



PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION

Monday, May 10, 2021 at 4:00 PM via Zoom

MINUTES

PRESENT

Chair Carmin Dunn
Vice Chair Elisa Mann
Commissioner Jerry Belcher
Commissioner Howard Blumenthal
Commissioner John Brewington
Commissioner Lynne Pettit
Commissioner Paul Barlow
Commissioner Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

Doug Morten
Mouhamed Zaher
Rachael Barry
Sheri Ingram
Thad Houk
Shanna Duggan

ABSENT

Commissioner Jacob Woodruff

OTHERS PRESENT

Emily Martin
Pat Jewett

CALL TO ORDER - 4:02 P.M.

1. Welcome New Commissioner Brandon Sundeen

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2. Approve Minutes of April 12, 2021

Motion made by Commissioner Brewington, Seconded by Commissioner Pettit to approve the Minutes of April 12, 2021.

Voting Yea: Chair Dunn, Vice Chair Mann, Commissioner Belcher, Commissioner Blumenthal, Commissioner Brewington, Commissioner Pettit, Commissioner Sundeen.

TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR: From attendees not otherwise of the agenda

Rachael Barry wanted to let them know at their next meeting she is going to talk through the code section in light of changes with the Rec program folding in, she thinks it's a good time to do it. She has been working to develop an orientation for new commissioners. Martin asked if she could see that document or if it was available on the website. Barry said she dropped a link into the chat area for her.

COUNCILOR'S REPORT

Morten said welcome Sundeen and the dimension he can bring is phenomenal. The work he does as a historian is amazing and has a tremendous amount of merit, especially when it comes to the historical significance of our parks and what each has to offer.

He would like to see each of them come back to looking after a park and giving reports on them. It's interesting to him to hear the parks reports and hearing what they feel each park needs. He did report their findings on obtaining properties. Staff is diligently working on it but he can't say a whole lot about it. He has been talking with Brown and Zaher about it. One thing that is important to him is if the Council agrees on a way to purchase property that this Commission recommended and if they agree on an action plan, it doesn't matter if it is in the Master Plan or not. That's how the Veterans Plaza and the disc golf course came about. He did that for what they suggested but left out some of the details. It's good enough to suggest they acquire property next to the Botanical Garden and then let staff do the rest. Keep the motions simple and he thinks they will have great success with that. As for looking at new properties, there is a lot of activity with the staff and there are negotiations so he can't get into details.

He heard something in passing about a work party at the botanical gardens and if that happens, he is no longer teaching he would like to get involved. He would also like to host a post-work party get together at his house because it is so close to the Botanical Gardens.

Dunn said they stopped doing the park updates when they went to Zoom meetings and she thinks it's a good idea to start them up again. Ingram will send out the list of who had what parks for the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS**3. Emily Martin - Scappoose Bay Watershed Council**

Martin said Blumenthal did a fantastic job of introducing her to the Council so she wanted to give a nod in his direction. She also wanted to explain her background as well as her roll on the Watershed Council. She is the Restoration Project Manager and joined them in August of last year as a part-time employee and started her position in December and has been managing the nursery, the nursery volunteer program and small projects. Some small projects that tie in are assisting with the Nob Hill 5th Street Trail Extension so she has been working closely with Blumenthal and Carolyn Skinner to get the trail ready for the next planting season. The Nob Hill work party removed a lot more ivy than she expected them to and Blumenthal has been fantastic at weed whacking the canary reed grass that's growing in the wetlands and he's attacking the blackberries. In mid-June, they will have a crew from Native Plantscapes NW start doing the first treatment of blackberries and ivy so they can plant the native plants without having them get overwhelmed by the invasives.

She has been interested in attending these meetings because they have partnered with the City of Scappoose to help them manage some parks and nature areas. Her job with that has been to survey and monitor the parks and get a sense of what kinds of invasive species or ecological problems could be present in the parks. They are working with the City of Scappoose to not only maintain and manage their existing areas but are trying to help them manage the parks for a better ecological picture. There are opportunities to plant native plants, create shade over stream and they are trying to work with the City to provide their services and to help network them with volunteer opportunities and with other agencies. For example, she discovered garlic mustard in two of their parks and it is classified as an Early Detection, Rapid Response noxious weed so the Soil & Water District does a lot of

garlic control sprays and they were able to connect them with the City to get those sites targeted for garlic mustard spray. She has been talking to Duggan and Zaher about getting a similar partnership set up with the City of St. Helens because when we think of a watershed, we tend to think it's a creek or stream but it's everything that runs from the top of the mountains to the bottom of the Columbia River. She thinks it a great opportunity for the Watershed Council to assist and have a chance to improve the existing biodiversity that's already there.

