

**MINUTES FOR REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**

April 10, 2024

Council Chambers – 6:00 PM

1175 E Main St

Present: Commissioners Bachman (Chair), Landt (Vice Chair), Lewis, Adams, Seffinger, Interim Director Eldridge, Deputy Director Dials, Parks Superintendent Caldwell, Senior Services Superintendent Mettler, Sr. Administrative Analyst Terry, Executive Assistant Mero

Absent: None

I. CALL TO ORDER

Bachman called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. APRC Special Meeting February 7, 2024

Motion: Bachman asked for unanimous consent.

Vote: All yes. Minutes approved.

III. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

Bachman: Adding to the agenda under VII. Business: Item c. Lithia Park Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Parking Improvements.

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

Ron Owen: Lives in Ashland and is the Chairperson of the Ashland Oregon Pickleball Club. Has 139 members and was formed on June 8, 2023. Founded to promote good sportsmanship in pickleball and foster quality of play, and to encourage adequate and available pickleball courts in Ashland. He's played at Rogue X in Medford. Phoenix and Talent are getting ready to update their pickleball courts. Courts in Ashland are by far the best in southern Oregon. The club works with local organizations that have an interest in pickleball in Ashland. They are in discussion with Ashland Parks and Recreation staff on topics they are interested in. Volunteer as instructors in local schools and in other organizations. We promote donations to the Ashland Parks Foundation pickleball fund, and we host pickleball events. Cori Frank is in charge of club membership and external affairs, and she has additional information that may be of interest to you. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Cori Frank: Want to piggyback on that I have been meeting with folks who have come and gone through Parks and Recreation, and we have been talking about various pickleball sites because it is extremely popular. We are having more and more players. I am very concerned about the summer because when you have to wait 20 – 30 minutes to play a game people get very frustrated, the locals, but we have visitors, and we understand that. Currently we have seven out of the eight courts that are fully useable. There's one court that really needs to be repaired. I am hoping that when the funds come through and you get the repairs done at Hunter Park you can piggyback on and maybe fix that one court at least so that we have eight fully functional courts. Would also like to see, and I notice Oak Knoll Golf Course is on the agenda at one time it was discussed that we would have some additional pickleball courts there and I'm really hoping at some point we actually have some indoor pickleball courts built there because it's quite windy out there. I also want to say we really appreciate particularly Rachel who keeps us updated and we've had some issues with noise, we know that, and she is working on getting some quiet balls tested which we are going to help with that of course. We also want to work with the City and Parks and Recreation to develop guidelines for use of the courts because they have gotten so popular, and we have had some abuses at the courts, and we don't want to have that. Thank you so much and we hope to see more pickleball courts.

Cat Gould: Good evening, my name is Cat Gould and I'm from Ashland. Here to give a quick update on what I've been up to at Ashland Pond. Since the Alameda fire tore through the Ashland Pond Area in 2020, we had a massive loss of amateur trees but also a clean slate in terms of the invasive weeds. As there was a lot of construction work going on right after that time installing the new pipe, I could see the weeds starting to get their foothold back in there, so I went into consultation with the Oregon Dept of Fish and Wildlife, Lomakatsi, the Fresh Water Trust, and City Parks staff to see what I could do to help the situation down there, so it didn't just end up a huge blackberry pile and another fire hazard for the future. Since last year, myself and other volunteers have put in up to 100 hours down at the Ashland Pond. We have recently planted 100 Oaks, 29 Bark[?] 10 Skunk bush, Nootka roses, Spireas, Black Cottonwoods, Maples and 16 Ponderosa, a total of 186 plants. What I would love from Parks is some support to irrigate those plants over the next two years until they are established. I have tried to talk with Freshwater Trust and most of the planting that they've got on down there they are pulling the irrigation at the end of this summer so it's not suitable to share the irrigation plan. One of the ideas I had is to have a large storage tank at top of that access road there right below the neighborhood which can get filled up with a City vehicle and just have a gravity fed irrigation system which would be really simple to apply. I would also love it if - I've spoken to Rick about this in the past - that the Pond was supposed to be designated a wildlife zone and there is a conflict between dogs that are not on leash and the wildlife down there. The birds are constantly getting scared off their nests and sometimes attacked. A muskrat got attacked this winter and I would love to see some signage down there to encourage people to be respectful of the wildlife and have their dogs on leash. So some signage and some irrigation, I would love that support. Thank you.

