

CITY OF CORVALLIS
MINUTES OF THE PARKS, NATURAL AREAS AND RECREATION BOARD
JULY 15, 2010

Attendance

Kent Daniels
 Mary Buckman
 Nick Todorovich
 Randy Willard
 Randy Keller
 Joel Hirsch, Council Liaison

Absent/Excused

Jen de-Vries, Chair
 Lynda Wolfenbarger, Vice-Chair
 Charles Fisher
 Betty Griffiths, Greenbelt Land Trust
 Greg Lecuyer, 509-J District Rep.
 Alejandra Gonzalez

Staff

Karen Emery, Director
 Jackie Rochefort, Parks Planner
 Dave Phillips, Parks Operations Supervisor
 Mark Lindgren, Recorder

Visitors

America McMillin, Parks Operations
 Specialist
 Stewart Wershow

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. Pesticide Free- Water Wise Demonstration Projects	X		
VI. Staff Reports	X		
VII. Board Member/City Council Liaison Reports	X		
VIII. Board Elections	X		
IX. Revenue Brainstorming	X		
X. Goals Update	X		
XI. Adjournment	X		The next regular Parks, Natural Areas and Recreation Board meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m., August 19, 2010 at the Downtown Fire Station Main Meeting Room.

CONTENT OF DISCUSSION

- I. CALL TO ORDER:** Kent Daniels called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m. in the absence of the chair and vice chair; he noted that there wasn't a quorum.

II. INTRODUCTIONS.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES. Mary Buckman noted that “Crystal Lake” was misspelled on page 9, second paragraph of the June 17, 2010 minutes; there was no quorum so the minutes could not be approved.

IV. VISITORS’ PROPOSITIONS. Csilla Andor noted there had been a serious accident at the Skate Park recently involving a five year-old riding a scooter who collided with a teenager riding a bike. She suggested setting specific hours for younger children to use the facility, due to the differences in size and pattern of use. Buckman asked what proportion of park users were small; Andor replied that roughly five of forty were smaller. She added that there was an emerging crowd of younger users. (about age ten or younger); she said that size was an issue. Randy Willard suggested she contact the Benton County Skateboarding Alliance.

Director Karen Emery related that after that incident, she requested a formal risk assessment of the facility by the City’s insurance company. Staff discussed imposing a size requirement to use the bowl, based on height. There was also discussion regarding posting hours of use for specific ages, but there is no way to enforce that. She said that Supervisor Dave Phillips will work with the Alliance to make it safer. Planner Jackie Rochefort related that the lower skate section was specifically designed with younger users in mind, with the thought that older, larger users would use the more challenging terrain; however, bikers tend to try everything, so that hasn’t worked out as designed. Andor asked if the facility was designed for bike use; Emery replied that it was indeed designed for multiple use. She added that the Alliance has found that most users are respectful users; however, accidents do happen.

Buckman asked how many accidents occurred at the facility; Emery replied that there are an average of three ambulance calls to the facility each year. Daniels said he’s found that bikes seem to go faster than skateboards do. He suggested it was worth considering the ideas of hours for different users. Randy Willard suggested that early morning could be best for young users. He added that he had injured himself riding a board there while avoiding collision with a small child. Keller noted that some danger may be related to bikes being quieter and faster than skateboards.

V. PESTICIDE FREE-WATERWISE DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS. Park Operations Specialist America McMillin said project partners included Civic Beautification and Urban Forestry Advisory Commission (CBUF), Public Works and volunteers. The department has identified sustainability goals of using less water and pesticides in landscapes and concluded that it should encourage demonstration sites. Two demonstration projects are located at a street island at 18th and van Buren and a 65’ by 12’ site at Riverfront Park. CBUF member David Sandrock donated the design for the Riverfront site; the same plant materials were used at both sites.

The Riverfront site is located near the fountain. It was formerly irrigated, planted with blue fescue and was weedy. During the project, all vegetation and irrigation heads were removed. A fertile loam and pea gravel mix was added and it was planted in October 2008.

