



PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION

Monday, January 11, 2021 at 4:00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT

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

ABSENT

Commissioner Jacob Woodruff
Commissioner Walter Fowler

STAFF PRESENT

Doug Morten
Mouhamed Zaher
Sheri Ingram
Thad Houk
Shanna Duggan

OTHERS PRESENT

Mike Tagliavento
Sue Mueller
Fred Love
Crystalyn Bush
Clair Catt
Greg B.
Terry Knoop

CALL TO ORDER - 4:03 P.M.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve Minutes of December 12, 2020

Motion made by Commissioner Brewington, Seconded by Commissioner Blumenthal to approve the Minutes of December 12, 2020.

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

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

Mike Tagliavento with Riverclub Estates and is speaking on behalf of the board. Christmas week, he found Public Works installing signage right behind the houses and it caught them off guard. He is trying to understand what has transpired to generate the signs which don't seem to be located anywhere else in the refuge. They are tall, large intrusive signs that take away from the ambience of the property. He is wondering if they have answers to it and Dunn said she is not sure if anyone would and that he may need to talk to Public Works. Zaher said he met with the Public Works Supervisor and went to the site and took pictures. There are individuals, we don't know who, that have been dumping stuff so that is what initiated the reason to have the no dumping signs where they currently are. One of the neighbors mentioned sign color but these type of signs are required to be a particular color, for example, stop signs are always red. There are specific reasons for those sign colors. We don't know who is dumping stuff there. There were several areas scattered around so that is why the signs were put in that area. That is the responsibility of and a liability for the City.

Tagliavento gave a little history and said the homeowners have been managing that property for about 20 years by picking up and cleaning and maintaining it. They have spent thousands of dollars out of their own pockets by abating blackberries as they grow so rapidly and choke the entire valley. They have a vested position in the property that parallels the City. Nobody wants to see it dumped on. Instead of signs, the Riverclub Estates board can take immediate action once they are made aware of a situation and penalize those parties accordingly. He's hoping to meet with Zaher so they can resolve these issues internally quickly and make sure they don't happen again rather than the signage in the back yard. Would they allow them to self-police and consider removing the signs.

Zaher said he is flexible and open to the idea of policing it in a joint venture. The biggest issue is monitoring it and the signs are on City property. Another option is we could put a fence there to make it protected but that would be a lot worse than a sign. It is a liability issue and we need to protect the City property. Maybe we can lower the signs.

Tagliavento said it would be great if they could be lowered and they would appreciate it if they could be moved back a further distance from the decks. They are so close, it takes away from the ambience of the area. Zaher said he is willing to consider other options and they can talk later offline and he is welcome to set up a meeting any time. Tagliavento will call Zaher later for a meeting.

Belcher said he had a long talk with Fred Love and there were a lot more issues than what was brought up here. There has been dumping in there by the neighbors on the ODOT property and the Friends of Dalton Lake don't want that going on in a nature preserve. There were native willows that had been cut and allegedly, the neighbors had cut them to improve their view. Tagliavento said over the years they have been managing the property quietly, he has frequently gone to the City offices and updated them as to what they are doing and asking if they can do certain things and the City told him as long as you aren't upsetting your neighbors, it's fine with us. They have never been told they can't do

something. They have thinned some volunteer cottonwoods down by the water every few years. He said he has presented that and no one has refuted it in the past.

Belcher said another thing brought up in his conversation with Love was the reed canary grass down there. Belcher said it can be invasive and the Homeowners Association is concerned about fire damage. That could be mitigated by putting in lower native vegetation. Pettitt said she would like to be in on the meeting.

Kathy Syrstad said there is a major flooding problem in McCormick Park in the winter on walking trail. Two exercise trails are under water and ducks have made it their temporary home. The problem seems to be worse since BMX work done. It didn't seem to flood that badly in the winter before that work was done. Zaher wasn't aware of issue so will look into it.

Duggan has an opportunity for a new trail called Born Learning Trails through United Way and Claire Catt is taking it back to her board on Thursday for funding. They are similar to the story trails but are for early learning with action items they do when they get to a certain post. She shared a picture of one. If Catt gets funding, she will bring it back and put on a future Parks Agenda. The website is www.bornlearning.org. It looks like we would be the first in Oregon to get one. She would work with Public Works to get it installed.

