

**CITY OF CORVALLIS**  
**MINUTES OF THE PARKS, NATURAL AREAS AND RECREATION BOARD**  
**January 16, 2014**

**Attendance**

Betty Griffiths, Chair  
 Lynda Wolfenbarger, Vice-Chair  
 Joshua Baur  
 Deb Rose  
 Ralph Alig  
 Phil Hays  
 Marc Vomocil  
 Tatiana Dierwechter  
 Michael Mayes  
 Joel Hirsch, City Council Liaison  
 Kevin Bogotin, 509-J District Liaison

**Staff**

Karen Emery, Director  
 Jude Geist, Parks Operations Supervisor  
 Claire Pate, Recorder

**Guests**

Chad DeMers  
 Laura Duncan Allen

**Absent/Excused**

Jon Soule  
 Ed MacMullan

	Agenda Item	Summary of Recommendations/Actions
I.	Call to Order/Introductions	
II.	Approval of Meeting Minutes: November 21, and December 5, 2013.	Approved, with revisions
III.	Visitors' Propositions	
IV.	Marys River Boardwalk Project Update	
V.	Sunnyside School House Update	
VI.	Marketing Goal Report	
VII.	Alternative Funding Goal Report	
VIII.	General Review of Goals	
IX.	Budget Discussion Follow Up	
X.	Staff Report/Other Business	
XI.	Adjournment – 8:10pm	The next regularly scheduled meeting will be on February 20, 2014, at 6:30 p.m.

**CONTENT OF DISCUSSION**

**I. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS**

Chair Betty Griffiths called the meeting of the Parks, Natural Areas and Recreation Board to order at 6:30 p.m. at the Downtown Fire Station, 400 NW Harrison Boulevard. She asked to add to the end of the agenda a follow-up discussion relating to the upcoming budget.

## II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

### November 21, 2013:

Corrections noted:

Page 9, Par. 3, 1<sup>st</sup> line: delete the word “asked.”

**Motion:** Vomocil moved to approve the minutes as revised. Wolfenbarger seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### December 5, 2013:

Corrections noted:

Page 3, Par. 2, 5<sup>th</sup> line: delete “ways to” to read “come up with different ways to manage that.”

Page 7, Par. 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> line: add “said” after Alig.

**Motion:** Hays moved to approve the minutes as revised. Vomocil seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

## III. VISITORS' PROPOSITIONS.

**Chad DeMers**, Corvallis Bike Park Coalition, spoke on behalf of a group of bicyclists who are advocating for a bicycle park facility in the Martin Luther King Jr. Park. They are currently maintaining the BMX track park in South Corvallis and have logged over 500 hours of volunteer time doing the work of adding features and making it safe for children. Their desire is to have a bike facility for children in north Corvallis. They would start small by putting in some beginner pump tracks and child-sized track loops, and make it a trial run. This would make biking accessible to kids in this area, in addition to having the BMX facility in south Corvallis.

In response to commissioner questions, Mr. DeMers said that they have over 130 members on a Facebook page. Over 70 people have logged the 500-plus hours of volunteer work since September 2012. They had first proposed a pump track next to the skatepark to have a facility out of the rain, but the permits were too expensive because of its proximity to the river. The size they would need to begin with would be an area of 50' x 20' placed in proximity to the playground equipment at MLK Jr. Park. The features would be dirt that could be moved with a shovel. No equipment would be used, and the work would be done and maintained by volunteers.

Staff stated that there is a plan in place for the park, and it would need to be reviewed. Upgrades are planned for the playground and the barn during FY14-15, and this project might be able to tie into that work. Staff said they would review the existing plan for the park, and invited Mr. DeMers to meet with Parks Supervisor Jude Geist to discuss the feasibility of adding this facility and to put together a more detailed plan to bring back to PNARB for consideration.