Dunn asked what they can do as a Commission to progress the partnership with the City of St. Helens and Martin said that is conversation she and Duggan and Zaher should have and there is a lot of support going forward. We have great volunteer programs already and know the parks well so it may be a bit of a different partnership in that, while she could go in and assess and give feedback on what kind of problems could be in the parks, she think she will have to do less footwork and talk to them about what kinds of plants they have seen in the parks or what problems they see that could tie into ecological problems. She thinks the bigger thing would be to work with them to figure out what the ultimate picture is for the parks. They need to figure out what the steps are such as what to do next after they eradicate the invasive species. Is it restoring the natural area or trying to manage the native species that are already there?

4. Annual Report to Council

Mann said she can put the report together but can't present at that time. Barlow said he can present the report to the Council but wants to know if he can do it on the 16th instead of the 2nd. Ingram e-mailed Kathy Payne and Payne said she would schedule it for the Work Session on the 16th.

5. Parks & Rec Volunteer Information

Duggan met with Payne today on the volunteer program they are putting together with things like Code of Ethics, volunteer forms, whether they would need a background check for what they are volunteering for. They are encompassing all volunteer programs within the City including Parks, Rec, Library, Admin staff, Police and are going to house it under this one volunteer program. They got volunteer vests they will use instead of having a t-shirt or badge. They will be easier to show who they are and not lose them. Volunteers will need to come and check them out when they do work parties and things like that. She is creating a form for work parties so they can capture all the information and waivers and of there are any materials they need. She is trying to get some grants to buy shared materials they can all use such as shovels and rakes and things like that. Right now they are lending out what they have for the Parks crew so that is not the best use of materials. They need to know expectations too because there were some garbage bags left by Dalton Lake that she didn't know if we were supposed to pick up or not. There needs to be better communication so they are all on the same page. Her goal is to have robust volunteering and having work parties at every park every six months on a rotating schedule. She showed the City of Tualatin Volunteer webpage and she is going to set up a page like that for St. Helens. They are working on a document and when it is done, it will get looked at by the managers and the Commissions and then go to Council for approval. Belcher wondered if they could contact the high school about having students do projects and other youth organizations like the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and include them in it. He'd like to see them included in the program. Duggan said the Tualatin page has a specific section for Scout projects and team building projects. We will also get our rec programs and after-school programs involved too. She thinks we will have a lot of people who want to be involved if we provide them with guidance.

Barlow asked if that would cover the volunteer work they do at the BMX track and Duggan said our hope is this will cover anybody who volunteers for the City just so we have a uniform place where everyone knows what to expect. We will try to make it as easy as possible. He asked if it was different for people who volunteer to help at a race and she think there would be a difference on how they subcontract that out and run it through their insurance so he would be in charge of his own volunteers during an event. Blumenthal said he is in the park weekly so asked if he could get a vest he wouldn't have to check out each time and she said she would check with Payne because they want to make it as easy as possible. Martin asked if they would have to develop training programs for people who would be using equipment or working with noxious weeds and Duggan said she thinks there is a need for that for some of the things they do. We already do the with some of the rec coaches they have and they can do something similar with things that are more in-depth. Martin asked of there would be some kind of quota like someone would have to do one to two hours a month and Duggan said she thought it would be fun to do some kind of incentive program to encourage people to volunteer. She doesn't want to put a time thing on it because she wants people to volunteer without having an expectation on it.

Zaher welcomed Sundeen and said he has heard many great things about him and is excited to have him. He also thanked Duggan for the great work she has done in her position for less than a month and a half and thanked all the Commissioners for their hard work. He wanted to express his appreciation for their amazing efforts from a Commission he has never seen anywhere in his career. He is excited about the transition we are bringing to the City by appointing a Parks & Recreation Manager who is going to work closely with the Commission to achieve the goals they are looking at for many years forward. They have full support from the City side and we want to take Parks & Rec to the next level. They are working diligently to support in any way they can with equipment, tools, and staff resources.

