www.AshlandParksandRec.org
340 South Pioneer Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520
541.488.5340

MINUTES FOR JOINT SESSION WITH CITY COUNCIL
PARK COMMISSION
May 7, 2025
Council Chamber, 1175 E Main – 6:00 PM

Commissioners/Councilors Present: Adams, Hansen, Gardiner, DuQuenne, Weiner, Mayor Graham, Bachman (Chair), Dahle, Landt (Vice Chair), Kaplan
Staff Present: City Manager Cotta, Parks Director Houston, Deputy Director Dials, Assistant City Attorney Zahran, Senior Services Superintendent Mettler, Executive Assistant Mero
Absent: Councilor Bloom

I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Bachman called the meeting to order at 6:09

II. **ROLL CALL** – Commissioner Adams, Councilor Hansen, Commissioner Gardiner, Councilor Duquenne, Commissioner Weiner, Mayor Graham, Commissioner Bachman, Councilor Dahle, Commissioner Landt, Councilor Kaplan all present

III. PARKS & RECREATION SERVICE LEVELS AND BUDGET CHALLENGES WITHIN THE CITY'S GENERAL FUND – Director Houston, City Manager Cotta

Questions/Discussion on Cotta's portion of the presentation:

- Clarification on Enterprise Admin Services Slide 5 of presentation. What spurred the ask for a 5% reduction? A: Given uncertain economy, at budget retreat it was decided to leave the budget flat, in part because of information that personnel costs were coming in higher than expected. Then when revenues were clearly going to be short, the ask went out for a 5% cut to all GF departments
- Suggestion to increase TLT and Food and Beveridge taxes so that rate payers don't get hit. TLT expenditure is regulated. Stop buying and purchasing land and look at selling land.
- Revenue from sold park land can only go to capital budget.
- Why such a severe reduction? Not just because of measures 5 and 50. A: We can do better at forecasting. Haven't been good at funding the general fund.
- Question about Food and Beveridge tax and how it is utilized. The tax brings in about $4 MIL per biennium and Parks budget is $14 MIL so not a long-term solution.

www.AshlandParksandRec.org
340 South Pioneer Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520
541.488.5340

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).

