



PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION

Monday, December 08, 2025 at 4:00 PM

APPROVED MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Vice Chair Howard Blumenthal
Commissioner Paul Barlow
Commissioner Jerry Belcher
Commissioner Lucas Green
Commissioner Scott Jacobson
Commissioner Lynne Pettit
Commissioner Ashley Stanley

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Brandon Sundeen, City Councilor
Buck Tupper, Facilities Maintenance Supervisor
Dawn Richardson, Admin Billing Specialist
Jamie Ford, Admin Billing Specialist

ABSENT

Chair Dana Lathrope
Commissioner Jacob Woodruff

CALL TO ORDER – 4:00 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of Minutes from November 10th, 2025 with corrections

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the November 10th meeting. It was noted that a correction was needed on page three in the discussion items, where "Botanical Gardens" should be changed to "Mountain Hill Nature Park." After this correction was acknowledged, the minutes were approved.

Motion to approve the November 10th, 2025 Minutes with corrections made by Commissioner Jacobson, Seconded by Commissioner Green.

Voting Yea: Vice Chair Blumenthal, Commissioner Barlow, Commissioner Belcher,
Commissioner Green, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Pettit, Commissioner Stanley

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

None

NEW BUSINESS

2. Round Table Question

Commissioner Green posed the question: "What are you most looking forward to in the next year or two in our parks?"

- Commissioner Green shared that he was excited about progress at a park project that seemed to be slowly gaining momentum, hoping that groundwork might begin within two years.
- Commissioner Stanley expressed her desire to see the health of vegetation in the parks improve, specifically mentioning having more native plants and less scotch broom. It was noted that a specialized tool (weed wrench) was now available to help remove scotch broom.
- Vice Chair Blumenthal expressed wanting to see parks grow with more visitors and increased respect for park spaces.
- Commissioner Belcher stated he was most looking forward to the implementation of the Urban Trail.
- Commissioner Jacobson indicated he was looking forward to talking about implementation of the Urban Trail next year.
- Commissioner Pettit shared that she would like to see more maintenance done by the commissioners themselves, such as pulling weeds and clipping.

3. Campbell Park Pickleball Courts - Belcher

Commissioner Belcher introduced the topic of resurfacing the pickleball courts at Campbell Park. He noted that local pickleball players have expressed interest in having a different surface on the courts.

Commissioner Jacobson mentioned that this had previously been discussed and put on the wish list for the next Master Plan.

Facilities Maintenance Supervisor Tupper provided detailed information about the current condition of the courts. He explained that when it's cold, the court tiles rise up from the ground, causing the ball to lose energy when it hits these uneven areas, making the courts nearly unusable. He shared cost estimates:

- A quote from Sport Court to install and stripe a new surface was approximately \$36,000
- If the City maintenance crew and volunteers did the work themselves, the materials could cost around \$6,000

Facilities Maintenance Supervisor Tupper mentioned that Eric Fawcett and other pickleball players were willing to contribute financially and with labor. Mr. Fawcett even offered to purchase permanent nets.

The Commission discussed reaching out to the City of Rainier, which recently completed a similar project, to learn from their experience. The discussion concluded with the suggestion to test the new surface on one court before proceeding with the full project, and to explore potential grant opportunities.

4. Term Expirations 12/31/2025 - Dana Lathrope (does not wish to be reappointed)

The Commission acknowledged that Dana Lathrope did not wish to be reappointed. The Commission expressed appreciation for her contributions as Chair and noted that she would be missed.

5. Term Expirations 12/31/2025 - Scott Jacobson (to be discussed)

Commissioner Jacobson indicated that despite some challenges in the past year, he wished to continue serving on the Commission.

The Commission briefly discussed that officer elections would take place at the January meeting, and members should consider nominations for Chair and Vice Chair positions.

Motion to recommend Commissioner Jacobson's reappointment made by Commissioner Belcher, Seconded by Commissioner Green.

