



MINUTES FOR SPECIAL MEETING

Park Commission

April 28, 2025

Council Chamber, 1175 E Main – 6:00 PM

Commissioners Present: Gardiner, Weiner, Bachman (Chair), Adams, Landt (Vice Chair)

Staff Present: Assistant City Attorney Zahran, Director Houston, Deputy Director Dials, Parks Superintendent Caldwell, Senior Services Superintendent Mettler, Senior Administrative Analyst Terry, Executive Assistant Mero, Eastern Parks Supervisor Miller, Recreation Manager Flora

Absent: Commissioner Adams left the meeting at 8:00 PM

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Bachman called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM
- II. **ROLL CALL** – Gardiner, Weiner, Bachman, Adams, Landt – all present (Commissioner Adams left the meeting at 8:00 PM).
- III. **ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA**
- IV. **PUBLIC FORUM**
- V. **BUSINESS**
 1. **Current Status of the APRD FY 26-27 Budget** – Director Houston

SITUATION – At the April 15, 2025 City Council meeting, the proposed park fee was not approved, resulting in a park operations budget of \$14,397,635. This means \$1.4 million in reductions for the FY 26-27 biennium budget.

BACKGROUND – Direction for the FY 26-27 budget was to have no increase from the current biennium due to general fund forecasts and increasing costs. The Park Commission recommended a budget that was higher to accommodate the additional facilities that the Department was taking on.

The budget review identified that an additional reduction was needed to ensure that there was sufficient general funding for the adopted budget. The City Manager requested a \$5 park fee be added to the utility meter rates. This fee is consistent with other Jackson County jurisdictions.



The Department presented reductions with the \$5 park fee and without the \$5 park fee. In addition, it identified a fee level to maintain the Park Commission recommended budget.

ASSESSMENT – The Department is currently reviewing each object code per program to estimate the additional savings (with impacts) to reduce the reductions proposed for restroom closures, pool operation, ice rink operation, and some programs traditionally managed by the environmental education program. The current information on this will be reviewed at the meeting.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

- Is there a policy direction the Park Commission would like to make regarding programs?
- Are there alternative long-term funding solutions the Park Commission would like to explore?

Chair Bachman wants to focus on the first bullet. Asked his colleagues not to focus on the next bullet. Hold off until PROS Plan is complete, until this budget is complete.

PUBLIC FORUM

Ed Finklea Ashland: Spoke to the importance of the Ice Rink, keep it open, please.

Cathy McNeill Ashland: Spoke to the importance of the Senior Center.

Nancy Nelson Ashland: Spoke to the importance of gardens. Suggested that land could be sold like the golf course, and that utility fees can't be raised without a vote.

Kathy Stazny Ashland: Spoke to the importance of the community gardens. Said the Community Gardeners are self-sufficient, don't need much help. Free maintenance for Parks.

Susannah Perillat Phoenix: Spoke to the importance of community gardens, so much more than deer fences and vegetables.

Regina Boykins Ashland: Spoke to the importance of community gardens. Good for visitors. Good exercise. A great resource.

Cate Hartzell Ashland: Spoke to the importance of preserving programs especially community gardens. Need to be provided information on the budget for the community gardens to help cut costs, etc.

Carol Carlson Ashland: Spoke to the importance of community gardens, interaction with children at Ashland Creek Park. Teaches gardening through Olli. Questions how expensive the gardens are. Promotes self-management.



Steve Koskello Ashland: Spoke to the importance of Community Gardens. The gardens give meaning to the concept of community. Questions financial wisdom of closing the gardens. Invasive weeds will take over. Consider gardeners as resources.

Jane Hall Ashland: Spoke to the importance of Community Gardens. Waited two years to get a plot. Focused on the mental, stress reducing effects of gardening.

Gary Shaff Ashland: Spoke to the importance of Community Gardens. 75 gardeners provide thousands of user hours biennially. Remarked that the gardeners used to do maintenance that Parks staff has taken on.

Sharon Dohrman Ashland: Spoke on behalf of Ashland's children. Spoke to the importance of keeping splash pad, pool, and ice rink open. Suggested shutting down the golf course.

Eli Jackson Bear Ashland: Recommended taking the community garden as its own line item, not lumped in with Environmental Ed program. They are self-sufficient.

Barbara Schack Ashland: Spoke to the importance of community gardens. Noted that they pay fees. \$100 per year generating revenue. They share vegetables widely.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED – The budget follows prior practices, consistent with the City Charter and budget rules.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS – The proposed budget is \$1.4 million less than the recommended budget. If approved a park fee of \$5 would generate \$1.125 million and result in \$15.5 million funding for the FY 26–27 biennium Parks Department budget.

ATTACHMENTS – N/A

Questions/Discussion:

- Clarification on whether some numbers were yearly or biennial.
- Are the golf numbers being compared equally with the pool, rink, senior center, etc.
Yes, Rocky explained difference between running a facility and maintaining it. Having Cartograph will help us be able to compare apples to apples.

Motion: I move that the Commission approve a total operating budget for the fiscal biennial ending in 2027 of approximately 15.8 million and that a monthly fee of \$6.50 for Ashland Parks and Recreation Department, added to the monthly utility bill, be adopted by the City Council.