Bachman: I'm sure staff would be happy to work with you on those issues.

V. CONSENT

None

VI. DIRECTORS REPORT Interim Director Eldridge

- Citywide Facility Condition Assessment. Cost shared between APRC and the City, primarily Public Works. (APRC cost \$71,471) Every facility within Parks was assessed. Supervisor Wes Casale led the contractors all week.
- New City of Ashland Website. A huge undertaking. Expected to go live May 21 or thereabouts. Staff from all City departments, including Parks, have been taking extensive trainings, up to three hours long, and working to get webpages up. Functionality for City and Parks staff is going to be incredible and it's going to be a big improvement for the public as well.
- Hiring: Just finishing up a round of interviews for an Office Assistant II for Rec. Almost ready to make an offer. Also in the process of hiring the raft of seasonal positions needed to run Parks for the summer, including Daniel Meyer pool staff, and staff to help with volunteer work parties and events.
- Very excited to formally welcome Brandon Terry to our team. Brandon is our new Senior Administrative Analyst. We are thrilled to have him. Brandon was born and raised in Ashland and went to Ashland High School. He went to U of O for his Bachelor's and then worked in Washington D.C. for the Architect of the Capitol, a small federal agency that is responsible for facility management on Capitol Hill. He moved back to Ashland a few years ago, continuing to telework, until this position came up.
- We have a new facilities team to replace Pathways contracted staff. One of their primary tasks is cleaning park bathrooms and removing trash. Parks have recently been plagued with vandalism, issues with the homeless population, and other destruction of property. To try to minimize such destructive activity, we decided to bring responsibility back in house. Ric Deckelman is supervising Jesse and Drew. The team is in the parks during nights, days, weekends, and holidays from 6:30 AM until about 8:30 PM. They unlock deadbolted restrooms each morning and lock them at night. This change has resulted in cost savings while providing full time work to members in our community.

Canceling the contract with Pathways (their costs went up 30% in the last several years) and a contract with Maksimum Security for locking/unlocking the Japanese Garden saved APRC about \$90,000. We are beginning to realize that a team of two is not sufficient and are considering adding another member to the Facilities team.

Bachman: Yesterday I was in Lithia Park around 5:00 going to a meeting at Com Dev and saw two gentlemen in security uniforms patrolling, and I knew that was coming back but didn't know when. That's the Police Department and probably the cadet program. So, in addition to what we're doing, we are getting more eyes, ears, and boots on the ground. Because APD is getting more funding they are able to provide security again.

Eldridge: There are also volunteer folks walking the parks. There is a meeting scheduled with APD to collaborate with Parks Facilities crew. They will be working together a lot.

- This Commission heard the DEIA assessment, and the number one biennium goal was best management practices to improve relations amongst coworkers, the community, the City, etc. Along those lines, in the last several weeks I have done four 'Lunch With Leslie' small team meetings/lunches. One with each of the three Parks Supervisor's teams and then one with Rec and Senior Services staff together. Relevant highlights: Commitment and caring for the community and the service provided; concern over budget limitations; not enough staff to do the job well; Recreation and Senior Services departments desperately need a marketing and outreach coordinator for their success; desire for more professional opportunities, certifications, and training.
- Summer Playguide is out! Swim lesson registration opens on Monday April 15. Best to go online to sign up as they sell out quickly. Examples of upcoming events: Rogue Valley Bike Swap Saturday April 27 12:00 – 2:30 PM; Children's Day at the Ashland Japanese Garden (AJG), May 5 from 11:00 AM-2:00 PM; Lithia Park guided walks are back for 2024. Initially, the free walks will take place Saturdays at 10:00 AM. May add Thursdays in the future.

Landt: What are the dates the AJG is closed?

Eldridge: This is an entire agenda item. It reopens this Saturday.

- Senior Services: There is now an electric wheelchair charger at the Center that can be used free of charge. Fabulous recognition in the Sneak Preview by way of an article by Beth Morris, a fitness instructor at the Senior Center. She teaches personalized strength and balance training for older adults and her classes are extremely popular.
- Update on the Ashland Forestlands Climate Change Adaptation Project. City of Ashland Wildfire Division is the lead. Cutting of trees began April 5. Most of the east side lower watershed trails are currently closed. There is a live map on the CoA website to check before going hiking/biking. It is extremely dangerous to enter the areas that are closed.

