



PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION

Monday, March 10, 2025 at 4:00 PM

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chair Dana Lathrope
Vice Chair Howard Blumenthal
Commissioner Paul Barlow
Commissioner Jerry Belcher
Commissioner Lucas Green
Commissioner Scott Jacobson
Commissioner Lynne Pettit
Commissioner Jacob Woodruff

STAFF PRESENT

Brandon Sundeen, City Councilor
Buck Tupper, Facilities Maintenance Supervisor
Sheri Ingram, Public Works Office Assistant
Dawn Richardson, Admin Billing Specialist
Jamie Ford, Admin Billing Specialist

OTHERS

Nick Flory

CALL TO ORDER - 4:01 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve Minutes of February 10th, 2025

Motion made by Commissioner Belcher, Seconded by Vice Chair Blumenthal to approve the minutes of February 10, 2025.

Voting Yea: Chair Lathrope, Vice Chair Blumenthal, Commissioner Belcher, Commissioner Green, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Pettit

Woodruff & Barlow were not present during voting

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

NEW BUSINESS

2. Interview Brittany West and Nick Flory for Parks & Trails Positions

Flory: I'm Nick Flory. I have lived in St. Helens for 5 years – I was in the navy – I met my wife here. Looking to join the Parks & Trails group as a way to get involved with local government and help beautify the city and the parks & trails that I venture out with my wife and my dogs.

Belcher: Do you have any past experience, and what is your interest in doing this?

Flory: My interest in doing this is to be involved with the local government and help out our community. We have a very beautiful town. I have seen a lot of big projects in other Cities I've lived in and have a lot of good ideas. I am a superintendent for an elevator company. I manage 27 mechanics and 1500+ elevators in the State of Oregon. I have a lot of

management experience. So, hopefully that can aid in the contributions. I take pride in things that I do, such as maintaining a nice lawn.

Lathrope: The Parks Commission meets every 2nd Monday of the month at 4:00 PM. Additional volunteer time takes a couple of hours a month - is this something you'd be up to?

Flory: I'd be able to take that on as well. I already volunteer as a volunteer firefighter, so I will add that to my agenda.

Lynne - Have you read the responsibilities and duties of the Municipal Code?

Flory: Yes. I've also gone over the by-laws.

Lathrope: Any particular projects or parks that interest you?

Flory: I like going to McCormick Park. I take my dogs there and I like doing the trails there. Grey Cliffs is another beautiful park there with the marina. I grew up in a small town in Mishawaka, Indiana. They have a nice riverwalk, it would be nice being a part of that.

Lathrope: Any other questions?

Blumenthal: You'll hear us discuss that in the past we've always assigned a park to somebody for about a year or so and you just walk by there and occasionally do stuff, changing that formality a little bit.

Flory: Does the Parks & Trails Commission, do you also do events like races. My wife is a runner, and I'd like to see more opportunities like that.

Lathrope: As a member of the public, there's always a potential to do those kinds of things. As far as being a Commissioner, on the Parks and Trails, realistically we are liaisons on behalf of the Parks and Trails, and so it's our duty to be aware of what's going on in our parks and trails systems, spend time there, bring attention to the parks maintenance or to City Council of anything that requires attention in our parks and trails, and then to act as requested by City Council. We're here to be liaisons, stewards, be aware. Advisors really. As far as large action, or creating events, I can't say it's completely out of the question, but anybody of the public can do those kinds of things.

Blumenthal: Most of what we do is a lot of try put together work parties. Lynne looks a lot after dalton lake. I'm a spear header of Nob Hill Nature Park. Those are two parks that have strong friends groups. If you have a park that was really something you'd like to be more of a champion for, we can discuss that later if there's ever a park that you're really excited about.

Lathrope: Assignments or things like that don't negate you from doing any work or activity in any of the other parks as well. This is a community effort, a mutual group effort and so we work cooperatively towards benefiting our parks and benefiting our community. Do you have any other questions for us?

Flory: No.

- Brittney West was not present for interview.

Lathrope: requests reaching out to Brittany one more time? We will circle back at the end of the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner Jacobson, Seconded by Commissioner Woodruff that Council appoint Nick Flory to the Parks & Trails Commission.

