



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Monday, January 09, 2023 at 4:00 PM

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Commissioner Howard Blumenthal
Chair Lynne Pettit
Commissioner Dana Lathrope
Commissioner Paul Barlow
Commissioner Jerry Belcher
Commissioner Scott Jacobson
Commissioner Lauren Gonzales

STAFF PRESENT

Shanna Duggan, Recreation Manager
Melisa Gaelrun-Maggi, Parks & Recreation Administrative Assistant
Buck Tupper, Facilities Maintenance Supervisor
Brandon Sundeen, City Council

OTHERS

Tina Curry
Nick Sorber

CALL TO ORDER - 4:00pm

Buck Tupper was introduced as the new supervisor of the Parks Department. He spoke a little about the transfer of Parks to Public Works and Shanna Duggan still overseeing Recreation.
Brandon Sundeen was introduced as the new liaison from City Council.
Lauren Gonzales was introduced as the new Parks & Recreation Commissioner.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Re-approval of October 10th, 2022, minutes.
Correction to December 12th, 2022, minutes. Commissioner Jacobson's comment "definition of objectionably reasonable is too broad" needs to be changed.
Motion made by Blumenthal to approve both sets of minutes, seconded by Jacobson.
Voted yea: Jacobson, Lathrope, Pettit, Barlow, Blumenthal, Gonzales, Belcher.

VISITORS COMMENTS:

❖ Tina Curry – Tourism Department

Tina Curry had heard from Pettit that some of the parks did not have signs. She came up with a campaign called "Park It" and printed designs on t-shirts to sell and raise money for signage. She is unsure of the cost needed to buy new signs or re-furbish the old ones. Tupper mentioned that most of the parks already have signs. Barlow feels there should be more discussion. Gonzales feels that the history of each park should be an important part of the signs. Belcher stated that the Arts & Cultural Commission had tried to sell t-shirts in the past and had very little success. Tina followed up to say that the financial burden would not be on Parks but provided by Tourism.

Lathrope asked if the money would go into a fund that they can pull from as needed and if Tina would be participating in other ways. Tina replied that it would be a one-time check writing act to help the Parks.

❖ **Nick Sorber-President of St. Helens Little League District 1**

Nick Sorber talked about the work that the McCormick ball fields need and that the appropriate dirt is not currently on them. They would like to purchase the dirt and maintain the fields as well as reserve the fields for a certain amount of the season. Tupper agreed that the dirt is not the best and his only concern is that the adult softball league also uses those fields, and the seasons might overlap a little, but other than that, he feels it would be a great bonus for the fields. Nick would really like to be able to utilize the fields for little league tournaments, concessions, portable mounds, and removable bases. Blumenthal had questions about all the different sized fields for the different sports. Nick explained that it is baseline length.

Nick stated that Valley Athletics would be the ones supplying the materials. Nick will come up with more specifics in writing if the Commission is open to the idea.

Blumenthal asked Duggan if the league would get exclusive use. Duggan says they do not get exclusive use and they get 50% off user fees per hour of volunteer time. Nick would like the amount of money they put into the fields built as a credit against their user fees. Duggan says that they currently have a formula, but Sundeen can always ask the City Council for permission above and beyond the usual.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Re-appointment of Commissioner Woodruff - Chair Pettit

The interview panel has already re-appointed Commissioner Woodruff.

Howard made a motion to re-appoint Commissioner Woodruff, seconded by Jacobson

Voted yea: Jacobson, Lathrope, Pettit, Barlow, Blumenthal, Gonzales, Belcher.

3. Urban Trail - Commissioner Belcher

Belcher is asking the Commission to develop a budget for the Urban Trail to put before the City Council. Pettit brought up that they cannot start at the beginning of the trail due to the Waterfront construction, but they can begin at the end with Grey Cliffs. They have already received some ideas on what they can start with from Mouhamad such as striping. Belcher talked about safety barriers, paths, views, and crosswalks. Commission members have volunteered to help with post markers.