Adams: "Fell on Knee" trail is actually closed but is not signed. Where it intersects with Wonder, I have talked to two different trail users who, not knowing about the closure, turned right off of Wonder onto Fell on Knee and ran into felled trees and then had to go miles out of their way because there were no signs. (The lower part of the trail is marked, but not the upper part.) Someone should notify whoever does the signing.

- The real noise starts April 15. Helicopter logging begins, there will be logging trucks coming out of Timberline Terrace and up and down Walker. Parks is playing only a small supporting part in this project. Open Space Supervisor Minica and his crew graveled the private dirt road for logging trucks on the east side of Siskiyou Mountain Park. Also helped with some of the road closures.

Landt: Is the map of closed trails going to change as the project continues?

Eldridge: Yes, it is live.

- Update on Pioneer Hall and Community Center: Staff attended the final page turn of the engineering construction documents with Public Works and the engineering team ZCS that are working on the renovation. The RFP is out, closing on April 30, 2024. Estimates run from summer to fall of this year for the project start date. Public Works has engaged Parks at every turn to talk about the various needs we might have if we use these buildings. Both buildings will be retrofitted to make them ADA accessible.

Landt: Will the kitchen and restrooms be brought up to 21st or at least 20th century standards?

Eldridge: Both bathrooms in both buildings are being completely redone. The kitchen is a question mark. Possible supplementary move to replace all appliances and make it ADA compliant.

Seffinger: Regarding the work at the Community Center, there was a lot of concern about the hillside from the owners of the property nearby. Will the hillside be reinforced?

Eldridge: Fairly confident that a larger retaining wall is part of the plan. Will confirm.

VII. BUSINESS

a. Ashland Japanese Garden Koi Pond Improvements (Information) Parks Superintendent Caldwell

The AJG redesign was completed in June of 2023. Since that time there has been an excessive amount of algae growth in the Koi pond, compromising water quality for the fish. The work currently being done by Sage Hill Landscape will help eliminate the problem by installing equipment that will address the algae problem. They will also provide an operation and maintenance plan for staff to follow. The AJG is currently closed for the duration of the project. The closure began April 2 and is anticipated to end April 14, ahead of schedule! The work being done includes new pumps, filters, UV disinfection, and installation of a Koi "exerciser" jet manifold. Many thanks to the Ashland Parks Foundation for their support in providing all of the funding for this project!

Eldridge: Explained a Koi "exerciser" as basically a hot tub jet that shoots out air that the fish can swim into and against. So it increases circulation while cleaning and exercising the fish. Like a hamster wheel for Koi using a current.

Seffinger: Where are the fish being kept?

Caldwell: In Phoenix or Talent at Wishing Well. They are on sabbatical.

b. Oak Knoll Golf Course Update and Discussion (Information) Interim Director Eldridge

Eldridge invited Caldwell and Deputy Director Dials to chime in at any time. In February 2023 Commissioners directed staff to issue an RFP for management of the Oak Knoll Golf Course GC). Golf Automation was selected, and contract negotiations began in summer of 2023. We were unable to reach an agreement and negotiations were terminated. Now working on next steps.

Due to drought, a year ago the grass at the GC was all brown. Through the hard work of staff, especially Bill Miller and Jeremy Christensen, one year later the grass at the GC is once again beautiful and green. Players are returning to the course and revenues are rebounding. APRC is at an inflection point with the management of OKGC. We have an existing Golf Manager position on our org. chart with funding approved in the FY 23-25 biennium budget. Another option would be to put out another RFP.

To seek feedback, parks staff met with the Golf Management Advisory Committee and community members, including representatives from the HOA of the neighborhood surrounding the course, the men's and women's golf clubs, and the SOU golf coach. The belief is that the potential for the course is immense and that it could generate much more revenue. The budget is a limitation on that potential; however diversification of uses could help increase revenue as it did pre-COVID. With some variation everyone agreed that the GC needs coordinated, integrated on-site leadership as well as someone who can do marketing and development. Some feel that the budget should go into materials to continue to improve the course and/or to making temps into full time employees and giving raises to current staff rather than to hiring a new manager.