**Laura Duncan Allen** said she had spoken to PNARB before but wanted to follow up on her concerns about enforcement of the dog leash requirement in the vicinity of the Crystal Boat ramp. Geist said that staff had looked at the area and found that there was ample signage, though they would likely add some signage reminding dog-owners who are leaving the off-leash area to leash their dogs. Otherwise, it is up to the Corvallis Police to provide enforcement when notified of an incident. Timeliness of response is an issue, since the offender might leave prior to an officer being able to respond.

Ms. Duncan also shared her concerns about litter and camping in the riparian zone. There are several homeless camps across the river in Orleans Natural Area, and on the Corvallis side there are remnants of camps and trash. Under the Van Buren Bridge are also campsites. She has been in correspondence with ODOT in this regard. When the river rises, a lot of the trash will be washed

into the river. Her hope was that a dumpster and bathroom facilities might be provided, along with enforcement of no camping.

Geist said that staff and police officers do periodic postings and cleanups, but it is an ongoing problem with campers that are displaced moving to another location. They try to deal with the Orleans area once a quarter. There are safety and liability issues, so volunteers cannot be used for the work. The ability to do more frequent patrols and cleanups comes down to availability of resources and staff time to do the work. Griffiths suggested that Ms. Allen talk to Police Chief Sassaman as well as the Linn County Sheriff's office about additional patrols for the area.

There was a brief discussion about campground facilities for the homeless, and it was suggested that Ms. Allen contact the Homeless Coalition to offer her suggestions and to get more information about what they are doing in this regard.

#### **IV. MARYS RIVER BOARDWALK PROJECT.**

Director Emery recapped that the Marys River boardwalk had been washed away during the flood of 2012. The City received a FEMA grant to replace the boardwalk and they were in the process of doing some active fundraising for \$64,000 in matching funds to move forward on the project. The Friends of Corvallis Parks and Recreation has taken on the project. There is a meeting scheduled for 5:30pm on January 23, 2014, at the Parks and Recreation Administrative offices to provide attendees with more information on the project itself and to discuss opportunities for involvement as well as donating funds. There is a follow up meeting on January 30, 2014, for those who might want to talk about the design for the replacement. The neighborhood will be sponsoring a fund-raising event set for March 3, 2014, which will have live music and entertainment; along with some other informal coffee events. The hope is that the money will be collected by June 2014. Rochefort can give an update to PNARB at the February meeting.

#### **V. SUNNYSIDE SCHOOL HOUSE UPDATE.**

Emery informed the Board that the City Council had accepted donation of the Sunnyside School, and Park Planner Rochefort was immersed in the details of moving the structure at the end of January. Permits are in place and they have received an anonymous donation in the amount of \$100,000 to help cover the costs. The Friends of Parks and Recreation are seeking additional donations to complete the funding of the move, rebuilding the roof and foundation work. Griffiths added that they have received \$22,000 and are looking for an additional \$3,000. Any funds collected over that amount can be used for future phases of the renovation.

#### **VI. MARKETING GOAL REPORT.**

Dierwechter passed out meeting notes (**Attachment A**) from the last meeting of the Outreach, Education and Advocacy Subcommittee. She said that much had changed in the six months since they met, but the themes were still appropriate. At that time, they did not have the levy results. Since then, they have met with staff to ensure there is an understanding of the role of PNARB in terms of advocacy, so some of the concepts included in the handout are dated. The overall theme, however, is that much more can be done to let the community know about the wonderful things Parks and Recreation does and how they can be involved in supporting those efforts. Dierwechter briefly covered the rest of the ideas contained in the meeting notes, and said that the team would be meeting again soon to update ideas and strategies, and prioritize with staff two or three efforts to work on.

Emery said that staff has just put together a department-wide marketing team and it would be useful to have a joint meeting with the subcommittee and this newly formed group. Staff's first effort was to put together a baseline of what is already being done in this regard. It was agreed that a joint meeting would be a good next step.

Griffiths said that it would be really helpful to get the perspective of a high school student on the PNARB; Bogotin said he would try to find a good candidate for that though there is no vacancy on the Board at this time.

