



MINUTES FOR STUDY SESSION

PARK COMMISSION

June 4, 2025

Council Chamber, 1175 E Main – 6:00 PM

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

Staff Present: Director Houston, Parks Superintendent Caldwell, Senior Services

Superintendent Mettler, Executive Assistant Mero

Absent: Commissioner Bachman (Chair), Deputy Director Dials

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Acting Chair Landt called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM
- II. **ROLL CALL** – Commissioners Gardiner, Weiner, Landt all present. (Adams arrived a little late missing the roll call).
- III. **PUBLIC FORUM** – None
- IV. **ADVISORY COMMITTEE POLICY/CHARGES** – Director Houston

SITUATION – Assign updated charges to the Ashland Senior Advisory Committee (ASAC) and Recreation Division Advisory Committee (RDAC)

BACKGROUND – APCR Policy 102 established ASAC (then S-PAC) on February 28, 2018. Per this document the original charge is:

“The Senior Program Advisory Committee (S-PAC) purpose is to advise the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commissioners on matters related to the Ashland Senior Services Program and to coordinate with the APCR Director and the Senior Services Superintendent.”

APCR Policy CP.R.2019.08.26 established RDAC on August 26, 2019. The original charge, per this document, is:

“The Recreation Division Advisory Committee (R-DAC) purpose is to advise the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commissioners on matters related to Recreation Division’s programs and services and to coordinate with the Recreation Superintendent and APCR Director on matters related to the general operations, quality, promotions, diversity, equity and inclusion practices and programming.”

ASSESSMENT – The Park Commission tasked staff with developing a charge for the advisory committees. With input from the advisory committee officers, staff are proposing the following charges for ASAC and RDAC:

- ASAC
 - Help staff interpret and implement PROS Plan Senior Services related items.
 - Work with staff and advise Park Commission on policies related to Senior Services.
- RDAC
 - Work with staff on the PROS Plan Recreation Division related items.
 - Work with staff and advise Park Commission on policies related to the Recreation Division.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS – Staff would like Commissioner’s input on the proposed charges for the two (2) advisory committees.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED – Consistent with City ordinances and Park Commission policy on advisory committees.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS – N/A

ATTACHMENTS – (see packet)

APRC Commission Policy 102 (ASAC), APRC Commission Policy No. CP.R.2019.08.26 (RDAC)

Questions/Discussion:

- ASAC members discussed their proposed charge at their last meeting. They were fine with it.
- Any reason the committees couldn’t still operate under their current charters? A: Yes, we are trying to get the charges aligned with the PROS plan strategic planning process.
- Discomfort with the wording of the charge, specifically ‘advise’. Wordsmith?
- Staff were directed to bring the item to the regular business meeting next week, with some wordsmithing, for a vote.
- Proposed charges are nonspecific. Keep the charges as they are and focus on more important items.

V. WINBURN WAY SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE – Director Houston

SITUATION – Update on the Winburn Way Subcommittee’s activities.

BACKGROUND – The Park Commission established a subcommittee to assist in reviewing the Lithia Park Winburn Way action item. The subcommittee includes Commissioner Weiner, Commissioner Gardiner, and Director Houston. The subcommittee is to develop a plan to review and engage the public on options to address the safety on Winburn Way through the boundaries of Lithia Park. Upon completion of the process, the subcommittee will report to the Park Commission for potential action on a strategy.

The Lithia Park Master plan identified potential options to address the safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles as they travel on Winburn Way. Dogs are not permitted in Lithia Park. Many dog walkers utilize Winburn Way's road right-of-way to connect from Granite Street to the downtown plaza.

ASSESSMENT – The subcommittee has met three (3) times to review and develop the charter and project plan. The subcommittee has identified five (5) options to consider through the process. Each option has a different impact on traffic volume, speed, and modal operational space.

Staff have begun coordinating with Public Works. In July 2025, Public Works will install traffic counters. A public engagement process that will include a comment period and an open house will occur in August 2025. Staff are planning to present the options to the Transportation Advisory Committee for review and advisement in September or October 2025.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS – Staff propose that the subcommittee continue to work on the project plan.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED – Department Work Plan FY 26-27

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS – This subcommittee's work will impact the scope of work for the capital project identified for Lithia Park in FY 26-27.

