



PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION

Monday, January 12, 2026 at 4:00 PM

APPROVED MINUTES

PRESENT

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

STAFF PRESENT

City Administrator, John Walsh
City Councilor, Brandon Sundeen
Billing Admin Specialist, Dawn Richardson
Billing Admin Specialist, Jamie Ford

STAFF ABSENT

Facilities Maintenance Supervisor, Buck Tupper

OTHERS

Sean Williams

CALL TO ORDER – 4:00 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve Minutes of December 8, 2025

Motion to approve the minutes of December 8, 2025, made by Commissioner Jacobson, Seconded by Commissioner Green.

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

Voting Abstaining: Commissioner Pettit

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

Chair Blumenthal noted there were no attendees wishing to speak on topics not on the agenda.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Additional Application Press Release for Parks & Trails Positions

Chair Blumenthal introduced the topic, noting that the Commission needed to provide direction to City staff regarding advertising for the vacant Parks & Trails Commission position. After brief discussion, the Commission directed staff to advertise the position again in the same manner as before.

3. Elect Chair & Vice Chair

Chair Blumenthal opened the discussion about electing a new Chair and Vice Chair. Commission members discussed the traditional succession pattern where the Vice Chair moves up to Chair position.

Commissioner Jacobson noted that historically, the Vice Chair would become Chair and then a new Vice Chair would be elected. Some Commissioners questioned whether this pattern should continue or if a different approach should be taken.

Chair Blumenthal mentioned that Commissioner Pettit had suggested via email that Commissioner Barlow be elected Chair with Blumenthal remaining as Vice Chair.

Vice Chair Barlow expressed concerns about his ability to attend all meetings in person, noting that he sometimes has grandchildren to watch, which might affect his availability.

After further discussion about the procedure and preferences, the Commission decided to maintain the tradition of having the Vice Chair move to Chair.

Motion to elect Blumenthal as Chair and Barlow as Vice Chair made by Commissioner Woodruff, Seconded by Commissioner Jacobson.

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

Voting Abstaining: Commissioner Pettit

4. Chapter Six Review

The Commission began a review of Chapter Six of the Parks and Trails Master Plan to determine what projects had been completed and what remained to be done. Chair Blumenthal noted some confusion regarding the layout and page numbering of the different versions of the plan, but the Commission proceeded with the review.

The Commission reviewed recommendations for several parks:

1. **Sixth Street Park:** The Commission discussed items from the Master Plan including the need for permanent handicap accessible restrooms with drinking fountain. Commissioners noted that these facilities are still lacking, despite heavy use during baseball and other sporting events. The Commission decided to keep these recommendations in the Master Plan.

2. **McCormick Park:** The Commission discussed recommendations including expanding the Veterans Memorial, installing a multi-sports basketball court, and adding more covered picnic shelters. City Administrator John Walsh noted significant upgrades to the electrical infrastructure had been completed. The Commission agreed to remove items #11 and #12 from the Master Plan, which related to parking improvements that had already been completed.

Vice Chair Barlow raised concerns about drainage issues at the BMX track area of McCormick Park, noting that a culvert installed years ago may be blocked, causing flooding in the winter months. The Commission agreed to add drainage improvement to their list of recommendations.

3. **Godfrey Park:** The Commission discussed enhancing the playground with a natural play area and installing ADA-approved swing sets. Commissioner Woodruff emphasized that swing sets should be a priority for this park. There was also discussion about possibly designating a dog area within the park.

4. **Civic Pride:** The Commission discussed several recommendations including a splash park. Commissioner Pettit noted that Civic Pride Park currently has no water service, which would be

needed for many of the proposed improvements. She also shared that she and her husband had done maintenance work at the park, removing blackberry bushes, and that maintenance staff had subsequently sprayed to prevent regrowth. Commissioner Pettit also mentioned plans to work with the museum to add historical information to the park.

The Commission agreed to continue reviewing the remaining parks at the next meeting.

