



MINUTES FOR JOINT PARK COMMISSION/CITY COUNCIL AND PARK COMMISSION
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

February 11, 2026

Council Chamber, 1175 E Main – 6:00 PM

Commissioners and City Councilors Present: Bachman (Chair), Adams, Landt, Gardiner (Vice Chair), Sherrell, Bloom, DuQuenne, Graham (Mayor), Dahle (Chair), Kaplan, Hansen
Staff Present: Deputy Director Dials, Senior Services Division Manager Mettler, Parks Division Manager Caldwell, Executive Assistant Mero, City Manager Cotta, Deputy City Manager Rooklyn, City Attorney Pietila, Deputy City Attorney Zahran
Absent: Commissioner Weiner

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Bachman called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM
- II. **ROLL CALL** – Sherrell, Bloom, Adams, Hansen, DuQuenne, Landt, Graham, Bachman, Dahle, Gardiner, Kaplan
 1. Pledge of Allegiance
 2. Land Acknowledgement**
- III. **QUARTERLY FINANCIAL UPDATE** – Interim Finance Director Morrison

1. Finance Update – Second Quarter FY 26 and Utility Receivables

SUMMARY – On a quarterly basis, the Finance Department presents the current quarter-end financial statements and provides a review of significant items.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED – Administrative/Governance Goal: “To ensure ongoing fiscal ability to provide desired and required services at an acceptable level.”

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS – Presented in this packet are the Financial Statements for the period ending December 31, 2025, which is in the first year of the budget biennium and 50% of the fiscal year.

The December 2025 Financial Statements include the following reports:

- Summary of Fund Balances
- Statement of Revenues and Expenditures – City Wide

- Statement of Resources, Requirements, and Changes in Fund Balance – by Fund
- Summary of Cash & Investments

Revenues –

For the period ending December 31, 2025, the City received \$55.9M or 54.5% of budgeted revenues for the year which was 6.4% more than the prior year.

The year-over-year change in the **Taxes** category was primarily due to the increase in the Public Safety and Wildfire Reduction Fee and the establishment of the Parks Fee.

- The Food and Beverage Tax and Transient Lodging Tax are collected on a quarterly basis, and the first quarter was due October 31. The City has shown an increase over the previous year for the Food and Beverage tax of 12.5%, however this was mostly due to a continued audit the City and its third-party contractor are conducting. Transient Lodging Tax has increased over the previous year 14.8%.

License and Permit activity has increased since the last quarterly report compared to the prior year up from 72.5% to 87.1%.

Intergovernmental Revenue was higher than the previous year with the year over year change of 127.9% due to increased grant revenue for Public Works for upgrades to the TAP system and conflagration reimbursement for the Fire Department.

Charges for Services Revenue are higher than the previous year as expected with the year over year change of 102.4% due to the updates to the Miscellaneous Fees and Charges and Rates.

Fines and Forfeiture Revenue are higher than the previous year with the year over year change of 132% primarily due to increased Parking fine revenue.

Interest on Investment Revenue was lower than the previous year resulting in a year over year change of 83.9% but remains higher than historical figures.

Miscellaneous Revenues are higher than the previous year with the year over year change of 542% due to the sale of clean fuel credits in the Electric Fund and decommissioned assets in the Equipment Fund.

Expenditures –

For the period ending December 31, 2025, fund expenditures are within budget expectations. Personnel Services was 45% of budget and Materials and Services was 48.2% of budget. Debt Service is trending as expected based on debt repayment schedules. Capital Outlay is trending as expected based on the timing of Capital projects.

Ending Fund Balances, Cash & Other -

As of December 31, 2025, Total Fund Balances City-Wide was \$88.8M, which was \$1.9M or 2.1% lower than the previous year. The General Fund Ending Fund Balance was \$19.5M, which was \$2.1M or 9.9% less than the prior year as expected when the 2025/27 biennium budget was developed and adopted. The increase in the ending fund balance in the General Fund compared to the previous quarter was due to the receipt of the property tax which occurs in November each year.

The Capital Improvement Fund is showing a negative ending fund balance as of December 31, 2025 due to cost overruns for the Community Center and Pioneer Hall. The ending fund balance for FY 2025 came in lower than expected, reducing the funding for this biennium. A transfer of appropriation from the General Fund Contingency will be required and will be presented to Council for approval in March. The estimate at this time is that \$200,000 will need to be transferred from the General Fund to the Capital Improvement Fund to cover the remainder of the expense for those two projects.

The Water Fund is showing a decrease in the ending fund balance due to Capital Projects that are underway. The Equipment Fund is showing an increase in the ending fund balance due to timing of asset purchases and the increase to the sale of assets.

Cash and Investments balance was \$85.2M which was \$648,820 or 1% more than the previous year remaining consistent. This balance is critical to our financial health and our ability to meet our ongoing operating needs and obligations.

Utility Receivable Update: The City's Utility Billing division continues to pursue delinquent balances owed on Utility Accounts. As part of the FY 2025 Audit, the City reduced the \$6.8M in the total amount owed by \$2.7M due to delinquent, closed account balances sent to collection and is progressing toward compliance either through payments or a payment plan agreements with the remaining customers. As of December 31, 2025, the total amount owed on Utility Accounts, which includes current charges, was \$5M. Of that \$2.6M was delinquent. \$1.4M are on a payment plan and \$1.2M are not and subject to delinquent processing. Below are the amounts by fund owing to the City.

Fund:	Utility Billing Receivable	
	As of Dec 31, 2025	Total Delinquent
General	\$ 693,688	\$ 405,838
Street	235,878	130,141
Wildfire Risk Reduction	66,753	17,339
Water	733,464	379,967
Wastewater	669,273	297,592
Stormwater	84,027	33,932
Electric	2,114,470	1,157,518
Telecommunications	393,958	186,797
	<u>\$ 4,991,511</u>	<u>\$ 2,609,123</u>

Amount on payment plans: \$ 1,416,953

Amount without payment plans: \$ 1,192,170

PROPOSED ACTIONS OR MOTION(S) - N/A

ATTACHMENTS - 2nd Quarter Financial Report as of December 31, 2025 (please see packet)

Questions/Discussion:

- Will the Council be apprised of the Capital Improvement fund separately from the cost overruns coming out of the general fund for Pioneer Hall/Community Center within this fiscal year? A: Yes.
- In the last biennium did we use the ending fund balance to balance this budget? A: Yes.
- Does the drop in the pending fund balance from last year include the uncollected utility account receivables? It was done in June.