ATTACHMENTS – Subcommittee Charter, Winburn Way Safety Project Plan (see packet)

Questions/Discussion:

- Too hard to restrict dogs to specific trails in the park, not manageable
- It's about creating dog walking space. Slowing traffic will be good for all modalities. Consider the suggestion from the LPMP.
- The area under review is only 1/3 of a mile. Big issue is that it feeds into the hazardous parking area (where most biking accidents happen).
- Are physical barriers being considered? A: Yes, candlesticks, hockey pucks, slightly raised, roughened surface for walkers.
- Raised pedestrian crossing areas are also under consideration.

- Clarification: Option three would still be the same free for all that it is? A: Yes.
- Considering regular raised sidewalks? A: Possibly, not yet tied to anything.
- Option two: Only 6 feet? Not wide enough for two bikes.
- Most important goal is to give pedestrians, some with dogs, a safe way through Lithia Park.

Received good feedback. Will take it back to the subcommittee.

VI. INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT – HERBICIDE USE EXCEPTION – Director Houston

SITUATION – Review exemption to use two tools to manage landscaped beds and tree wells.

BACKGROUND – The Park Commission adopted an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy on May 10, 2010. It requires the Park Commission to grant staff an exemption for use of any synthetic herbicide. The IPM policy was last reviewed on June 13, 2024, to allow park staff to use synthetic herbicides on other city properties.

ASSESSMENT – The Parks Department is challenged to manage 811 acres within the budgetary constraints provided by the adopted budget. The Department completed a maintenance management plan identifying we have only 33% of the staffing levels needed to complete routine maintenance tasks. Since the adoption of the IPM policy in 2010 staffing has been reduced from 50.55 to 35 FTE staff (31%). The park system has grown by 26% in the same period. Additionally, the City has adopted new ordinances that require a higher level of fuels reduction and weed control.

Reviewing staff practices determined they are unable to address secondary or tertiary weed management activities due to the level and amount of line trimming required, the earlier start of the fire season (June 1, and the rate of vegetative growth. In short, due to the current workload staff can only line trim to manage landscaped beds, tree wells, and other areas.

Because of the time it takes to manage weeds, staff are not able to address other routine and preventative maintenance requirements for the Department. Increasing the budget and/or staffing is not currently an option. As such, staff is looking at the use of synthetic herbicides within landscaped beds and tree wells.

Staff have reviewed synthetic herbicide alternatives:

- Mulch – no time to manage existing conditions to apply
- Burners – takes more time to manage area. Requires same frequency as line trimmer
- Irrigation Changes – in process. However, this spring it will have a minimal impact for identified areas

- Goats – indiscriminate eaters, will eat what we want to retain (potentially)
- Hardscape – expensive up-front costs. Looking at this for some areas
- Volunteers – staff time to manage, reviewing additional options

Staff proposes using the following synthetic herbicides:

- Trifluralin – for pre-emergent use to reduce line trimming
 - Application: 1-2 applications, generally February to June.
- Dichlobenil – for post-emergency use to reduce line trimming
 - Application: 2-3 applications, generally March to October.
- Glyphosate – for spot spraying to reduce line trimming
 - Application: 1 – 4 applications, generally March to October.

The goal is to reduce the time staff spend line trimming to allow secondary and tertiary treatment of the landscaped areas and tree wells. Over time, this will reduce the utilization of synthetic herbicides. Use of these synthetic herbicides will follow the IPM plan protocols.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS – Does the Park Commission want to move this exemption forward to address operational needs within the regulatory and fiscal constraints of the Department?

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED – Integrated Pest Management Policy – Park Commission

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS – Given the financial constraints of the Department, this topic will not increase the budget. It will allow the Department to use existing resources more effectively to address other operational requirements to maintain safe parks and facilities.

