



PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION

Monday, March 8, 2021 at 4:00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT

Vice Chair Elisa Mann
Commissioner Jerry Belcher
Commissioner Howard Blumenthal
Commissioner John Brewington
Commissioner Lynne Pettit
Commissioner Jacob Woodruff

ABSENT

Chair Carmin Dunn
Commissioner Paul Barlow

STAFF PRESENT

Doug Morten
Mouhamed Zaher
Sheri Ingram
Thad Houk
Shanna Duggan
Jenny Dimsho

OTHERS PRESENT

Clair Catt
Terry Knoop
Pat Jewett

CALL TO ORDER - 4:03 P.M.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve Minutes of January 11, 2021

Motion made by Commissioner Blumenthal, Seconded by Commissioner Pettit to approve the Minutes of January 11, 2021.

Voting Yea: Vice Chair Mann, Commissioner Belcher, Commissioner Blumenthal, Commissioner Brewington, Commissioner Pettit, Commissioner Woodruff

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

COUNCILOR'S REPORT

Morten said one issue he still has lingering is trail connectivity. There is a 50-foot buffer around wetlands so on the Millard property, he thinks the Council is in favor of a trail going through the property to Firlok Park Blvd. which connects to the school area. It is a perfect opportunity to look at trail connectivity in that area. The wetland areas could be considered park area. Brewington said it could also go to the Ross Road property and back around to Gable Road to make a nice little loop. Morten said it does open up all kinds of opportunities.

Regarding the Master Plan, quite some time ago, he suggested the Commissioners each adopt the parks we do have and report on them. There is the Master Plan. He would suggest they get the minutes for the reports the last several years for each park and what each park needs. We need reminders because a lot of things still haven't been done and when it comes time to do a new Master Plan, a lot of things get forgotten about.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Vacancy

Ingram said Walter Fowler had to resign as he moved to McMinnville and we can only have one commissioner reside outside the city limits and that is Pettit. Kathy Payne will be advertising and taking applications until March 23rd so hopefully we will have some new applicants to talk with during the April meeting.

3. Code of Ethics

Ingram said Lisa Scholl had e-mailed them all an updated Code of Ethics and Scholl wanted to remind them there is an acknowledgement page they need to be sure and sign and return as soon as they can. They can drop it off at City Hall or the PW shop or mail them in.

4. Millard Road Property Update

Matt Brown said the City is moving forward with an RFP with Eco Northwest to develop an RFP process for a developer to come into Millard Road. The property is zoned Mixed Use and there are several wetland areas the developer will have to take into consideration. A specific RFP has not been approved yet. They have just had some general conversations with the City Council on what they would like to see and the Council will have to approve it. Hopefully in the next month or so, they will come back to the Council with a document and they have 30-45 days for an RFP process and another 30-45 days for interviews and final selection. The idea behind it is to sell the property, develop it and use the money to purchase property near Ross Road. In the 2015 Parks Master Plan, they identified Ross Road as a second option to the Millard Road property for park services out there and they have already been in discussions with the School District to potentially purchase the portion they own by the church to create a continuous park with a couple of parcels the City already owns.

Brewington asked if there is a process that has to be gone through to annex the Ross Road property and Brown said he wasn't sure of it was in our out of City limits. If it is out, there would be a process to annex it in but that would be a City Planner question. Brewington said they had a discussion about having a small park at the end of the Millard property by the creek and he thinks the bridge is still there and Brown said there was discussion at the Council meeting that they would like to see some

nature trails or connections through the property to the other side. The developer may also include some kind of park but that would be up to the developer and the Council to negotiate that.

Belcher asked how big the property was and Brown said he wasn't sure but Graichen had given a number of how many acres were developable versus how many acres were wetlands including the 50' buffer at the last Council meeting. Dimsho said there are 17 developable acres. Belcher was wondering about ball fields and said he was talking about the Ross Road property and Brown said in theory they could do a softball complex or some sort of field use on that property and it would have to be in the Master Plan. The School District originally bought their piece of property with the intention of building an elementary school and that is off the table now so they no longer need it and are open to selling it. Brown said when Graichen and Dimsho went through the rezoning process of the Millard Road property, there was language put in the resolution that basically pointed that Ross Road property would be the Millard road property park so it's kind of already been memorialized that the Ross Road property would be the park on that side of the highway.

OLD BUSINESS

5. Parks & Rec Program Update – Born Learning Trails

Duggan said they had talked about the Born Learning Trails at the January meeting and United Way is willing to purchase and donate the materials so we can put it at McCormick Park. It's a program for mostly 0-6 year olds though she can see everybody benefitting from the things you can do on it. They went to McCormick a few weeks ago and looked at where on the trail system would be a good place to have it. They thought the old campgrounds would be a great place. That is where they had launched their reading trail. It's an easy place for people with littles to access especially with the new playground going in. She had a picture of an existing trail to show them. She is hoping to have it going by the summer of 2021.

Belcher asked if they could go over the list of activities and Claire Catt, Executive Director of United Way of Columbia County said they are excited for St. Helens to be the first community to install these trails with the goal of enhanced opportunities for early learning. There aren't a lot of childcare centers so kids can do fun things with their families like the library is doing. She doesn't have a list but she has been on a few of these trails and the activities range from math to science exploration to early literacy. There are some suggestions based on the child's age like to find things of a certain color, finding leaves that are different shapes, finding things that start with different letters of the alphabet. Shanna showed a picture of hopscotch and that one has a variety of physical activities. They are activities that are basic and take zero equipment and can be done for 30 seconds or 30 minutes depending on how long the family wants to spend at each station.