Motion: Bachman

Second: Gardiner

Vote:

<u>Gardiner</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Weiner</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Bachman</u>	<u>Yes</u>
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Adams	Yes	Landt	Yes	
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Discussion:

- Asking Council to fund Parks at the level they asked.
- Seconded to get it on the table. Their charge is to preserve programming and support the people who have come out. Trusts the numbers are right on the \$6.50 fee. Supports everything the City wants Parks to do. To let go of Main St Park would be a travesty.
- Discomfort with the dollar amount total part of the motion. We already approved it.
- Reference to the original motion that the Council has now deliberated on.
- Noted there is sufficient time to ask Council to consider a similar total with a different fee before the budget is approved.
- 13% rise in employee benefits shouldn't be a surprise. Concern that the ask won't be received well by Council. Questioned the numbers.
- Current process is a band-aid. Suggested that the fee be a one-time biennium fee while a sustainable funding source is identified.
- Council took exception to the last motion because the numbers didn't add up. Trust expressed that the numbers add up now. Ridiculous to ask for a fee that won't cover the costs of the things we want preserved.
- The Council was looking for the process used to select the items we identified to cut.

2. **Staff Recommendations for APRD Miscellaneous Fees and Charges** – Deputy Director Dials

Chair Bachman asked to postpone the action until the next meeting and keep it as an info item.

Bachman made a motion to delay action on the item until the 14 of May. No second.

Counsel recommended going forward with the presentation and waiting until the end of the presentation to decide whether to act or not.

SUMMARY – All Ashland Parks and Recreation Department (APRD) fees for programs and services are itemized in the City's Miscellaneous Fees and Charges document. The approval of miscellaneous fees will come before the City Council for approval on May 20, 2025. At the last Commission meeting on April 9, Commissioners directed staff to bring back two fees for further discussion and information:

- Sport Fields Rental Fees



- Exclusive Use/Site Fee for Park Use

BACKGROUND – Staff was directed to bring back information on sport fields rentals and the impact to user groups using fields at North Mountain Park, Briscoe and Hunter Park. The proposal is to increase fees from a per season charge to a per hour/per field model.

An example from the attached spreadsheet, the highest user in our system outside of Ashland High School is the Ashland Soccer Club at 576 hours and serving 350 Ashland youth. In the proposal, Ashland Soccer Club would go from paying \$500 per season to paying \$35 per hour/per field. This would result in an increase to \$20,000 per season. In that same example, if it was \$10 per hour/per field, the total cost to Ashland Soccer Club would be \$5760. Other examples are included on the spreadsheet.

For the Exclusive Use/Site Fee for Park Use at \$150, staff were asked for more information on the length of use of a site for that fee. Staff would recommend an 8-hour use per site. This fee would be for any non-reservable areas approved during the Special Event permitting process. For instance, in Lithia Park the site could include Butler Perozzi Fountain Lawn, Front Lawn of Litha Park and the Lower Duck Pond Lawn.

For other proposed fees on the Miscellaneous Fees and Charges spreadsheet in most cases, staff have looked at market rates and suggested a gradual increase in fees. Ideally, in two – three years, there will be more data to evaluate the actual costs of the many services that APRD provides to further inform development of a cost recovery policy.

ASSESSMENT – Although increases in fees could prove difficult for the users, under the current biennium budget scenario increasing fees is one of the tools in our toolbox to recover some of our costs.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS – Staff are recommending the fee increases attached to this memo.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED – City of Ashland Miscellaneous Fees and Charges

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS – Expenses have increased 15-17% and exceed revenues in all areas. These fee increases are proposed to help offset additional budget reductions.

PROPOSED ACTIONS OR MOTIONS – I move to recommend the APRD fee increases presented to the City Council for inclusion in the Miscellaneous Fees and Charges book.



ATTACHMENTS – Miscellaneous fees and charges spreadsheet; Sport Fields Rental Fees (see packet)

Questions/Discussion :

- How would the unusual area be signed and managed? To be determined.
- \$35 per hour wasn't approved by Commission.

Public Forum

Stephen Lanning Ashland: Wanted to speak to the budget, didn't understand the process. Too great of a financial burden with the proposed fees. The increases in both the utility fee and increase to field use could be a hardship.

Nathan Van De Graff Ashland: Spoke to the importance of youth sports. The Ashland soccer club offers free soccer to over 100 youth. The club pays for some maintenance. \$35 would mean no free soccer.

Keri Pennell Ashland: Spoke to what the Ashland Little League does. They basically take care of Hunter Park. Staff doesn't do much. Kids are getting the shaft.

Deanna Oakley Ashland: Spoke to the importance of Ashland's baseball program including Little League and the High School. Threatened to take their teams to other fields.

Anne Gaffney Ashland: Spoke to the importance of considering how increasing fees will impact all the groups that use the fields, including the School District. Shifting dollars around isn't solving problems. We must all work together.

Questions/Discussion:

- Are the proposed fees just for one year? Yes.
- Can't understand the quantum leap from undervalued to overpriced. Consider the impact if we do or don't raise the fees.
- Current fees are incredibly undervalued. \$5.00 per hour would be a good starting point without being burdensome to the users.
- When would the fee change start? July 1, 2025.

Motion: I move to approve the fee schedule as presented except that the field rental be \$5.00 per hour on all sport fields.

Motion: Landt Second: Gardiner

Vote:

<u>Gardiner</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Weiner</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Bachman</u>	<u>Yes</u>
<u>Adams</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>Landt</u>	<u>Yes</u>		



VI. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF

- a. Liaison Report

VII. UPCOMING MEETING DATES

1. Park Commission Joint Study Session with City Council May 7, Council Chamber, 6:00 PM
2. ASAC Meeting May 12, Senior Center, 3:30 PM
3. Park Commission Regular Business Meeting May 14, Council Chamber, 6:00 PM
4. RDAC Meeting May 15, The Grove, 4:00 PM

VIII. ADJOURNMENT – Bachman adjourned the meeting at 8:31 PM

Respectfully submitted by Nancy Mero, Executive Assistant

Written Testimony Received:

I am deeply saddened by the reduction in services the parks department will be able to provide in the future. Our parks are the gem of Ashland and what fuel so much of our tourism economy. How can we attract visitors to our city without our parks or without the facilities needed to visit them (restrooms)? As it stands, I foresee families, who already have a difficult time moving to and living in Ashland, moving away to younger communities in our area where children have access to bike parks, splash pads and restrooms.