ATTACHMENTS – Trifluralin – EPA R.E.D. Fact Sheet; Dichlobenil – EPA R.E.D. Fact Sheet; Glyphosate – EPA R.E.D. Fact Sheet (see packet)

Questions/Discussion:

- Opposition to the reintroduction of herbicide use. People deserve a chemically free place to hang out.
- Concern expressed. Look more closely at what is meant by exceptions. Should revisit the whole policy.
- Need to cut costs, be more efficient due to budget constraints. Look at chemical use in certain areas.
- Pros and cons listed in tables were not comprehensive enough. Didn't list health risks, carcinogenic effects. Culture: parks looked better 20 – 30 years ago because there

were more staff. Recommendation to change aesthetics, educate the public. Have fewer annual and perennial beds, less deciduous trees, and more evergreens.

- Does staff have sufficient information/direction to move forward by tabling the item or bringing it back to another meeting? A: There are three alternatives: additional tools, more resources, or we don't do a good job.
- Suggestion to pilot chemical use in one park.
- That would fit the description of an excepted use.

VII. **PARK ORDINANCE(S) UPDATE** – Director Houston

SITUATION – Amendment of Ashland Municipal Code (AMC) Chapter 10.68 – Public Parks to include provisions for special use permitted activity.

BACKGROUND – AMC 10.68 does not permit many of the uses that we allow via a special use permit. A special use permit does not allow the department to permit activities or uses forbidden by the AMC.

ASSESSMENT – In coordination with the Legal Department, staff have taken a broader look at AMC 10.68 for consideration of special use permits.

Proposed changes in the following have been recommended:

- **10.68.060** Unpermitted Commercial Activity
- **10.68.080** Posting Notices Prohibited
- **10.68.120** Park Property Prohibited uses
- **10.68.170** Park Waters Use
- **10.68.260** Swings Hammocks
- **10.68.330** Camping Prohibited

These draft changes to the AMC will provide more flexibility for events and special use permits as approved by the Parks Director or their designee.

The process to amend AMC 10.68 would be as follows:

- Park Commission recommendation at Park Commission business meeting
- City Council approval of AMC amendments

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS – Are there any questions about the proposed amendments? Are there other amendments staff should consider?

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED – AMC 10.68 – Public Parks, Special Use Permit Policy

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS – If adopted, these changes to the AMC would require some additional staff time for implementation. Once implemented the changes would provide more revenue opportunities for special use permits within the parks system.

ATTACHMENTS – Chapter 10.68 AMC Amendment DRAFT Changes (see packet)

Questions/Discussion:

- Clarification on the process. Adopted Commission recommendations would be forwarded to Council for changes to the AMC? A: Yes
- There is a total lack of enforcement of AMC, but rules are still necessary.
- Recommendation to add free standing signs to section 2. (like a sandwich sign, H frame, etc.)
- The reason for the item is to give the Director some leeway. Don't get bogged down in rewriting the code.
- ODFW says no fishing in the creek below Reeder Reservoir. Has to be corrected; add slack lines to the hammock section.
- Need to look at no busking in parks.
- Staff will feather in "for examples" and bring the item back in July.

VIII. COMMUNITY CENTER/PIONEER HALL RENTAL FEE – Director Houston

SITUATION – Review Community Center and Pioneer Hall Rental Fee

BACKGROUND – Each year the City reviews and updates the miscellaneous fees and charges book. The Parks Department's review this year included the addition of Pioneer Hall and the Community Center as potentially rentable assets for the next fiscal year. Currently there is no fee identified for the Community Center in the adopted miscellaneous fees and charges book. The fee for Pioneer Hall is \$23.00 per hour for weekdays and \$35.00 per hour for weekends.

The City Council reviewed the miscellaneous fees and charges book. They directed the Park Commission to again review the fees for the Community Center and Pioneer Hall. The Council had concerns around the increase in the hourly rental rate and cleaning fee.

ASSESSMENT – Generally, a fee review includes a review of the cost recovery standard for the item, found in a cost recovery policy. A cost analysis for providing the facility or service is needed to determine the cost recovery. Alternatively, a comparable analysis and community threshold enquiry are completed. This entails identifying the rate charged for other comparable facilities and assessing whether the community would pay the amount proposed.

