



PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION

Monday, June 14, 2021 at 4:00 PM via Zoom

MINUTES

PRESENT

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

ABSENT

Commissioner Jacob Woodruff

STAFF PRESENT

Doug Morten
Mouhamed Zaher
Rachael Barry
Sheri Ingram
Shanna Duggan
Jessica Chilton
Matt Brown

OTHERS PRESENT

Claire Catt
Pat Jewett

CALL TO ORDER - 4:05 P.M.**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

2. Approve Minutes of May 10, 2021

Motion made by Commissioner Blumenthal, Seconded by Commissioner Mann to approve the Minutes of May 10, 2021.

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

TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR: From attendees not otherwise of the agenda**COUNCILOR'S REPORT**

Morten wanted to welcome Councilor Jessica Chilton. He asked her to attend so it gives a broader perspective of what's going on with the Council. He wanted to thank everyone who participated in the Botanical Garden cleanup and thanked Zaher for providing pizza and Belcher for providing beverages. He feels good about the parks and where things are going. Chilton said she just came to see how this works and jump in once in a while and attend meetings when she can. She loves seeing how many people are on the Commission and it is a really strong Commission. She asked what will

happen with the old trash cans and tables and Duggan said she is thinking the can filter some stuff to the Rec Centers and also donate them to non-profits and community groups. Zaher said they are flexible if anyone has any ideas or suggestions.

NEW BUSINESS

3. Park Benches and Trash Cans

Duggan said part of her job is to find out what is working well and what isn't and part of that is to find things that are visually appealing and easier for them to clean and move. She showed benches they are looking at blue benches and black cans that are metal. We currently have wood picnic tables that get graffitied often and boards get taken off and they have other issues with wood and they are very heavy. These will be on concrete pads and will be locked down. The trash cans we have now are the ones that were painted years ago and they are rusting and decaying on the bottoms. They are going to present to Council for the go-ahead to order these and start with McCormick and Columbia View and will transition all the parks over to these eventually. They are easily cleaned because we can pressure wash them and hard to vandalize. Hopefully these lids will create less opportunity for people to dump their home garbage. That has been a big issue with the open cans.

Dunn liked the art on the trash cans so thinks we should find some other way to incorporate art in the parks since cans are going away. Duggan agrees and we can look at a way to transition into other art in the parks. Jewett asked if they have issues with people digging through the garbage for cans because they do make separate containers for recyclables and Duggan said they haven't had issues with that. They can look at that in the future but this is just a start to the parks makeover to make them more visually appealing and easily cleanable. The trash cans we are getting look slightly different than these and will have a similar lid to protect them from the rain. There will also be ADA tables that can be added in as things go along. Zaher said the tops will also discourage people from throwing in big bags of their home garbage.

Dunn asked what the cost of these is and Brown said the garbage can, lid and liner is about \$980. The park benches are \$700-800 with a discount. They are normally \$1100 but we get a discount because we are ordering 26 or 29. They are better quality and more appealing than what we have. We want people to feel welcome and seeing things that are torn up or sitting down and getting a splinter isn't very appealing and this will set the standard bar a little higher than what it has been in previous years. Duggan said this will save a huge amount of staff time because they spend a lot of the winter repairing and painting tables. The cost of upgrading is a good match to what the cost savings of maintenance would be.

4. Code Changes - Rachael Barry

Barry said they are going around looking a code sections for boards & commissions. She is looking at those and wondering if they meet their needs. Do their responsibilities meet the mission? She shared a handout she made and wants to know how their mission fits in. Dunn said she thinks it's important to us be open and responsive to those in the community and the needs for parks is something they need to be cognizant of. Jewett said she comes out from Portland and thinks tourism plays a huge roll. Blumenthal agreed and thought they should find a way to get tourism money into parks because there are a lot of things they could do to promote the parks as tourist attractions. Belcher said the parks help the quality of life for residents and visitors. It is important to have open spaces. The day they did the park cleanup, a couple from Portland showed up who wanted to walk the park and he gave them a map. He thinks the trails could be safer in some places. Pettit agrees but as far as Dalton Lake Nature