I believe in being financially responsible and sound. But what expenses have been taken on in the recent past that have caused these long-standing things to be out of budget? Can we look at those things and reduce them instead of reducing our long standing parks and services?

Concerned citizen

Sent from my iPhone

Melissa Cropper



Dear APRC,

Please see the attached letter requested to be read at the APRC Special Budget Meeting. Thank you in advance for the consideration of including as Public Testimony.

Kindly,

Stephen Lanning

04/28/2025

Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission
340 S Pioneer Street Ashland,
OR 97520

Dear Chair Gardiner and Parks Commissioners,

Subject: Recommendation to Sell or Lease Oak Knoll Golf Course and East Main Park to Preserve Essential Community Facilities and Ashland's Long-Term Stability

I am writing ahead of the Parks and Recreation Commission's upcoming budget deliberations to respectfully urge the Commission to take bold action to ensure the longterm sustainability of Ashland's treasured recreational assets. Specifically, I strongly encourage the Commission to actively pursue the sale or long-term lease of Oak Knoll Golf Course and East Main Park. Doing so would allow Ashland Parks and Recreation (APRC) to focus its limited financial resources on maintaining and strengthening the core facilities that serve the widest cross-section of the community — particularly families and youth.

The Oak Knoll Golf Course has operated at a financial deficit for many years. Despite best efforts, it continues to require significant subsidies. Similarly, the East Main Park property — though a valuable piece of land — remains undeveloped. In the current financial climate, the City simply cannot afford to add new parks if we cannot adequately sustain the parks and facilities we already operate.



Selling or leasing these two properties would generate funds that could be used to: -
Preserve and enhance existing facilities such as the Garfield Park splash pad, Daniel Meyer Pool, and the Rotary Ice Rink.
- Offset the financial need that is driving the proposed \$9 monthly Parks fee, potentially reducing the burden on Ashland residents.

I am fully supportive of a progressive Parks fee to stabilize the department's finances and safeguard Ashland's quality of life. However, it is only fair to first remove inefficient cost centers like Oak Knoll that only benefit a narrow demographic before asking residents to pay more.

Furthermore, there are broader demographic and economic factors at stake. Ashland's family population is declining, and the consequences of this shift are already visible in the declining enrollment numbers at the Ashland School District. If Ashland becomes increasingly unaffordable and unfriendly to young families — through the erosion of basic amenities like pools, splash pads, and recreational spaces — we will accelerate the demographic hollowing out of our city. This trend threatens the long-term health of our schools, local businesses, and community institutions.

Maintaining a welcoming, vibrant, and family-friendly environment is essential for Ashland's future. Selling or leasing underutilized properties like Oak Knoll Golf Course and East Main Park would provide immediate financial relief and allow APRC to focus on the facilities that best serve our residents.

I respectfully request that the Commission formally explore the disposition of these properties and seriously incorporate this strategy into your budgetary planning. Thank you for your thoughtful stewardship and for your commitment to preserving what makes Ashland a truly special place to live.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Lanning

My name is Betsy Krausnick and I've been at Ashland Creek Community Garden since 2011. I'm so grateful for this space since I don't have adequate sun at my house and was able to finally grow vegetables and meet people I wouldn't have met otherwise. This space definitely helped me during the pandemic by having a place to go to. This also has helped me in the aftermath of my retirement when I was at a loss of what to do and who to see. I appreciate the ability to grow so much food that I share it with my neighbors and even people I pass on Oak street while walking home with buckets of onions.



I would hope that you honor the year contract that we have signed and paid for at least through the end of the year. I've put in time and money to ready my beds for new plants and already have onions, garlic, peas, kale, lettuce, and beets growing.

The garden has a steady stream of gardeners tending to their plots and I feel this helps deter vandalism.

We are responsible for 4 hours of work on the area, inside and outside besides our own plots. We weed the perimeter of the fence if needed and also take care of the lavender bushes in the front. If necessary that work could be expanded even though our hours are completed.

Keeping the garden open allows me to grow my own vegetables, have a place to go to everyday, and visit with the friends I've made.

I support the \$5 a month park fee, and also, if necessary an additional water fee based on our plot size.

I believe the gardeners in the ACCG are totally able to take care of everything that's needed to keep the space going.

Betsy Krausnick

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hi City Council,

My name is Scott Friend. I've lived here for 20 years. My two kids are 6 and 8. We love Ashland in large part because of its parks and amazing schools.

Ashland families are being hit hard right now with massive budget cuts to schools, and now we're getting news that some of our favorite parks programs will be shut down too. Please, either charge us a \$9+ fee or figure out how else these programs will get funded fully, but do not cut them. You have the power to keep this town awesome. Shutting down Daniel Meyer Pool would be terrible! So many kids learn to swim there. The fee to get in is so small, raise it if needed. Do not close down the pool. The ice rink? That place is amazing! Why would we decide to close that? We can afford to pay for it. It is so much harder to rebuild services like this from scratch once they are gone than it would be to raise the money to keep them going.