Morrison: Asked to give an update on Low Income Assistance Program. As of December 31 there were 454 qualified customers. Once customer reaches a \$400 threshold they are no longer eligible for the 30% discount. Twelve customers have reached that threshold. Typically January and February are colder months. There will be an update at the next quarterly report.

- Have all twelve of the customers who reached the threshold been offered an audit? A: Upon applying for the program customers are notified of the audit. They have two years to do so. No customer has yet asked for the audit. If they don't apply for the audit they no longer qualify for the discount. Will be sending out reminders.

Morrison: Updates to AMC for utility billing at next Council meeting. Delinquencies accrued during COVID. With lack of staffing.

- Updating the software for utility billing. RFQ just submitted, going through review.
- Mirroring ORS to change the AMC, implementing new software will help to keep customers from getting too far in arrears.
- Is the third party hired bringing in funds? A: Not yet it's too soon.
- Built into the rising utility rates to help subsidize those who can't pay.
- Payment plans have been enormously successful. Hope to recap all \$1.2 million.

2. General Fund Forecasting Discussion

SUMMARY – A financial forecast has been requested by Council showing a two and five year projection for the General Fund. Staff will present the current biennium as well as two additional biennia.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED – Excellence in governance and city services
Sustainability through creativity, affordability, and rightsized service delivery

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS – Presented in this packet is an update to the financial forecasts presented at the Council retreat December 1, 2025 which will help guide the discussion on future budgets and service delivery. Forecasting is necessary to make informed decisions on long-term financial sustainability. The goal of these forecasts is to provide an accurate view toward a realistic target to help ensure resources are aligned with achievable financial expectations.

With the rising cost of personnel and materials, and the uncertain economic outlook both locally and federally, it is essential to continue to evaluate revenue and expenditure streams and update these forecasts periodically. The process of developing these forecasts involved:

- Gathering and analyzing historical averages of revenue and expenditures and how they have increased or decreased.
- Developing a set of assumptions using a best and worst case scenario.
- Implementing collective bargaining agreements.
- Projecting revenue and expenditures based on the above factors.

ASSUMPTIONS – A ten year history for revenue and expenditures was used in developing the change in percentage for the best and worst case scenarios below:

	Best	Worst
	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Property Tax	3.3%	3%
Other taxes	3%	2%
Franchise	4%	2%
Licenses and Permits	2.2%	0%
Intergovernmental	2%	0%
Charges for Services	3%	1%
Internal Charges	4%	5%
Fines	2%	1%
Miscellaneous	1%	0%
Interest	1%	0%
Regular Employees	4.0%	4.0%
Health Insurance	8.0%	15.0%
PERS	10.0%	13.0%
PERS PF	13.0%	16.0%
UAL	12.0%	15.0%
M&S	3.0%	6.0%
Capital	0.0%	5.0%

Additional Adjustments:

- Building Fund created for BN 2027/29, transfer will be needed from General Fund
- Equipment Replacement rents updated for actual planned rental charges
- All Internal Fees updated to cover cost of Administration, IT, Finance, and Public Works
- Vacancy rate used for best scenario averages 90%
- Vacancy rate used for worst scenario averages 95%
- Reallocation of 50% of Fire Marshall and Fire and Life Specialist to Wildfire Risk Reduction Fund
- Estimate of Utility Billing software costs and corresponding increase to internal charges
- Worst scenario assumes Fire OT remains over \$700,000
- Worst scenario includes equivalent funding of removed staff member for Finance support
- Worst scenario includes higher equipment costs for Police and Fire in out years
- Worst scenario includes Food and Beverage sunsetting in 2030
- Worst scenario includes increased deferred maintenance costs in Public Works budget of \$200,000 each year

Additional Adjustments from previous forecast:

- Reduced interest earnings as we are seeing 52% of budget currently and to reflect impact on decreased ending fund balance.

- Reduced PERS rates slightly with impact of Advisory rates provided by PERS. 1%
- Reduced Property Tax due to ongoing Appeal by Charter Communications. \$120,000

PROPOSED ACTIONS OR MOTION(S) - N/A

ATTACHMENTS - Scenario 1- Best Case, Scenario 2- Worst Case (please see packet)

Questions/Discussion:

- Best case is very close to previous forecast.
- Do not currently have funding for Capital. Worst case would still not have funding and would not meet policy. In a catastrophic emergency the money would have to come from the General Fund.
- No reserve fund. Need to have these conversations very soon as 27-29 is coming up very soon

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

Paul Mozina (didn't identify where he's from): Spoke to the dangers of Glyphosate. Used it extensively. Got throat cancer. Could have been due to the use of alcohol, tobacco and other contributing factors well. Asked for a schedule of where herbicides are being sprayed. Urged protection for workers spraying.

Cori Frank, Ashland: Thanked the Commissioners. November 9, 2022, ballot measure 15210 was defeated by 65%. It would have changed the leadership of parks. Wants the public to continue to elect the Commission to oversee Parks. Would like transparency and clarity.

Gayle Patten, Ashland: Asked Parks administration to reconsider some of the recent changes implemented by ex-director such as the removal of many garbage cans. Sees more trash now where the cans were removed. Understands up to \$50,000 was allocated for new signs for Lithia and other parks. Were the signs made and if so, where are they?

Chair Bachman noted they don't answer questions in Public Forum. Recommended contacting Parks staff for an answer.

V. CITY OF ASHLAND FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS – Mayor Graham and Commission Chair Bachman

SUMMARY - The City of Ashland is launching a community-driven Strategic Plan to help chart our shared future. The plan will guide service delivery, set priorities, and invest resources over the coming years, with staff perspectives playing an important role alongside community input. January 28, 2026, a workshop was held for City Council in

Pioneer Hall. Park Commission Chair Bachman and Mayor Graham will share highlights and next steps regarding the City's strategic planning process.

- Graham: The Strategic Plan will both set a vision and chart a course for the community.
- Cotta: Hired SSW Consulting. January 28 held a workshop with Council, Chair Bachman, and staff. March will be back with an engagement plan for Council to review and improve. Will reach out to Council and Commission to be sure they capture all the groups they will be working with. Goal is to have a finalized plan by July/August. The plan will help with budgeting to ensure the community's/Council's priorities will be funded moving forward.
- Graham: A lot of community feedback will be collected by consultants.
- Bachman: Parks has their own plan. Much more operationally focused. Lots of data specific to parks to share with the City. Parks will adopt their own plan separate from the City plan adopted by Council.