Preserve, it can be forgotten because it is on the north end of the City and we don't have access yet so connectivity is important. Barry asked if they have enough members and Dunn thinks we have enough members so if a couple of people miss, they can still have enough for a meeting and they aren't running into the issue of having to cancel on the spot and she thinks if they have more members, it may start to get overwhelming and everyone agreed. Barry pulled up the code section and it's really solid and been recently reviewed. She would suggest one change in making Chairman and Vice Chairman into Chair and Vice-Chair to be more inclusive.

Motion made by Commissioner Belcher, Seconded by Commissioner Pettit to recommend to Council to change the Parks & Trails Commission section of the Municipal Code from Chairman and Vice-Chairman to Chair and Vice-Chair to make them more inclusive.

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

Barry asked if they were okay with meeting once a month and Brewington said they met every other month for a while and it didn't go very well so they went back to monthly and it seems to be working the best. Barry said they have a large scope of responsibility and Belcher said one of the things they have talked about is public recreational facilities and he knows baseball fields and skateboard parks and all that are recreational facilities so he's not sure if they need to change that. Duggan said she thinks it doesn't hurt to have that language in there. Barry asked if it made sense to add recreational programming and facilities and Dunn said if they were going to oversee that, it makes sense to add that language in there. Zaher said it falls under one department now so that is appropriate. Belcher said they talked before about changing the name to the Parks & Recreation Commission for consistency. Blumenthal would still like Trails in there and Belcher agreed but thought Parks & Recreation & Trails is a little cumbersome. Zaher recommends changing the name to the Parks & Recreation Commission for consistency and the trails automatically falls under that. Brewington thinks it's more appropriate too. Creating a second commission for Recreation is out of the question because it's more work and would create a lag in communication. Dunn agrees with dropping Trails and keeping it consistent. Morten said now is an opportune time to look at committees that can be developed to oversee areas and report on them. Mann likes the idea of subcommittees. Belcher liked people having one or two parks to report on and thinks none of the parks will get left out. He thinks they would if they were all covered by subcommittees. Dunn thinks they should get back to the Code and talk about the other subject next month. She thinks they should move forward with a name change.

Motion made by Commissioner Blumenthal, Seconded by Commissioner Mann to recommend to Council that the Parks & Trails Commission should be changed to the Parks & Recreation Commission.

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

5. Park History - Civic Pride Park

Sundeen thought it would be fun to take a few minutes to give the history on each park at a meeting and he decided to start with Civic Pride Park. He had pictures and information he put together. They may have noticed the sign that says National Community Achievement Winner 1958. It was a big deal in the 1950s. There was a national competition and communities were being encouraged to improve and beautify their communities and a local woman named Lucille Holbrook decided to get in on this effort so she got the help of the St. Helens Women's Club, the Junior Women's Club and the Zenith

Club and organized a Community Achievement Council. They said "Our park was in a deplorable condition. Our youth were being neglected. Our city was unkempt and unattractive. There seemed to be little community spirit or civic pride." Keep in mind there was only one city park in St. Helens in the 1950s. So with the motto "Civic Pride is the responsibility of everyone", they set out in this effort to beautify and improve St. Helens. Lucille went around and got the involvement of 51 community groups including the Kiwanis, Shriners, Lions Club, Optimists Club, churches, the School District, City Council and Columbia County and they took on different projects around St. Helens to make it look better. That included eight parks projects. The cool part is they won this national competition and received national recognition and the \$10,000 prize from Sears and this was a big deal in 1958. The City had been eyeing the Civic Pride property for years as a location for a park and hadn't done much with it so the three Women's Clubs took this on as their project. It was originally called the Swimming Pool Park and they felt the need for a good attractive well-equipped park. There was no place for families to take their children and food for a picnic. There were three City lots and a piece that belonged to the School District and it was covered with weeds, blackberries, rock and an unused road. He had a rough sketch of what it would look like and part of it was a wading pool they built next to the big pool because kids under six weren't allowed in the big pool.