If we wanted to live in a community with lower fees and taxes we would not live in Ashland. There are plenty of towns who have made the choice to defund their parks and public pools. Families will leave this town if we continue to let the degradation of these public services continue.



Scott Friend

Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission members, Ashland Creek Community Garden (ACCG) is unique among the properties under the Commission's jurisdiction. If you haven't visited the ACCG, I invite you to come by. A quick visit will show why it should be sustained and not on the list of cuts.

The ACCG Leadership Team, four volunteer gardeners of which I am one, began exploring, in February of this year, alternatives to the Parks Department's approach to ACCG. We soon realized that most of the tasks that the Parks Department does could readily be done by volunteers and, in fact, had historically been done by volunteers.

By early April, we had finalized our proposal. We requested a meeting with the Parks Department to review our ideas. A meeting was scheduled for April 16th. Unfortunately, due to current circumstances, the Parks Department cancelled the meeting.

The tasks that we believe should be done by members of the volunteer Leadership Team, rather than Parks staff include:

- Providing orientation to all new gardeners with attention to current contract specifications
- Conducting monthly "walk-throughs" and provide feedback to individual ACCG gardeners.
- Advising gardeners on changes that are needed to adhere to Parks/gardener contract.
- Serving as advisors to gardeners who have deviated from the contract's performance standards.
- Monitoring and helping to ensure that individual gardeners perform four hours per year of required community service hours for the betterment and maintenance of the ACCG.

The Leadership Team is well trained in these duties and has performed them in the past.

If ACCG becomes self-managed, as proposed, it would unburden Parks staff. In fact, the proposed changes would alleviate most costs associated with the ACCG other than water which is more than covered by the annual garden fee paid to Parks by gardeners.

The Leadership Team has additional ideas to further reduce costs and would be happy to discuss our ideas with the Parks Department.

Needless to say, the ACCG community is committed to keeping the garden open. We look forward to rescheduling the "cancelled" meeting and exploring ways to make ACCG an all volunteer community garden. Further, we recommend that this same approach be undertaken at the Scenic, Garden Way, and Clay Street community gardens.



The Leadership Team are volunteers and would appreciate the Parks Department recognizing our contributions to the city, just as the Department does for other Park volunteers.

Gary Shaff

ACCG Leadership Team/Plot 15

EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear APRC Commisioners,

I have been a member of the Ashland Creek Commuity Garden since the original garden was created on Hersey Street in 2002 or 2003. We were the first community garden in Ashland.

We have not only created a beautiful space over the years for community members to enjoy, but a healthy space for garden members of diverse backgrounds to come together and share our life experiences and knowledge of gardening.

We created a pollinator garden that also benefited our neighbors. We have a Children's garden to teach the next generation about growing your own food. And, We give back to the community thru our donations of fresh produce to the Food Bank.

I would be greatly impacted if our garden was closed. I have invested a lot in purchasing soil amendmments and plants already this season. And, I have crops in the ground. Eating organically keeps me healthy which I would not be able to do if I can't grow it myself. Gardening is a healthy activity. Please find a way to keep Ashland Creek garden open. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Zoe Ann Northcutt

Ashland Creek Community Garden

Plot #37

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

As a mom of two and a local preschool teacher of 18yrs, I strongly disagree with the closing of the Daniel Meyer Pool, splash pad and ice rink to make up for the parks budget crisis. Families look forward to these experiences every year. The pool and rink are consistent in bringing in revenue through the seasons which they are open. Can the fees of the pool and rink be raised by \$1-2 per person to help save this from happening? The splash pad is an accessible saving grace for families in the heat of the summer, closing it would be a disservice. Please reconsider your decision to close these amazing resources that our children look forward to.

Thank you,
Andrea Johnson

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hello Commissioners, Council, and Mayor,

One of the enduring charms of Ashland is its stellar parks. I'm writing today about Ashland Creek Community Garden (ACCG). This is a working garden, akin to a small community farm, that produces hundreds and hundreds of pounds of vegetables every year, plus flowers and a habitat for pollinators, and the beginnings of a viable worm compost to offset carbon emissions from old produce.

I believe that saving ACCG is cost-effective and easily done; this makes perfect sense during a time of budget constraints.

ACCG already pays--Everyone in the garden pays a yearly "user fee" already (what other recreational community in Ashland pays for their privilege--such as use of mountain trails or pickleball or tennis courts, or enjoying tai chi on the lawn at Lithia Park?). My family pays property taxes **and** approximately \$16.00/month for the mid April-October growing season. (By the way, we **already signed** a contract for the 2025 growing season and gardeners have **already paid** their fees.)

ACCG can be self supporting--we can eliminate the need for Parks staff.

We have an effective Leadership Team in place and know how to manage. We are voted on by our peers and have established roles that will continue.

- We complete monthly inspections of plots for organic practices, weed control, water use, adherence to the contract. We communicate with our fellow gardeners.
- We plan work parties, identify maintenance needs and fix what's broken, all on our own! Examples of repairs: greenhouse door, tools, locks, benches, canopy, shed and greenhouse inspections/maintenance/adherence to standards).
- We coach and offer gardening advice.
- We maintain a pollinator habitat.

ACCG is diverse--we have elders and youngers; folks of differing backgrounds and income levels, we help provide food for the local food bank; we impart life skills

ACCG is vital to my family--we eat organic vegetables daily, we exercise, socialize, strategize, work, provide pollinator habitat, it is an integral part of our lifestyle. I have been gardening in ACCG for 7 years and part of Leadership and Co-Liaison for 4 years.

