



# **PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION**

Monday, February 09, 2026 at 4:00 PM

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## **APPROVED MINUTES**

### **PRESENT**

Vice Chair Howard Blumenthal  
Commissioner Paul Barlow  
Commissioner Lucas Green  
Commissioner Scott Jacobson  
Commissioner Lynne Pettit  
Commissioner Ashley Stanley  
Commissioner Jacob Woodruff

### **STAFF PRESENT**

City Administrator, John Walsh  
Councilor, Brandon Sundeen  
Parks Field Supervisor, Tori Shelby  
Billing Admin Specialist, Dawn Richardson  
Billing Admin Specialist, Jamie Ford

### **ABSENT**

Commissioner Jerry Belcher

### **OTHER**

Lori Baker

### **CALL TO ORDER – 4:00 PM**

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

#### **1. Approve Minutes of January 12, 2026**

**Motion** to approve the January 12, 2026 minutes made by Commissioner Jacobson, Seconded by Commissioner Green.

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

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

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **2. Interview Lori Baker for Parks & Trails Position**

The Commission conducted an interview with Lori Baker for the Parks & Trails Commission position. Ms. Baker introduced herself, noting that while she lives in St. Helens and uses the parks, she had not closely followed the Parks Commission's activities, though she did listen to the two most recent meetings to familiarize herself with the group's work.

Ms. Baker shared her extensive experience, having worked with Columbia County Parks for nearly 20 years, starting as a seasonal employee and eventually becoming a full-time maintenance person. She explained how her background could benefit the Commission, stating she is knowledgeable about park

safety, accessibility, and maintenance needs. She also noted her experience attending parks advisory meetings during her time with Columbia County Parks.

When asked about her favorite park in St. Helens, Ms. Baker mentioned that while she uses McCormick Park the most, she particularly loves the Botanical Gardens, describing them as "a hidden treasure that could really be so much more." She also frequents Godfrey Park, her neighborhood park, and the Dalton Lake area.

Commissioners asked about her availability for meetings and work parties. Ms. Baker confirmed that Mondays work well for her schedule, but she would need to request leave for Saturday work parties, though she could support them in other ways, including helping with organization.

Ms. Baker also discussed her involvement with Friends of Dibblee, a community group that organized cleanups for 18 consecutive years at Dibblee Point, a Columbia River access area that was eventually incorporated into the county park system.

Following the interview, the Commission voted on Ms. Baker's appointment.

**Motion** to appoint Lori Baker to the Commission made by Commissioner Jacobson, Seconded by Commissioner Green.

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

It was noted that the recommendation would be forwarded to the City Council for final approval.

### **3. Botanical Gardens: Priorities & Volunteer Session - Commissioner Stanley**

Commissioner Stanley discussed plans for a volunteer work party at the Botanical Gardens in the spring. She noted the need to coordinate the timing around the Nob Hill work party and other events. After discussion, the Commission tentatively set Saturday, March 28, 2026, for the Botanical Gardens volunteer work party.

Commissioner Stanley mentioned she has created a Facebook page for Friends of Botanical Garden but has not yet populated it with content. She was advised that it should be set up as a private friends group page where people request to join, to distinguish it from official City communications.

Commissioner Stanley also shared her plans to have the GIS tech from the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council, and the vegetation manager tour the Botanical Gardens with her to identify priority areas. It was noted that tree ivy had already been identified as a priority issue. The importance of being aware of poison oak was also discussed.

### **4. Round Table Questions - Continue or Discontinue?**

The Commission discussed whether to continue the roundtable questions format from previous meetings. Commissioner Pettit expressed a desire to discontinue the roundtable discussions and return to the previous system where Commissioners were assigned specific parks to monitor and report on, which she felt was more effective for helping maintain the parks.

It was noted that the Commission had moved away from the old reporting system because not all members were satisfied with it and had started using a different assessment approach. No consensus was reached on how to proceed, and the Commission agreed to place the topic on next month's agenda for further discussion, with the goal of possibly developing a hybrid approach.

**OLD BUSINESS****5. Milton Creek Reserve - Standing Item**

Commissioner Jacobson and Commissioner Green reported on a successful site visit to Milton Creek Reserve. They noted there was good turnout with approximately 20 people attending, including Port Commissioners and other organization representatives. Councilor Gundersen also attended and was supportive of the project concept.