The whole park was developed in nine months largely by volunteer efforts. The work started in September 1957 and the majority of the work was completed on three Sundays. On the first Sunday, there were 13 men and seven women that showed up to help including City employees and Council members, local schoolteachers, loggers, Halls Truck Line, Watters Concrete and the women provided hamburgers, chili, pie and coffee. The City donated the gas and oil and trucks and on the first Sunday, they hauled 50 loads of dirt from six miles away. On the second Sunday, the County donated the supplies and there were 90 loads of dirt and over 400 yards of fill put into the site that day. On the third Sunday, the Kiwanians came in and laid the flagstone walkway and parts of it are still there. The City hauled in more dirt and continued leveling. After this, the City took over ownership and maintenance and it was a beautiful park for many years. It was fenced and there were picnic tables, a stone fireplace and barbecue, swings, sandbox, monkey bars, merry-go-round and the wading pool he mentioned. It was a very popular place for picnics and family get-togethers over the years.

In today's Master Plan, it says this park is a blank slate and has great potential because of its central location. He knows it doesn't look like much today but he thinks it is a gem and with where it came from and the effort that went into developing it, it has a really cool story. Dunn said she would love to see more of the history of all of our parks and would be neat to see this highlighted in City communications. We had talked about having a Park of the Month where we showcase one of our parks with general information and she thinks it would be great to incorporate the history. Morten said he was around then and remembers the excitement and the opening of that park. He remembers a lot of things about that park and man, have we grown and we still have the pride. He loves that park for its name.

6. 6th Street Park Concerns

Sundeen wanted to bring up a couple of things since he has been spending time there with his kids for little league. He sees that both of these items are already in the Master Plan. There were 150 people there the other night and one porta-potty they have to walk to the far corner of the field to use and he thinks they need a restroom there. Brewington said there was a restroom there years ago but people kept putting rock in the toilet and vandalizing it and it became easier to take it out than to fix it every month. Parking is also an issue and there is an area on the lot on 7th Street where 20 cars parked and they are going to lose that when the container houses are built. Morten is looking for a recommendation and maybe Hudson contributing an extra bathroom to the park as part of their

franchise for short-term use. Duggan talked to Sundeen about it a bit and she is looking into grants to get funds for a restroom and also permit fees depending on the number of people at an event. She also has a note into Planner Graichen about parking.

Motion made by Vice Chair Brewington, Seconded by Commissioner Belcher to ask Council representative to include Sani-cans in next year's budget when and where needed.

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

OLD BUSINESS

7. Annual Report to Council Reminder - June 16th at 1:00pm

Mann said she is finishing it up and will send it out for their review tonight for feedback. She will have it sent over to Paul by tomorrow night.

8. Parks & Rec Volunteers

Duggan said she and Kathy Payne have been working on a volunteer packet with good information so everyone knows what to expect when they are volunteering. She has vests and asks that they come and get them for volunteer groups. Dunn and Belcher were her guinea pigs for their work group and came by and picked up a tote with some tools and volunteer forms. She is trying to make it as easy as possible. She has been working with different groups like softball, disc golf, BMX that do volunteer activities already to get an idea of what they take care of and what they need our assistance for and get on the same page so we can keep those places looking maintained and make sure everyone is following the same procedures. She likes the idea of focusing on different parks. She thinks they should pick a few in the beginning and start doing volunteer groups. Godfrey, McCormick and Campbell would really benefit from some volunteer groups coming. She would like to have a work party on a Saturday in July at McCormick and there is a lot of talk and excitement because she found out about a Japanese garden that used to be there. She has a lot of people who would love to bring it back to life. She hopes it brings more pride to the parks and less vandalism. She has an idea to do something called Litter League with the young folks to pick up trash and bring it in for a Dutch Bros card and having them do things like that to build a little pride. Blumenthal said we need to do more to get volunteers to adopt parks. He was talking to Brown the other day and he said there is a form they need to fill out for the existing groups to get their name listed on the City's website in the Adopt-A-Park area. He had never heard of that before and Duggan said they are working on updating the website so she will get him that form.