McMillin related that the 18th and Van Buren street island was surrounded by concrete and infested with thistles; the neighborhood group had not been able to keep up maintaining it. It was first excavated down one foot to remove weed seed and roots; then Public Works excavated another foot. A one-time chemical Casuron barrier and landscape fabric were installed and the same Riverfront plant list was used in the February 2009 planting.

The Riverfront site is hand watered during the hottest time of the year. A temporary drip system was installed at 18th and Van Buren, due to the harsh location; there are two gallon per hour emitters, one per plant, watering 7 days a week for 5 minutes over a 20 week watering season. They wanted to check differences in watering; there were no plant losses at 18th and Van Buren and only two lost at the non-irrigated Riverfront site. At Riverfront, 20,384 gallons of water were saved; a total of 500 gallons were used during hand watering on a few of the hottest days. The 18th and Van Buren site saved an estimated 19,251 gallons of water for 2009; a total of 4,820 gallons were used. It took ten hours for two people to install the drip system.

She noted that the plantings leave all the dead plant materials in place; it lets Nature do its thing and gives birds and other animals food and habitat. Falling leaves mulch the site and supply nitrogen. The effect is similar to an English garden, with plants melding into each other. She said the Riverfront site took 130.5 hours total in 2008, with 10.7 hours in 2009 (5.2 hours weeding and 5.5 watering; not much over a year). The 18th and van Buren site required 145.7 total hours including planting, in 2008; and 23.5 total in 2009, with 3.3 hours weeding, 20 for installing the irrigation and 0.2 hours to maintain the system. She related that she's gotten a lot of citizen input, especially at Riverfront. People express interest in the landscape, the flowers, and the concept; many said they were trying to emulate it at their own property.

She concluded both sites did well over a tough winter. She said she now believes the concept works. She got another a grant from the City of Corvallis Sustainable Purchasing Program to fund another demonstration site in front of the Osborn Aquatic Center.

Keller asked if the Riverfront site would be weaned off irrigation; she replied it would be, after three years. At some point, the plants will have to be thinned and can be used elsewhere. Recorder Mark Lindgren asked whether the cost of labor for hand watering a few times in summer was more expensive than materials and labor in installing the drip system; she replied she hadn't done that analysis. Rochefort related that the bulbouts downtown were a joint project with the Madison Avenue Task Force.

Daniels related that he, Keller and other neighbors worked to maintain the 18th and Van Buren the site for a long time; however, the numbers of volunteers shrank over time. He said this approach would save resources and staff time over the years. He asked whether it was an approach that would be more widely adopted. Emery replied that some cities that have tried going entirely that way have reverted, needing to use pesticides in some locations. Phillips said he liked the adaptive management possibilities; we can learn from it over several years and find models that work. Rochefort emphasized that these are demonstration gardens; these plants will have a life span and are more appropriate for some areas but not others. She said the same issue applied to native plants, where the right plant must be put in the right place. Daniels asked about leaving the dead material on perennials; McMillan replied it is a matter of aesthetics, not the health of the plant.

- VI. STAFF REPORTS.** Director Emery related that staff are uploading programs in preparation for online automated registration in September. They're recruiting in-house for a 0.5 Senior Administrative Specialist; the position was reduced to half-time during budget reductions and the previous staffer in that position chose to move to a full-time Public Works position.

She highlighted the annual Chalk it Up contest; an all-time high of 154 children drew sidewalk chalk art and competed for prizes. The Children's Parade will be held in August. Family Fun Night in Central Park had an all-time high of 270 family and youth participating. The Osborn Aquatic Center preliminary budget appears that it will be in the black for only the second time in the history of the

department operating it; this is largely due to an effort to reduce costs through lower staffing levels and deferring several projects. Parks and Natural Areas staff supported the Red, White and Blues Festival.

