



PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION

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

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

STAFF PRESENT

Mouhamad Zaher
Matt Brown
Sheri Ingram
Thad Houk
Shanna Duggan

OTHERS PRESENT

Emily Martin
Terry Knoop
Pat Jewett

CALL TO ORDER - 4:02 P.M.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve Minutes of March 8, 2021

Motion made by Commissioner Brewington, Seconded by Commissioner Blumenthal to approve the Minutes of March 8, 2021 with corrections by Pettit. After reviewing audio, minutes stand as is. What was written is what was said on the recording.

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

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

COUNCILOR'S REPORT – Not present

NEW BUSINESS

2. Introduce Parks & Rec Manager Shanna Duggan

Zaher said Duggan has been promoted to Parks & Rec Manager and will be taking over the Parks & Rec spot and working closely with Houk as well as the Commission. He thanked her for joining us and everyone is excited for this opportunity. Duggan said she is also excited and thank you for the opportunity.

3. Interview Parks & Trails Commission Applicant

Dunn said they will be talking to them one at a time and it would be great if they could tell them why they applied, what interested them and an overall introduction and ask any questions they may have. They will discuss and make a recommendation for the Council when they get to discussion items towards the end of the meeting.

Brandon Sundeen – He is born and raised in St. Helens and enjoyed the parks then and still is with his kids. He moved away to go to school and moved back about dix years ago. They use the parks regularly and enjoy exploring the city and seeing new things. He enjoys volunteering and making a difference when he can. He is currently a volunteer for the Columbia County museum so one of his big passions is history and he thought it would be cool to incorporate more of our history into our parks. We have a rich history and people go to the parks and have no idea who Mr. Godfrey was or who were the McCormick's and why it is called McCormick park. Heinie Heumann was an important figure for a long time but his kids think the little area in the corner is for the dogs and the rest of the park is for the humans. He loves going to the parks and volunteering and trying to make a difference so he thought this would be a good fit.

Belcher said his application says he has volunteered many hours into McCormick Park and the Veterans Memorial so what are a couple of things he has found out that he thinks people would like to know. Sundeen said the McCormicks were prominent and lived in a house on Nob Hill. When they wanted to go to their country estate out of town, that was McCormick Park. Mrs. McCormick hosted the St. Helens Gardens Club there for years and it was a big deal to get invited there. When he was researching local vets who were killed in WWI and he noticed a couple of names were missing on the old memorial. He went to the VFW and asked what they could do to get the names added and they told him they were working on revamping the whole thing and they asked him to help them out and make sure they weren't missing any other names for other wars. He spent months doing research in newspapers and archives and ended up finding over 30 WWII veterans from Columbia County that weren't on there and now they are. He's proud he had a part in that and likes doing that kind of research.

Belcher asked what the area was with the big rocks in a rectangular shape and Sundeen said that was Nellie McCormick's personal garden space. She called it her Japanese garden and you can still see remnants of Japanese Maple and Rhododendrons and other flowering plants. He took pictures and wrote a story on it last year and he would like to see it revamped. Brewington said he went out there years ago with Jim Davis when it was in full bloom and it was a sight to see. He asked if that property was donated to the City and Sundeen said he believes the City purchased it. Jim Davis told him they had the option of purchasing the golf course or the McCormick property and they picked McCormick sometime in the 1970s.

Pettit said when she was doing research and went to the museum, Les and Brandon were very helpful with historical facts on Dalton as well as pictures. Dunn asked what his favorite park is and why and Sundeen said McCormick because he goes there the most often to go on the walking trail and the Veterans Memorial and T-ball with his kids.

Virginia Carlson – Parks are important for families and she thinks St. Helens does such a good job of dedicating the real estate and this committee has done so much work to make them more accessible to more people in our community. The parks are about flowers, dogs, kids, seniors – there is a park for everyone and she thinks continuing that work, as someone who uses the parks for her work and personal use, it just seemed like an easy way to be involved because it is something that is important to her. She has crossed paths with most of the Commissioners and she was involved with the splash park and has been involved with a group that has done different clean-up efforts all over town. She worked with the Main Street group for a number of years and she thinks parks have a key role in livability in a community. All the communities that win awards have great park systems. It's an integral part of attracting visitors and financial investment. People don't often realize how important parks are to economic development.

Dunn asked which was her favorite park and why and Carlson said it depends on the season because she is a photo person and she likes any place she can walk. She likes the trails at Nob Hill and that go down into the waterfront. She likes winter walks through the disc golf course. She finds it peaceful and solitude. She did a lot of walking there during her journey through cancer and found it healing. It's awesome that anyone can use it any day of the week for free. Belcher said he notices she went to Ford Leadership and wanted to know about that. She said she did it in 2008 and it was the project that did the splash park. After that she was recruited to teach the next project that did the banners on the highway and then she helped with the project that prepared the safety packs. She has participated in everything the Ford Foundation has done in our community for the last 12 years trying to keep those connections and funding streams alive in our community. She moved here in 1995 and didn't know anybody so when she got laid off in 2002, she was talked into doing it and she has met a lot of people through it.