9. Anonymous Donation to Parks

Pettit said we have a \$1000 donation from an anonymous doner for the purpose of removing invasive species and planting native species. Do they have suggestions for parks where this can be used? Duggan is working with Scappoose Bay Watershed and doing an IGA with them and she doesn't have all of the details but they are going to start with McCormick and Godfrey to help remove invasives and she wonders if it can be worked in there. She thinks they should focus on the ones with streamways and then could move in if there is money left over. Pettit thinks some parks have been left by the wayside and she thinks the Botanical Garden would be good because they have been trying so hard. Belcher thinks it should be used at Dalton Lake, Nob Hill or Godfrey. There are a bunch of

neighbors by the Botanical Gardens that he would like to see buy into it to see where it goes so they should wait on that one. A little money would go a long way at Godfrey Park. Dunn agrees they should just put volunteer hours into the Botanical Gardens for now and use the money elsewhere. Zaher also working with Scappoose Bay Watershed to work with them more next year and he thinks this Commission could make a prioritized list for the Watershed to work with. Pettit would love to get rid of more blackberries at Dalton so does the City have anyone certified to spray? Zaher said we are looking to get someone certified this year. Blumenthal said \$1000 doesn't go a long way so he'd like to see it go to another park that needs more work than Nob Hill. Pettit would like to see some go to Dalton and some elsewhere.

Motion made by Commissioner Belcher, Seconded by Vice Chair Brewington to recommend splitting the \$1000 anonymous donation between Dalton Lake Nature Preserve and Godfrey Park for invasive eradication and planting of native species.

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

10. Possible Name Change of Columbia Botanical Gardens

Dunn would like to hear history from Sundeen in the future and then they could talk about a potential name change after that. Everyone was in agreement.

11. Monthly Reports - Parks Assignments

Dunn said they talked a little about this earlier and proposes they talk about what format they would like to do next time and since they are discussing the history and a possible name change at the Botanical Garden, maybe Belcher can give an overall update on it as well to get back into that cadence and next time they can discuss further and continue doing. Belcher said he is good with that.

12. Master Plan Ideas List

Dunn asked if there were any ideas list additions and Pettit said the advisory committee is working on a write-up for that plan.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Blumenthal said he likes that the City has gone down on the waterfront and gotten rid of the butterfly bushes since those are very invasive and likes that they got rid of the blackberries in some areas but didn't touch them in other areas and they ground down only madrone tree on the waterfront property that was about six feet tall. He was walking in the park and had to jump out of the way of a hover board and the kid was running it around on the camas bluff. He is wondering if they are allowed in parks. Duggan says he can bring up issues to her directly instead of waiting to bring it to the Commission.

Mann said kennel cough made the rounds at the dog park again. The water is starting to pool up and the dogs are drinking out of a puddle in the gravel under the spigot so can that be taken care of? Duggan said she will look into that.

Pettit said they are having a work party at Dalton on Saturday the 26th from 9am to noon. They will be cutting ivy and blackberries and opening up trails.

Dunn wanted to thank everyone who contributed at the Botanical Garden clean-up and thanks to Zaher for the pizza. Everyone was grateful for that at the end of the day.

Barlow said there has been a fair amount of vandalism at BMX track this year. There have been doors ripped off and tagging so things need to be repainted and the memorial sign has been taken down and he doesn't know where it is and wants everyone to keep an eye out. They have put up motion detector lights.

Duggan said Public Works and Parks are working hard to get things ready for the new playground to open. It looks great. She wants to do a work party in July and hopefully they can do some at the BMX track. She is trying to figure out how to get ahead of the vandalism and wants them to reach out to her instead of waiting for a meeting to bring them up.

Belcher had a suggestion for the Commissioners that the railroad bridge the goes over creek is rusty and he thinks the City should ask the railroad to paint it.

ADJOURNMENT - 6:16 PM