The GC has adequate TID water rights. It needs increased storage capacity. The retention pond holds about 370,000 gallons of usable water. At full capacity the pond can sustain approximately four days at full irrigation (fairways, tees, greens and roughs) and 21 days using a very conservative amount of irrigation limited to tees and greens. Increased storage capacity is an important next step. There are some jurisdictional and legal complexities to adding water storage and a feasibility study would be required.

Landt: What capacity could we get for how much money if we put in an additional water storage? Is that what the feasibility study would be for?

Caldwell: The feasibility study would be for looking at location, legalities, how much storage, what water, where, etc.

Eldridge: It sounds like you're describing a cost benefit analysis of putting in a pond, which is doable.

Landt: It is critical to know if adding storage makes sense/would pay off in the long term.

Bachman: Agree. It will require some input from the City as well. A big project that might need financing. Contingent on getting revenues up.

Seffinger: Much of the community surrounding the GC considers it their park. There was once talk of putting in a playground and a dog walk path. All our parks require money to maintain.

Eldridge: Yes, thank you, it is currently a multifunction park. Shouldn't be expected to have to pay for itself. Might need to be subsidized like all other parks.

Eldridge: BN 23-25 total budget for GC is approximately \$1,260,155. This includes personnel, materials and services, golf grounds, and utilities. This BN, all of the grounds maintenance for all parks has been removed from the actual item and been lumped into the Parks Division budget. Had to look at past budgets to come up with an approximation for GC grounds maintenance. This budgeting change hinders our ability to track expenditures from one park to the next. Would like to change it for the next BN.

GC revenues have varied a lot. COVID was actually a boon for parks. FY 2021 and 2022 saw GC revenues close to \$400,000. At that time the course was under dynamic management. Revenues dropped considerably in 2023 with the drought. We have already brought in more this year than in all of 2023 and expect that trend to continue with the GC in such great shape.

Dials: During FY 22, our highest revenue year, the restaurant was in operation, which added to the revenue.

Caldwell: There are no major plans right now. We need to figure out where we're going with management of the GC.

Adams: Has played exactly one game of golf, knows little to nothing about the game. The primary issue is water as we cannot afford to irrigate the GC without TID water. This year looks good so far with Emigrant Lake full and seemingly plenty of TID water. We will be able to maintain the miraculous work staff has done in bringing the GC back. Currently it looks like it's costing us a half million dollars to keep the course open. Even in 2022 with great revenue we still had to pay half of that. Hard on our current budget. Want to keep the golf course affordable, too. Suggested a community input session for people who know about golf to collect ideas like a par three course which would take far less land and less water. This year looks like a good one for the GC, but climate change is real.

Lewis: Has served on the golf course subcommittee for years. Got to know the course and the passionate golf community. Does not want to see the course management given away to an outside group lacking community commitment.

c. Lithia Park ADA Parking Improvements Parks Superintendent Caldwell (Information)

Caldwell: Staff initiated this project. Would like input from Commissioners. The project would see ADA parking added in Lithia Park off Winburn Way adjacent to the pickleball courts and across the street from the Japanese Garden. There is a lack of ADA parking in this part of Lithia Park. Between the Butler Bandshell and the swim reservoir there is only one designated ADA parking spot (by the Lithia Cabin). We contracted with Adkins Engineering. If we complete the design, the total cost will be \$35,000. For that cost, we get a set of construction drawings and informational help during construction. So far, we have expensed \$3 - \$5k for preliminary drawings. There are drawings of three options. The design engineers are tasked with assuring the plan(s) meet all State and City requirements. One option has angled parking spots. Typically, the angles match the traffic flow. Currently Winburn Way has two-way traffic flow so the suggested spots would be angled to traffic heading east on Winburn (toward the plaza). There is a connecting ADA path on all the options. Pictures were shown of the location. It is right up against the volleyball court.

Adams: Is the intention that all of the parking spots would be designated ADA?

Caldwell: Yes.

Seffinger: Is a loading zone where people could be dropped off in the works?

Caldwell: Hadn't considered that as I'm not familiar with loading zones.

Seffinger: They use them at places like OSF. A driver can drop off a passenger and then go find parking.