Voting Yea: Chair Lathrope, Vice Chair Blumenthal, Commissioner Barlow, Commissioner

Belcher, Commissioner Green, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Pettit, Commissioner Woodruff

3. **Scappoose - Dalton Lake Presentation - Lathrope**

Lathrope: Lynne mentioned she was requested to do a presentation on Dalton Lake for Scappoose. Lynne can you clarify what is the intention of the presentation, what information she's including and to whom?

Pettit: I was called by the Scappoose Library staff in late January. The person that invited me was a Commissioner 8 to 10 years ago. They knew about Dalton Lake and they were interested in having me come and give information on history of birds and plants in the area. That's April 26th. What I'm presenting for 15 minutes, in the Library are pictures and I will show that in a progression.

Earth day is 10 PM – 3 PM at Heritage Park. If you're interested in that you can contact Scappoose Parks and Recreation if interested in obtaining a booth.

Lathrope: Will you be presenting on behalf of parks commission or just a public citizen?

Pettit: That didn't come up, but I can present as Parks & Trails if you want.

Lathrope: It brought up questions about potentially speaking on behalf of the commission about one of the parks we oversee but the rest of the commission not being aware of the presentation ahead of time.

Blumenthal: I do not have a problem speaking about it.

Lathrope: The concern it brought up for me was about speaking on something the commission isn't made aware of.

Belcher: I've talked to rotary about urban trail and talked to Lions Club regarding that. I didn't get permission to do that. I don't see that it's a problem.

Jacobson: I'm not opposed to Lynne speaking regarding Dalton.

Lathrope: I want to make sure that if it represents the commission as a whole, and that it is made aware to the commission before being presented.

Lathrope: Had the opportunity to review the agreement between City and ODOT for the Dalton Lake area. There's potential concerns. Agreement with the City and Dalton Lake was created in 2009 - ends in 2029. The site is owned by ODOT. The end of agreement there is a potential for the City to pay for any and all improvements at the City's cost. City was requested to develop a management plan for approval to identify policies and procedures. Lynne, have you developed a management plan between the City and ODOT?

Pettit: Yes. That was in the proposal that was given to the City and also the representative from ODOT looked at it and was happy with it. The management plan was given to the City Council and they approved it.

Lathrope: Planning does not have it and our Parks team does not have it.

Pettit: The Planners should have it. They are the ones that reviewed the agreement with me. When we brought it to the City it had future improvements.

Lathrope: The only thing anyone has is a press release, but as far as an actual management plan it does not look like anything from ODOT was put in place.

Pettit: I think you're looking for something that isn't needed, I can give you my presentation.

Lathrope: I read through the cooperative management agreement. It does have one specific laid out permit and agreement. In the agreement itself, under City's responsibilities line item 6 says "The City shall develop a management plan for approval by ODOT". This has not been completed.

Pettit: City did approve what was presented. We had a specialist working on it, that was part of the advisory committee (Chip Beubl) was 40 years our extension agent, a soil and water conservation district director, and a naturalist.

Lathrope: Line item number 8 under City Obligations. This one states that "the City shall construct at its sole expense improvements at the site as may be compatible with preservation of the wetland area. Limited to trails, trail direction interpretive signage, similar noncommercial passive improvements. Do you have approval for improvements being done?"

Pettit: Yes, we have a contact at ODOT. I think we need to talk about this later. I believe you're talking about something already approved by ODOT.

Lathrope: The reason I ask is because I cannot find anyone at the City who has the permits or approvals. It doesn't sound like the City has plans to extend the agreement. At the end of the agreement, it states that "the City shall, at its sole expense, completely remove and dispose of any improvements unless specifically allowed by ODOT". That would put a financial cost to remove all the improvements. Jacob said it would be advisable to discontinue improvements for now.

Tupper: It's a minimal footprint and would be inexpensive to remove it. It would be back to normal in approx. 2 weeks. The hardest part would be popping up the concrete but that could be done in a half hour.

Lathrope: Just covering our basis in accordance with the agreement.

Tupper: I didn't pull out of it that there is a permit that needs to be filled out.

Lathrope: That's why I talked to Jacob to see what is required.

Jacobson: It can come back on us, so it would be nice to have something concrete to fall back on.

Pettit: ODOT, Vector control, Mouhamad all in on the process and it was well vetted. All items have been donated from City businesses.

Lathrope: I love reading laws, rules and written agreements. It's something I do in my free time. I want to make sure we're doing the best we can regarding rules and guidelines. Making sure we're covering our basis because ultimately the City is liable.

