

MINUTES FOR BUSINESS MEETING
ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
July 10, 2024
Council Chambers – 6:00 PM
1175 E Main St

Present: Commissioners Bachman (Chair), Landt (Vice Chair), Adams, Lewis, Seffinger; Acting Director Dials, Senior Services Superintendent Mettler, Senior Administrative Analyst Terry, Executive Assistant Mero, Assistant City Attorney Zahran

Absent: Parks Superintendent Caldwell

I. CALL TO ORDER

Bachman called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. APRC Business Meeting – April 10

Motion: Landt/Seffinger m/s to approve minutes.

Vote: All yes

III. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA None

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

Ron Owen: Lives in Ashland. President of the Ashland Oregon Pickleball Club. The club held a fundraiser with over 100 attendees during which they raised over \$7,500.

Cori Frank: Lives in Ashland. Shared the success of the Southern Oregon Pickleball Association's tournament fundraiser. Spoke about wanting to hold a senior pickleball tournament in Ashland in September. Emphasized the need for more pickleball courts in Ashland.

V. CONSENT AGENDA None

VI. DIRECTORS REPORT Acting Director Dials

- New team member Admin Assistant for Recreation Amber Shroy. Amber will be splitting her time between the Nature Center and the Grove.
- Hiring of the Oak Knoll Golf Course Manager is in process.
- Had a great turnout for a cookout held for seniors and their families at the Senior Center.
- Summer Sounds free concert in Lithia Park on July 29 featuring Blitzen Trapper and opening act Cousin Curtiss. Put on by the Ashland Folk Collective with generous support from sponsors including Epic Ashland.
- Pool/Splash Pad are open. Except for a few private lessons, all swimming lessons are full!
- Had to remove four stressed, dying Ponderosa Pines from Lithia Park due to safety concerns.
- Butler-Perozzi kick off meeting with Architectural Resources Group and Ashland Parks Foundation is coming up on July 26.
- Planning Commission approved annexation of East Main Park; process continuing ultimately going before Council for final approval in September and October.
- Despite the heat, over 200 people attended the Tanabata event at the Japanese Garden.
- There was a break-in at the Japanese Garden. Damage and theft occurred. Police were called.
- Staff worked hard for the Fourth of July celebration. The run drew over 400 people. Proceeds from the run benefit the Phoenix and Talent high school cross country teams who helped with staffing the event.

VII. BUSINESS

a. Appointment of Parks and Recreation Director Chair Bachman/Zahran

Zahran clarified that a final hiring decision on director should be made with a motion, second and vote in a public meeting. She apologized for her part in not being clear on the process.

Motion: Landt: I move that we appoint Rocky Houston as Director of Parks and Recreation, and that we acknowledge that the City Manager executed the employment agreement prematurely when the HR Director tendered the document to management, and that we ratify the attached employment agreement in support of hiring Rocky Houston. Lewis Seconded.

Vote: All yes

b. City of Ashland New Website Update Dorinda Cottle City Communications Officer

Previous website was over 20 years old. The City wanted to condense the number of pages. Went from over 1,500 pages to ~ 200. A survey revealed that the website is the number one communication tool for the City. Thirty percent of Ashlanders get their information from the website.

City purchased three modules from CivicPlus, a company that specializes in municipalities. CivicEngage is the website module and the topic of this presentation.

Redundancy on the website is because people search for things in different ways. Example of Senior Services listed in three different places. Parks and Rec and the Commission can be accessed from multiple places, too.

Top four visited pages in 2023: Public Meetings, Wildfire information, Parks and Recreation, Utility Billing.

Work on the website is ongoing. Feedback is welcome. Please provide lots of details if there are issues. Next steps for Park's and Rec homepage include adding more photos, working on the master plans, beefing up the history of Ashland pages, and adding information about Bee City USA.

Questions/Discussion

Seffinger: Is there a Staff Directory?

Cottle: Yes

c. David's Chair Route in Lithia Park Acting Director Dials/Recreation Manager Flora

The mission of David's Chair is to give people with mobility issues access to places they would otherwise not be able to visit. Program is being sponsored in Ashland by Travel Ashland, the City and APRC.

