recreational services to the southeastern portion of the City that were reduced when the YMCA park was sold.

Much like option #1, the Department would continue to develop a season-by-season approach to monitor savings, costs, and revenues to ensure it is in compliance with the adopted budget.

Staff would continue to complete the strategic plan, restructure the Department, and implement streamlining efforts to improve efficiencies for the programs and services it provides.

Option #3 - $6.50 Park Fee

This option is consistent with the budget recommended by the Park Commission. It results in cost reductions, consistent with the budget direction, and allows the Department to take on additional work requested by City Council and the Park Commission for the new and newly rehabilitated assets.

Staff would continue to complete the strategic plan, restructure the Department, and implement streamlining efforts to improve efficiencies for the programs and services it provides.

This option would also address the community's feedback on minimizing park program and service reductions.

$6.50 Park Fee	
Revenue(18 months)*:	**$1,462,500**
Park O&M budget:**	**$15,860,135**
Reductions:	**$0**

Impacts:

- All programs would be consistent with current operations, open Community Center and Pioneer Hall, and develop East Main Park.
- Consistent with budget direction and inclusion of new responsibilities

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

1. What additional information is needed for the review of funding options for the Parks & Recreation O&M Budget for FY25-27?

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

Biannual budget process

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Parks O&M budget for FY 25-27, as presented to the Citizen Budget Committee, will result in $1.4 million in reductions. This will result in the layoff of (2) staff, eliminating the environmental education program, have significant reductions to the recreation program, reduce park operation's level of service, and terminate the East Main Park development project.

ATTACHMENTS – N/A

PREPARED BY: Rocky Houston