Blumenthal: I'm very impressed by the improvements of Dalton Lake. Wondering if we should make a motion or a recommendation about maintaining Dalton Lake Stewardship?

Lathrope: We have a vested interest in the area, as a commission we utilize that space. It sounds like the City is not interested in renewing or purchasing that area.

Pettit: Conservation group or environmental group could show interest in Dalton Lake.

Jacobson: It would be good to have an action plan should anything go sideways.

Woodruff: Why don't we make a motion to ask the City to renew for longer?

Lathrope: I would encourage all of you to read through the management agreement. A lot of responsibilities and potential consequences.

Blumenthal: Is there a way to get a copy of the management agreement?

Tupper: We don't spend a lot of time out there. Once a month maybe.

Woodruff: Where is the burden at?

Belcher: This is wetland and cannot build in this area. What is ODOT's plan for the future? It's either going to stay the way it is or it's going to have improvements like Lynne has been doing. It's going to stay the way it is whether it stays in the City or to ODOT. Not overly concerned about what happens, but it would be nice for ODOT to give us permission to make improvements.

Lathrope: This is where I was going with this. This agreement is ending in 4 years. Now is the time to discuss if we are going to extend or not. What would a plan with ODOT and City look like.

Blumenthal: There are 4 or 5 acres owned by someone else that is privately owned.

Pettit: that land is locked in - brought portfolio to owner. Asked owner to donate the property and if interested to contact the city administrator - but nothing came of it. We talk to the group who owns the strip of land on the east side. They are not interested in donating land to the City. We are landlocked on the south side. Talks about creating trails around the private properties for the future.

Belcher: I remember the landlock. This is maybe to Brandon Sundeen, why doesn't the City want to go into agreement with ODOT?

Sundeen: Dalton Lake has never been mentioned.

Tupper: We have to spend a lot of time conveying information and can be time consuming to explain to people regarding ODOT.

Belcher: But that was 2 or 3 years ago. I'm talking about people cutting their own trails, they shouldn't be doing that.

Pettit: Can't build on it, so it will not generate any income.

Jacobson: Regardless of renewing the agreement, we're still going to be affected by people calling you up.

Lathrope: I talked to Jacob. They will be discussing it in the management meeting. It would be wise to re-up and discuss next month. Lynne, I would love for you to share the background of Dalton Lake.

Pettit: I don't know about next month. It would have been nice to know about you speaking to Jacob about Dalton Lake. Maybe I could have shed some light on it. Maybe in the next couple of months I could.

Lathrope: Would be great to have a refresher for everyone new.

OLD BUSINESS

4. Rolls & Responsibilities/Parks Assignments - Lathrope & Jacobson

Lathrope: Spent time creating a mockup of assessment tool. I gave Buck a copy of the park assessment tool and a mockup of the monthly report. The filled-out template only had one copy.

- Explained the process for the checklist. McCormick was a concern to split into regions.
- Ball fields
- BMX
- Walking Trails
- Gazebo Play Area
- Walking Trails

Woodruff: Split into 3 regions.

Lathrope: Mock-up of Park Assessment Tool: Can fill out and send in email prior to meeting - this is something we can have created into a digital form. Hoping to utilize this information for annual report to the council. If there is any proposed park clean up any potential for community engagement, a place for positive remarks, volunteer hour tracking. This gives opportunity for that. Showed and gave example of report to Tupper. Shows mock of completed template for example to Commission. I would gladly take on the responsibility of taking the reports and handing them off to Tupper.

Woodruff: Does this only apply to one park?

Lathrope: This could be for any park you want. I would like to trial run this.

Belcher: Can we drop it by or email it to you?

Lathrope: Yes

Belcher: I wasn't for this to begin with, but I think with 3 months it will be fair and allow us to view other parks. We can still come in and give reports on our main parks.

Barlow: What prompted this? What's the problem we're trying to fix by doing this report? I'm not against it, but what are we trying to fix?

Belcher: People didn't feel like they were being treated fairly regarding the rotation of parks and only being able to see all the parks. We will have a park for 3 months. It gives everyone an opportunity to observe parks more critically. We don't currently give a report on a different parks, but with this report you can.

Lathrope: Yes, those are complaints I've heard and experienced. I felt unclear as to what my responsibilities were regarding reporting. This gives a clear report in a minimal way to allow multiple eyes on the same location to give a more thorough presentation.