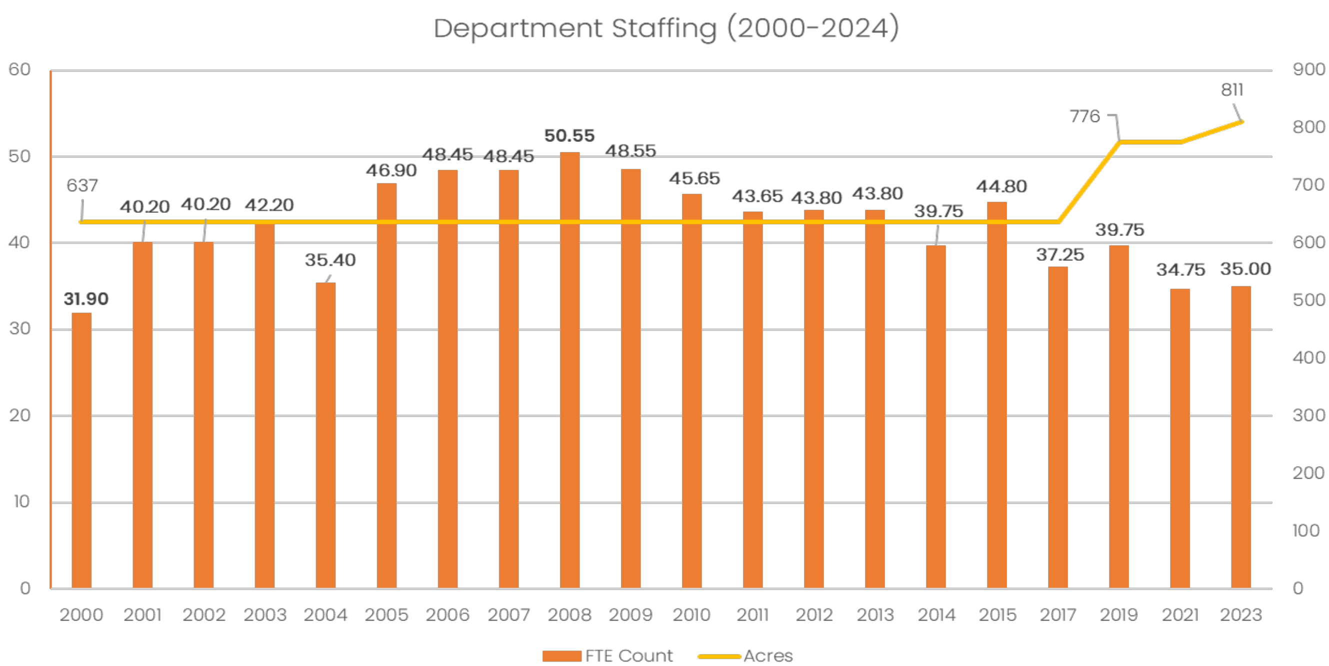

Figure 1 - APRD Staffing & Acreage 2000-2023

www.AshlandParksandRec.org
340 South Pioneer Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520
541.488.5340

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.

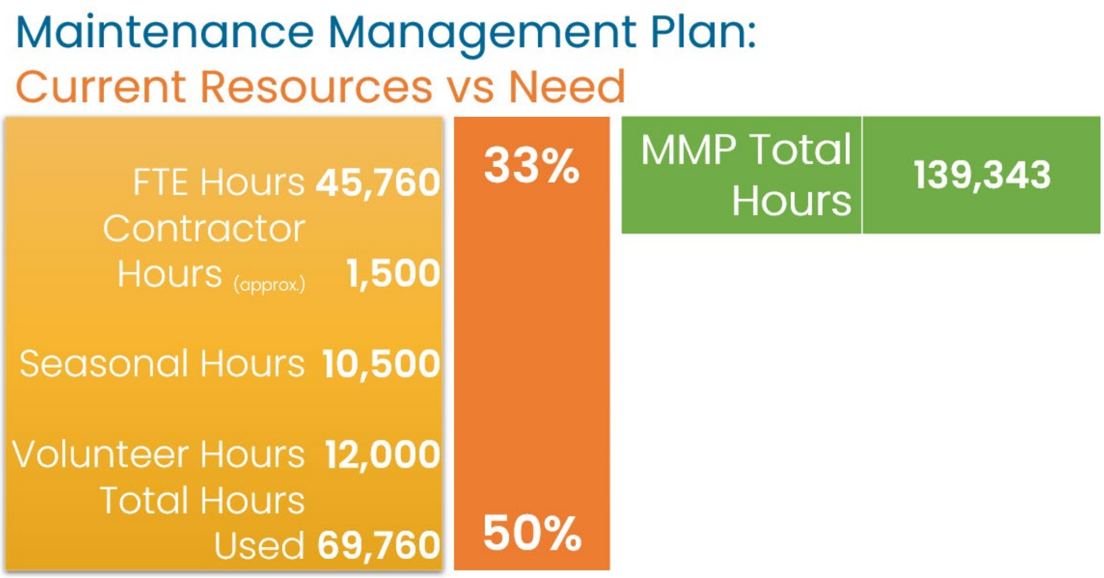

Figure 3 - Maintenance Management Plan Data

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

1. Are there any questions on this historical summary?

Questions/Discussion:

- Are there different levels of maintenance for different parks/assets? A: Yes.
- What else was going on in the City over history resulting in such a dramatic reduction in Parks' portion of the GF? A: Reclassification of internal services (Enterprise).
- Is the tool used for the MMP a tool for fine tuning how to make future reductions in staffing/maintenance? A: Yes, especially when used with Cartegraph. Good for forecasting tasks.
- Volunteerism is huge.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED - Biannual budget process