Tupper is concerned that not all the trails are going to connect with all the construction going on. City signs must be put in with a v-lock system due to safety, as well as many other rules and regulations within the city. Any fencing or safety barriers must take into account the surrounding homeowners views. Any ideas need to be put before the city insurance company to take liability into consideration.

Belcher says he has seen some signs in parks in Longview that are simple. Tupper said that it might be a possibility within the park but anything near a sidewalk must be to specifications. Not to mention all the signs that have to be mowed around by the Parks crew.

Lathrope wants to know if they can make a smaller specific action plan for this year. Blumenthal thought it might be helpful to create a plan A and plan B. Tupper mentioned that if they do it in segments, they need to make sure not to create any dead ends.

Belcher does not want the Urban Trail to wait until after the Waterfront phases are over. He would like to see the City propose a minimum budget. Pettit wants QR codes created and put along the trail. Tupper thinks that trails on smart phones would help eliminate physical posts and help save some money. Lathrope would like to see an action plan for the QR codes that can be added to the already existing parks.

4. Standardize kiosks for parks - Commissioner Belcher

Belcher stated that Pettit mentioned the Botanical Gardens needs a kiosk with a trail map as well as a poison oak disclosure and some history. Pettit feels that the park kiosks should be standardized in design, shape, and materials. Tupper asked if Dahlgrens Hardware has donated materials in the past. He also mentioned that Roger is very good at building things quickly.

Blumenthal made a motion to standardize the park kiosks, seconded by Gonzales.

Voted yea: Jacobson, Lathrope, Pettit, Barlow, Blumenthal, Gonzales, Belcher.

5. Rename Commission - Chair Pettit

Pettit pointed out that Parks is no longer part of Recreation and that the Commission used to be called Parks and Trails. She would like to rename the Commission Parks and Trails.

Belcher wonders what the relationship in the future will be with Recreation. He feels that Recreation should make their own Commission.

Blumenthal made a motion to rename the Commission Parks & Trails, seconded by Barlow.

Voted yea: Jacobson, Lathrope, Pettit, Barlow, Blumenthal, Gonzales, Belcher.

Brandon Sundeen pointed out that this will have to be approved by City Council.

6. Nominate and vote for 2023 Chair and Vice Chair - Chair Pettit

Lathrope stated that she would like to be considered for Chair.

Jacobson nominated Lathrope for Chair, seconded by Belcher

Voted yea: Jacobson, Pettit, Barlow, Blumenthal, Gonzales, Belcher.

Blumenthal said he would feel more comfortable being Vice Chair. Gonzales nominated Blumenthal for Vice Chair.

Jacobson nominated Pettit for Vice Chair, seconded by Belcher

Voted yea: Jacobson, Lathrope, Barlow, Blumenthal, Gonzales, Belcher.

Blumenthal made a motion to move the votes forward, seconded by Gonzales.

Voted yea: Jacobson, Lathrope, Pettit, Barlow, Blumenthal, Gonzales, Belcher.

7. Satellite Parks - Jacobson

Jacobson spoke of Salmonberry, the City watershed property up Pittsburgh Rd, that he feels could be a future satellite park.

Pettit would like him to bring a map of future areas and dates for a tour.

Tupper explained that there is currently a box with instructions on the gate.

8. Nob Hill Staircase - Blumenthal

Blumenthal feels that the trail in Nob Hill Park has become compacted, and the staircase is eroding since he is no longer allowed to use gravel. He wants to know who will take care of these issues.

Tupper said his crew will take care of it, but right now the stairs are closed due to the construction around it. He will make sure it is safe for citizens before it is re-opened.

9. Nob Hill Bridge - Blumenthal

Blumenthal wants to talk about budgeting for new bridges and boardwalks in Nob Hill Park to take on equipment and more foot traffic. Tupper said that would be a conversation that would need to include engineering.

10. 5th Street Trail - Blumenthal

Blumenthal wants to organize a work party on the first Saturday in March. He wants to know if they can still park on Plymouth Street. Tupper said he will investigate this.