I sincerely hope that during these budget decisions, that access to fresh and organic food for our community will be sustained.

Respectfully,

Barbara Schack

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hello all,

I write in support of continuing Ashland's community gardening program(s) as an incredibly healthy way to stimulate creation of a sense of community, production of healthy, organic produce, a lifestyle that embodies the best of what it means to nurture the Earth. As a newcomer to the program, After waiting a year for an available slot, I am deeply concerned that it will be terminated before I get to enrich my gardening experience through joining this group of gardeners. The garden is a vital source of shared experiences where we learn from each other as we till the soil.

Terminating this program would cut off a large chunk of my daily joy. I would lose the opportunity to contribute to Ashland's health and welfare. I would lose contact with a group I am just beginning to know. I will lose the benefits of all of the work I have already put into Plot #23, and it will be sad to see so many others feel the same loss.

I support looking for viable alternatives to closure, such as volunteer management combined with, if possible, paying an additional \$5-10 per month.

Please leave the door open.

Thank you very much.

Ted Susu-Mago

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Ron Demele

Re; budget-Priority One is,,, build out East Main Park as planned for 7+ years.
Area is fastest growing with kids. Now no Y park...kids and bike youth need this! Dog park.
Never return grant money....we will be on the bottom for next request. Also local credibility is
at risk here! We have planned, volunteered, waited and expect follow through!

Ashlanders will pay for these proposed cut areas. Do it and originate or find sources to
maintain. Consider new approaches. Contract labor? Supervised Inmate labor? volunteers?
Impact of cuts will really hurt Ashland in many ways. Defer maintenance. Prioritize parks...
and consider which are underutilized by public. Build out East Main Park!.... So. ashland resident.
thanks.



Hello Council Member

I am writing in hope the Daniel Meyer Pool will not close. My family and I depend on this excellent pool in the summer to swim and we are prepared to pay more to keep it open to the public for summer swimming. Thank you

Ariane Del

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear Parks and Recreation Committee,

I am writing regarding the budget cuts specific to the Ashland Creek Community Garden. I am asking that you be creative problem solvers in order to keep this garden going.

In the 15 years we've had a plot there, my 2 boys and my extended family have benefited greatly from the year-round organic produce, flowers, friendships, community building, carpentry opportunities (I taught my younger son to use power tools during the pandemic by building garden structures to shade lettuce while supporting cucumbers and winter squash on top), and practical life skills (my older son now gardens at his house in Medford).

Since we all pay to garden there, do volunteer hours to keep it weeded and maintained, and have a knowledgeable Gardener-run Management Team, wouldn't it be possible to do this without a Parks employee coordinator?

If the annual cost for the water increased, I would be willing to pay more for the yearly contract. Also, we have signed a contract and have paid the Ashland Parks and Recreation for gardening there this calendar year and have invested in seeds, starts, irrigation equipment, soil amendments, and weeding hours.

Would our fees be refunded to us?

In addition, I would be in support of a \$5. monthly fee on our utility bills in order to keep the community garden, the city parks, and the amazing community opportunities that Ashland Parks and Rec has offered for so long up and running. These are some of the very best things about this town. Thank you for your time and service,

Ann Bass

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

From Carol Carlson 4-27-2025

I'm here to talk on behalf of the Ashland Creek Community Garden. In 2003, I was one of two Ashland residents who advocated before the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission to establish community gardens. The APRC agreed. The Ashland Creek Community Garden (ACCG) came first and then another three smaller community gardens.

There is a harmony and beauty in the Ashland Creek garden that parents and children in the playground notice and all the dog walkers in the park feel. When we find little kids hanging on the fence looking curious, we invite them in to pick strawberries in the Children's Garden and sit in the little gazebo we've made for them. We share produce with the adults.

Learning to grow your own food is a life skill just like learning to swim as a kid. As a Master Gardener and member of the ACCG Volunteer Leadership Team, I'm committed to using this special place to teach organic gardening to the larger community. This season I have 3 teaching tours lined up for OLLI members.

Our Community Garden has 51 plots and about 70 gardeners. **It's popularity is reflected in the 3-year long Wait List for garden plots. It is thriving, inspirational and wellmanaged, in large part due to our Volunteer Leadership Team.**

Focusing in on budget matters, we feel that most tasks that are currently undertaken by Parks staff could be done just as efficiently by the Volunteer Leadership Team. These include: 1) new gardener Orientations, 2) walking through the garden monthly to observe any problems (like invasive plants in plots or weeds in the paths), 3) talking to gardeners to correct any problems, and 4) managing the Wait Lists to bring in new gardeners.

We already do our own repairs and buy items, like our shade canopy, through gardener donations.

I'll finish by addressing **Water Use** at ACCG. As a homeowner with a drip system on a 20x20 ft area comparable to my 20x20 plot at the ACCG, my records show that at home I pay \$50/year for irrigation above my household use. \$100 is the "user fee" that I pay to Parks for my plot. Consequently, **my user fee more than covers the cost of water that I use to water my Community Garden plot. In the future, as the city increases water rates, the fees for ACCG gardeners could increase at the same rate.**

A caution: To close ACCG might cost Parks more than keeping it open in terms of combatting invasive weeds and vandalism. Right now our constant presence takes care of those things.

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hello,

I would like to encourage the APRC to ask the city to move forward with the \$9/month utility fee to cover the budget deficit of the parks.

The Daniel Meyer Pool, Garfield Park Splash Pad and North Mountain Park visitors center are vital for Ashland families with young children. This would be a huge loss for the community to have them close or restrict their hours.