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS - N/A

ATTACHMENTS - N/A

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

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

www.AshlandParksandRec.org
340 South Pioneer Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520
541.488.5340

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 are 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

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

Questions/Discussion:

- Items on Current Actions to Streamline Operations slide will take time. Reasonable timeframe to see some results? A: Depends on the item.
- Are you considering increased volunteer use? A: Yes, with a trail boss, or trained volunteer lead running groups so that it doesn't involve increased staff time
- RVMBA, DEVO, AWTA do a ton of work on trails.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED - Biannual budget process

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS - N/A

ATTACHMENTS – N/A

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

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

Parks 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.

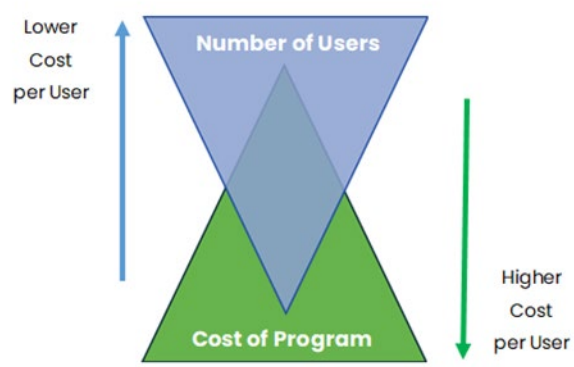

Figure 1 - Utilization vs Costs

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

www.AshlandParksandRec.org
340 South Pioneer Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520
541.488.5340

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

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

Figure 4 - Park Utility Fee Revenue

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.

www.AshlandParksandRec.org
340 South Pioneer Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520
541.488.5340

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.

$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

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

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, will have significant reductions to the recreation program, reduce park operation's level of service, and terminate the East Main Park development project.

Questions/Discussion:

www.AshlandParksandRec.org
340 South Pioneer Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520
541.488.5340

- Do the number of users (Program – Reductions Rubric slide) represent unique users. A: No.
- Comment about how golf course only has 30,000 users in 365 days of being open while pool and ice rink have many more in a short period of time. PROS Plan survey said get rid of the golf course.
- We can't have the informed discussion needed until the PROS Plan is complete. What does that process look like? A: Complete PROS, first. Any reduction is going to be devastating to someone. Intend to have the PROS plan complete by end of '25.
- Not pretending business as usual. Can't keep using band aids. Need to transition to some other revenue enhancement solutions and/or more reduction(s) in levels of service and move away from the fee. Process could take two to five years.
- If the PROS plan is completed at the end of 2025, will we have the information so that in two more years we will be having a fundamentally different conversation? A: Hopefully. Not sure what might get in our way.
- Is there money budgeted for the PROS Plan implementation? A: There is not a specific line item.
- Cotta: there is money in the CM's office for strategic plans. Director Houston and she have talked about partnering. PROS Plan fits neatly into the City's overall strategic plan. Parks Department is ahead of the game. Other departments will have to come up with their own strategic plans.
- The Council and Commission as a group need to work together. Have to make cost reductions. Change the services rather than reduce them.
- Need innovation. Events, drawing people to visit and then hopefully move to Ashland. This will drive economic growth and thereby the general fund.
- Expand the TLT possibly. Has to be a better way than to put the fees on the backs of the people.

Mayor Graham: Council has to give direction to the Department tonight about how to move forward with a fee.

Council Only Discussion

- Will a $5.00 fee relieve stress on Little League, etc.? A: It would significantly reduce the number of reductions Parks has to make, including field use rates.

www.AshlandParksandRec.org
340 South Pioneer Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520
541.488.5340

- If a park fee is passed will that allow the Commission to work with the field users (and others) on a different increase to their costs? A: Yes, though it would need Park Commission motion to change adopted fees/misc. charges.
- Accept the band aid. Pass the fee. Do the work to avoid being in this position again.
- The fee is not equitable. Once you go down this rabbit hole, there's no going back. There has to be a better way.