Sundeen said there have been times he has been walking through a park and has seen a flower bed that needs weeding and thinks he can have it done in half an hour and asked Duggan what the protocol for that is and she said he could just give her a quick call and let her know and he could come by the Parks office and pick up a vest. She will also send him a waiver. Dunn asked if there would be room to add a page specifically for donations with a wish list of things they would like in the parks where people could donate money or materials Duggan said she will push forward on doing that. Belcher said Ace Hardware might be willing to donate things like clippers and things like that. Duggan said keep coming with ideas and she would like to get his launched by July or maybe earlier.

6. Anonymous Donation for Parks

Pettit said they had an anonymous donor with a \$1000 donation to the City for a Parks & Trails project and it is for removing invasives and planting natives in a City park and it starts July 1st. They can divide it between parks that need it the most. Dunn asked what their next step should be and Pettit said they should come back to the next meeting with suggestions. Belcher asked who would administer the money and Pettit said the City would.

7. Possible Name Change of Columbia Botanical Gardens

Belcher lives by the Columbia Botanical Gardens and thinks it is mis-named because it is not a botanical garden. He knows someone who walks down there and she has met people from Portland a few times on the trails and they are wondering where the botanical garden is. He knows a name change is a big

deal and now that we have Sundeen, our local historian on the Commission, he has thought about something like the Old Quarry Nature Park. Portland has mounds of cobblestones so we could make a kiosk with cobblestones with stones that were mined from this quarry. We could have a kiosk with the history on it that showed the mining and barging of the cobblestones. The area used to be a giant quarry and he was told we had Italian immigrants that came to St. Helens to mine the quarry. Columbia Botanical Gardens isn't an appropriate name for the history and doesn't describe it very well - it is a nature park. A name that better describes it with the history behind it would mean a lot more.

Belcher said there is a plaque at the beginning of the trail said Pat Svedich (sp?) donated the property a long time ago. Sundeen has always been confused about the name too and thinking he would see something different than what he saw. The Svedich and Brownlow families came together to donate the property. He has reached out to people in both families and he's not against renaming it but would like to have an understanding of why it was named that. Jim Davis, who was the Parks Director at the time is also a good resource. Brewington thinks it would be good to have a kiosk with a picture of the old quarry and he thinks we should get the history on it and not rush into anything. Belcher said he is open to a name would like to see it called a nature park instead of a botanical garden. He agrees we need to move slowly on it.

8. Possible Name Change of Parks & Trails Commission

Belcher had brought up a possible name change of Commission but he talked to Duggan who talked to Zaher and he thinks it's not a good idea at this time. Duggan needs to talk to Zaher more about it. With it being the Parks & Recreation Department now, she doesn't know what that means for the Commission and she wants to be thoughtful about not bringing a lot of recreation items to the meetings because she knows they are long already.

OLD BUSINESS

9. Update on Born Learning Trail

Duggan said we are going to do the trail at McCormick Park and she wants to see what the playground footprint looks like so they can add some of the stations close to it. She thinks it will be a June/July project. They will be doing a work party and will invite them all to help install it.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Houk said the playground is coming along well and they just finished all of the concrete curbs around it. They will be done in a couple of weeks and then we will have to clean up and backfill. Dunn asked if there was a grand opening date and Houk said they have a meeting to discuss it tomorrow.

Blumenthal said they have another native plant walk on May 22nd at 1:00. They had the corrections crew out a couple of weeks ago and they went on the trails and hacked some of the wildflowers. They hope they can get them back later in the summer when the wildflowers aren't so critical. He'd like them to do a field trip later in the summer to Sand Island if Covid restrictions loosen up.

Pettit said City police will be patrolling Dalton Lake area from now on. There are a couple more homeless camps at the south entrance and they are cutting trees.

Belcher said in the annual report, he would like them to emphasize Urban Trails and that they were unanimous on The City purchasing the Kearsley/Bailey property. Last year, the Columbia County Beekeepers came and talked to them and said they were interested in planting native plants in the Botanical Garden and he would like to get their phone number to talk to them about that.

Dunn said the Botanical Garden cleanup is tentatively scheduled for May 22nd at noon. They will be widening trails, picking up garbage, blackberries, pulling ivy. Blumenthal asked if his weedeater would be helpful. Belcher said there are some places on the back trail where it would be.

Duggan said it has been great working with them so far. They are now in the process of hiring recreation summer help and parks summer help.

ADJOURNMENT - 5:28 PM