VI. PARKS LEADERSHIP NEXT STEPS –Deputy Manager Rooklyn and Deputy City Attorney Zahran

SITUATION AND BACKGROUND – The Ashland Parks and Recreation Department's structure, funding, and relationship with the larger City organization have changed over time. These changes have created obstacles for how the City delivers recreational opportunities and maintains our parkland, impacting Ashland residents, and the larger economy and visitors alike.

With the Parks Director position currently vacant, there is an opportunity to review the Department's history alongside the pinch the Department has experienced regarding financial and governance constraints. It will help us understand the current context and what steps or paths may guide us forward to better fulfill the Ashland Park Commission's mission "to provide and promote recreational opportunities and to preserve and maintain public land."

At the joint session, the Deputy City Manager, Deputy City Attorney, and Acting Parks Director will present an overview of the changes to the Department, as well as some structural obstacles within the existing system that need to be addressed.

Ashland Park Commission Purpose

By City Charter, the Park Commission “shall have control and management of all the lands herein dedicated for park purposes...” (Article XIX, Section 3). The Recreation Commission is comprised of Park Commissioners. (Article XXII). As stated on the City’s website, Ashland Park Commission’s mission is to provide and promote recreational opportunities and to preserve and maintain public lands.

Meanwhile, the City Council has ultimate financial responsibility for the Park Commission – with both bodies subject to financial and legal constraints, as set forth in policies, procedures, and law.

Department Funding & Structure History¹

- 1908 Ashland voters voted to set aside property along Ashland Creek for park land, establish the Park Commission to manage that land, and adopt a permanent tax levy to support parks.
- 1990’s Measure 5 and Measure 50 required that the permanent tax levy for Parks had to be levied and received by the City of Ashland. The City of Ashland provided a set millage to Parks & Recreation into a separate Parks General Fund annually, and Parks and Recreation continues to operate autonomously and be accounted for separately from the rest of the City government.
- 1994 Ashland voters approved the first Youth Activities Levy that issued additional property taxes to support parks management and recreation.
- 2006 Senior Services was added to the Parks Department portfolio.
- 2007 A court ruling elsewhere in the state pointed to the need to transfer the Youth Activities Levy to the Ashland School District, which voters approved as the Youth Activities and Academics Levy.
- 2008 The Parks Department received its last year of Youth Activities Levy funding.
- 2013 Instead of providing a set millage to Parks and Recreation annually, the City transfers funds annually as a “charge for service.” This changes Parks and Recreation to a blended component unit, meaning Parks and Recreation is a legally separate entity but significantly relies upon the oversight, policies, and financial resources of the City.
- 2024 At the auditor’s recommendation, the Parks General Fund is rolled into the City’s General Fund.
- 2025 City Council adopts Ordinance 3248 establishing the Ashland Parks and Recreation Department as a department of the City. This removes the Ashland Park Commission status as a separate legal entity.

Parks Director Role

¹ This history is from a compilation of sources and documents that may not have been verified. This timeline will be updated as information is confirmed, corrected, and added.

The changes in the funding and structure of the Parks Department have changed the role and scope of the Parks Director. Below are significant changes from years past, put in place by Ordinance 3248.

- Employee Oversight – The Parks Director is responsible for supervision only. The City Manager bargains and implements the labor contract for park employees; the City Manager, via the Human Resources Department, sets the employee policies; and the City Manager approves of all hires and terminations.
- Budgeting & Spending – All budgeting and major spending is performed under the direction of the City Manager and is subject to City Council approval.
- Reporting Structure – The Parks Director is responsible to the Park Commission on all strategic and policy matters related to the control and management of park land, and responsible to the City manager on all operation, financial, and compliance matters.

Current Challenges from Staff Leadership's Perspective

- Policy implementation – The most needed tools to successfully implement policies are budget oversight and employee oversight. While the Parks Director takes policy direction from the Park Commission, the director does not have full budgetary control. This calls for a high level of alignment needed between the Park Commission, the City Manager, and the City Council. When that alignment is not there, the Parks Director is unable to successfully do their job. An example of this was the establishment of a rental structure for Parks Department facilities.
- Capital projects – The Parks Department is responsible for its own capital projects as part of its role managing and maintaining park lands and facilities. These capital projects, however, often involve significant land use, building, electrical, and other City services to accomplish. The separation of duties between the Parks Department and Public Works puts Parks' capital projects at greater risk of coordination issues, timing issues, and permitting issues. An example of this is the East Main Park project and the ice rink canopy permitting process.
- Unique systems require unique candidates – Ashland's governance structure for our park lands and operations is unique. The new reporting structure requires a Parks Director who is familiar with day-to-day operations and oversight of a parks department, and who has the skills and experience to work with an elected board that provides policy oversight and direction. Since most municipal Parks Departments do not report to an elected board, it is difficult to find candidates with the requisite experience.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS – Prior to hiring a new Parks Director, City leadership would like to implement changes that candidly address the core issues faced by the Parks Department and the City this past year. While some of these changes

will be able to occur at the operational level, others may require Park Commission and City Council guidance.

In the immediate time frame, staff recommend:

- Recommendation #1: Delay hiring of Parks Director while necessary changes are identified and implemented.
- Recommendation #2: Hold Park Commission meetings alongside City Council so that both entities can hear the same public engagement, city constraints, and staff input from all departments at the same time.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED - Excellence in governance and city services (City Council values); Citywide standards and operational alignment (AMC 2.28.610 Ashland Parks and Recreation).

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS - The Parks Director position is budgeted at a total cost of \$21,430 per month in FY26 and \$22,660 per month in FY27. Any delay in hiring will be treated as vacancy savings within the Parks Department budget.

ATTACHMENTS – None

Rooklyn: Gave a brief intro noting recent resignation of Director Houston and how the change in leadership makes it a good time to talk together about Parks history and integration into the City. Reviewed the history of Parks in Ashland. Please see Department Structure and Funding above and following slides from PowerPoint:

Discussion Purpose

Summary

With the Parks Director position vacant, we have an opportunity to identify and implement potential changes to better fulfill the Ashland Parks & Rec Department mission.

Level Set

Build a shared understanding of the department history and its relationship with the larger City organization.

Identify Issues

Hear from staff what issues they have experienced through an operational and liability lens.

Set a Path

Discuss if and how we'd like to move forward as an organization.



Ashland Park Commission Mission

Provide and promote recreational opportunities and to preserve and maintain public lands.