I would also like to add that restricting access to parks and amenities in them is simply not an option as they are essential to families and summer time sanitation. This is vital for the cleanliness of Ashland and would directly affect the tourism the city relies on.

Best regards,
Johanna Hobart Crane

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hello and thanks for hearing my testimony, as I won't be able to be present tonight.

As a resident of Ashland, I'm very concerned about the rumours of Daniel Meyer Pool closing, losing the public restrooms in town, and shutting down the splashpads.

I have a young daughter, and the parks in Ashland, have been one of the driving forces keeping us here over the years, and those parks wouldn't be worth much if they didn't have public restrooms in them for various reasons, including the number of homeless people who use them--who would presumably use the rest of the park if they didn't have a restroom--as well as residents who simply need to use the restroom while they're enjoying a day at the park.

The splashpads and moreso, Daniel Meyer Pool, are critical for getting through our hot summers, as well as giving us access to important swimming lessons, and having the pool closed would be a huge loss for the community. I have heard some talk about the YMCA pool taking over for Daniel Meyer, but many of us can't afford to be members at the Y, and the outdoor pool is also just so much more pleasant as a place to go and spend time.

I consider the restrooms and pool to be critical infrastructure to the livability of the city, and as such, they are non-negotiable. If there has been budgetary mismanagement in the past and we're now having to deal with it, then we need to do that, but not at the expense of such important parts of our town. We need to find money--whether it's through new fees, moving money from other funds, or some other source--because these are critical to keeping Ashland a clean, fun place to live.

Thank you for your time,
Brendon Potts

--

Monsoons are magical

My name is Jane Hall. Don and I have been gardening in the Ashland Creek Community Garden for 1 year, after 2 years on the wait list.

We have found that gardening in the Community Garden has filled a void and has given us much joy! It is an important component in our daily lives for a variety of reasons...

As seniors, gardening is a easy and useful addition to our physical activities.

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

It provides healthful fresh organic produce for 5 months+ with plenty to share with neighbors!

It is a connection to the natural world...hands in soil, seeding, caring for the plants and harvesting. Following the weather and breathing fresh air.

Garden actives are great for mental health, known for reducing daily stress, particularly needed in these difficult times.

Social connections established in a community garden are key for feeling less isolated and becoming connected to the larger community around us.

Having helped start the Yreka Community Garden in 2004, I have witnessed what an asset it can be. All "varieties" of folks garden there, lending to a broader community understanding between residents. People actually get off I-5 to visit it and to rest for a few minutes in the peaceful green garden space! It thrives to this day on volunteer members and is self supporting.

We would support a \$5 park fee to help continue the amazing community gardens of Ashland and would in fact, support a \$9 fee to guarantee continued operations off all Park and Rec programs.

Thank you, Jane and Don Hall

Hello Ashland Parks and Recreation,

I am writing in regards to the budget cuts proposed for APRC. We all know how valuable the parks are for the health of our citizens and visitors, as well as the general health of our community. Ashland is a vibrant and thriving city. Let's keep it that way.

As I understand it, the city recently voted against a \$9/month fee on our utility bill. I do not feel the council members were adequately representing Ashland citizens when they voted on this matter. The news of the proposed budget cuts has spread faster among Ashlanders than any other city news in the previous 20 years I've lived here. The community is outraged and devastated. I believe our community wants to keep the parks and facilities that accompany them open and accessible. It goes without saying that the employees that keep these operations going are also essential.

The community would easily support a \$9 fee. Another solution would be enforcing paid parking, with the revenue going to APRC. This would not only support the budget but incentivize people to use alternative transportation. Obviously this is not as easy to initiate as a utility fee, but something to think about in the long game.

Your devoted Ashland citizen,
Ariel Daniel

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hello, Parks Commissioners,

I see in local media that the assistant director has called for changes in fees to those who use parks fields to practice sports. Was this person feeling well on the day she made these proposals, or was she having a 'twilight zone' moment and forgot she was on Earth in Ashland? To suggest that we would burden our local community with fees that used to be \$500 and would soar to the unacceptable level of \$10,000 can only be interpreted as some kind of mean-spirited joke and surely not intended to be a real proposal that you would give the dignity of even considering.

Also on the chopping block, the community gardens that myself and others had a lot to do with many years back. We attended your hearings and as a result of a commissioner motion, the PC voted to allow community gardens on any parks' property ' . . . where it is appropriate.' This has been a highly successful partnership between Parks and Ashland citizens — all your community gardens are full and have waiting lists. As a former citizen volunteer who worked with Linda Chesney as the coordinator, I know from experience that running these gardens does not require a huge time commitment and is also seasonal with little staff work in the winter months. The assistant director should know this and should be advocating to keep the gardens open, as should the director, who obviously does not know any of this history as I do.

The real question for us citizens is whether the current slate of Parks Commissioners and Parks' staff have any idea how to run a parks system. The aging commissioners who are beyond their expiration date should just resign, as they would in a parliamentary system when the public has lost confidence in them. Your decision making for years has placed you in this budget predicament; it is clear you are not very efficient as an organization; and stale ideas from stale commissioners means you spent money on destroying a Japanese historic garden and replaced it with a walled fort (and have no money now to maintain it) and are obsessed with one little fountain in Lithia Park while your whole system is collapsing around you.

Go ahead, raise your fees on sporting fields and close the community gardens. That will be the legacy of two decades of mismanagement and poor decisions made by emperors who don't realize they have no clothes.