Currently, the Department does not have an adopted cost recovery policy or cost data at the level necessary to be effective in developing a cost per facility or amenity. Therefore,

staff are utilizing the comparable analysis and community threshold enquiry model to develop a proposed fee.

There are two (2) factors to consider in developing a potential fee: rate and operational capacity. The rate will be found in the miscellaneous fees and charged book. The operational capacity will inform any policy or procedure that communicates the minimum use period(s) for the facility or amenity. We will begin by assessing the Department's operational capacity.

Operational Capacity

Each reservation for Pioneer Hall or the Community Center will require staff to answer questions, review a reservation request, review additional insured documents, and coordinate with park operations and/or a third party to ensure the facility is ready for use and cleaned after the use. This does not include the time for the Legal Department to review documents. Our current loaded cost for an administrative assistant or recreation manager is \$35 to \$72 per hour. Our estimate is 1 to 2 hours of staff time, depending on the complexity of the rental. Therefore, covering the administrative costs of a rental would be \$70 to \$144.

Park operations are operating at 33% of staffing levels to meet routine maintenance of parks, without considering the addition of these two assets to our portfolio. As such, the Department is reviewing the use of a contractor to complete the interior cleaning. The model we hope to use is an on-call contract to have the service come to clean up after a facility was used for the day. The estimate is \$65 to \$125 per cleaning. The goal is to get 100% cost recovery (average) for this expense. Staff is recommending a cleaning fee as follows:

Facility	All Day Rental	2 Hour Rental
Pioneer Hall	\$75	\$15
Community Center	\$100	\$20

Due to staffing levels, the Department operates with minimal staff available on weekends to assist any users of Pioneer Hall or the Community Center. As such, a minimum of six (6) hours or a daily rental is recommended. For weekdays a two-hour minimum is recommended. This will ensure that at least a portion of the administrative costs are recovered.

Rate: The Department is responsible for the utilities, ongoing routine maintenance (interior and exterior), and the administration of the facilities. The City has just invested over \$2.3 million in major repairs to both facilities. The current weekday to weekend rate differential is a 52% higher rate.

Following are the hourly rate options for consideration:

Facility	Current Rate	Adopted Rate	Alternative #1	Alternative #2
Pioneer Hall	\$23/\$35	\$60/\$120	\$40/\$60	\$30/\$60
Community Center	Null	\$80/\$160	\$50/\$75	\$40/\$80

Alternative #1 utilizes the same rates adopted for the Senior Center's single room fee for Pioneer Hall. A 25% increase was applied for the Community Center due to the greater square footage. Alternative #2 utilizes a rate based on a 50% reduction of the adopted rate.

Staff will provide a more detailed comparable review during the study session to assist in a review of the hourly rate for these two facilities.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS – Staff are seeking input on the proposed alternative rates and seek direction on moving an alternative forward or if needed, receiving additional information from the Park Commission.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED – Biannual budget process

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS – Fees for rental, services, and programs assist in reducing general fund support. The next biennium budget has been adopted with identified amounts of fees being generated. The utilization rate and fees charged impact the amount of fee revenue generated.

ATTACHMENTS – N/A

Questions/Discussion:

- Previous rate was quite inexpensive, but buildings were equally quite funky. It's been seven years since they were used. The adopted rates are very reasonable.
- Question about the much-reduced cost of cleaning for shorter rental periods. A: Quick clean in between short rentals, big cleaning at end of the day.
- Do the two buildings have kitchens? A: Not full.
- Suggestion to step the fee increases over time.
- There will be a recovery policy in the future, an additional tool for adjusting fees.
- Advocate for no cleaning fees. What will the cleaning cost? A: Pathways would charge \$65 per hour with a minimum number of hours.
- Struggling with the process. The Commissioners are independently elected officials and should stick to what they think, not what they think the Council thinks.
- It is a PR issue with the Community. Council rejected the fee the Commission felt was right.

Staff was asked to bring the issue to another Study Session for more discussion with options, including the adopted rate.

- IX. **LOOKAHEAD REVIEW** – Director Houston reviewed the Lookahead.
- X. **ADJOURNMENT** – Acting Chair Landt adjourned the meeting at 8:19 PM

Respectfully submitted by Nancy Mero, Executive Assistant