Mayor Graham: Council can only provide recommendation to staff as this is a study session. No formal decision can be made tonight.

Graham called for three rounds to garner Councilor's opinions/feelings.

1. **Do you support a fee? Which fee. $5 for 24 months, or $6.50 for 18 months.**
2. **Do we cap the fee at some point?**
3. **Are we attaching it to a process, like a strategic plan?**

Round 1. Dahle $5; Kaplan $5; Hansen $6.50 first choice, either is fine; DuQuenne no fee; Graham fine with either, prefers $5
Round 2. Dahle no more than 24 months; Kaplan favors no cap; Hansen no time cap and a continued fee; DuQuenne doesn't support the fee at all; Graham 24-month cap that is extendable
Round 3. Kaplan attach some metrics provided by staff; Graham that will take time outside the budget deadline. Suggested a broad-brush outline for the short term; Kaplan, understood, suggested bringing it to the October 21 joint meeting; Dahle wants a sense of urgency attached. Asked that the Commission give Rocky direction to get things in order with expediency to satisfy, inform the public, report to Council four times a year, and avoid being in this situation again; DuQuenne suggested the Council meet with the Commissioners every four months; Cotta asked for clarification: Are we asking Rocky to report to Council quarterly, or having the two elected bodies meet quarterly? Graham, that is maybe a bigger Council discussion.

Graham's summary: Direction to Parks - carry forward a $5 park fee for 24 months (or TBD). The Council needs to do its own General Fund work concurrently.

www.AshlandParksandRec.org
340 South Pioneer Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520
541.488.5340

Discussion/Questions:

- Parks is taking the brunt of the lack of money in the General Fund. All the departments need to do their work.
- The 1.4 MIL for Parks for the next biennium budget will need a Council resolution, yes? A: Yes, a draft will be brought to the May 20 Council meeting. The budget can be amended. The budget committee has asked the City to allocate more funding to the Parks Department which would entail taking away funding from other GF departments.
- Clarification that if the Council adopts the $5 fee for Parks, the City would not have to take funding away from other GF departments.
- Ultimately the Council will be adopting the amended budget rather than the presented budget. Changes are anticipated.

VI. **ADJOURNMENT** – Chair Bachman adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM

Written Testimony:

Esteemed councilors and commissioners,

It was brought to my attention that KDRV recently aired two segments about the "$1.4 million in budget cuts" that Ashland Parks and Recreation was facing, including an interview with Director Houston in which a misrepresentation was made.

https://www.kdrv.com/news/ashland-parks-faces-1-4m-in-cuts-youth-sports-feesrise/article_3a0d0f4c-8ac4-4ff3-ae21-c456c7246812.html

The City Manager's proposed APRD budget of $14,397,635 as noted in the current online budget (https://ashlandoregon.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/501 p.149) is actually HIGHER than the 23-25 biennial budget of $13,360,519. It would appear that APRD 25-27 budget is realizing an INCREASE of $1,037,116. Certainly not a 5% cut, nor a 10% cut.

APRC was proposing a 25-27 budget of $15,795,925, an 18% INCREASE of $2,435,406 over the 23-25 budget, not the 5% city administration was requesting of all departments. The public deserves to see what that increase was intended for.

www.AshlandParksandRec.org
340 South Pioneer Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520
541.488.5340

The “cut” APRD continues to cite compares its PROPOSED budget to the City Manager’s proposed budget in the APRD “general fund”, NOT to the previous biennial budget.

Continuing to disseminate this narrative could be misleading to the public and be construed as a PR effort to influence public opinion regarding a new Parks fee.

Is it possible that the extreme cuts proposed by APRD in the absence of a $6.50/mo/ratepayer might actually not be necessary? It is equally distressing to see City Manager Cotta endorse the the narrative of budget "cuts", the need for extreme service cuts, and the need for a new fee by her statements at the 4/9 Commission meeting. Her support of the fee appears to be tacit approval of an 18% budget increase for Parks when at the same time states all other departments are taking 5% cuts.