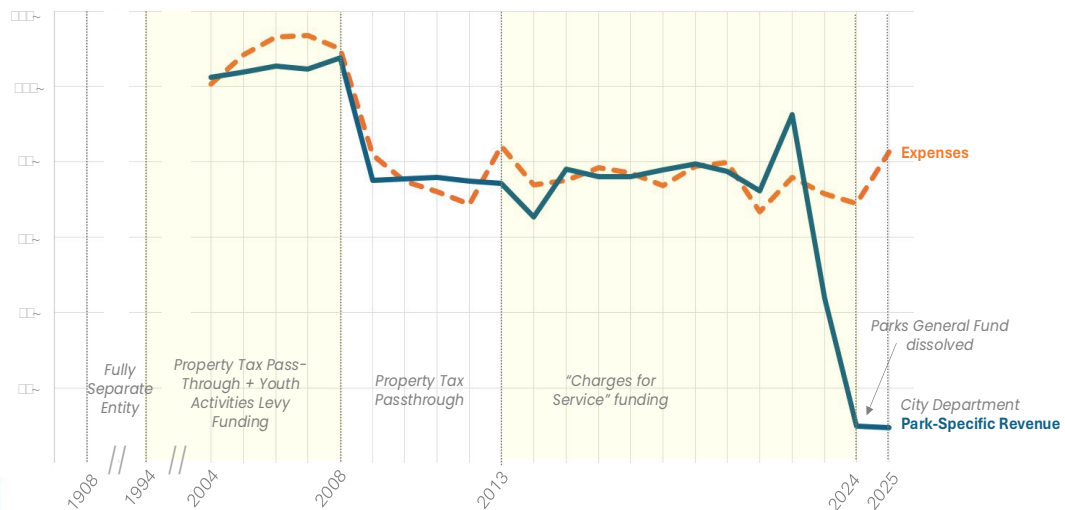
Per the City Charter,

- Control and manage all park lands (Article XIX, Section 3)
- Administer the Open Space Park Program (Article XIX A)
- Act as Recreation Commission (Article XXII)



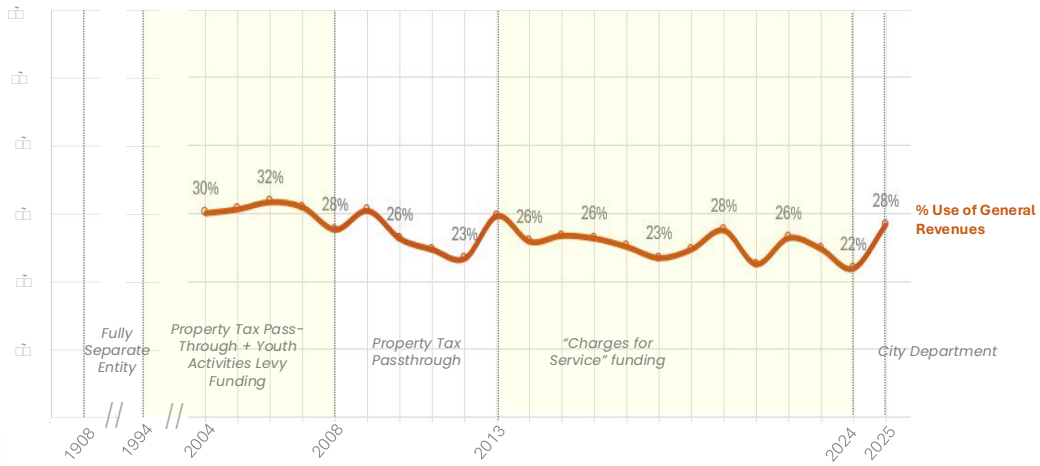
Major Changes to Parks & Recreation Structure

City of Ashland Annual Financial Reports, adjusted to 2025 dollars. **Expenses** represent operational expenses (personnel, materials & services, and capital outlay). **Park-Specific Revenue** represents charges for service and property tax income specific for park purposes, and does not include grants, interest, or miscellaneous income.



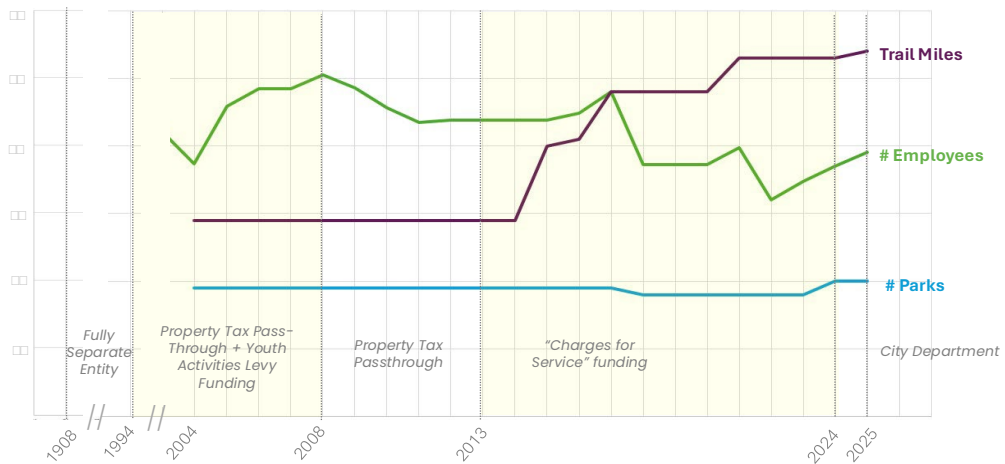
Major Changes to Parks & Recreation Structure

Calculated using City of Ashland Annual Financial Reports. **% Use of General Revenues** is defined as the the percentage of general revenue that is used for Parks Department operating expenses. General revenue is defined as property taxes, utility user tax, user taxes for government activities, and nonrestricted interest income.



Major Changes to Parks & Recreation Structure

City of Ashland Annual Financial Reports. Total acres of open space is not included, but follows a parallel growth pattern to Trail Miles. The Parks Department oversaw 642 acres of open space in 2015, and oversees 811 acres today.



ORD 3428: Ashland Parks & Rec Department

Employee Oversight: The Parks Director is responsible for supervision only.

Budgeting & Spending: All budgeting and major spending is performed under the direction of the City Manager and is subject to City Council approval.

Reporting Structure: Responsible to the Park Commission and the City Manager.