## **VII. ALTERNATIVE FUNDING GOAL REPORT.**

Rose said that the team had met several times and has a lengthy list of prioritized ideas. They were prioritized by a number of metrics, from the potential dollars that could be raised to the amount of effort it would take and potential success of a program. Staff took the information and came up with a list of the top five ideas. Their next meeting will be to look at those top five ideas. Rose then shared a lengthy list of ideas that had been generated which included naming rights for buildings/rooms/trails; expansion of "dog day" or week; having private concessions or food trucks at parks for special events; pursuing grant opportunities; having an annual campaign; collaborating with the medical community on therapy classes at the pool or Senior Center; and many more.

## **VIII. GENERAL REVIEW OF GOALS.**

Griffiths suggested that they do a general review of the goals and the work that has been done to date. Goal 7 was discussed first, in response to questions from Vomocil.

**Goal 7 (Develop a Parks and Recreation District by 2015):** On request of City Council, Parks and Recreation staff had done some research on formation of a district and looking at potential boundaries for the district. That information was given to City Council, but because of the timing and financial uncertainty of tax compression, no action was taken. It was also indicated that it could be a citizen initiative, and not a Council initiative. A group of citizens would need to propose a district and then work with the City on details. Emery added that the largest barrier to forming a district is the tax compression issue. Each new district that is formed diminishes the capacity for other taxing districts to levy additional funding. She said that she would send a copy of the feasibility study to the entire Board for their information. Griffiths said that since it was one of PNARB's goals, they should have another discussion about it after reading the feasibility study.

**Goal 1 (Advocate prioritizing improvements to existing neighborhood parks, trails and natural areas):** Hays said that a few years ago he chaired a joint committee that had been formed with City/County and Greenbelt Land Trust to look at priorities for the trail system. The committee postponed doing any more work until they could get a listing and map of the existing trails. That work has now been done and he will be contacting the people who were on the original committee to see if they would like to continue on with the mission. The group should get some direction from either PNARB or from Parks and Recreation staff so that he can focus discussions.

It was agreed that Hays would get together with Geist to develop some starting points for the subcommittee's work. Geist said that now that the trails are mapped they have identified the need for different linkages and they can use that as a starting point. They will also look at neighborhood parks' deficiencies and do some prioritization.

**Goal 2 (Implement efficiencies between city, county, OSU, LBCC and school district by 2014; e.g. sharing equipment and personnel):** Baur said that the subcommittee had not yet met, but that he would try to get a meeting organized. Hays added that the City, County, OSU College of Forestry and Oregon Department of Forestry were already working on agreements to share small equipment. Heritage Tree program is also a joint effort.

**Goal 3 (Develop a plan to increase funding for Parks and Recreation):** This was addressed earlier by Rose.

**Goal 4 (Expand public awareness, communication and advocacy for all Parks and Recreation facilities, land and programs):** This was addressed earlier by Dierwechter.

**Goal 5 (Develop or expand community relationships and partnerships to pursue joint goals – non-governmental):** Mayes said that nothing had been done, other than to review the list that was updated. He will try to get the subcommittee together within the next month.

**Goal 6 (Develop and expand access and recreational opportunities, such as outdoor education, for underserved youth and families):** Wolfenbarger said that once the Family Assistance program funding is resolved they can continue their work in this area.

## **IX. BUDGET DISCUSSION – FOLLOW UP.**

Griffiths said that staff had been asked to follow up on several questions that the Board had at the last meeting. Emery responded to the questions as follows:

- **Was the “five-year expense average” a fair process to use for next year’s budget?** Departments were given a fixed budget number which reflected a five-year spending average. For Parks and Recreation, the fixed expenditure number for FY14-15 will be \$292,000 less than the current budget, a 5% cut. There was discussion at the last PNARB meeting about how this would impact the Family Assistance program, which is a scholarship program provided to low-income families so that they can participate in programs. City Council had asked that this program be marketed in light of the increases made to the fees in order to implement cost recovery for programs. The Family Assistance program provided an avenue for people who could not afford the new fees.