Barlow: Who's responsible for tracking all this? it seems like we're making more work.

Pettit: I agree with Barlow. What we used to do was to bring it to the table at that time.

Jacobson: A few months ago, I suggested we have 2 people assigned to each park in case something happens. So that there is always a representation. This methodology works with that and gives a more comprehensive overlook regarding all the parks.

Lathrope: This gives everyone a minimum in all the parks - if they want to go above and beyond that.

Blumenthal: Would like to see this for longer than a 3-month rotation. Would have to see how to work around the time he has at his assigned park.

Lathrope: This would just be a trial run. Nothing is set in stone.

Woodruff: This gives you a chance to go learn about and see each of the parks and see things another commission doesn't.

Lathrope: That is the core reason for this: For everyone to get out of our comfort zone and see how it goes. Then we can discuss it further at the next meeting.

Jacobson: Councilor Sundeen read rolls and responsibilities last meeting, and I read through them. We have not met the commitment. We should see if we want to be committed to all the responsibilities or if we should revise and bring to the Council? I would suggest we read through the Municipal Code 2.74 the bylaws we agreed to as the Parks and Trails Commission.

Lathrope: Would you like all Commissioners to review the bylaws and present concerns at the next meeting? We can spark conversation and see what has been in place and see if it's still able to be attended to.

Blumenthal: Feels nothing happens when concerns are brought forward.

Jacobson: It is explicitly written out and more extensive how it reads.

Lathrope: Let's review at the next meeting. Please read and digest bylaws so we can clarify at the next meeting.

5. Milton Creek Reserve - Standing Item

Green:

- Passed out map of Milton Creek Reserve with area estimates.
Potential area for bridge.

Lathrope: Is that the line to have City set aside for project? Next step is to take to Jacob for him to give more concise lines and present to Council.

Belcher: What made you pick that area for a bridge?

Green: It's narrow where the slough is, and roads already go through.

Lathrope: Buck how would we go from mockup to Jacob then to Council for exact request? Since this is still rough estimate, Jacob would have a more defined boundary.

Tupper: I would go to him with what has been presented today - substation on back corner lot.

Lathrope: Would anyone like to take this to Jacob.

Jacobson: I will.

Belcher: Would like to see it remain as a camas meadow. I would like to see Scott talk to Sean Clark (The Port) so he knows what is happening. I would like for him to ask where their property lines are. Got the impression that the Port would be willing to donate the property. Need to know where the property lines are.

Jacobson: I would also like to ask them to be a part at what we're doing.

STAFF REPORT

Tupper: Trail to bench that will be installed this week. Scheduled work party at the Japanese garden April 5th from 9 - 12. Work party from 1 - 3 at Nob Hill Park. A guy from South Columbia Family School from him and crew will do clean up at McCormick. Pick up trash & sticks. Smaller stuff for kids to do.

COUNCILOR'S REPORT

Councilor Sundeen: Some reports can get lengthy, should be getting guidance soon about expectations. Prepare presentation and submit to council. You are welcome to come to meeting and share but not needed to do a full report that has already been reviewed.

Blumenthal: Isn't that a good way for the public to hear the details and be informed?

Councilor Sundeen: I think that's a good point. There are lots of ways to get that out there. Social media, newspaper, etc.

Lathrope: Talk to Crystal about public engagement.

Councilor Sundeen: Maybe make quick videos about parks.

Tupper: Crystal also does newsletters. That's an opportunity to share with the public.

Lathrope: this is another use for the checklist utilizing information.

Blumenthal: Would like to get work parties listed in newsletter.

Sundeen: You're welcome to share as much or as little as you'd like. Don't feel limited. Mouhamad shared that worst case scenario everything should be complete by the end of June for the park and first phase of the riverwalk. Plan is to have 13 Nights back at the Riverfront, but McCormick is listed as a backup in case. Would anyone like me to take anything back to Council?

Belcher: Why they might not want to renew Dalton Lake.

Sundeen: I don't know if that's an appropriate question for Council, but I can bring them the information. Thank you for all you do.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Blumenthal: Work party coming up on the April 5th, 1 – 3 at Nob Hill. We gave a tour to OSU Forester at Nob Hill.

ADJOURNMENT

5:52 PM

Respectfully submitted by Jamie Ford, Administrative Billing Specialist.