6

Operational Challenges

Challenge	Example
Alignment between Park Commission, City Manager, and City Council	Establishing the rental structure for Pioneer Hall and Community Center
Capital Projects	East Main Park; Winburn Way Paving
Communication with the Public	Ice Rink closure
Unique Role	Last Recruitment Pool



7

Rooklyn: Functionally, Parks has been operating as a City department. Ordinance 3248 made it official. Parks Director may be the toughest job in the City. Requires alignment between Park Commission, City Manager, and City Council for success. Takes a lot of time to get things done correctly. (example: time it took to arrive at fees for Pioneer Hall/Community Center). Parks is the only department that oversees its own capital projects. All other department's capital projects are overseen by Public Works. Need to

The Parks Director position is very unique. It is difficult to hire because the candidates tend to have operational skills but aren't used to reporting to an elected board.

Reminders:

RULE 2.1 ADVISOR In representing a client, a lawyer shall exercise independent professional judgment and render candid advice. In rendering advice, a lawyer may refer not only to law but to other considerations such as moral, economic, social and political factors, that may be relevant to the client's situation.

1. The Legal Department has 1 client: The City of Ashland
2. Disliking the Legal Department's advice does not make it bad advice



Areas of Concern

How APRC operates within the City of Ashland creates areas of concern in three primary areas:

1. Capital Projects
2. Human Resources and Personnel Concerns
3. Governmental Confusion



Capital Projects – Themes

Parks department is not equipped to execute technical capital projects as efficiently and with less likelihood for error as the public works department. Here are 2 broad ways in which that plays out.

1. Expertise Mismatch/Compliance Risk:

- a. Parks staff specialize in landscape, recreation, and operations—whereas PW has the expertise and the departmental structure to ensure the technical, permitting, and compliance capacity needed to avoid delays, liabilities, and costly change orders.

2. City-Wide Coordination:

- a. Successful capital projects coordinate between departments (streets, utilities, public safety). Centralized program ensures economies of scale
- b. Centralized project center means more likelihood the City is treating business partners fairly and in the same consistent manner.



10

Capital Projects – Area for Concern

What do some of the potential consequences look like?

1. Mismanagement of Bids

- a. Increased risk for procurement protests → fines/ reputational damage

2. Failure to properly insure bonding/insurance

- a. Lack of familiarity may lead to mistakes in proper gathering, or greater likelihood to succumb to political pressure they are not needed.
- b. Consequence is City would take on liabilities of a contractor that is insolvent, or judgment proof.

3. Cost Overruns/ Project Delays

- a. Natural risk to any project, but structure of Parks department and APRC supervising these projects means more to coordinate, learn, verify.



11

Capital Projects – Examples

1. **East Main Park**
 - a. Issue with frontage application and annexation
 - b. Incomplete bid package
2. **Ice Rink**
 - a. Lack of Permitting and engineering knowledge at the director level; lack of capacity to oversee multiple projects
3. **Winburn Way**
 - a. Is it Lithia Park and under Parks or just a Public Right-of-way that goes through Scott and the TAC committee? Whose responsibility is it to pave?



Human Resources : Theme

The Parks Department should focus on recreation, maintenance, landscape operations, etc. It is not equipped and structurally incompetent to internally handle HR complaints, which can lead to legal, operational, and equity risks. Historically, and although changing, there was a culture that City employees that worked in parks were “different” from other City employees because of the Parks Commission.

The very nature of this can lead to concern in the following ways...



Human Resources : Area of concern

1. Inconsistent Policies:

- a. Decentralized HR may cause uneven hiring, discipline, leave tracking, wage misalignment, improper job descriptions, leading to wage disputes

2. Improper Management of the Parks Director:

- a. But for the Commission, it would make sense if the Parks Director was managed in the same way as any other director. The bifurcation makes the Director one more step removed from supervision within broader City functions.

3. Staff being subject to political pressure:

- a. APCR has one advocacy goal – Parks and Rec. The focus of this advocacy and historic role of APCR has, at times, led to instances of Commissioners overstepping their policy role.
 - i. May impacts employee wellbeing and create confusion as to proper direction
 - ii. May pressure staff to act contrary to professional judgment, legal advice, or city policy.



Governmental Confusion: Theme

The City of Ashland is one governmental entity. Yet it has a hybrid policy model regarding just parks and rec—an elected parks board sets Parks policy while the City controls every step of that implementation (e.g. finance, HR, legal). At worst, the dynamic creates the perception of blurred accountability. It can leave residents and staff feel unsure who is responsible for decisions or complaints.



Governmental Confusion: Themes

1. **Blurred Accountability.**
 - a. Voters hold the elected Parks body responsible for park outcomes.
 - b. But, City and Council controls ever stage of implementation (policy, finance, legal, etc.)
 - c. The parks director reports to the Commission, which lacks the supervision, fiscal authority, and citywide perspective a City Manager provides.
 - d. Meanwhile, City Managers step back from oversight to avoid appearing to interfere with parks policy—leaving a gap in clear, effective supervision.
 1. → Dynamic fosters ineffective decision-making and increases the risk of missteps
2. **Budgetary & Communication Mismatch:**
 - a. Majority of Parks funds come thru the general fund, which is set by Council. But then Council
 - b. Meanwhile, APRC receives public input for park policy
3. **Unclear Political Accountability:**
 - a. Residents don't know whether to press the Commission or Council,
 - b. APRC must live within funding decisions as provided by Council
 - c. On the flip side, since Council does not have policy control over Parks, there may be an unwillingness to support Parks priorities that the Council did not have buy-in on a policy-level that the Council did not have ownership over



Governmental Confusion: Examples

1. Pioneer Hall
2. PROs Plan and City Strategic Plan
3. Field Fees
4. Ice Rink



APRC Mission Goal

The mission of the APRC is to provide and promote recreational opportunities and to preserve and maintain public lands



Last 12 months of Park Commission Agendas

Info	Committee Appointments	Fees	Park Map & Related	Capital Projects	Park Ordinance	Misc Policy
PROS	Trail advisory	Fields	Bandersnatch	Winburn Way		Indoor Facility
Recreation	Recreation Advisory	Pioneer Hall	Trail classification			Policy on Policies
Pickleball	Senior Advisory					
Golf						
Budget						
Fountain						



Staff Recommendations

Take the time to assess operational and structural changes to the Parks & Rec Department prior to hiring a Parks Director.

These changes may be able to occur at the operational level, others may require Commission and City Council guidance.

In the interim:

- Hold Park Commission meetings alongside City Council
- Hold Parks Director position vacant, with CMO as acting director



Zahran: Acknowledged the service the boards provide to the City. Historical practices are not always the best. Legal is tasked with giving frank advice that isn't always easy to digest.