OLD BUSINESS**Website - Jacobson**

Jacobson is thinking of starting a "Visit St. Helens" website instead of the official City website which he feels is too clinical. He brought up maybe joining with Tina from Tourism. Duggan suggested checking with Crystal and the City about the rules surrounding this first.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Jacobson is worried about the stage being offset with the new construction of Columbia View Park. Other commission members thought that they remembered hearing this was so that people sitting on the grass could see the stage. Sundeen encouraged the commission members to watch the planning meetings to see what is going on with Waterfront projects.

Pettit passed out a park list and asked the Commissioners to take a look and see which parks they would like to take over or be removed from.

Blumenthal feels that each park should have a "friend's group" to care for the parks. Nob Hill is the only one that has a "friends" group. Pettit feels that a volunteer list of who works in all the parks would be more efficient. If any volunteer requests a specific park she will pass their info on to the Commissioner who oversees that park. Belcher and Jacobson think that a general "Friends of the Parks" group would be better.

Jacobson feels that two people to a park is good for a buddy system.

Tupper wanted to clarify that if they need to use the work crew it, needs to go through Public Works.

Belcher wants to know if Pettit can champion the Japanese Garden in McCormick Park. Lathrope would like to participate in the Japanese Garden as well.

Barlow could use some help with the trails in the spring. Gonzales had questions about what Barlow does. Pettit and Jacobson volunteered to help with the bike trail.

Pettit volunteered to take care of Civic Pride. Jacobson would like it to be a community garden. Sundeen would like to help bring it back to its former glory. Gonzales agreed to help as well and will come up with a plan based on the Master Plan.

Pettit wants to start a sub-committee to work on park grants. Belcher was told by the City that it was not the Commission's job. Pettit said she would talk to Mouhamed. Tupper stated that he thought Accounting staff works on grants. Duggan mentioned that she thought the grant they are referring to conflicted with another City grant. Belcher feels the state will be coming into a lot of infrastructure money soon and he wants some for the Parks.

STAFF REPORT**Buck Tupper**

Buck does not have much to report as he is new and trying to streamline.

Belcher asked how many people he has working for him.

He stated he has a carpenter, a mechanic, three park maintenance workers, and an office administration assistant.

COUNCILOR'S REPORT**Brandon Sundeen**

Sundeen said that the history of the Parks has always been no money, but they are creative with fundraising, so make a wish list and chip away at the little things.

OTHER BUSINESS

Jacobson stated that Steve Toschi is putting together a PC HB3115 task force and is asking for two members from the Parks Commission to be involved. Jacobson would like to be one of the members. Gonzales asked what HB3115 is, Jacobson said it was about homelessness. Gonzales stated she would like to be involved.

Belcher made a motion to create a task force involving two Commission members, seconded by Pettit.

Voted yea: Jacobson, Lathrope, Pettit, Barlow, Blumenthal, Gonzales, Belcher.

Jacobson mentioned that in the next Planning Commission meeting they are talking about Columbia View Park and he has asked Steve Toschi to let him know anytime the Planning Commission mentions Parks. Jacobson let the Commission know that there is another land vacation request to the City and the Parks Commission has not been advised about it. He feels that these should be under their purview, and that the Parks Commission should advise. He feels these spaces should be left as microclimates for flora and fauna.

Sundeen stated that all citizens are welcome to bring their comments to Planning Commission or City Council.

Blumenthal feels that if public comments go over their time it should be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Jacobson wants more than ten days'-time to add agenda items. Pettit pointed out that additional items can always be brought up in "other business."

Pettit wants to know in advance what the agenda items will be before they are added to the official agenda. She also wants to change the style of the agenda format.

Belcher wants every Commissioner to give an update about every park at every meeting.

Summarize action items:

Revisit parks assignment.

Urban Trail Action Plan.

Parks Website or Facebook Page.

ADJOURNMENT - 6:36pm