Dunn said welcome to Zaher and we are happy to have him here. Zaher said this is his first time here so great to meet everyone. He is happy to be part of the City of St. Helens team and working to make our community a better place and provide the best service to our citizens.

COUNCILOR'S REPORT

Morten said he is happy to be here. He thought he might go to another department and is glad the Mayor kept the status quo with the Parks Commission. He called Ingram because sometimes things fall through the cracks when things get recommended to Council. It's up to him to deliver those things and he needs to deliver items that don't go on the agenda so Ingram will now send him things that don't end up on the agenda so things don't end up falling through the cracks. So if things happen in these meetings that don't end up going to Council, any of them can e-mail him to remind him of them.

Hopefully we can resolve issues about signage at Dalton Lake. Pettitt has been to meetings and tried to reach out to groups. They are working on the salmon habitat in Dalton Lake and one issue was to remove the culvert to help the natural flow of tidal waters. What spurred this on was we had environmentalists from all over the State there for a meeting about what they were going to do and several of them ventured over into the area and they were appalled that someone took a brush hog in and cut a swath about 30-40 feet wide of grass that contributes to the rehabilitation of salmon habitat. We followed up with Public Works and get a survey done to see where property lines are. He spoke briefly with the Columbia City mayor at one time and spoke briefly to make some awareness of the situation.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Elect Officers

Dunn said in the past they had moved the Vice Chair to Chair so she asked if Mann was comfortable with that. She said she would rather not so Dunn said we could put it out for nominations. Belcher thinks it's good to rotate through the leadership. Dunn said we can take nominations because we aren't going to force anyone to do it. Nobody else was interested so Dunn was okay with doing it

again. Ingram said the sole duty of the Chair is to run the meeting and now with having Zoom meetings, they are also helping out with letting people into the meetings and muting/unmuting them so that is an extra duty now besides just running the meeting. Dunn said comfortability with Zoom is a prerequisite.

Motion made by Commissioner Blumenthal to reappoint Dunn Chair, Seconded by Commissioner Pettit.

Voting Yea: Chair Dunn, Vice Chair Mann, Commissioner Blumenthal, Commissioner Brewington, Commissioner Pettit, Commissioner Barlow

Voting Nay: Commissioner Belcher

Motion made by Commissioner Belcher to appoint Brewington Vice Chair, Seconded by Commissioner Blumenthal.

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

3. Millard Road Property

Dunn shared previous maps that Dimsho had brought to them to vote on before for park options. Pettit went to a meeting where they had brought up the possible sale of property. She thought they wanted low impact housing in there. Morten said it was zoned Mixed Use. With Mixed Use it could be a park, businesses, cottage clusters or any number of things. Brewington said when they talked about it at Parks meeting a while back, they recommended making part of it a park and part assisted living. The property reverted back to the City when hospital failed. The property on Ross Road went to school district when the City acquired the hospital property. Ross Road was originally purchased by the City at a reduced priced and was going to be made into a park way back when. Morten said he fought it all the way and fought City Planner and was in favor of keeping it park land. The Parks Commission has weighed in heavily on part of it being a park. He would like them to keep the status quo of their previous recommendation and that would help him in his argument. Belcher said a couple of years ago the Parks Department thought it should be used for the community. If we sell, it is not a vision of the future. There will be a lot of homes in that area in 20-30 years and there is only one major park on that side of town so it could be a central area for people to recreate. If we get rid of this, there will probably not be another big area out there for the City to buy. Pettit lives a mile away and there isn't another park out there and she thinks it will be appreciated down the road if that is made into a park. She had a meeting with the Soil Conservation District and a citizen who lives on the other side of McNulty creek from where they are talking about took video of spawning Coho in the creek. So they want to go to the neighbors upstream and get reports on what they are seeing. Parks & Trails voted for option #1 with the park area in it before and it would be great for future generations. Blumenthal says the property was paid for by taxpayers with the hospital tax and it was given to the City and he doesn't think the City should sell it and make money off it when it was paid for by taxpayers. It should be given back to the community who helped buy it. Morten said a large group in the City who would like to see it used for public use. Mann said they have they gotten a lot of feedback from citizens on keeping it a park. Morten suggested they vote on it and he can take recommendation back to Council. Belcher said it is short sighted. When the area gets developed and people want a park out there, it will be hard to acquire property out there.

Morten said they should ask Ingram to e-mail Payne to put it on the Council Agenda and he would recommend they come to that meeting.