I'm sure you would agree that honesty and transparency are critical for public trust in the institutions created to serve Ashland residents. Ashland residents deserve a line item expense and revenue statement to appropriately respond to this potential imposition of a new fee. I continue to believe a re-evaluation is needed of the number of parks, riparian areas and other open space that Ashland residents are being asked to increasingly support.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,
Barb Magee

For last evenings study session I spoke specifically to a slide from the packet that was prepared for the session.

The slide mentioned 5 pathways to increase revenue. All of which will take time except for the easiest is to create a fee. I would appreciate council and parks to consider there might be other ways to lead to more sustainable solutions that don't put all the burden on the citizens.

Reduce management/supervisor costs by 10% across all city departments.

Design EQUAL reduction to all parks programs.

Halt professional training, travel and E. Main Park development Consider

including more 'adopt a park' options.

Sell assets. Oak Knoll being at the top of the list for many reasons: foremost compared to other parks the usage in number of golfers is small, water usage is concerning and I'm told the golf course costs $200,000,00 over and above the income.

I attended a meeting to see if data was available on number of users. I was told SS# are not collected but tee times are. I wanted to know number of golfers so I decided to do my own collection study. I combined Hersey St., Railroad and Garfield parks (assuming close to property of the golf course). On multiple occasions I drove by the three parks then Oak Knoll to do an approximate head count. My findings were close to 50% more individuals were at the small parks compared to the golf course.

I have nothing against the sport of golf but in these it just doesn't make sense. I would like to learn more about the Golf Course management advisory committee. On another note the field usage fee chart is unfair and I hope it is voted down.

know the community has many more ideas but these are a few I would like you to consider.

Thank you for your time and consideration Sharon Bryson Ashland resident over 35 years

Dear Nancy:

My wife and I were actively involved in the preliminary stages of planning for the new Ashland Parks and Rec Dog Park about 4 years ago.
Our house borders the Park property by the Wetland, on the South East corner. We thought the initial offering and plan was brilliant, with the generous donation of land from a local resident, combined with a land swap with the City (or County) for the property south of Dollarhide and another property in town. And as we understood it, the deal would only go through if a Designated Park was in the Plan. Walking away from that offer would just be irresponsible.
We worked with our community to help design the Park and all its amenities. We sincerely hope you will follow through with this plan! Abandoning it would be a huge mistake! We understood that the need for a Park at this end of town was desired by City and County planners, as well as statewide goals.

If the issue is money, you could restructure the design and eliminate some of the amenities that are not as popular with the public, or that are costly. We would be happy to work on a committee that helps design this "back-up plan." My wife and I are retired, so we have time to contribute to this cause.
And we think it's a good one!

Sincerely,
Michael and Victoria Miller Ashland,
Or. 97520

Dear Members of the Ashland City Council:
The Rogue Valley Audubon Society (RVAS) is writing to strongly support continued funding for the North Mountain Park Nature Center and the critical staff who manage and coordinate this local treasure. This vital community resource plays an important role in environmental education, conservation, and wildlife preservation in Ashland and Jackson County.

Over the past year, our organization has been devoted to supporting the Nature Center through substantial volunteer efforts and financial contributions. Our members have dedicated more than 750 volunteer hours to various programs, including bird walks, bird surveys, educational initiatives, and cleanup efforts. RVAS has also made nearly $2,000 in financial contributions to fund ProjectFeeder at the Park, making it possible to keep the feeders full and allowing for community members to borrow quality binoculars, and awarding prizes for the annual Bird Day.

The North Mountain Park Nature Center is an extraordinary ecological asset to our community. More than 175 bird species have been identified in this area, making it a premier birding hotspot in Ashland. The Nature Center plays a crucial role in protecting critical habitat, including ponds, creeks, and riparian areas, which are especially important during nesting seasons.

The Nature Center serves as a focal point for environmental and conservation learning, attracting school groups, families, nature lovers, and tourists. It hosts popular events like the annual Bird Day and Salmon Festival, providing invaluable educational experiences for our community.