Commissioner Jacobson mentioned they only visited the City side of the property during this trip, and Commissioner Green suggested planning another site visit in April to see the Port side when camas would be blooming. They also reported that they had testified at a Port board meeting regarding the reserve.

Commissioner Jacobson noted that he had been contacted by Lindsey regarding a narrative for an EPA grant, which was completed quickly with help from City Administrator Walsh.

Commissioner Pettit requested that Commissioner Stanley and Lori Baker be updated on what has been accomplished at the Milton Creek Reserve over the past year.

**6. Master Plan - Standing Item (Please Bring Ideas)**

The Commission continued their discussion about potential additions to the Parks and Trails Master Plan. Commissioner Jacobson advocated for including the golf course on the Master Plan, explaining that it would be beneficial to have it listed in case the property becomes available in the future.

Commissioner Green suggested formally recognizing Milton Creek Reserve as a nature park or preserve in the Master Plan, rather than just mentioning it as a potential trail location.

Other suggestions included adding delineation of City property boundaries at the end of Fourth Street and considering split rail fencing in parts of Nob Hill Park to protect camas meadows from foot traffic.

City Administrator Walsh and Councilor Sundeen participated in the discussion, with Councilor Sundeen suggesting that the Commission maintain a running list of ideas rather than making frequent small updates to the Master Plan. He also noted that some smaller projects like adding gravel or boulders could potentially be addressed directly with Maintenance staff without needing to be in the Master Plan.

After considerable discussion without clear consensus, the Commission agreed to continue the discussion at next month's meeting, potentially establishing an annual process for recommending updates to the Master Plan.

**STAFF REPORT**

Parks Field Supervisor Shelby, filling in for Tupper, reported on several maintenance activities:

- Progress on the Wind Phone project at McCormick Park, with the bench and pole installed and a ceremony scheduled for February 19 at 10:30 AM
- A concrete pad poured for the Lion's bench at McCormick Park
- Repairs to an information sign that had come down

- Completion of leaf season cleanup
- Support for rodent control work around the City
- Tupper's promotion to Public Works Operation Manager

Parks Field Supervisor Shelby also noted that concrete work for the Nob Hill bench was next on their schedule, followed by work on the kiosk.

City Administrator Walsh mentioned two potential projects:

1. A partnership opportunity to remove invasives and plant native trees on Sand Island Marine Park, leveraging funding from the Soil and Water Conservation District and a DEQ project opportunity
2. The possibility of additional pedestrian crossings over Milton Creek to enhance connectivity

### **COUNCILOR'S REPORT**

Councilor Sundeen thanked Commissioners for their work, particularly for organizing the Milton Creek field trip. He also noted that 2026 marks the Country's 250th birthday and shared historical information about St. Helens parks developed during previous national celebrations. He mentioned that in the late 1950s, St. Helens won a national community beautification contest, during which Civic Pride Park and the Sixth Street ballpark were developed. He also noted that the Botanical Gardens were created as a bicentennial project 50 years ago.

Councilor Sundeen invited the Commission to consider undertaking a special project this year to commemorate the 250th national anniversary, suggesting it could be "a lasting legacy, some kind of monument, whether it's big or small" in the parks.

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Several Commissioners shared updates on their park activities:

Chair Blumenthal noted that a new volunteer has been helping with weeding the railroad tie staircase between Nob Hill Nature Park and the main trail, showing dedication even after contracting poison oak from the work.

Chair Blumenthal also raised a concern about people walking cats on long leashes in City parks, noting that unlike dogs which are required to be on 6-foot leashes, cats on 16-foot leashes were being allowed to chase wildlife. The Commission agreed to add this topic to next month's agenda to discuss whether the City's leash regulations should be amended to address this issue.

Commissioner Pettit provided updates on her volunteer activities at various parks:

- Regularly walking Dalton Trails and removing garbage
- Working with an ODOT crew that cut ivy from trees at the 56-acre site
- Maintaining Walnut Tree Park
- Cutting blackberries at Civic Pride Park and working with the museum to obtain historical pictures for the park

**ADJOURNMENT – 5:12 PM**

Respectfully submitted by Jamie Ford, Admin Billing Specialist