Motion made by Vice Chair Mann, Seconded by Commissioner Brewington to recommend to Council that they go with their original recommendation of Option 1 of the Master Plan for the property.

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

4. Old Portland Road Path

Blumenthal said this is a major walkway to get in and out of the Riverfront District between downtown and 18th St. and he is concern about things that are degrading the path. There are a lot of rocks by 4th St. and someone put their sewer across it and that area is now gravel. Someone drives a semi across it and damaged it and there is an area where a sign was put in that is sunk in a bit.

Belcher said it can obviously be a trail or maybe the city can use sidewalk funds to upgrade it. Morten asked if Blumenthal could take pics of the problem areas and they could make it an action item for the Council. We will put on next agenda and Blumenthal will send pics to Ingram for the packet.

OLD BUSINESS

5. Master Plan List Additions

Morten thinks redoing the entire Master Plan is a waste of time and thinks they should be able to make addendums and send to Council. Otherwise it takes an enormous amount of time to redo the whole Master Plan.

Zaher said his roll is to revisit Master Plan and he will be working hand in hand with Parks and Public Works and Council to prioritize projects depending on where they stand in the Master Plan. Be patient, things will improve and get better.

Blumenthal said they need to pick a date once a year to collect these and pass them along to the City to get them in the Master Plan. Zaher said they need to abide by rules and regulations on getting things updated in the Master Plan to get funding. It's not easy to just add things.

Morten said the Council approved Urban Trail so staff will move forward on getting it into the Master Plan. Dunn asked where we go from here. Zaher will have information for them at the next meeting.

6. Parks & Rec Program Update

Duggan said they are welcome to go onto the website to see current programs. There are gnomes in the parks for an upcoming scavenger hunt. There is a grant pending for a nature trailer they can take to different parks for activities. They can e-mail her for info or go to the website or Facebook.

7. Dalton Lake Update

Pettit was going to give kudos to Public Works for the signs they put up. There were calls from Columbia City residents and they did a lot of talking. There was a misunderstanding that the property was owned by ODOT and City has an agreement. She thought signs were good to let them know not to dump and it is a natural area.

There has been a lot of misinformation on property lines and the people had not been informed. She thinks they should write a letter with the City informing them it is a nature preserve and letting them know who to contact with concerns.

Morten said it is not our property. Division of State Lands mitigated that property and he thinks we would be overstepping our bounds and we should see what ODOT thinks. Cutting willows and things could be severe. He doesn't know. We need to find out what the citizens of Columbia City want and see if we want the State to get involved. Pettit said we need to look at the cooperative management agreement and it addresses these issues. A letter would let people know especially on the south end where they are trying to get access and it would let them all know it is a nature preserve. It would be a simple letter saying it became a preserve in October of 2019 and this is what we would like to do, etc.

Morten said the State could easily become involved. People have already encroached on the property. Dunn thinks this has gone beyond Parks Commission scope. Zaher said lets see what neighbors want and doesn't feel we need to get lawyers involved. The signs can be lowered. Building a fence is going to make things worse. We want to move forward and be positive. Pettit asked if she should move forward with drafting a simple letter. She will probably get a new map from Planning with new trails they can put on the kiosk. She needs to report hours worked as a friends group to City Council. Morten said Blumenthal does that every six months with Nob Hill and sends it to Public Works, Council, etc. She has a spreadsheet she will forward to Zaher and Morten. Morten said send to Ingram too. She got an e-mail from CREST and they will get an invite around the first of February to discuss options on Dalton salmon habitat.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Blumenthal had a meeting with Zaher and Watershed Council getting bids to do blackberry and ivy control along 5th St. trail.

We still have issues with people dumping on Grey Cliffs. There is a slide on trail and can see all the debris people dumping yard debris over the cliff. People at the end are still dumping even though there is a sign. There is about 50 feet where people are dumping where there are no signs. Can we put up signs? Dunn said maybe we should start by sending out a letter to homeowners so they know. He has notified Code Enforcement and even sent pictures of a guy dumping. Morten thought communication was a good idea and Council could draft a letter. We need to identify the area and outline the area on a map. Dunn said they can make a recommendation at the next meeting.

Houk said he met with playground people and staked out new playground. It is enormous. They will have to take out a couple of trees. Belcher asked what is the situation on the playground at Godfrey and Houk said there is still not a set plan - hopefully they will have one soon and can work on it after McCormick.

ADJOURNMENT - 5:58 PM