Belcher asked what she thought the roll of urban trails is in St. Helens and she said it connecting neighborhoods and connecting the community within itself. She loves to walk and there are so many areas that don't have sidewalks and she thinks urban trails fills a void they have in fully accessible parks. If someone has a walker or wheelchair or powerchair, our parks are not very accessible at all. As far as parks within an hour of St. Helens, she would put us in the bottom of the barrel for wheelchair accessibility. Urban trails bring a level of accessibility for people to get out and see the community. She likes looking at yards and plants and architecture and it's one of the few things you can do for free anymore.

Shannon Mullican - She was born and raised in Columbia County and she works in construction so she actually tears down all the prettiness that is everywhere so she thought this would be a good way to give back. She has a 3rd grade son and two really big dogs that have to be out all the time so they use the trails all the time. She lives right next to the Botanical Gardens so they use those trails probably two to three times a week. They go to McCormick all the time and trying to get out and see more and do more is what brought her around to this. Also being involved will help her son know that being involved is how you get what you want where you want it. Dunn asked if there was anything specific she wanted to see in our parks that prompted her to apply and she said we are coming out of winter so we know everything is disgusting during winter. Over the last two to three years, there have been a

lot of updates and upgrades. She sees what Duggan does because her son goes to the Rec Center and some of the things there are fantastic how they bring them back around to McCormick. She is sure she will come up with things she sees as she goes. Dunn asked what her favorite park was and why and she said she loves the Botanical Gardens. Every season has its own things that are absolutely beautiful – different flowers, different foliage that pop up. In about a month, it is going to be a beautiful walk through there and that is one of her favorite things about it. Belcher asked what her job description is and what she does and she said she works for a mechanical contracting company that installs piping and she is currently on-site at Intel. They install the chemical piping and she is a project manager.

The fourth applicant didn't join the meeting so they will discuss the applicants during Discussion items.

4. Grant Opportunities for Urban Trails

Duggan shared her screen about a Recreational Trails Program with a grant cycle schedule. She thought it might be a good thing to explore further with the urban trails we are looking at doing. She is wondering if they could make some sort of side committee to push this along and put it together. She can help fill in the pieces but will need help so is wondering if anyone has the capacity to help and time to look at the webinar on the 15th. April 30th is when the letter of intent is due. She has not had a lot of capacity to look through this and see what the guidelines are and if it would fit with Urban Trails. She is hoping those who have been doing the work in it could help her navigate through it to see if it would be a good opportunity for us. Dunn said she can help but can't attend the webinar but could sign up for it and hope they have a recording. She would be happy to review materials and if anyone else is interested, they could meet and discuss. Barlow said he would like to. He is busy but it interests him. Duggan said they would have to have a letter of intent by April 30th and the grant application is due June 15th for winter/spring funding. If they want to find a date when they could all meet, they could do it at the Rec Center if they were comfortable with that and they could hash out the details for the letter of intent. It may not be good right now but can be good for future opportunities. She is always looking for grants and has gotten about \$79,000 so far this year for the Rec Program and asked them to please send things to her if they see them.

5. Possible Property Purchase or Trade

Belcher said there is around five acres of property for sale on the east side of the Botanical Gardens owned by Rich Bailey and Durrell Kearsley. He would like to see the City buy this property or trade for it. The Parks Master Plan says "As the population grows, the object is to provide enough additional acreage to maintain the jurisdiction's desired ratio of parks per 100,000 residents". In 2019, the population was 13,559 and the Portland State department that studies population and urban issues estimates St. Helens will grow by 4000 people in the next nine years. We have two nature parks totaling 9.8 acres. The Master Plan says we need a projected additional 21.4 acres in 2020. He thinks this would be a great opportunity to increase the size of the Botanica Gardens. If this land were purchased, the park would go from Belton Road all the way back to Grey Cliffs Drive. The City has the opportunity to get the land now before it gets developed and we lack enough nature parks and this would increase it and be a good deal. They are currently asking \$275,000 for the property and he doesn't know if that is the market value. His understanding is it would cost too much for infrastructure to make developing this property profitable for the current owners. They would be happy to sell it or maybe trade it. Maybe the City could trade a portion of the Millard Road property or some other property that he is not aware of.

Brown agrees with what Belcher said about the Master Plan but he focuses on current data which is the 2010 census but it still says we need more nature parks, like 15.9 acres. He knows Duggan is planning in the next year to start updating the Master Plan. We have talked about reclassifying some of the

parks with the consultant that comes in to do the Master Plan so everything is accurate so we can best utilize system development funds to do improvements. As far as the Millard property, he does not speak for the Council but from the direction he's seen from the Council so far, they intend to sell that property as one piece for a single developer to do a community development this includes walking trails, wetland mitigation and connectivity from front to back. The intention is to use some of those funds to purchase the Ross Road property to create the future softball/baseball complex park.

