



PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION

Monday, July 12, 2021 at 4:00 PM via Zoom

MINUTES

PRESENT

Chair Carmin Dunn
Vice Chair John Brewington
Commissioner Howard Blumenthal
Commissioner Elisa Mann
Commissioner Lynne Pettit
Commissioner Paul Barlow
Commissioner Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

Shanna Duggan
Sheri Ingram
Matt Brown
Jessica Chilton

ABSENT

Commissioner Jacob Woodruff
Commissioner Jerry Belcher

OTHERS PRESENT

Matt Lokken
Brian Daniels

CALL TO ORDER - 4:05 P.M.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve Minutes of June 14, 2021

Motion made by Commissioner Blumenthal, Seconded by Commissioner Pettit to approve the Minutes of June 14, 2021.

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

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

COUNCILOR'S REPORT

NEW BUSINESS

2. Baseball Fields - Matt Lokken

Lokken, who just took over as the head baseball coach at St. Helens High School is here with Brian Daniel who is the president of Little League and they got together to look at what they need to develop their youth programs and making sure they have access to fields. They have run into trouble because the Middle School was rebuilt and they lost a baseball field. That was the only other full-size field they had in town other than the High School. They want to find an alternative option in town for their 13-14 players. They play on a full-size field and anyone younger plays on the smaller fields and there are plenty of those in town. The 13-14 year-olds have been practicing in an open field at the fairgrounds because they haven't had access to a full-size field. They are here to ask for help in finding access to a full-size field in town. They have talked to the Columbia County Fair about possibly donating a piece of land and working with them on producing another field in town. Daniel said in the coming years a lot of kids won't be able to play because they don't have a full-size field to play on so they are just trying to plan ahead. Lokken said the fields in town are set up for the smaller size with 60' bases and 200' fence and they need somewhere that will allow them at least 300' down the lines and 350' in center field and 90' bases. They have looked at fields in town and nothing is set up for them to be able to expand them. If there is a softball field that isn't being used or if the County could give them a piece of property, they could put up a backstop and some labor time turning it into a baseball field.

Brewington said it isn't ready yet but there is a piece of property on Ross Road that they have been talking about building a complex on and he thought that would include a baseball field and two softball fields. He isn't sure where all of that is in the process and he's not sure who to talk to.

Brown said currently there are three parcels on Ross Rd. Two are owned by the City and one by the School District. The one that is most needed is the one by the church where they do golf practice and the City has an interest in acquiring that property from the School District but it is contingent on selling the Millard Road property to have the funds to purchase it. Even if we could purchase it tomorrow, it would probably be at least two years before anything is developed because that will have to be a bond project because we wouldn't have the cash available to build an entire complex. There are initial plans they are going through with an idea study to show what it could potentially look like with a couple of softball fields, a baseball field, a soccer field and a complex building. It is very initial drawings of what it may look like. It's basically there to let the School District know we are interested in the property and this is what we would like to do with it but there are a lot of planning stages on top of that.

Duggan thanked Daniels and Lokken for being here and she has spoken to both of them on several occasions about the lack of fields. We are moving forward with a Master Plan for the City spaces we currently have and we will be working on things that are lacking out here. She asked if middle school is not going to be putting in a baseball field at all and Lokken said they put up a backstop at the field at the new school but center field is too short and they were unaware of that because of the dynamics of baseball field sizes. Duggan thinks the fairgrounds is a short-term fix because they have some different property up there with Asbury Acres and she isn't sure how they are using that. We don't have a quick fix right now. The fields we have now are all in use so she doesn't see them being good options right now.

Lokken said he appreciates that and they are hoping if the fairgrounds is willing to donate the land and someone had an extra backstop they could use, they could probably make it pretty cheap just to get a useable field in place. They don't want anything new because that is coming to the high school but he thinks they are a couple of years out on that and when construction starts on that, even their high school players will be out of a field to play on so it would be great to get something temporary.

Duggan said our budget has already been allocated so it would be a 2022/2023 ask if we were to help out with anything. With the partnership with the School District through Parks & Rec, it would be helpful to have a Master Plan to facilitate these sports spaces because with gyms and basketball, there are some opportunities so she is hoping they can get it filled more under one location so they can work really good together as partners and not have competing things going on and just be great with the space we have. She would love to explore more ideas on how they integrate recreation clinics and facilitate that because we are for the kids. Lokken is excited about the new fields they are going to put at the High School. It sounds like they will have lights which will double their field time. When they get done with practice, they can flip the lights on and their youth teams can practice. The integration between the High School and youth programs is really important. Brewington asked if they were talking about a turf field at the High School and Lokken said they are talking at least one but it's still kind of unsure for a couple of years.

Blumenthal asked if the School District could cut us a deal on that lot on Ross Road since we are in an agreement with them and talking about building ballfields for their players and Brown said they are looking at selling that property for a fair market price and those funds would go towards facilities at the High School to pay for things like lights and turf.

3. Citizen's Day in the Park

Blumenthal brought this up and said we had a table before so asked if we want to do that again and thought we had a banner printed up for this kind of thing. Dunn said we do have a banner and there is a planning meeting on July 14th at 6pm at McCormick if any of them want to attend and she is planning on being there. Duggan said they have a lot of activities planned if they want to do an activity and they can figure that out later when she gets things approved. It will be on August 7th and they are dedicating the new playground in the morning and having a burger lunch and she thinks there will be a band. She has a table she can have all set up for them. Barlow said he still has a fair amount of helmets he can make available and safety brochures for bikes and pedestrians.