Human Resources (HR): Heavy caveat as great strides have been made in the HR department. Still possible that employees aren't treated the same way.

Governmental Confusion: There is a hybrid model regarding just Parks and Rec due to the director reporting to the Park Commission (PC) and the City Manager. Can create blurred accountability for the citizenry. Puts City Manager in an awkward position due to not wanting to step on toes. Result is ineffective decision making.

Questions/Discussion

- Will take the recommendation to wait to hire the next director under advisement. The PC retains the authority to hire, evaluate, and terminate the parks director based on ORD 3248 creating the Parks and Recreation Department. The PC will be addressing next steps on what to do about the director position with input from the City Admin.
- Don't understand the recommendation to hold PC meetings alongside the Council meetings. Okay on a quarterly basis. Meetings would be too long.
- Question the seriousness of PC agenda items. Could fit into the Council agenda. Suggestion that both bodies would benefit from hearing the information at the same time. Possibly on a case by case basis depending on the item.
- Reminder that the voters overwhelmingly supported maintaining the PC. How are tonight's recommendations consistent with the City Charter, the will of the voters,

and with ORD 3248? Possible that deficiencies in an individual are being assigned to a whole Department. A: More coordination wouldn't change the PC's input on policy.

- There's just one City. Not two separate bodies. The right hand has to know what the left hand is doing for effective management. The risk is still the City's. This isn't an issue that went to the voters. Ideas have to be hammered through operationally with input from the City Manager and PW. The measure that went to the voters did not address these issues.
- Recommendations are asking for time for City management to work with the Deputy Director (sic) and the Parks Superintendent (sic) to come up with some operational changes that would have to be agreed to by both bodies for the success of projects for the community.
- Need to separate the two recommendations. Hiring of the Parks director doesn't apply to Council. The alongside meeting suggestion isn't functionally doable.
- Primarily, Capital projects should be with Public Works.
- Should the PC choose that path, the Council would participate in the discussions of how to go forward operationally.
- Request for a monthly report from Parks director to the Council (in the Charter) to reduce governmental confusion.
- What is the legal recommendation for coming together to make changes, timelines, proposals, etc.? A: Main priority is to have capital projects housed with Public Works. This is step one. Will come back with more specifics for step two.

Bachman: The mayor, chairs of both bodies and the PC vice chair are now meeting monthly to talk about these issues. He has met several times with the City Manager, and they are well on the way to having PW manage Park's capital projects. Redefining the role of the Park's director is an important step in the process.

VII. ADJOURNMENT FROM JOINT MEETING – Chair Bachman adjourned the Joint meeting at 7:48 PM. Called for a twelve minute break.

VIII. CALL TO ORDER FOR PARK COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING – Chair Bachman called the PC business meeting to order at 8:00 PM.

IX. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Park Commission Study Session January 7, 2026
2. Park Commission Regular Business Meeting January 14, 2026

Chair Bachman asked for unanimous consent. No objections. Minutes approved by unanimous consent.

X. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA – None

XI. **PUBLIC FORUM** – None

XII. **CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Approval of Bylaws Ashland Senior Advisory Committee
2. Recreation Division Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes October 16, 2025

Motion: I Move to approve and acknowledge the consent agenda.

Motion: Landt

Second: Adams

Vote:

Gardiner	Yes	Bachman	Yes
Adams	Yes	Landt	Yes

XIII. **BUSINESS**

1. **Park Commission Liaison Assignments** – Chair Bachman

SUMMARY – The Ashland Park Commission reviews liaison needs and makes appointments annually typically at the first regular business meeting of the calendar year.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED – City Charter XIX

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS – N/A

PROPOSED ACTIONS OR MOTION(S) – Move to approve the 2026 Park Commission liaison assignments

ATTACHMENTS – 2026 Park Commission Liaison Assignments

2026 Park Commission (PC) Liaison Assignments

Advisory Committees

- Ashland Senior Advisory Committee (ASAC) – Commissioner Gardiner
- Recreation Division Advisory Committee (RDAC) – Commissioner Bachman
- Trails Advisory Committee (TAC) – Commissioner Adams

Management Advisory Committees

- Bee City USA – Commissioner Bachman
- Current Parks, Conservation, and Maintenance – Commissioner Bachman

- Oak Knoll Golf Course – Commissioner Landt
- Ashland Japanese Garden – Commissioner Landt

2026 PC Representation on Non-PC Committees and Boards

- Ashland Parks Foundation Board – Commissioner Gardiner, President
- Forest Lands Management Advisory Committee (City MAC) – Commissioner Weiner
- Joint Powers Committee (Bear Creek Greenway) – Commissioner Landt
- Public Arts Advisory Committee (City MAC) – Commissioner Gardiner

No Commissioners requested different liaison assignments for 2026. Chair Bachman asked for unanimous consent. No objections. The 2026 PC liaison assignments are as listed above.

2. Calle Guanajuato Agreements – Acting Director Dials

SUMMARY – The following applicants have submitted requests for commercial space on Calle Guanajuato and the front of Lithia Park for the 2026 season. Staff is seeking Commissioner approval of these applications.

Requests

- Skout
- Café Lumina
- Little Tokyo
- Louie’s Bar and Grill
- Bar Juillet
- Oberon’s
- Greenleaf
- Mix Bake Shop
- Lithia Artisans Market

Draft 2026 Boundary Map Location

- R-6, R-6a, PP-8, PP-9
- PP-3a & PP-5
- PP-4, R-5 & PP-4b
- Part of R-4a, R-4b & PP-2
- Part of R-3
- Part of R-3& Part of R-4a
- R-2 & PP-3
- R-1a & R-1b
- A-1, A-1b, front of Lithia Park

Each year, restaurants adjacent to Calle Guanajuato and the Lithia Artisans Market can request rental space for seating and artisan booth placement. Once the agreements are approved, APRD staff, restaurant owners, and the manager of the Lithia Artisans Market collaboratively address any issues or concerns prior to the season opening.

The 2026 draft boundary map of rental spaces on Calle Guanajuato is included in the packet as well as schematics for a large and small Artisans Market in front of the park and on adjacent City of Ashland sidewalk space. These maps illustrate generally where restaurants and artisans will be located for the 2026 season. Each restaurant and the Lithia Artisans Market have submitted a request and a site plan in accordance with the Calle Policy.