We urge you to maintain full funding for the North Mountain Park Nature Center. This facility is not just a park, but a critical environmental education center that connects our community with the natural world.

Sincerely,
Rogue Valley Audubon Society Board
Rebekah Bergkoetter (Interim President)
George Peterson (Vice President)
Mary (Kay) Simmons (Treasurer)
Kate Halstead
Dr. Jamie Trammell

ASHLAND | OREGON

Park Commission

Better Together

www.AshlandParksandRec.org

340 South Pioneer Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520
541.488.5340

Erich Reeder

Written testimony

Stacia Stimac
5/7/25

Good evening, ~~Parks & Rec Commissioners.~~ My name is Stacia Stimac. I serve on the Ashland Little League Board, coach tee-ball, and am a parent of two young children.

Parks & Rec ~~You~~ gave us three days' notice that a vote was happening to change our field rental fee structure. We showed up — with little time to prepare — because we care. And despite several commissioners admitting during that meeting that ~~you~~ they were unfamiliar with the condition of the fields or how Little League operates, the vote still passed.

In response, we rallied. We put together a field tour so ~~you~~ they could see firsthand what goes into running this program — the hours of unpaid labor volunteers put in to drag, line, prep, clean, and maintain the fields. That's on top of coaching, umpiring, and organizing games for 176 kids — all to keep this program affordable for Ashland families.

And yet, despite that effort, we still haven't seen any meaningful partnership or follow-up from Parks & Rec. No attempt to revisit the vote. No questions about our operations. No engagement to work toward a solution together.

So I have to ask — what is going on here? Help me — help us — understand why a decision that directly affects only one program at Hunter Park was made with no collaboration, no consultation, and no transparency.

We're not asking for special treatment. We're asking for a fair process and a flat, predictable fee that reflects the reality of how Little League works. But more than that — we're asking to be treated like partners in the community, not an afterthought.

We're here. We've shown up. We're asking you to do the same.

Thank you.

Stacia Stimac

[redacted]

Presentation to Ashland City Council

Good evening, Mayor and Council Members.
I'm Eli Jaxon-Bear, a gardener at the Ashland Creek Community Garden.

Thank you sincerely for your service to our community. I recognize these are largely volunteer positions requiring significant personal sacrifice.
I come before you not as someone politically active, but as a concerned citizen who believes transparent governance is essential for our community's wellbeing.

I believe we all share the same goal: a community characterized by goodness, kindness, and responsible stewardship of our resources.

Recently, I attended the April 28th Parks and Recreation Commission meeting and observed concerning gaps in budget transparency. These observations prompted me to write a piece that several community members encouraged me to share with you directly.

KEY CONCERN #1: LIMITED BUDGET TRANSPARENCY

At the APRC meeting, Director Houston presented only macro-level budget categories without specific program details.

Our community gardens were lumped into a general "Environment" category alongside unrelated programs.

When I requested basic profit/loss information for the community gardens, this information wasn't available.
Question: Without program-specific accounting, how can we evaluate which programs are self-sustaining? Our garden offered a specific remedy of removing a layer of management and letting our volunteer team run the garden as we already are doing that. That suggestion was ignored.

KEY CONCERN #2: UNEXPLAINED BUDGET CORRECTION

After the City Council voted down the proposed $9 utility bill increase, a multi-million dollar "mistake" in the previous budget was mentioned. This correction reduced the proposed fee from $9 to $6.50 monthly. This negotiation between the committee and Director Huston: Would five dollars cover it? Six? Six fifty? There was no mention of how much actual revenue would be generated at each level, not what costs were covered. Six Fifty was decided without any reference to real numbers in the budget.

Not a single commissioner asked

accounting error of millions of dollars, nor how much would be generated at five dollars or six. This numbers were all decided without any reference to real numbers.

Question: Does this create the appearance that the revised budget was simply an accommodation to secure approval rather than a careful examination of priorities?

