

**CITY OF CORVALLIS
MINUTES OF THE PARKS, NATURAL AREAS AND RECREATION BOARD
MAY 15, 2008**

Attendance

Mary Buckman
 Kent Daniels, Chair
 Jen deVries
 Charles Fisher
 Dennis Iverson
 Randy Keller, Vice-Chair
 Denise Nervik
 Margie Powell
 Betty Griffiths, GLT Liaison
 Noel Mingo, 509-J District Rep.
 Stewart Wershow, Council Liaison

Staff

Steve DeGhetto, Park Operations Supervisor
 Karen Emery, Acting Director
 Jackie Rochefort, Park Planner
 Mark Lindgren, Recorder

Visitors

Absent/Excused

Paul Hohenlohe

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Agenda Item	Information Only	Held for Further Review	Recommendations
II. Introductions	X		
III. Approval of Minutes	X		
IV. Visitors' Propositions	X		
V. Staff Reports	X		
VI. Board Member/City Council Liaison Reports	X		
VII. Farmers Market Update	X		
VIII. Re-naming Former MLK Jr. Park			Motion passed unanimously to rename the area Orleans Natural Area.
IX. Parks and Natural Areas Sustainable Operations Plan Presentation	X		
X. Goals and Objectives	X		Postponed.
XI. Adjournment	X		The next Parks, Natural Areas and Recreation Board meeting is 6:30 p.m., June 19, 2008 at the Downtown Fire Station.

CONTENT OF DISCUSSION

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Kent Daniels called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.
- II. **INTRODUCTIONS.** Introductions were made.
- III. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES.** Keller noted that on page 5, paragraph 1, there is a reference to a \$5.2 million cost for Option #2; he recalled additional references to other estimates of \$5.5 and \$5.6 million; Rochefort said she would get back to him. Griffiths name was misspelled in paragraph 4, page 7. Dennis Iverson voted against the motion in the fifth paragraph, page 7 (the motion was not unanimous, as recorded). Betty Griffiths moved and Charlie Fisher seconded to approve the April 17, 2008 minutes as corrected; motion passed.
- IV. **VISITORS' PROPOSITIONS.** None.
- V. **STAFF REPORTS.** AIC Director Karen Emery drew attention to Director's Highlights. The Board will do a fee review in June. Staff is working with the school district to secure a \$20,000 donation for Osborn Aquatic Center boilers. Noel Mingo's last meeting will be in June; she is working with the superintendent for his replacement.

Daniels asked about the status of the Directors position. Emery replied that the process closes tomorrow; after that, Human Resources will do initial screening, then set up interviews. City Manager Jon Nelson is working on questions and setting up panels and opportunities for staff, Board and community input.

She will be giving an update to the Council on May 19th on the Bond measure for the Senior Center expansion, Chintimini Park improvement, system-wide softball, and playground improvements; she will send copies of that staff report.

Planner Jackie Rochefort related that work will begin on constructing Townsend picnic shelter in Avery Park and new street and picnic shelter lights there have been installed. A Capital Improvement Program solicitation letter was an insert in the April City newsletter. She will ask for two volunteers to serve on the CIP subcommittee to sift through and make recommendations on the CIP proposals.

Evanite has submitted a new revised application for a Greenway Permit, which would include an easement or right of way of land to the City for continuation of the multimodal path. Griffiths stated that due to concerns about the possibility of hazardous substances there, even if the City only has an easement, and not a right of way, part of due diligence is to ensure that the site is clean before the public uses it, so an environmental assessment will be required anyway. Rochefort agreed, but added that if anything is found, it would be the responsibility of Evanite to clean it up, not the City's.

She related that the Planning Commission denied the Seavy Meadows project; the City Council will hear the appeal on June 2nd. She noted that since the affordable housing project proposes that 27 acres of a wetland preservation area would come under the stewardship of Parks and Recreation, she will attend the meeting. She related that the Planning Commission denied the application on the grounds that the site was not designed to maximize the preservation of wetlands, and were concerned about the hydrology of the site and felt the applicant didn't do a thorough enough job discussing how the hydrology might be affected by the five acre parcel of housing.