5. Concepts of Excellent Trails - Belcher

Commissioner Belcher shared information from a National Geographic article about professional trail builders. He noted several key points:

1. Trails can support tourism and economic development, pointing out that the article mentioned how "funding affordable ways to bring people back in touch with nature not only boosts their happiness, but also represents a solid investment for tourism."
2. The article provided technical guidelines about trail construction, including advice against lining trails with small pebbles, as this can trap water and discourage hikers from staying on the trail.
3. The article emphasized the importance of variation in trails to maintain interest, which Commissioner Belcher noted is a strength of the Urban Trail in St. Helens.
4. Commissioner Belcher mentioned the article's suggestion to use large boulders as trail markers instead of signs, which can be expensive and are often damaged. He noted that Tupper (Parks Maintenance) had indicated they have boulders available for this purpose.

Commissioner Jacobson mentioned an upcoming Trail College event at Cascade Locks at the end of April, which might be valuable for Commissioners to attend.

OLD BUSINESS

6. Master Plan - Standing Item

This item was discussed in conjunction with the Chapter Six Review under New Business.

The Commission also discussed their park assessment process. Commissioner Jacobson expressed disappointment that some Commissioners had not participated in the assessment process as agreed. Several Commissioners shared differing views on the effectiveness and utility of the assessments:

- Commissioner Barlow expressed concern about creating extra work for staff without clear benefits.
- Commissioner Green supported the assessment tool but felt it should be voluntary rather than mandatory.
- Commissioner Pettit stated that she believed the assessment experiment had failed because the information hadn't reached the appropriate staff members.

After discussion, Commissioner Belcher proposed that between the current meeting and the February meeting, all Commissioners visit Grey Cliffs Park individually and come prepared to discuss their observations. **This was approved as a non-binding motion.**

Motion to visit Great Cliffs Park made by Commissioner Belcher, Seconded by Commissioner Jacobson. Voting Yea: Chair Blumenthal, Vice Chair Barlow, Commissioner Belcher, Commissioner Green, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Pettit, Commissioner Stanley
Voting Abstained: Commissioner Woodruff

7. Milton Creek Reserve - Standing Item

Commissioner Green announced that the Port would be having their annual open house on Wednesday at 8:30 AM, which would include a presentation on their portion of the Milton Creek project.

Commissioner Jacobson reported that he and Commissioner Green had met with Elliot and Lindsay the previous week to discuss grant opportunities for the Open Top site. He also mentioned plans for a site visit on January 24th but noted that this might conflict with Senator Ron Wyden's event in Scappoose on the same day. The Commission agreed to consider rescheduling.

City Administrator John Walsh informed the Commission that the City is working with the Marine Board and ODFW on designs for a motorized boat launch and fishing pier at Grey Cliffs Park. He also suggested considering an extension of the river walk along the waterfront at Grey Cliffs Park.

STAFF REPORT

City Administrator John Walsh offered to have City staff review the Parks and Trails Master Plan and mark off completed projects to help the Commission in their review process. He also noted significant improvements that have been made to the parks over the past 10-12 years.

When asked about the potential golf course project mentioned by Commissioner Jacobson, City Administrator John Walsh indicated that the Urban Renewal Agency could be a good funding source, particularly when matched with other grants.

COUNCILOR'S REPORT

Councilor Sundeen had no report to share.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Commissioner Pettit asked about the City's current relationship with Dalton Lake. She explained that the property is owned by ODOT, with a cooperative management agreement that ends in 2029. City Administrator John Walsh noted that the City had explored purchasing the property, but the appraisal came in higher than expected.

Commissioner Pettit added that ODOT was planning to address ivy removal in the 56-acre area between now and February at a cost of \$10,000-15,000. She explained that as a wetland mitigation area, any future use would need to be passive, with limited improvements such as kiosks, benches, and bike racks permitted.

Chair Blumenthal reported that volunteers had contributed 340 hours to Nob Hill Park in the previous year, with 156 hours in spring and summer (including 50 hours for a work party) and 104 hours in fall and winter (including 30 hours for a work party).

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:53 PM

Respectfully submitted by Jamie Ford, Administrative Billing Specialist