Last year, Parks and Recreation spent \$139,000 on Family Assistance scholarships, having reached out to lower-income families who wanted to participate in various programs. With application of the five-year spending average, Family Assistance would be budgeted at \$33,000 for FY14-15. This is due to the fact that in the first four of the five years, little was expended in this program. Last year, with the marketing of the program and the increase in usage, the amount spent increased substantially. The reality is that the program demand will be the same as, or greater than, the \$139,000 spent last year. For the current budget year, \$80,000 has already been spent and the busiest time is yet to come in the spring. The budgeting process can be complex to explain, in that the expenditure for the scholarships is also counted as revenue towards meeting the mandate for recovering the cost of programs.

- **Can Family Assistance be paid through United Way funds, to which the City contributes?** It is possible, but those monies are a fixed amount so funds allocated to this program would mean taking away funding from other programs. City Council would have to weigh in on this to determine if they would like to redirect those dollars.

- **What happens if not enough fees are collected to cover costs of the programs?** Fees are calculated to cover the costs of providing a program, so if those fees are not coming in there is likely a similar decrease in expenditures such as for instructor costs. Expenditures have to be held to the budgeted amount, although there is a mechanism called a supplemental budget request wherein City Council can give the department authority to exceed its budget if, for instance, it has received additional revenue through grants or donations for a certain expenditure. An example of this for the current year is that \$2,500 was put into the budget for memorial benches; however, this year by December over \$8,000 was collected. Staff plans to go to City Council with a request to expend that extra amount over the \$2,500.
- **What is the City Council's fund balance policy?** Emery said that she does not have a lot of detailed knowledge about this, but the City Council adopted a policy to have three months of payroll in a reserve fund. To get to that fund balance, the intent is to appropriate 10% of that targeted amount every year until the target is met. The City's target is \$6,300,000.

Griffiths said that the budget questions had been asked to ascertain whether the process was equitable for the Parks and Recreation Department in light of the Family Assistance program expense and the fact that in previous years some positions had been left vacant. It was decided that she, Council Liaison Hirsch, Emery, Dierwechter, and Mayes would meet to have an additional discussion and determine whether further action would be appropriate. Any recommendation from PNARB would have to be made at the February meeting.

#### X. **STAFF REPORTS/OTHER BUSINESS.**

Emery said that the new playground has been put in at Tunison Park, and the irrigation system will be upgraded. The park will be up to date and the neighborhood is pleased with the results.

A stainless steel replacement of the Central Park squirrel has been securely installed. This was a donation by the Madison Avenue Task Force and was done by the original artist.

In December, a SantaCross race event was held in Avery Park, providing a family friendly bicycle event for the community. There was some turf impact which was anticipated; however the organizer is responsible for all of the turf repair work. There were over 200 participants, who were very appreciative of the opportunity to compete in Corvallis. It resulted in some additional revenue which could be put into the Family Assistance program, and donations of bicycle equipment.

Baur shared that the Public Participation Task Force "world café" had been a useful exercise for generating ideas on how to improve communications between committees, and with the City. There were several City Councilors in attendance and lots of good discussion. The results will be posted on the City website.

Council Liaison Hirsch said that the City Council had a work session to discuss a process to update the Vision 2020 statement. Goals relating to the natural environment were to a large extent met due to the work of the Parks and Recreation Department and PNARB.

Wolfenbarger announced that Senior Citizen Foundation of Benton County Inc. was having a birthday party from 1-3pm, at the Senior Center. This is a non-profit organization who funds senior related projects/programs in Benton County.

In response to a question related to the Senior Gold Pass refund process, Mayes said it seemed to be going well and he had received notification that his \$25 was on deposit.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm. The next meeting will be held on February 20, 2014, at 6:30 p.m.