Parks Operations Supervisor Steve DeGhetto related recruiting for the Park Maintenance Technician position closes tomorrow. He noted that some areas now have grass that is taller than some of the public expects; this is to foster regeneration of native plants. Staff is working on sustainability projects; the Youth Volunteer Corps will provide support to a pilot program to recycle containers in some parks in fall.

The Pacific Tree Climbing Institute will offer a tree climbing experience this summer in oak trees at the Bald Hill barn, with the ropes and harnesses that arborist's use; he encouraged people to sign up. He noted such tree climbing is permitted with a special use permit; organizers are experienced enough to avoid damaging the trees, understory plants, etc. The event will occur after bird nesting is over. Keller related that tree climbing with gear, like rock-climbing, is becoming very popular, and there are sometimes environmental considerations; liability is also an issue. Some areas have had to craft ordinances to deal with the issue.

DeGhetto noted that both youth and adult recreation programs are underway. The Riverfront fountain is up and running. There will be a chip giveaway on May 24th and 31st from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Pioneer Park. He related that there will be leaf drops there; Public Works has agreed to eventually pave an area there as part of the sustainability program.

VI. BOARD MEMBER/CITY COUNCIL LIAISON REPORTS. City Council Stewart Wershow related the Budget Commission has finished its work and approved the budget. The Council will hear the Board's recommendation on softball next Tuesday. A new School Facilities Manager starts work in July; Mingo related that he would probably be his replacement as School District Liaison on the Board.

Betty Griffiths distributed brochures on a beautification project underway in Village Green Park this weekend; as well as the Greenbelt Land Trust's latest newsletter. She highlighted Energy Trust pamphlets on what you can do about global warming, available for placement in offices or at programs for kids. Emery noted that some day camps have an environmental component that would lend themselves to weaving that in. Daniels noted that Griffiths is one of the leading coordinators in the local sustainability effort. Griffiths related that the Sustainability Coalition is working on a new landscaping plan for native plants at Porter Park.

School District Liaison Noel Mingo announced that the one year anniversary of the construction and dedication of Wildcat Park will be held June 12th.

Daniels related that he serves on Civic Beautification and Urban Forestry Commission; he noted that when three young trees were recently destroyed by vandalism, Urban Forester Becky Merja posted signs highlighted the roughly \$1,000 cost of the replacing them. He credited such signs with reducing such damage over the last five years. DeGhetto said that the person convicted of causing damage to turf and shrubs in Central Park will be required to pay \$1,500 in restitution; he has suggested to the judge that the 40 hours in community service be served at Parks and Recreation in order to help the young offender understand how such damage costs the community.

Wershow highlighted the public meeting May 20th regarding OSU's proposed reconstruction of 14th and 15th Street between Jefferson and Monroe. Daniels noted the meeting is to be held three weeks before construction is scheduled to begin and is slated to remove about 30 trees. He added the community has been trying to get bike paths on the section of road for many years; however, it would have been preferable if OSU had offered the public the chance to comment earlier in the process.

Griffiths highlighted the Greenbelt Land Trust's June 1st Run for the Hills; and a Dixon Creek Tour from 2-6 p.m. that showcases a restoration project on a section.

Iverson asked about the possibility of the Board getting internet access during board meetings; it would help in following along presentations and discussions with map-based issues. Emery replied she will follow up on it.

VII. FARMERS MARKET UPDATE. Rebecca Landis stated she was Market Director for the Corvallis-Albany Farmers Market. The non-profit runs three farmers markets in the area. Her presentation concerned the future of the Wednesday market now sited at the Benton County Fairgrounds.

She related the group was governed by a 10-person Board of Directors and the members of the association are made up of vendors. Vendors are coming to the conclusion that the market needs to move closer into town. The market there now operates from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays, 32 weeks per year. However, this is not an easy time for people who must work. Because of this, the group is committing itself to finding a new location for the market for 2009.