OLD BUSINESS

4. Botanical Garden Update/Report

Dunn said Belcher was going to give the report but he isn't here and asked if Sundeen had time to do any history on it. He said he didn't find a whole lot other than it showed up on a list of projects that were done in 1976 as a Bicentennial project. A lot of communities around the country were doing community improvement projects for the Country's Bicentennial and apparently that was one of them. Belcher touched on the fact that it used to be an old quarry and he has mentioned a few times one possible name being something like the Old Italian Quarry or something like that. He doesn't know if the Italians had as big of an impact as Belcher thinks they did so he doesn't know if that would be an appropriate name. Dunn said we will put it on the next agenda so Belcher can give his report and we can talk about the naming and throw out some ideas.

5. Master Plan Idea List Updates

Brown said next fiscal year, would like to redo 2015 Parks Master Plan so this list will become more important as far as what they see in other parks, what is needed and what their dreams are thinking big for all of the parks. He would love to see a large list of things they want in each park because that will help them when they update the Master Plan. He would like them all to revisit it and add things

like drinking fountains or playgrounds or splash pads. They want those ideas so it will help them in the future.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Pettit said the donation money for Parks & Trails is now in the City fund so it can be used when we are ready and she believes that was going to Dalton and Godfrey. They are going to schedule a work party for July 24 from 9am to 12pm barring any 100 degree heat. We now have a dedicated Sergeant, Sergeant Eustice from St. Helens Police Department and they will be patrolling Dalton Preserve and looking for campers in the area and that has been a big concern for a lot of people. The second bike rack and kiosk will be put in at the front of the Rutherford Parkway at the south side. We are also having a bench put on the overlook and a third bench at the second trail that goes right on to the Columbia. She is trying to make a comprehensive list for signage and noting private property and where the boundaries are going to be. She will send her list for the Master Plan so they will have them in August since she won't be at the meeting. She is still trying to get access on the south but it's still all private property.

Blumenthal said Scappoose Bay Watershed Council is going to start working with a restoration group on the blackberries on Wednesday on the 5th Street R.O.W. Carolyn Skinner had also sent out an e-mail with their volunteer hours. Dunn said she had it and read the recap of the volunteer hours from January to June. They had 78 hours regular and 51 hours for the work party at Nob Hill and 15 regular hours and 52 hours for the work party at 5th Street R.O.W.

We had talked about there being forms for the Friends groups to fill out so they could start listing their things on the City's webpage. He is wondering if that has gone anywhere and Duggan said she and Payne have been working through the Volunteer Program and they are almost done with the legal stuff to present it to Council. Right now they have the regular volunteer forms that they had before and this is an ongoing work in progress. Blumenthal was wondering if many people have been walking the waterfront lately. A month or so ago, the City did a clearing project and took down all the butterfly bushes on the Veneer property and mowed the blackberry bushes along the tops of the hills and there used to be a fir tree that has been shown with holiday decorations on the waterfront and it was shredded to the ground. There was a madrone that was four inches in diameter at the base and five to six feet tall that was shredded down and they must have run out of time because there are still a bunch of blackberries at the upriver end of the property. Is there a way for us the know when things like that are happening so we wouldn't lose things. He also asked when we were going to start meeting in person and Brown said they are having a test of live streaming on the website of the City Council meetings. The plan now is to be in person at the Council meeting on the 21st in person and if that goes well, we will begin to add other committees.

Pettit said she has heard complaints from people for the last couple of years about the beaver dams being removed and she called the Division of State Lands and they told her that we should have a permit to remove the beaver dams and to put gravel in. Ingram said she wanted to let them know in the past Public Works has taken the beaver dams out at the request of Vector Control because in the summer, the water is not moving and gets stagnant and creates huge mosquito problems so perhaps the people doing the salmon habitat and Vector Control and the City need to get together and discuss this issue about whether to take them out or leave them in and Pettit said they are doing that.

Sundeen wondered if there was some way to get better communication between the City and the Commission because there are a lot of things going on and he read about a grant the Parks & Rec received and saw on Facebook that the new playground is open and it seems like this Commission should know about things like that whether it's a weekly e-mail or some other way to give them a

heads-up on what's going on so they don't have to hear about it in other places. Dunn said she gets the Press Releases from the City and that is how she gets updates. Duggan said there are a lot of moving parts and the Press Releases notify the public which they are a part of and it wouldn't make much sense for her to prepare something for them that Crystal King has already prepared and sent out. The playground was a different situation because they decided very quickly to open it because they were having a hard time keeping people off it.

Dunn said huge shout-out to all of the City staff who made the playground possible and it is so cool. They went down this weekend and it was great to see so many people there but it didn't seem crowded because everything is so spread out. One thing that did come up in the feedback was people would like benches with some of them in the shade and Duggan said that is in Phase 2 of the project and she has been going down there daily to get an idea of where the best places would be for the parents and what kind of bench would be best. We should be getting our new trash cans and picnic tables this week and will start with McCormick and Columbia View to see how it goes.

She wondered how the Annual report to Council went but Barlow had already dropped off. Mann said she put together the presentation and added the edits everyone suggested and sent it on to Barlow. Duggan said she heard it and thinks it went well. Dunn also said at past meetings, Pat Jewett has made comments about trails and she has mentioned she some loops in St. Helens and Dunn is going to meet her at 3:15 at Safeway tomorrow to walk one if anyone else is interested in meeting them there and going.

ADJOURNMENT - 5:00 P.M.