



PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION

Monday, April 14, 2025 at 4:00 PM

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chair Dana Lathrope
Vice Chair Howard Blumenthal
Commissioner Paul Barlow
Commissioner Nick Flory
Commissioner Lucas Green
Commissioner Scott Jacobson
Commissioner Lynne Pettit

MEMBERS ABSENT

Commissioner Jerry Belcher

STAFF PRESENT

Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Dawn Richardson, Admin Billing Specialist
Brandon Sundeen, City Councilor

STAFF ABSENT

Buck Tupper, Facilities Maintenance Supervisor
Jamie Ford, Admin Billing Specialist

CALL TO ORDER: 4:00 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve Minutes of March 10, 2025

Chair Lathrope asked if everyone had a chance to review the minutes from last month's meeting. Commission Member Lynne Pettit noted an edit for item number 3, Scappoose Dalton Lake presentation. She requested that it be noted that the presentation was being given by the Dalton Lake Nature Preserve Advisory Committee, and that Howard had mentioned it first, with Pettit agreeing. Deputy City Recorder Lisa Scholl asked for clarification on the location of the edit. Pettit specified it was in item number 3 on the agenda.

Chair Lathrope inquired if the recordings were reviewed when making the transcript. Scholl explained that she was filling in for Jamie Ford and that they had moved to an AI transcription base, which she hoped would save time.

Chair Lathrope asked for a **motion** to approve the minutes.

Commission Member Scott Jacobson moved to approve the minutes. Commission Member Howard Blumenthal seconded the motion.

Chair Lathrope called for a vote. All members voted in favor, and the minutes were approved.

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

Chair Lathrope asked if there were any visitors or topics from the floor. There were none.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Round Table Topic: Parks-Related Questions - Lathrope

Chair Lathrope introduced a new item she had added to the agenda. She explained that she had been reflecting on the commission's mission and intentions, and in an effort to reconvene in a positive direction, she wanted to start each meeting with some fun questions for the commissioners to answer. The question for this month was: "If you could pick one thing, what was your core driving factor for getting involved with the Parks and Trails Commission?"

Howard Blumenthal stated his driving factor was the Nob Hill Nature Park. Scott Jacobson mentioned his broad experience and desire to see some of what he's seen used in St. Helens. Nick Flory expressed his enjoyment of the outdoors and desire to give back to the community. Lucas Green mentioned advocating for and protecting native species in the parks for future generations. Paul Barlow explained his background with the bicycle and pedestrian commission and his involvement with cycling in Columbia County. Lynne Pettit shared her interest in holding onto natural areas. Councilor Brandon Sundeen talked about growing up in the local parks and wanting to address maintenance issues he observed. Chair Lathrope shared her inspiration from a community project regarding the botanical gardens and her passion for watching things manifest in the parks.

3. Parks Assessment Tool Review - Lathrope

Chair Lathrope then moved on to discuss the parks assessment tool review. She had received assessment tools from three people and had compiled a report based on the responses. The report included safety concerns, structures and amenities needing attention, cleanliness issues, trees and foliage concerns including invasive species, observed number of visitors, and feedback from park users.

Howard Blumenthal elaborated on the issue of yard debris dumping at Great Cliffs Park, mentioning the spread of invasive species like arum. The commission discussed the need to address this issue with Buck and potentially involve code enforcement. Brandon Sundeen suggested that the commission could request joint meetings with the city council to have more in-depth discussions about park issues.

Chair Lathrope encouraged commissioners to continue using the assessment tool and to expand their focus beyond just parks to include other public spaces within their scope according to the municipal code.

4. Japanese Garden - Belcher

Scott Jacobson reported on behalf of Jerry, who was absent. He mentioned that there was interest in getting more community involvement with the Japanese Garden, potentially through newsletters and forming a group. The commission discussed ideas for showcasing the garden and attracting more volunteers.

Brandon Sundeen shared that there had been a recent cleanup at the Japanese Garden with 21 people participating, resulting in 51 volunteer hours. He mentioned plans for future work parties and plantings.