She met with Parks Operations Supervisor Steve DeGhetto and Public Works representatives to discuss possible locations on Parks and Recreation and city street sites. She related that she was encouraged to consider siting the market at Starker Arts Park. She added the market is still interested in relocating the market to the downtown area in the long run, though. She cautioned that any downtown site will have pros and cons associated with it.

She said the market was interested in siting a morning market in the Starker Arts Park parking lot; she added that an evening market there would conflict with softball and would have wind issues. Staff encouraged her to also consider using the linear, non-turf grass area leading up to the community gardens.

She highlighted several possible downtown sites, noting that any of these would require a lot of discussion. The market was temporarily sited in 2002 at 2nd street and B, which is north and east of the Skateboard Park. While it worked for the Saturday market at the time, it would not now fit that site, but the Wednesday market might. While there are parking issues, it is a functional, built site that could work at different times of the day, depending on parking considerations.

The Wednesday market could also occupy part of the same street right of way used by the Saturday market, at 1st street and Monroe. There are also parking issues at this site, too.

The Wednesday market could also be sited at 3rd and B streets, due west of the Skateboard Park. If this site is chosen, the market would have to participate in the gateway planning process listed in the CIP. While B street between 2nd and 3rd streets is less used for parking, it is too small for even the current Wednesday by itself, but could possibly play a part along with other plans.

She summarized that the market prefers to site markets on public property, based on experiences of itself and other markets. Church parking lots are also a possibility; however, for security reasons, she could not allow market users to use church restrooms. Mary Buckman asked whether a Wednesday market was viable. Landis replied that in a town this size, a mid-week market would always be smaller, but completely feasible. It would help to schedule it in a time and place accessible to those working. She noted that farmers would not be there were it unviable; in Europe, people often shop for food every day.

Dennis Iverson remarked that Starker Arts Park is still off the beaten path; the current fairgrounds site allows for a sign to be post on the road to advertise it. Landis responded that there is no research to indicate whether the fairgrounds sign actually helps or not. The Saturday market has no sign at all. She noted that the Starker site now has housing types of all income levels in close proximity to the park, as well as some employers and schools within walking distance. The fairgrounds site, in comparison, is much more isolated. There would be a significant cost reduction in not using the fairgrounds site, which could be banked for participating in any downtown CIP project for a market. Keller asked if water and restrooms were necessary. Landis said that restrooms and water are important; though power is optional and negotiable. Music does not have to be amplified. Both the sites have restrooms. It would be affordable for the market to reimburse the Department for its impacts.

Denise Nervik asked whether the market was proposing using Sunset Park or Starker Arts Park. Landis replied that she would consult with staff on which restrooms to direct customers to. She was thinking that the market itself could go into the new Sunset Park parking lot; she wasn't sure how much larger the market would have to be before it shifted to the grassy slope at nearby Starker Arts Park. The market would work with community garden users to ensure that their needs in using the site were not compromised.

Nervik asked whether a sign would be put up. Landis said she would likely put up two signs on the day of the event; she sometimes uses smaller signs, as well. Griffiths asked what the market paid for using the fairgrounds. Landis replied that including the marquee, the bill for this season will be \$5,200 for 32 weeks; the entire annual budget is under \$60,000. Several of those weeks typically are sited inside the auditorium during bad weather around November. With nowhere to get out of the weather at Starker, the Board could choose to shorten the season; she noted the Saturday market does not go indoors in bad weather.

Buckman asked if any school district properties were an option; she suggested an empty lot at Western View. School District Liaison Mingo replied that the library there has become a training center; that asphalt play area was full of parked cars today. Landis said that while there is no exact timeframe for making the change, the market season will begin in mid-April 2009, so it is in the best interest to be able to inform all the market's customers by the end of this season what plans are for next year.