Major Proposed Changes

The table below outlines the major proposed changes to this year’s leases. These changes stem from feedback from the Lithia Artisan’s Market, Calle restaurant owners, and Deputy City Manager Jordan Rooklyn. They are intended to help increase vendor and restaurant sales, better integrate leases with park assets for improved vibrancy, and reduce coordination burdens between businesses. These proposed changes are recommended as a pilot for this summer season and will be reviewed prior to future leases.

<i>Last Year’s Leases</i>	<i>Proposed Change</i>	<i>Reason for Change</i>
On Saturdays, approx. 10 Lithia Artisan Market vendors were on the Calle interior.	Remove Lithia Artisan Market vendors from the Calle interior. Keep “anchor vendors” at the Calle entrances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide restaurant owners with more seating capacity on the busiest days of the week. • Reduce the burden on restaurants for reconfiguring seating every weekend.
Lithia Artisan Market had space along the Lithia Park front sidewalk, in front of the Lithia Park entrance, in front of 51 Winburn Way, and along the Calle.	Consolidate Lithia Artisan Market vendors into one location; integrate market with Lithia Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow stronger branding and visual presence for Lithia Artisan’s Market. • Maintain the iconic entrance to Lithia Park. • Make Lithia Park a more natural connection with the market, inviting shopping visitors into the park and park visitors to shopping.

- See the attached maps for Lithia Artisan Market locations on Saturdays (Large Market) and Sundays (Small Market). These maps denote general booth locations and booth types; the exact number, spacing, and booth sizes in each area will be a collaboration with Lithia Artisan’s Market and APRD staff. APRD staff were consulted and expressed concern regarding soil compaction around the perimeter of the front lawn and parking strip and on the south side lawn near the Ash trees. An increase in the number of vendors would greatly increase foot traffic on the front lawn in and around the trees. Staff’s recommendation would be to work with the Lithia Artisans Market to ensure that booths stay clear of tree roots by marking areas where the Artisans can place their booths.

Season of Operation

Over the years, the season of operation for the Lithia Artisans Market and restaurants has increased:

- The current Calle Guanajuato policy states: “The default season of operation is Memorial Day through Labor Day. ”
- Once the Calle Guanajuato was reconstructed in 2014, more restaurants were interested in using it for longer periods and the Commission allowed an extended season, from mid-March through Mid-November.
- For the 2025-26 season, the Commission approved three options for seasons:
 - March 10 through November 9 (8 months)
 - March 10 through December 31 (9.5 months)
 - January 1 through March 9 (2.5 months).
- **For the 2026-27 season staff propose similar options:**
 - March 10–November 8, 2026 (8 months)
 - March 10–December 31, 2026 (9.5 months)
 - January 1, 2027–March 7, 2027 (2.5 months)

Fees:

In 2023, the Commission approved a three-year fee schedule for the restaurants and artisans. Restaurants will be charged for either five or seven days per week, based on their selected season of operation and square footage. The Lithia Artisans Market is charged for two days per week. This is a one-time payment that covers the entire rental period, which historically has lasted from mid-March through mid-November (eight months). This year, fees will be reviewed in May with all other City and Parks and Recreation fees.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED – Calle Guanajuato Commercial Use Policy #101

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS – Revenue is consistent with fluctuations that happen as restaurants open and close. Revenue for the Calle Guanajuato is \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year depending on these fluctuations.

PROPOSED ACTIONS OR MOTION(S)

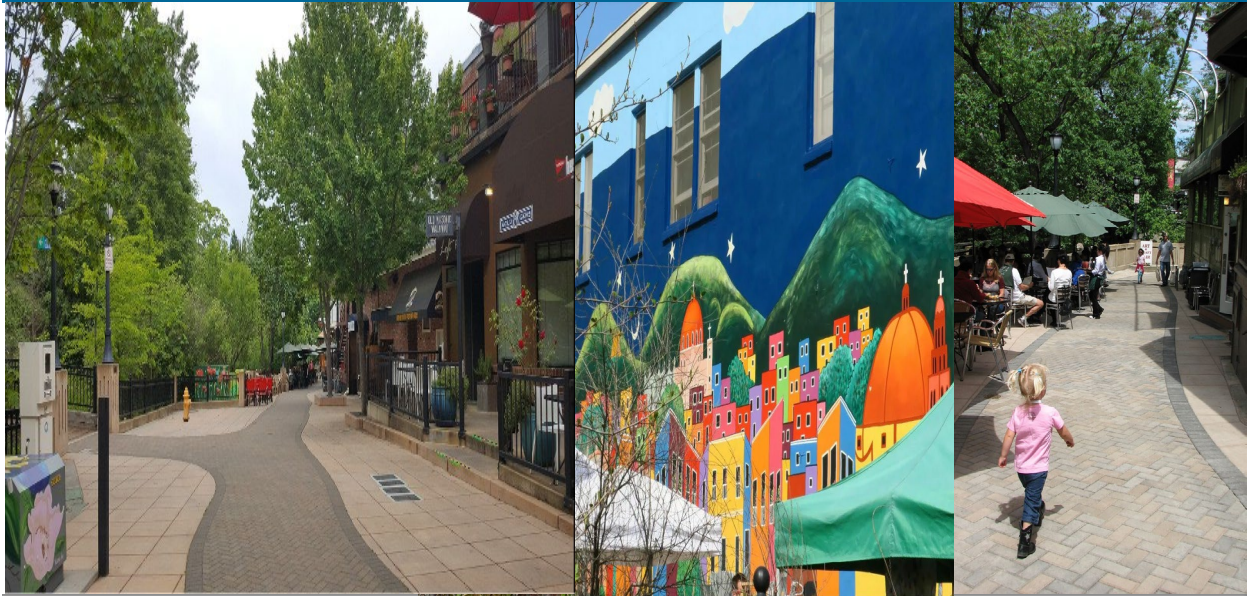
A separate motion is recommended for each of the items listed below:

- Move to approve the 2026 Calle Guanajuato Boundary Map.
- Move to approve an eight (8) month season March 10–November 8, 2026, a nine and one half (9.5) month season March 10–December 31, 2026, and off season use from January 1, 2026–March 9, 2027 giving restaurants and the Lithia Artisan Market the option to extend the months of the season of operation with a plan in place by November 1 to remove equipment, chairs, tables, etc., if a flood threatens.
- Move to approve the Lithia Artisans Market use of the front of Lithia Park during the regular season of March through November 8 with no use of

grass areas if one half inch or more of rain falls within a three-day period prior to the rental. Locations for the booths will be marked by APRD staff.

- Move to approve the nine (9) requests listed in the staff report for Calle Guanajuato for the 2026 Season.