6. Urban Trails Project Update

Zaher said at the last meeting, someone had asked a question about the Urban Trails Project. He met with Parks and Engineering to learn more about this project and it looks like there was a presentation from this Commission. It looks like a wonderful project to him however the issue seems to be that it was picked up a couple of times and died because it's not in the Parks Master Plan. This kind of project requires resources and funding and we don't have that in the budget so it's on hold status.

7. Parks Master Plan Update

Zaher said he looked at the Master Plan which is available on the website if anyone has any questions about what is in it. When we re-examine the Master Plan, that would be a good time to reintroduce the Urban Trail Project and any other major project the Commission would suggest. This would be a good time to involve all the stakeholders into the process of bringing the plan up to date. His goal is to

get all of the Public Works Master Plans up to date every five years. The Parks Master Plan was done in 2015 so this is the perfect time to update it and he has proposed that in the budget. This process will be picking up once the budget is finalized. Dimsho did an excellent job on the Master Plan but this time we are going to have a consultant come in to help us develop a solid Master Plan that will be more enhanced than the previous one. That will be faster than working in it internally so he hopes it will be done in a year. He will move forward with it as a priority. Brewington asked if he heard right that the McCormick playground project is going to start on March 15th and Zaher said yes and we are in the process of preparing the location now.

Belcher said he thought they had made a motion to put the Urban Trail on the Master Plan. Morten said they have to save some kind of flexibilities of things that come up for purchase of new parks if someone donates land or whatever. There have been projects come up that are not in the Master Plan so that is changing. He thinks the Council needs to reserve the idea of amendments to the Master Plan so if the Parks Commission wants something done in a five year period, amendments could be recommended to the Council. We have to think about budgeting. Dalton Lake went from a nature park to a nature preserve so a lot of things we have done have skirted the Master Plan. The current administration wants to make sure everything is in the Master Plan. If something innovative comes up, they need a tool to make sure it can be recommended to the Council to accept a proposal into the Master Plan as an amendment. Zaher need to make sure he is not off base with that and make certain it is a workable plan. He feels we need to set aside money in the budget meetings for projects they want to do. They need to have money to get the Urban Trail going in phases if they can.

Zaher said we have an opportunity with an outside professional service to help with the Master Plan, we have to design it with flexibility and all of those factors will be taken into consideration.

Blumenthal said we talk about money and we have a lot of people from outside our local area and would like to propose that they try to tap Tourism money for eco-tourism. Brewington said the Ordinance only allows that money to be used for certain functions so the Ordinance would have to be changed to allow that. Morten said it's a good point and it's a budget issue so he should show up at the Budget Committee meeting and testify.

8. Dalton Lake Update

Pettit said last Friday they had an Advisory Committee Meeting. Wetland plants are being donated Thursday. They have picked out native species and will be planted in the north wetland area and there are 62 plants. They want to get them planted on March 20. Deborah in their group has figured out how to get codes on the plant stakes so they can just hold up their phones and get the plant info. They are also working on a Master Plan for Dalton lake and what is being done in there.

Another kiosk is being built that they will put somewhere close to the south entrance that they don't have access to yet because it is private property. They will also have another bench in a couple of months and they plan on putting it on one of the trails that lead out to the Columbia.

She was going to report on the analysis meeting that Jason Smith from CREST was going to have but the meeting got delayed because of snow so they will have it on the 23rd or 24th of March.

Zaher said they had the gentleman from Dalton Lake talk about the signs. Pettit had talked about sending all of the residents a letter and he thinks it would be redundant now because they went over the issues with the signs and the responsibilities of the City and the residents. They came to an agreement and he wrote up rules they have to follow and if it is violated at any point, the signs will go back up permanently. The R.E.C. Board person Terry and Mike signed the letter on behalf of all the residents and they are all under the understanding that it is a nature preserve and nobody should be

touching anything on the property. He thinks sending out more letters would just create confusion so he would just leave it at that.

9. Nob Hill Work Party

Blumenthal said they are having their annual work party April 3rd in the afternoon. The Watershed Council may be doing a work party earlier the same day with some other kids doing some planting and clearing. At their work party, they are hoping to do some plants, maintenance on some caging, weeding and trail work where they took down some trees by the 5th Street trail. He asked Houk about the timeline on the benches and Houk said they had planned on putting one where they were going to do the trail work when that was finished.

They will also have a Plant Walk with Native Plant Society of Portland on April 11th and another one on May 27th.

10. Master Plan List Additions

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Blumenthal said he was supposed to get a map of where they are dumping at Grey Cliffs Park and after the storm, a huge amount of material just got deposited above the trail across from a couple of the houses. They are continuing to dump by the "No Dumping" sign. They are dumping non-native plants that are going to take root. There are a bunch of branches and stuff has rolled down just above the trail. He doesn't know where to go and he has gone to Code Enforcement. They are dumping 3-4 yards over the cliff a year. Morten said bring the map and info to the next Council meeting. He will follow up with a recommendation that they get letters to each of the residents on that road and remind them of the Ordinance and what the penalties are.

Blumenthal saw in the paper that it sounds like their idea of having an RV park behind the FARA building may be getting momentum with them purchasing the new site for the Parks & Recreation District.

Belcher said he would still like to see a pet area at Godfrey Park on the right where you come in from 4th Street. That area is very unattractive in his opinion to the right of the access road. He thinks they could dump some dirt in there and plant some grass. It would give people a place to take their pets and make it look more attractive. Mann said if they do that, they should put up a sign that says it is an on-leash pet area so they don't have people thinking it is an off-leash area.

Houk said the old playground equipment was gone at McCormick and they will meet with the installer Wednesday to do the final stake-out of the area. They say they will have it done by the end of April.

ADJOURNMENT - 5:10 PM