Daniels asked whether the market had considered a different time period; he related that San Rafael has a Thursday market that runs from about 3 p.m. to 9 p.m., located on the main street in the downtown. Landis noted that this is true in many towns in Southern California. She stated that a 3-7 p.m. schedule, changing to 6 p.m. in October, could be a very viable schedule. Many families shop as part of their evening plans and there is substantial interest in the idea. However, the site dictates the hours in which the market can operate, and this schedule would not fit patterns of use at Starker and Sunset Parks. She cautioned that to operate a market with a 3 p.m. start time, other vehicles would have to be off the site by 1 p.m.

VIII. RE-NAMING OF FORMER MLK JR. PARK. Daniels noted that while the area was formerly named as a park, this is an opportunity to call it something else, such as a natural area, which, to him, is more in keeping with its use now and in the future. Emery stated she is looking for a recommendation on a name to send to the City Council. She agreed that the Board could consider not calling it a park, since, due to limitations, there are few park amenities possible at the site.

Planner Jackie Rochefort stated that in September 2005, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission asked the Board to rename another park that had more active uses for MLK, Jr. Park; the Board chose to rename Walnut Park. This left the former MLK, Jr. Park without a name.

In 1992 the City purchased two parcels of park land east of the river, totaling 108 acres. Most of the park land east of the bypass was named Alan B. Berg Regional Park. She said the Department is following the City Council policy on naming process. Following a Gazette-Times article on the process, a number of suggestions were submitted. She highlighted the criteria for naming a public facility.

Rochefort related that a number of suggestions were received, including from a Gazette-Times editorial, to rename the park Orleans Park, since the 27-acre area is on the site of the historic city of Orleans, which was washed away in an 1861 flood. She cited a letter from historian Mary Gallagher on the history of the city; it was about 15 blocks in size. Rochefort highlighted a dozen other suggestions.

Fisher asked whether using the phrase "Open Space" or "Natural Area" would preclude opportunities for running trails, benches or other such improvements in the future. Rochefort said it would not; those were common passive recreation amenities in such areas. Fisher related that there had previously been a plan to put a running/walking trail through the area and loop through Berg Park, as well. Daniels added that the bypass bridge was designed to accommodate a pedestrian/bicycle path. Fisher noted the Van Buren Bridge already does provide such access to the area; also, the Van Buren Bridge planning committee still intends a pedestrian overpass there.

Nervik suggested the suffix "Natural Wetlands Area". Rochefort said portions of the area are now under agricultural lease and portions are wetlands. DeGhetto stated that the riparian corridor on the east riverbank has undergone several restoration processes. Rochefort added that the site has been discussed as a possible mitigation site for industrial areas by the airport, so more wetland areas could be restored there.

During discussion, Rochefort said that naming depends on how the park is intended to be developed; if passive recreation or little or no development is contemplated, then it should be designated a natural area or open space, not a park. Also, the Board could change a name from natural area to park, or vice versa. Daniels stated that the Board needs to go through a review of open space names; with staff helping in developing criteria. For example, Alan B. Berg Park will probably end up renamed as Alan B. Berg Natural Area. Rochefort added that at the time the Open Space Advisory Commission sunsetted, they were beginning to have that discussion.

Buckman stated that she didn't want a possible name to guide future activities there. Rochefort said that there is a master plan for both Berg and former MLK, Jr. Parks; both are seriously constrained by lack of vehicular access. There are also protections for wetlands, as well. Griffiths asked about soil quality; DeGhetto replied that much of the soil to the west of the bypass is of high quality; much of the area east of the bypass is also of high quality, except for the area that was formerly landfill, which is settling. Fisher added that he has walked the area over the years, and on the east side of the bypass, one can frequently smell methane gas on the former landfill site. He related the farmer leasing the former landfill site said that agricultural equipment frequently snags on junk, as the soil settles around it; the area west of the bypass is fine farming land.

DeGhetto added that he is often asked by the public why an area without any amenities is called a park. Emery concurred that the public is sometimes confused by the use of the word "park" used with a natural area, since they have an expectation that there will be certain amenities; staff is concerned with this. Daniels added that the County uses the phrase "natural area" as well, so the City's similar use would promote common terminology.