He went to the Botanical Garden for the first time about a month ago and that park does need some major improvement but he likes the idea of expanding it. If they decide to recommend the City purchase it, there is a lot of future development on the other side of the road for parking and that is one issue he had when he went there. He did want to throw out an idea. He thinks Civic Pride Park is under-utilized. A couple of years ago, we offered to give them the park to expand into an outdoor water area but they were not interested. He recently talked to the Planning Department about what it would look like if part of the park were developed. There is a sewer line that runs through the park but there is an area off to the left that is zoned as Mixed Use so could be developed. Off to the right is an area that could be kept as a smaller park. They mentioned a trade and since they are developers, he wanted to throw it out as an idea for a possible trade. There are plans on paper but he doesn't know what the future holds for Civic Pride and there are larger needs in some other parks and we have a small staff so it can be hard to maintain them.

Belcher asked if the City owns any lots here or there on streets that could be traded where Bailey and Kearsley would like to build on and Brown said a couple of years ago, they went through all the property the City owns and there were a handful of properties including Millard Road and three lots that they reached out to Habitat for Humanity and Community Action Team to see if they wanted to build homes on those lots. There are issues with sewer laterals that make them not the best place to put single family homes or just plain unbuildable. There are some bluffs where some mining was going to be done by a developer that the City ended up buying to avoid litigation and it is not zoned correctly and a lot of land use stuff that it has to go through so it's not ready for a developer. Other than that, there is not a lot of property the City owns that is buildable. Brewington asked him if he could check into any other properties that might be available and he said yes. He went over a map of Civic Pride showing them the possible developable area.

Motion made by Commissioner Blumenthal, Seconded by Commissioner Pettit to recommend that Council look into property for sale adjacent to the Botanical Garden and look at a portion of Civic Pride or other property Staff or Council thinks might be good to trade or buy the property outright.

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

OLD BUSINESS

6. Update on Identifying Parks Volunteers

Ingram said Kathy Payne was working on a new volunteer form with some kind of ID card last year and then Covid happened and it got put on the back burner. Payne will work on it and give them an update next month.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Pettit said they have a work party this Saturday at Dalton Lake from 9 to 11 a.m. and Blumenthal is going to cut blackberries. They will be cutting blackberries and Ivy. They will meet at the kiosk but they need to park by the Columbia Humane Society.

Belcher said he wants them to think about a couple of things and we can put them on the agenda for the next meeting. He thinks the Columbia Botanical Gardens is mis-named. It's a nice name but he doesn't think it catches what the park is. Most of it is an old quarry and the bottom part is a wetland. Maybe it could be called the Old Quarry Botanical Gardens or the Italian Quarry Nature Park. He would like them to think about it until the next meeting and see if it is a good idea.

He also is wondering if we can change the name of this Commission to the Parks & Rec Commission. It was the Parks Commission and then changed to the Parks & Trails Commission and now we have a change of command and Duggan is in charge of Parks & Rec. Brewington and Dunn were not in favor of it. Dunn said we have full agendas every month just covering parks and trails stuff and the meetings usually last two hours and she worries that if they add recreation, they won't be able to cover everything they need to in the meetings. Duggan also said she thinks Zaher is also going to talk to them about that in the future. Belcher said maybe the City needs to look at forming a Recreation Commission. Brewington asked if they were under one budget now and Duggan said while they both come out of the General Fund but the Rec budget is still separate from Parks Operations.

Blumenthal said he had hoped Emily Martin would have spoke for a moment. She is with the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council and is their restoration person now and is heading up the 5th Street R.O.W. grant that is coming in. She also operates the Watershed nursery in Scappoose. They had 20 people show up yesterday for semi-annual tour with the Native Plant Society of Oregon and there were a lot of fawn lilies, chocolate lilies and trillium blooming right now. They got one of the Lions Club benches from the City and have made contact with the Lions Club about getting more benches and are going to start saving their plastic to add to that. They had their semi-annual work party a couple of weeks ago which was broken up into a morning and afternoon work session. They gave almost 52 hours in 5th St R.O.W. cleaning blackberries, trash and old tires and gave 51 hours in the park including planting and weeding. They acquired a new weedeater with a beautiful blade on it so that is why he thought he would use it at Dalton Lake.

There was a vote on the Commission applicants and the majority were in favor of appointing Brandon Sundeen.

Motion made by Commissioner Brewington, Seconded by Commissioner Belcher to recommend that Council appoint Brandon Sundeen to the Parks & Trails Commission to fill the vacancy that expires on 12/21/21.

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

Houk gave an update on McCormick Park playground. He said they are working diligently and many items are up.

ADJOURNMENT - 5:50 PM