Caldwell: Our intent was to provide parking spots, but we can consider a loading zone as well.

Adams: The angled parking doesn't make sense in this case as the traffic flow in the area is very slow. Imagine most of the traffic accessing this parking lot will be coming from the downhill side, forcing them to make a 270 degree turn into the parking lot or having to drive up the street and turn around.

Landt: The plans seem to suggest that Winburn Way will always be as it currently is. Referenced the Draft Lithia Park Master Plan (LPMP) proposal of having Winburn Way be one way and only 10 feet wide which would prevent backing in and out of a parking lot. The Draft LPMP suggests another option where Winburn would be 20 or 22 feet wide but even that would be tight for a parking lot. There needs to be more planning. Consider hiring a landscape architect. Agrees angled parking would not work on that side of Winburn. Should explore another option. Also, why are there two right angles in the sidewalk? Makes using/pushing a wheelchair very difficult.

Eldridge: Assume it is due to root and drip lines of trees.

Caldwell: That was our direction, but you could achieve that with a straight or curved path as well.

Landt: A curved path would be good. Non-handicapped people are going to cut the right angles every time creating wear outside of the sidewalk.

Eldridge: We have a very rarely used Volleyball Court. Would setting the parking lot further off the road into the volleyball court area address some of your concerns?

Landt: It potentially could but would use up a lot more space, paving a lot more paradise to do it. But there might be a good reason to do it.

Seffinger: Would like to follow up on the idea of a loading zone in the interim. In a way it would provide more use as people wouldn't be parking there all day. Asking staff to look at that.

Bachman: An excellent idea if the drop off point would be closer to the ADA access to the AJG.

Eldridge: Commissioner Seffinger, is the loading zone in addition to some ADA parking or in place of?

Seffinger: [Could not hear response.]

Adams: Wheelchair users can also drive so a drop off zone wouldn't work for all. The volleyball court is not used much though it might be altered to be more desirable, like the courts at Garfield Park. We might consider some sort of fence around the court to prevent balls from being spiked onto vehicles.

Landt: Thinks putting the parking lot on the Japanese Garden side of Winburn should be considered despite the grade. At the next meeting would like to talk about possible changes to Winburn Way and how that would interface with the proposed ADA parking.

Bachman: Would like staff to consider putting on the Lookahead before the meeting dates.

Eldridge: We can do that.

Bachman: We are thinking only of wheelchairs, but there is a whole spectrum of mobility issues making the drop off idea sound better and better. Maybe even carving into the hill a bit to pull off Winburn Way while dropping people off. We need both. Part of a bigger plan to talk about the LPMP.

Landt: This project is complicated enough that involving a landscape architect would be valuable.

VIII. LOOKAHEAD REVIEW

Eldridge reviewed the Lookahead. Announced the May 8 Business Meeting is being canceled and the May 1 Study Session will be a Special Meeting.

IX. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF

Landt: Would like to talk about the modifications to the configuration of Winburn Way at the May or June meeting to get some clarity so that staff can move ahead on the ADA parking. We would be preapproving one part of the LPMP ahead of the entire thing.

Bachman: Would that be an action item?

Landt: It may need to be an information item so that the public has more time to be involved.

Bachman: So, an information item in May and action in June.

Eldridge: So, Commissioner Landt you're going to prepare that item, because we have nothing.

Landt: Yes, though I may need some staff help. We can talk about it offline.

Seffinger: I would like some clarification. When we talk about Winburn Way, there is a desire from the biking community to have a path through that area. The dog walking community would also like to have someplace with access to Lithia Park. Winburn Way was at one point talked about for those kinds of things. Will that be part of the discussion?

Landt: That is the discussion.

X. UPCOMING MEETING DATES

a. ~~APRC Study Session May 1, Electronic Meeting 6:00 PM~~— APCR Special Meeting May 1, in person 6:00 PM in Council Chambers.

b. ~~APRC Business Meeting May 8, in Person at Council Chambers 6:00 PM~~ - canceled

c. Ashland Senior Advisory Committee May 13, Electronic Meeting 3:30 PM

d. Recreation Division Advisory Committee May 16, in Person at the Lithia Park Cabin 4:00 PM

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Bachman adjourned the meeting at 7:36 PM

Respectfully submitted by

Nancy A. Mero, Executive Assistant