Voting Yea: Vice Chair Blumenthal, Commissioner Barlow, Commissioner Belcher, Commissioner Green, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Pettit, Commissioner Stanley

Parks Master Plan Discussion

John Walsh (City Administrator) attended to discuss the Commission's desire to be more involved with parks planning and decision-making, particularly regarding the parks Master Plan update. He explained:

- The Community Development Department is currently at 50% capacity due to staff departures.
- The City is currently working on the Transportation System Plan and the Scappoose to St. Helens Connector Project.
- The parks Master Plan update was planned to leverage state dollars but requires more resources than available.

Walsh suggested the Commission could maintain a living document of projects, priorities, and recommendations that would feed into the future Master Plan update. This approach would allow them to keep parks and trails issues on the agenda despite staffing limitations.

The Commission discussed the process for updating the plan, with several members suggesting they should review the existing Master Plan first, particularly chapter six regarding recommendations.

Commissioner Barlow emphasized the need to stay on top of projects and help move them along.

The Commission agreed to review the parks Master Plan, particularly chapter six, before the next meeting and discuss how to proceed with updates.

OLD BUSINESS

6. Parks Assessments

The Commission discussed the ongoing park assessment tool project.

- Commissioner Belcher questioned whether the assessments were being effectively utilized, noting that he had completed four months of assessments but was unsure if the information was reaching Facilities Maintenance Supervisor Tupper.
- Commissioner Jacobson expressed support for the assessment program, noting that it gave Commissioners the opportunity to visit all parks rather than just being assigned to one or two parks.
- Commissioner Pettit stated she was not in favor of continuing the assessment program, as she felt it duplicated work maintenance staff already knew about. She suggested returning to the previous approach where commissioners each took responsibility for specific parks and performed hands-on maintenance like removing graffiti, clearing leaves, and maintaining trails.
- Facilities Maintenance Supervisor Tupper shared his perspective that while he appreciated commissioners visiting parks, he had not been receiving the written reports. He expressed mixed feelings about the assessment program, noting that detailed monthly reports on routine maintenance issues were not necessary, but information about safety concerns was valuable.

The Commission agreed to have Commissioner Jacobson research what was happening with the collected assessment data and revisit the discussion at the next meeting.

7. Milton Creek - Standing Item

Commissioner Green reported on a meeting with Lindsay Wilson from the Port regarding connecting the Port and Talbot site with the City side of Milton Creek. He explained that the Port is seeking DEQ grants to clean up the site and is interested in eventually connecting the areas with trails. The Port is considering moving the Marina to this area due to silting issues at the current Marina location. Commissioner Jacobson mentioned an article about the project that was still being revised and noted that discussions had raised questions about the need for a formal intergovernmental agreement between the City and Port regarding access.

STAFF REPORT

Facilities Maintenance Supervisor Tupper reported that park maintenance activities included leaf cleanup and winterizing buildings, snack shacks, and water fountains. He noted that the park crew had been helping with facilities maintenance due to an absence.

He provided updates on several projects:

1. The Urban Trail kiosk installation was awaiting final approval on location
2. The Civic Pride kiosk could likely be installed this winter
3. A meeting was scheduled with Bailey regarding the Wind Phone installation at McCormick Park, with a bench being donated for the site

Commissioner Pettit inquired about recent clearing work at the Japanese Gardens, but Facilities Maintenance Supervisor Tupper was unsure who had done the work.

COUNCILOR'S REPORT

Councilor Sundeen reported that the City Council had discussed the frequency of joint meetings with Commissions, deciding on twice yearly meetings with the Parks and Trails Commission, with the option to cancel if not needed.

He also mentioned that the Christmas Ship event would be taking place the coming weekend.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Vice Chair Blumenthal mentioned being approached by relatives interested in donating a memorial bench, and there was brief discussion about potential locations, with Councilor Sundeen suggesting McCormick Park playground as a location in need of additional seating.

Vice Chair Blumenthal also noted appreciation for the maintenance work done along 5th Street and asked about scheduling additional clearing, particularly at the end of 4th Street where blackberries were returning.

Commissioner Barlow indicated he would have an item for next month's agenda.

ADJOURNMENT - 5:21 PM meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by Jamie Ford, Admin Billing Specialist