The commission discussed the potential for incorporating native plants that complement the Japanese garden style while requiring less maintenance. They also talked about the need to address invasive species and wildlife issues, such as deer eating newly planted vegetation.

OLD BUSINESS**5. Roles & Responsibilities - Jacobson**

Scott Jacobson brought up the topic of reviewing the municipal code 2.74.090 regarding the commission's roles and responsibilities. He suggested that commissioners take time to digest the responsibilities, powers, and duties as laid out in the municipal code and consider whether they apply to current actions or if changes are needed.

Chair Lathrope proposed discussing these items in smaller chunks over the next few Parks and Trails meetings to thoroughly examine each aspect. The commission agreed to this approach.

6. Signs & Last Year's Grant for Signs - Blumenthal

Howard Blumenthal inquired about the status of a grant for signage that the commission had received previously. He also suggested the need for better signage regarding dog leash rules in parks, specifically mentioning the 6-foot leash requirement.

Chair Lathrope agreed that there was a need to address the issue of off-leash dogs and excessive dog waste in parks. The commission discussed potential ways to improve signage and raise awareness about leash laws and proper waste disposal.

Brandon Sundeen mentioned that despite existing no-smoking signs, people often ignore them. The commission discussed the challenges of enforcing rules and the effectiveness of signage.

Howard Blumenthal suggested creating short informational videos or including reminders about park rules in the city's monthly newsletter. He also proposed improving signage to clarify rules for e-bikes, scooters, and motorcycles in pedestrian-only areas.

7. Milton Creek Reserve - Standing Item

Scott Jacobson presented a new map showing the proposed areas for the Milton Creek Reserve. He explained that areas 2 and 3 on the map needed negotiation, while the rest seemed to be unproblematic for inclusion in the reserve.

Jacobson mentioned an upcoming joint hearing on June 11th with the planning commission and the city council to discuss the area. He requested that a representative from the Parks and Trails Commission, preferably the chair, attend the meeting.

The commission discussed the progress on the Milton Creek Reserve project and the next steps in the process.

STAFF REPORT

No staff report was presented as Buck was not present at the meeting.

COUNCILOR'S REPORT

Councilor Brandon Sundeen provided an update on Columbia View Park. He mentioned that grass planting was about to begin, many plants had been planted along the shoreline, and railings would be the final touch to be installed. He also reported on plans for the park's dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 26th, which would coincide with the return of the 13 Nights events.

Sundeen reminded the commission about the upcoming Boards and Commissions Appreciation Reception and mentioned that Citizen's Day in the Park had been rebranded as St. Helens Community Days.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Annual Presentation

Chair Lathrope brought up the topic of the annual presentation to the city council. She proposed focusing on what the commission has been doing, future plans, and any significant concerns. She requested that commissioners email her any items they would like included in the presentation.

Scott Jacobson expressed his opinion that the commission should have more time for their presentation to celebrate the parks and trails. Brandon Sundeen suggested that the commission could request joint meetings with the city council to have more in-depth discussions.

- Community Day in the Park

Chair Lathrope discussed the upcoming Community Day in the Park event on June 28th. She encouraged commissioners, especially newer members, to volunteer at the Parks and Trails

Commission booth. The commission discussed ideas for engaging with the public and showcasing their work, including featuring information about the Japanese Garden.

- **Other Discussion Items**

Howard Blumenthal provided an update on recent work at Nob Hill Nature Park, including a successful work party and ongoing challenges with wildlife and invasive species. He also raised concerns about the deer population in the city and its impact on native plants.

Scott Jacobson clarified some points about meeting laws and communication between commissioners outside of meetings.

Lynne Pettit asked about the status of park assignments for commissioners. Chair Lathrope explained that they were moving away from long-term individual park assignments and encouraging all commissioners to visit and report on various parks.

Howard Blumenthal suggested reviving the tradition of annual field trips to parks for the commission.

Lucas Green mentioned that the Camas at Milton Creek property would be in full bloom in the coming weeks and encouraged commissioners to visit.

ADJOURNMENT - 5:50 PM

With no further discussion items, Chair Lathrope adjourned the meeting.