KEY CONCERN # 3: CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS

The sequence of statements raised serious questions:

First, the director stated all programs could continue without cuts with the newfee structure.

Then, after budget approval, he mentioned plans for new hires—something not previously disclosed. Later still, he announced plans to close certain public restrooms early.

Question: If the budget allows all programs to continue and supports new paid positions,why are we cutting essential public services? How many dollars would be saved by cutting hours of public access?

QUESTIONS THAT NEED ANSWERS

How can commissioners approve a budget without seeing line-item details?
What was the nature of the multi-million dollar accounting error?
Could maintaining current staffing levels prevent restroom closures?

Without clear mapping of cash flows, what criteria are used to make budget cuts?

CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS

I'm not suggesting impropriety, but I believe we can do better:
Request APRC provide detailed program-level budget information to the Council and public.
Establish a policy requiring explanation of significant budget adjustments on a line item basis.
Create a transparent process for evaluating which programs to cut when funding is tight

CLOSING

I believe full transparency will heal much of the negative energy surrounding our local politics.

I trust in your commitment to govern with clarity and compassion.
Thank you for your time and attention to these concerns.

I'm happy to answer any questions or provide further information.

Ashleigh Cropper
[redacted]

1 TO 2 MINUTE TALK

Hello Parks and Rec Department along with Mayor and City Councilors. I attended Monday;s meeting but want to introduce myself to Parks department. I am Ashleigh Cropper, a working mother of two little boys who are 3 and 6 years old. I was born and raised in Ashland then moved back 4 years ago from Colorado, to raise my children here because I could not think of a better place to be as a family with an amazing community.

I am coming here again today to provide another statement of my concerns with the Parks budget and asking AGAIN for you to vote NO because we as a community need you to ask the hard questions.

WHY HAS THERE NOT BEEN CHANGES IN THE PAST TO PREPRARE FOR THIS MOMENT? To prepare for inflation, rising costs that inevitability always exist.

WHY has accountability for an essential job to forecast, prepare and be ready for what the future of a town may come to, not be addressed?

Why are we discussing closing park bathrooms, community gardens, senior centers, and ice rinks without even considering options for Oak Knoll first, as it's one our largest single costs?

Parks, you are being very clear: Ashland is not the place for families!

When looking at the budget on Monday, we could not see line items broken down into exact costs for areas like running the splash pad or the community garden. That is basic housekeeping with a budget and surely something you would have wanted to know before making these decisions. These are places that are busy and used which hopefully are a smaller cost to the community, yet we cannot see this transparency with numbers!

Parks and Rec, why are YOU targeting certain groups, especially families in Ashland? WHY Ashland Soccer Club, Little League, the Community Garden who already pay fees and handle their fields and gardens with little to no support from Parks to be asked for more money, or be shut down! WHAT IS THE END GOAL HERE? As my 6 year old would say, "THE MATH DOES NOT MATH!"

Why are tennis courts and pickle ball courts not being charged for their usage time but the places our children use are and the youth activities?

I moved here for wonderful amenities, which I have always had provided since I grew up here 30 plus years ago. When you close these amenities, you are showing where your priorities are at. You are pushing families out of town and not encouraging others to move here.

There is NO community when families are gone!

So here is what voting yes will do: It will keep bathrooms open, utilities fees added and our families with our activities. BUT voting No will demonstrate to Parks they must figure out their budget. We want the commissioners to put in the hard work, find solutions, and present a different budget.

Please again I am asking you to vote NO, to ask Parks to go back and look at their budget again. To find strategic ways to keep such valued and used amenities open!

I WILL SAY THIS AGAIN AND AGAIN: Do you want to walk by the parks and see no one playing there? See another school closed? That is the direction we are headed and I do not believe that is who Ashland is.

Thank you again for your time!

ASHLAND | OREGON

Park Commission

Better Together

www.AshlandParksandRec.org

340 South Pioneer Street

Ashland, Oregon 97520

541.488.5340