Staff are working towards changing the Land Development Code regarding hazard tree removal in historic districts; currently code requires that the Historic Resources Commission (HRC) review removal of hazard trees in historic districts. It is proposed to put that responsibility on the Urban Forester; that process should be finished by the end of the year. Daniels asked whether CBUF would be involved in the hazard tree removal process; Emery clarified that it is only a change in the process that currently requires the Urban Forestry to produce a very large amount of documentation and work with the HRC public hearing process. She noted that HRC members do not have arboricultural backgrounds. Forester Merja will continue to notify CBUF wherever possible. Emery clarified that the change only affects hazard trees in historic districts.

Phillips related that Operations staff were finishing up the Herbert Farm Natural Area management plan process; the public process was concluded last week. The draft will go to the technical group and look at what came up during the public process; a final plan should be finished in August; the stakeholder group will meet in August. The 2010 Youth Parks Corps, comprised of forty youth with two crew leaders, is busy working spreading bark mulch and other maintenance tasks.

Phillips cautioned that with fewer staff, less operational money and the loss of the Cornerstone maintenance contract (about forty hours per week), staff are rethinking about prioritizing how and where service level reductions should be accomplished. New service areas could focus on highly visible and rentable areas, such as ball fields, the rose garden, all of Crystal Lake, and shelters. He noted that not all parks have rentable features; the result could be higher rates of maintenance in rentable areas and less service elsewhere. There could be a reduction in mowing or irrigation frequency. There is rough mowing of some parks for fire suppression. There could also be a mix of service levels in some parks. The budget reduction could affect delaying the writing of management plans temporarily.

Buckman countered that the places that are rentable should be paid for by rents; she noted that three-quarters of funding comes from the property tax; however, by taking this approach, we're doing a disservice to those paying property taxes by focusing property tax dollars on rentable areas. Phillips replied that this is just one model; however, there will have to be reductions somewhere. Emery added that staff were concerned about putting resources into the rentable spaces so they continue to be rented. There is also the desire to increase the number of tournaments held at Crystal Lake Sports Fields. Phillips added that in high intensity areas like the rose garden, rentable plazas of the Riverfront and other landscaped areas, it doesn't take too long to lose a lot of ground in such highly maintained areas and for them to become much less attractive.

Buckman stated areas like the rose garden should pay for themselves; she shouldn't have to pay taxes to support someone's wedding. Willard asked when the proposal would be more concrete; Phillips replied it would be ready at the next PNARB meeting. Daniels added he was concerned about delaying management plans; in areas such as Witham Oaks, there has been public concern with suppressing firs that are slowly killing off native oaks. Phillips replied that Witham Oaks would be an easy place to do that without a management plan, such as what was done at Chip Ross Park. Rochefort added that though it is not a best management practice, Witham Oaks Natural Area was partly purchased because the public really liked the firs there; so there need to be selective choices in removing firs and in educating the public on that work.

Daniels asked how staff felt about the Herbert Farm and Natural Area process; he felt staff did a good job, but it seemed to take a long time. Phillips noted that staff support changed a third of the way in and

the change was not seamless, so it took a couple months longer than it would've otherwise. Rochefort added that the desire was for plan to be based in scientific analysis; also, the public process was probably longer than optimal.

Parks Planner Rochefort replied a grant was received from State Parks to repave Central Park Plaza; staff are waiting for a notice to proceed, and are working on planning with MATF, CBUF, the Art Center and staff, especially in light of the heavy public use of the area; and considering trees, benches and artwork.

The State Parks grant for the Lincoln tennis courts was turned down; this is because there was no trails or connective component to the project; also, grantors felt the sport was too narrow in relation to the number of users. There is some money to help improve the courts, though. She met with a tennis professional, who felt that the damage was more aesthetic and suggested ways to substantially improve the court.