ATTACHMENTS – 2026 Draft Boundary Map, 2026 Lithia Artisans Market front of Lithia Park small and large market options, Calle Guanajuato Commercial Use Policy

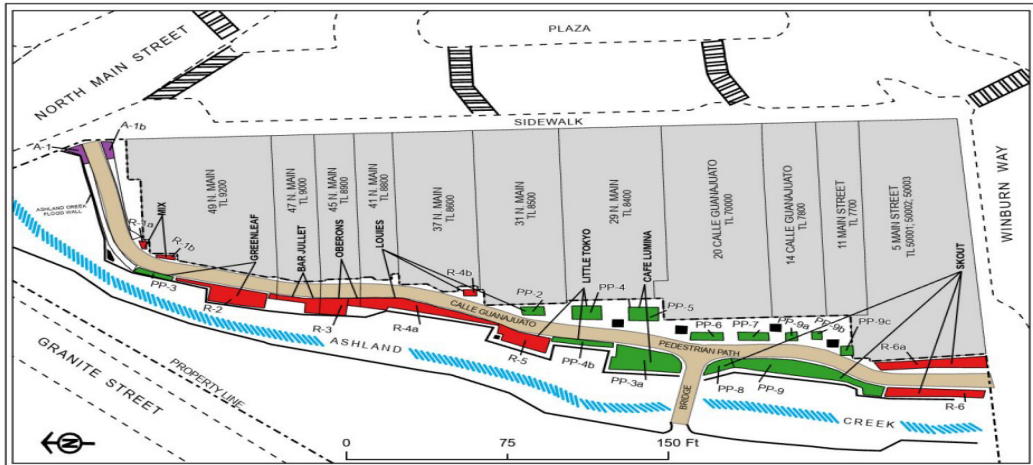


Calle Guanajuato Lease Agreements

APRC Regular Business Meeting | February 11, 2026



Calle Guanajuato



CALLE GUANAJUATO BOUNDARY MAP DRAFT
approved by APRC on _____



LEGEND

	PILOT PROJECT 2026		ARTISAN SPACE (WEEKENDS)
	RESTAURANT SPACE (7 DAYS PER WK)		CONCRETE TREE WELLS

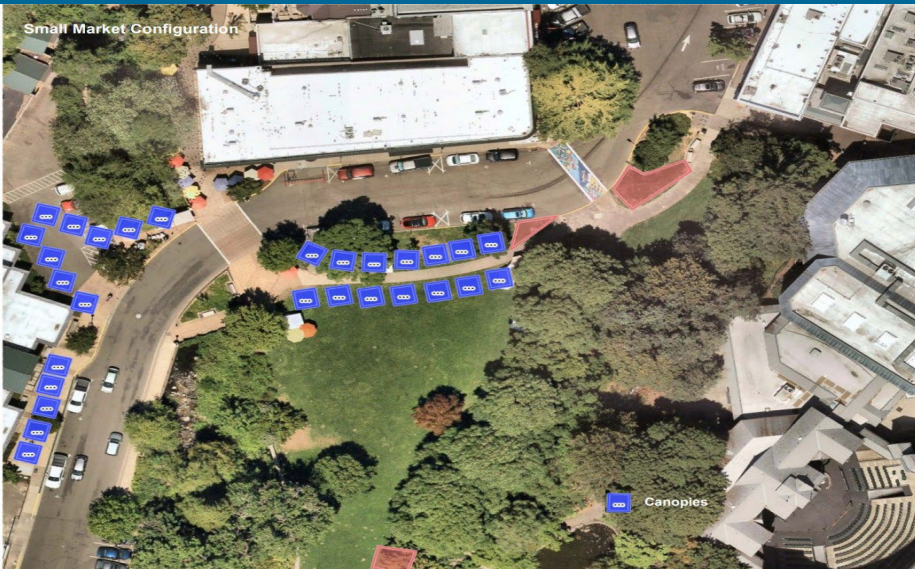
Business Name	Space #	Business Name	Space #	Business Name	Space #
Artisans	A-1 & A-1b, front of Lithia Park	Little Tokyo	PP-4, R-5, & PP-4b	Oberon's	Part of R-3 & Part of R-4a
Bar Juliet	Part of R-3	Louie's	Part of R-4a, R-4b, & PP-2	SKOUT	R-6, R-6a, PP-8, & PP-9
Café Lumina	PP-3a, PP-5	Mix	R-1a & R-1b		
Greenleaf	R-2, PP-3				



DRAFT Calle Guanajuato Boundary Map 2026



Calle Guanajuato



SMALL market configuration 2026





Questions/Discussion:

- No artisans on the Calle? A: They are at the top and bottom entrances to the Calle.
- The artisans are okay with this? A: Yes.
- Did we have to get permission from Com Dev for being in front of that building. A: They have a conditional use permit.
- Artisan booths don't go up to the entrance of Lithia Park? A: Correct.
- Regarding the orange umbrellas on the slide. Is the purpose to make space for more restaurants on the Calle? A: Yes.
- The inclusion of the umbrella spots for artisans was at the request of the Market. They wanted to be connected. Adding the umbrellas is a pilot due to the already high use of the front lawn of Lithia.
- Recommendation made to use spaces not on the lawn first to spare the grass. Request to have that added to the contract.
- Suggestion to move some vendors to the Plaza. A: Artisans want to stay consolidated this year. Will consider the Plaza and other streets going forward.
- On the map of the restaurants and vendors on the Calle, please identify which space would be opened up by having the vendors relocate to the front of Lithia Park. A: On the map, the areas in green are what will be opened up for restaurants.
- What are the purple dots on the schema? A: Vendors. Both restaurants and artisans like having vendors at the top and bottom of the Calle to draw visitors.
- Request for documentation of impact of market vendors on Lithia front lawn by taking before and after aerial photographs.

Vote:

<u>Gardiner</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Bachman</u>	<u>Yes</u>
<u>Adams</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Landt</u>	<u>Yes</u>

XIV. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF - None

- a. Liaison Report

XV. UPCOMING MEETING DATES

1. Park Commission Study Session March 4, 2026
2. Park Commission Regular Business Meeting March 11, 2026
3. Park Commission Study Session April 1, 2026
4. Park Commission Regular Business Meeting April 8, 2026
5. Ashland Senior Advisory Committee Meeting April 13, 2026
6. Recreation Division Advisory Committee April 16, 2026

XVI. ADJOURNMENT – Chair Bachman adjourned the meeting at 8:29 PM

Respectfully submitted by Nancy A. Mero, Executive Assistant