Bryan Holley

To: Ashland Parks Commission

This letter is to acknowledge the proposed cuts in parks services starting July 1 in Ashland, OR. I am a mother of two elementary-aged children who attend school in Ashland. We frequent Ashland parks during all seasons of the year. The services at these parks including restrooms, Daniel Meyer pool, the splash pad and the ice rink have been essential for my kids' comfort and enjoyment in this community. There are so many of my kids' friends and their families that utilize these same services throughout Ashland. The recreational opportunities the Ashland parks, Garfield park splash pad, Daniel Meyer pool, the nature center and centennial ice rink provide contribute largely to the health and well-being of a vast swath of our community. Please rethink your options and do not cut funding to these services that provide for increased wellness in our community. In these confusing and chaotic times we so vitally

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

need opportunities that increase the health and wellness of Ashland community members. Please do not take them away.

Sincerely,

Casey Corbett
Ashland, OR

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hello Ashland Parks and Recreation,

I am writing in regards to the budget cuts proposed for APRC. We all know how valuable the parks are for the health of our citizens and visitors, as well as the general health of our community. Ashland is a vibrant and thriving city. Let's keep it that way. As I understand it, the city recently voted against a \$9/month fee on our utility bill. I do not feel the council members were adequately representing Ashland citizens when they voted on this matter. The news of the proposed budget cuts has spread faster among Ashlanders than any other city news in the previous 6 years I've lived here. As an active user of those parks and facilities, I am outraged and devastated. I believe our community wants to keep the parks and facilities open and accessible. It goes without saying that the employees that keep these operations going are also essential. Myself and other members of the community support a \$9 fee. Another solution would be enforcing paid parking, with the revenue going to APRC. This would not only support the budget but incentivize people to use alternative transportation. Obviously this is not as easy to initiate as a utility fee, but something to think about in the long game.

Best regards,
Caitlin Guthrie
Ashland citizen since 2019

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hello. I'm an Ashland resident, a parent, and a licensed clinical social worker. My husband and I are shocked and deeply disturbed by the proposal to close the Daniel Meyer pool, Garfield splash pad, and the ice rink. My time is limited to write so I will keep this brief. The public health and social issues that will absolutely be impacted by this proposal include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *childhood obesity (a national epidemic. Rates of obesity increase when recreational opportunities decrease)
- *teen drug and alcohol use (this will increase, as the pool and the ice rink both provide employment and recreation opportunities for youth)
- *domestic violence (this increases when you take away low cost / free recreation outlets)
- *mental health (mental health is improved with more, not less, opportunities for youth and parents to gather, exercise, socialize and spend time outdoors)
- *socio economic inequity (this disproportionately impacts lower income families, as private recreational opportunities like camps and privately run extracurricular activities are more often than not financially out of reach)
- *tourism and population (the ice rink, pool and parks attract visitors and residents. Taking these things away will reduce both, furthering the budgetary crisis)

Thank you so much for your time and attention.

Best,

Melinda Lanning, Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)

To Whom It May Concern,

The parks budget seems pretty opaque and the cuts in services given the budget cuts don't make sense.

I know a 5% or 10% budget cut cannot result in a commensurate cut in services across the board, but I do not understand how they can result in the complete closure of popular programs like the Daniel Meyer Pool, the Garfield Park splashpad and the ice rink. These should serve our town's children and families and should be kept open no matter what. I don't approve of prioritizing the golf course over the pool and splash pad.

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

I would be OK with cuts in services at all of our parks (like trash, landscaping and park maintenance, etc.) in order to keep services open for kids.

Thank you,
Victor Chang

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear Ashland Parks, Ashland Council, Parks Commissioners, and Mayor -

How odd it is for Ashland to be considering cutting funding to Parks even more than it already has in the past. This is the point in history where youth need to learn about respect nature.

Ashland without its parks, and specifically North Mountain Park and the Nature Center doesn't focus on the future. North Mountain Park has been providing invaluable space and educational and recreational opportunities to this city and in fact the county for decades.

What is this town about anyway? Nature and youth have no voice. I am an outdoor teacher and the more young people who can be in nature, the better. PLEASE make decisions for the next seven generations, please.

Computers are moving in on education and nature needs its space and place to influence our future's youth ALSO!! Less screens, more outdoor nature spaces!!!

Please send me the Zoom link so I may attend.

Deep gratitude and appreciation,
Christine Brautigam
Outdoor Educator MSIT, MAT

We pay taxes that should go to parks They are more important then most things. Basic parks off the water parks no need Daniel Mayer pool serves many. Go back to basics but keep the parks! Thanks

Karen Potts

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

I'm Ann Cramer, a gardener at the Ashland Creek Community Garden (ACCG) since 2006 as well as part of the Leadership Team. I believe that the ACCG is a bright star, a model of a working, thriving community of gardeners. ACCG is made up of 51 garden plots where singles, couples and families enjoy growing organic vegetables, herbs & flowers. We garden amongst the good bugs & not so good ones, we're thrilled when the Monarch butterflies come to play and the various birds that sing to us on a quiet Sunday morning. And if this sounds all so idyllic, yea, we are challenged sometimes dealing with those pesky critters that like to create havoc.

ACCG was founded in 2003 by a passing neighbor who saw an empty field, recognized the growing potential and approached APR with the proposal to build a community garden. Cofounder Carol Carlson is still involved 22 years later. She was awarded Volunteer of the Year last year. ACCG is the oldest and largest community garden in Southern Oregon!

We've had Volunteer Garden Managers til COVID hit when we gardeners created a Leadership Team to address needs & provide solutions that APR had neither the staff or resources to deal with. Our LT team are a talented foursome who work well together, are passionate about ACCG, have years of experience with guiding, coordinating work parties, organizing social events, solving garden issues, building projects, maintenance issues & fund raising. We communicate well, respect and value diverse opinions, suggestions and input and we keep transparent and open communication with all the gardeners.