She related that the CIP proposals would be approved at the August PNARB meeting; they must be submitted to Public Works the next day. She asked for volunteers to serve on the subcommittee reviewing the proposals at a meeting in late July or early August; Buckman said she could participate in early August; Willard volunteered as well. She noted that the CIP is a 5-year planning document; even if there are not immediately funds for a project, it can be listed as a placeholder, which allows the city to apply for grants for it.

Rochefort reported that the neighborhood group that recently asked the board for approval to apply for a Neighborhood Empowerment grant for a Peanut Park community garden was successful in getting their grant; staff is working carefully with them on what is really a demonstration project and to ensure everything is in order. Emery added that the board required that a formal agreement be completed, as well as with insurance provided by the user group.

VII. BOARD MEMBER/CITY COUNCIL LIAISON REPORTS. Emery related that Council Liaison Joel Hirsch participated in the Mayor's proclamation for July's National Park and Recreation Month. Hirsch related that he was a judge at the Chalk it Up contest. He added the Council will consider the CIP next Wednesday. Daniels related he heard Joel's band perform the on 4th of July as part of the Deluxe Brothers. Keller asked what happened to the Majestic Theater bee swarm; Daniels replied that a Peacock employee sprayed an insecticide and killed most of them; a specialist will remove the rest; it has not been a problem for the theater.

Daniels related that the director of the Majestic Theater, Tim Flowerday, resigned last week; he said Flowerday had done good things for the facility, which is moving forward. He highlighted an upcoming event with a musical group "OK Go" that does videos. Hirsch noted the videos were impressive and the band is famous; they will be here for several weeks, creating substantial economic development.

VIII. BOARD ELECTIONS. Emery said that board election needed to be postponed due to the lack of quorum. Daniels suggested voting for the current two officers.

IX. REVENUE BRAINSTORMING. Daniels suggested starting with the process, and returning to it in September. Emery highlighted Betty Griffiths' ideas. She said revenue ideas could be further discussed at the September meeting.

Board suggestions included installing a parking meter to take in donations at the dog park; adding child care services to OAC; creating a dog related fundraiser; setting up "adopt a park" funds; growing native plants and sell the seeds; selling ads at facilities such as sports fields; putting logos on vehicles in return

for sponsorship of park maintenance; leasing park lands for wine grapes or other high value crops; consolidating with Philomath if it would save money; combining with the county for a county-wide system operated by the city (not necessarily a recreation district); considering a parks and recreation district for all of the city and county; selling the rights to a park name for ten years; adding a park maintenance fee to utility bills; putting sponsor names on trash cans; soliciting donations from local businesses for a Parks and Recreation account; holding a fundraiser/dance concert with music donated from local musicians; seeking a huge donation for an endowment from a wealthy benefactor; creating a golf tournament; increasing tournaments such as ultimate Frisbee; having fundraisers for specific projects like playgrounds; selling concessions at big events; getting business sponsorship of events; re-publicizing the donation check box on water bills; holding triathlons that connect as many parks as possible; offering land leases for land currently leased for grass seed for a higher value crops; holding a Majestic Theater event; creating a \$2 Park charge on utility bills; increasing use of volunteers; renovating and selling or renting Gaylord house; having neighborhood groups take over maintenance of park areas; selling ads on busses; and promoting department rental facilities.

Emery said she will bring the list back in September. She suggested emailing any further ideas to staffer Chrissy Bevans between now and September. Daniels said city-county district concept was previously brought up by the City Manager and there are many examples of such districts that work. Willard said it could work well; Buckman said it is a huge project. Buckman suggested consolidating City and County policing to save money. Stewart Wershow suggested using other funding sources other than property taxes, such as stormwater fees; for example, dog waste bags could also be funding by stormwater fees, since they reduce waste in water. Daniels suggested working with the County to add a fee on the landfill dedicated to Parks and Rec.

- X. GOALS UPDATE.** Daniels related that he'd revised Rochefort's meeting notes. Participants looked at how to organize planning for doing management and master plans for parks. There will be another meeting in August. Willard related he will be working on collaboration efforts.
- XI. ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.