Buckman moved and Keller seconded to name the area the Orleans Natural Area; motion passed unanimously.

Buckman highlighted opportunities for Willamette River Water Trail access there; also, some citizen's dream that one day a pedestrian bridge may extend across the river; she reiterated that she didn't want to set the outcome of the area just by naming it a natural area.

IX. PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS PLAN PRESENTATION.

Parks Operations Supervisor Steve DeGhetto gave a PowerPoint presentation of an overview of the Corvallis Parks and Natural Areas Sustainable Park Operations Plan Update. He said the 200-plus page document responded to Council sustainability policy. The plan has over 50 hyperlinks to other resource agencies and documentation. The plan will help evaluate and guide management and maintenance of parks and natural areas. The plan is dynamic, so things will be added over time. The plan helps provide management consistency as staff turnover occurs. He highlighted the work of Margie Powell in writing, editing and helping to produce the plan.

DeGhetto said the plan sought to help the organization minimize its impact on both local and global ecosystems. It promotes efficient use of financial resources; and purchase of goods that are durable, reusable and non-toxic, and have a take-back program for them.

He said that the Project Methodology included resources, activities, waste, and by-products. Project Development includes considerations of sustainability, impact and cost. A Project Ranking matrix will be used for all city projects. Major management issues include public safety, preservation and conservation of threatened and endangered species, preservation of historic and cultural sites, providing wise stewardship, budget stability, providing for multiple use, new development, and sustainability.

DeGhetto highlighted the different types of parks, which have different service levels. There are over 600 acres of developed park areas and over 1,000 acres of natural areas. The plan uses industry best management practices.

He said the natural areas section includes habitat inventories, best management practices, operation activities, levels of attention, conservation easements, reference materials, and maps. Considerations include threatened and endangered species and other sensitive species in both the City and County systems, and mapping them in an inventory. There is a cooperative agreement with Benton County on a Habitat Conservation plan. He highlighted the ESA Salmon Response Plan and the Integrated Vegetation Pest Management Plan, which has worked well over the last decade. He related that salmon have been documented to rest in area streams during high water events.

He highlighted an instance where Nervik asked why an area of camas had been mowed; the person on the mower probably didn't know about it. With this plan, documentation of such areas will prevent such accidents. DeGhetto noted the plan was GIS-based and maps such areas, making them available to future staffers. The plan captures institutional knowledge of what has (and hasn't) worked over the years.

He said the plan was part of the public record; though it may be too large to put on the website, it would be available as hard copy or on disc. He noted that as the Board makes decisions on aesthetics and values for areas, operations can make adjustments to levels of attention to open areas or service areas to parks.

Nervik asked whether there had been any consideration to irrigation and sustainability. DeGhetto replied that it had been taken into account; he added that even native plants often need watering as they establish during their first few years. Rochefort added that many new parks have temporary irrigation equipment intended to last three to five years.

DeGhetto stated the plan was designed to be a dynamic operations reference tool. In the absence of more formalized site sensitive management plans, the operations plan will allow for time-sensitive maintenance and restoration activities to occur.

Emery recognized DeGhetto for his work on the plan, which is a very important document that will be in use for years. She related that the Department is now getting inquiries from other communities about the plan.

Griffiths asked about the status of protecting native oaks and other plants in natural areas that currently lack management plans. DeGhetto replied that many areas have been classified according to habitat, such as Oak Woodland, Oak Savannas, Mixed Conifer Forest, Upland Prairie, Wetland Prairie and Riparian. Best management practices have been noted that relate to each of these types of habitats to help guide operations and as a budget tool in considering service levels for these areas.

Griffiths highlighted the potential cost savings of such management and wanted to hear more about the plan in the future. DeGhetto added the plan will be sent out for peer review.

- X. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.** Chair Daniels postponed discussion; he noted the document needed more specificity. Buckman related that there had previously been discussion of dividing up the work.
- XI. ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.