We recognize that APR is dealing with ways to reduce the budget. ACCG Leadership Team is offering a proposal that we believe will be a win-win for both ACCG & APR. We respectfully ask that ACCG continue to be open for this growing season through November 30th. The LT will self-manage ACCG as we have the skills & years of experience ie, doing the New Gardener Orientations, do the monthly walk-throughs, address & mediate gardener issues/conflicts, etc. You could consider this year to be a trial run to be evaluated after Nov. 30th.

Please keep in mind the following:

- Gardeners have already paid the fees for this year
- Many gardeners have already invested in amendments for the soil and bought/planted starts & seeds.
- Our greenhouse is full of summer veggie starts due to be planted mid- May
- ACCG is a year round garden with many gardens already producing veggies and herbs.

If ACCG was to be shut down, this would be a huge loss of time & expense for our gardeners. Many gardeners have chosen to garden at ACCG because they don't have either the space or the proper gardening conditions at home or they rent, live in apartments, etc.

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

We can foresee that APR would want an APR staff person to check in periodically. Since the LT team are volunteers, perhaps we could be under the purview of APR's Volunteer Coordinator.

ACCG's Leadership Team thanks you for your consideration with the opportunity for us to continue. Our reward is a vibrant, thriving community of gardeners enjoying the satisfaction of working the soil and growing their own food. Our reward is enjoying each other's creative, delicious dishes at our monthly potlucks. Our reward is working side by side at our work parties, sharing stories, laughing together, feeling the accomplishment of how many hands can get so much done while enjoying ourselves in the process.

I think we can speak for all the gardeners that we are very proud of ACCG and so appreciate the opportunity to garden here. Thank You!

Ann Cramer
Ashland Creek Community Garden
Leadership Team Member

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

I'm writing this email to support Community Gardens in Ashland, Oregon. My name is Linda Thomas and I have been gardening at Ashland Community Garden for more than 5 years; I was on the waiting list for 3 years before a plot became available.

Community Gardens are important to me because they enable me to grow my own organic vegetables which my family enjoys very much. I need the community space because I am unable to garden at home as my neighbors have large trees which shade my yard. When I have extra produce from my community garden plot, I give it to my neighbors, the Food Bank, or a Ukrainian refugee family who lives here in Ashland.

I love the sight and feel of a community garden; it provides a much needed sense of community for me and other gardeners and allows us to exercise our bodies and our creativity. I feel I am contributing to the beauty of Ashland by maintaining a lovely green area.

In good faith, I paid the fee and signed a contract with the City of Ashland for my plot for 2025. I have already spent many hours preparing the soil and planting vegetables. I have also spent considerable money on soil amendments, seeds, and plants for this year.

I fully support a \$9.00/ monthly fee for Ashland Parks and to keep community gardens open.

Thank you for your attention to this matter!

Linda Thomas
Ashland, OR 97520

> I am a member of the Ashland Creek Community Garden. I have been gardening there for at least five years and waited three years to be able to be included. There is always a long waiting list because there is so much interested in gardening. Some of us are unable to garden at our own homes because of lack of space or lack of enough sunshine. Also, deer are a deterrent too many gardeners. The Ashland Creek Community Garden has excellent protection from deer and other critters with our high fence. > The Community Garden is so important to me because I have been in gardener all my life and the activity keeps me healthy and happy. I was a gardener by profession for 35 years and now, as an elder, wish to continue to work with the soil and make things grow. Just last fall I planted a winter garden for the first time and was very successful in producing enough kale and other greens to add to my green smoothie in the mornings. It was so much fun to be able to collect my own produce during the late winter season. I saved a lot of money by not having to buy food items at the store.

>

> I have just replenished the beds in my 20'x20' plot with expensive soil amendments and more chicken manure and other products. I have paid a fellow to help me as I am still recovering from a broken leg. So I've paid out a lot of money for help and for supplies. It is so important to me to get very fresh produce which is abundant in the late summer and fall from my own Garden plot at Ashland Creek

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

community garden. I also have a trellis where I plant sweet peas and like for bees and other pollinators to enjoy. I share these other flowers with many people and children in the playground next to the garden who come ask about the flowers in my plot.

>

> Because I am recovering from an injury, the garden is a place of sanctuary as well as a place to heal. I can move around the plot without having to walk far whilst "getting back on my feet" (literally). I am unable to walk even a block at one go, but gardening has been 'just the thing'! It gives me some exercise and connects me with nature and my spiritual center. It is also my only chance to socialize with others as I am home alone most of the time. I have been friends with some of the folks at ashland community garden for several years and I am making new friends there all the time.

>

> Each of the gardeners donates time for the community by doing any number of necessary tasks such as weeding or conducting tours of the garden etc.

>

> I have already signed a contract with the city of Ashland and paid \$100 for my plot use this year. As I mentioned before I have already invested quite a bit of time and money to begin my summer garden.

>

> If you do not want to support our Ashland Creek Community Garden we

> are ready and able to assume duties ourselves as other community gardens in other cities have done cross the nation. They do not have to be part of the park system. But I am willing and able to pay five dollars a month for the parks fee to keep our community garden open.

Please consider the large Ashland Creek Community Center as an essential part of life in Ashland. As a senior in Ashland who pays a lot of taxes, I am requesting that you keep us in your plans or let us continue to thrive under our own supervision.

Thank you Elodie
Bergmann