Accompanied by a representative from David's Chair, staff tested the chair in Lithia Park. The proposed route map calls out areas of concern in the route like boulders and narrow bridges. The chair does not operate in MPH. It has a setting of 1 to 5 with 5 being equivalent to a slow walk. A flag will be attached to the chair when it is operational. The chair has safety features like safety straps for the user and a mechanism that prevents it from going up stairs.

David's Chair does not use ADA terminology because the ADA doesn't have trails qualifications. ADA establishes minimum standards for the built environment, not trails. David's Chair program does not qualify people to use the chair. No documentation of a disability is required. Truly all inclusive.

There is a current Parks volunteer who is interested in being the champion volunteer for the David's Chair program.

Questions/Discussion

Discussion included who yields right of way in narrow sections of trail. (The chair user would yield.) How far is the chair able to go upstream? (The chair has to turn around at the fire pits.) It has zero turn radius so is easily turned.

Timeline for start of the program is late August to early September.

VIII. LOOKAHEAD Acting Director Dials

Bachman: Likely there won't be a Study Session August 7.

Dials: Reviewed the lookahead.

IX. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS/STAFF

a. Liaison Report:

- Bachman attended the ASAC meeting in person on July 8. An item of discussion was how Advisory Committees/Commissions are chartered and meetings conducted. Assistant Attorney Zahran shared that having Commissions and Committees is a great way to garner community feedback for elected officials. It is the City's obligation to provide guidance. Advisory Committee protocols are being reviewed through the joint efforts of Legal, Staff Liaisons, and City Management. Guidelines will be created for all City Committees including APRC's.

ASAC and RDAC's charters and bylaws will need some slight modification. ATAC's charter needs an overhaul and there are no bylaws. Want to get things right as quickly as possible because we have work to get done.

At the ASAC meeting, there was also a great presentation by Jackson County Library Services on ways to utilize libraries without having to visit a location. (At Home Services)

- Landt: There has been activity with Jackson County's Envision Bear Creek Greenway plan for the future. This is why it is going to be an APRC meeting agenda item. Very important topic – great amenity for the community. There will be financial implications. They are in the final draft stages and want to bring it to the public for additional feedback.

X. UPCOMING MEETING DATES

Bachman shared upcoming meetings dates:

- a. RDAC Meeting July 18, in Person at Lithia Cabin, 4:00 PM
- b. APRC Study Session August 7, Electronic Meeting via Zoom, 6:00 PM
- c. APRC Business Meeting August 14, in Person at Council Chambers, 6:00 PM

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Bachman adjourned the meeting into Executive Session at 7:10 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy A. Mero Executive Assistant

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Ashland Parks and Recreation Commissioners:

As seniors and dog owners, my husband and I frequently walk our dog on the south extension of Pioneer Street (from OSF to Park's Office). This is one of the very few trails in Lithia Park that allow dogs.

We feel it would be a disservice to the many walking users of the south Pioneer extension to open this area to mountain bikes.

There are many trails open to the mountain bike enthusiasts but few that allow dogs. We request that you find another route through Lithia Park for mountain bikes, and leave the south Pioneer extension for walkers with or without dogs.

Respectfully yours,

Pam and Sherm Lucas
Ashland, Oregon

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Re: untimely Hiring of Rocky Houston June 2024

We are writing to request the withdrawal of the job offer to Rocky Houston, signed June 6th of this summer, 2024.

The hiring protocols per the Commission requirements and the proper process was not adhered to. This leads one to question the unfair practices act and equal opportunity employment. There appears to be unclean-hands as the decision / meetings / input were not properly addressed to the public.

After a long, yet questionable tenure, under Michael Black, it was refreshing to have an interim director, Ms. Leslie Eldridge.

She would be our vote (were we able to vote)

There was no need to hire, Mr. Houston, when the position was suitably filled, by a qualified, knowledgeable, familiar and competent employee; who should matriculate and has obvious expertise and ability.

Please consider the withdrawal of the offer and reconsider Ms. Eldridge.

Thank you so much,

Linda and Gregory Miller