

**CITY OF CORVALLIS
MINUTES OF THE PARKS, NATURAL AREAS AND RECREATION
ADVISORY BOARD
JANUARY 15, 2015**

Attendance

Lynda Wolfenbarger, Vice-Chair
Simone Frei
Phillip Hays
Deb Rose
Anthony Stumbo

Staff

Karen Emery, Director
Steve DeGhetto, Assistant Director
Jude Geist, Parks Operations Supervisor
Mark Lindgren, Recorder

Absent/Excused

Ralph Alig
Tatiana Dierwechter
Michael Mayes
Jon Soule
Marc Vomocil
Joel Hirsch, City Council Liaison
Kevin Bogotin, 509-J District Liaison

Guests

Dean Codo

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

	Agenda Item	Summary of Recommendations
III.	Approval of Meeting Minutes – December 18, 2014	December 18, 2014 minutes could not be approved due to lack of quorum.
IV.	Visitors’ Propositions	
V.	Parks and Recreation Family Assistance Program	
VI.	Parks and Recreation Master Plan Dedicated to Betty Griffiths	
VII.	Illegal Camping and Illegal Activity	
VIII.	Majestic Theater Update	
IX.	Board Member Reports	
X.	Staff Report	
XI.	Council Liaison Report	
XII.	Adjournment	The next regular meeting will be held February 19, 2015 at 6:30 p.m., at the Downtown Fire station meeting room.

CONTENT OF DISCUSSION

I. CALL TO ORDER.

Vice-Chair Lynda Wolfenbarger called the meeting of the Parks, Natural Areas and Recreation Board to order at 6:36 p.m.

II. INTRODUCTIONS.

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: DECEMBER 18, 2014

The December 18, 2014 minutes could not be approved due to the lack of a quorum.

IV. VISITORS' PROPOSITIONS.

Dean Codo highlighted the handouts he'd distributed to the board. He stated that the revised dog brochures will undergo review soon and he suggested including citizen citation procedures. He explained that any citizen may have a dog owner cited for violating the leash law; calling the police makes the process more likely to succeed. The police may not issue a citation unless they've personally witnessed a violation, but a citizen can.

In the case of a citizen complaint, in which the victim decides to sign the citation for the violation of Corvallis municipal code by another person, the officer will interview all parties involved and submit a report with the citation completed, except for the signature box and the court appearance date portion of the citation. The citation will be submitted with the report to the City Attorney for review and endorsement. If the City Attorney finds probable cause and endorses the citation, a citation is signed by the victim and the Corvallis municipal court will set a court appearance date unless the defendant enters a plea of guilty and pays the fine. If the defendant were to hire a lawyer to help defend them in municipal court, then the City Attorney would represent the victim in court. However, generally it is just two citizens talking to a judge. The burden of proof is on the citizen that is complaining.

Hays asked what the citizen citation procedure was based upon. Codo replied that the handout on the procedure was his summary based on the Police Departments instructions for officers and his conversations with the City Attorney. It also applies to traffic violations. It is not for crimes, and the burden is on the citizen to prove a municipal violation (with video, for example). Hays asked what part of the municipal code it was; Codo replied that he'd cited the Corvallis leash law.

He highlighted the DogGone News article on the Yellow Dog Project. He explained that if a dog has a yellow ribbon on its leash, this is a signal to give the dog some space; there are a number of reasons to do this. He said that this space was all he was asking for, saying that he was willing to wear a yellow ribbon if that got him space free from dogs.

Codo related that he was boating several weeks ago when the Willamette River was at 26' in height (currently it is at 14'). He observed flooded out homeless camps along the river, with a lot of human feces, paint spray cans used for "huffing", and lots of other garbage. He suggested providing trash facilities and PortaPotties and having more eyes on camps. He decried the large amount of trash going into the river from illegal camps. He said there was a camp at Home Depot and H-P, where a resident was recently killed crossing the highway; it would be preferable if homeless tenting area was located so that intoxicated campers didn't have to cross a highway.

V. PARKS AND RECREATION FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Assistant Director Steve DeGhetto highlighted his report on the Family Assistance Program in the packet. Emery explained that the agenda item was intended to solicit board input. DeGhetto said the program was started in 2011 in response to the Cost Recovery Methodology. Over time, program eligibility criteria was adjusted to be in line with the Health Department's free and reduced cost lunches, WIC, and SNAP programs, which are set at 185% Federal Poverty Level (FPL). This allowed using the school district and Health Department for verification services in determining eligibility of applicants of the program, thus removing a key barrier. There has been a steady increase in enrollment and utilization over time. He cited the table on page one, showing a \$167,582 total amount utilized in FY13-14. In FY14-15, there was a board recommendation to impose a \$125,000 cap on the program, which is still in effect. Under the fixed budget expenditure limit and new budget methodology, staff developed the idea of the Family Assistance Reserve (FAR) as a funding alternative to using the operating budget, which is based on property taxes. The FAR uses 7% in revenue growth from all programs with capacity for fee increases (except the senior programming, which was already recovering from challenges) along with fundraising, grants and donations.

He said Table 2 showed that those funding sources generated only \$51,000 to date though, far below the \$125,000 cap. He estimated that the funding would end up being close to the cap this fiscal year, projected at about \$133,000. However, it does not address the increased requests for assistance, more than can be funded. The category of service with the highest utilization was memberships at Osborn Aquatic Center, amounting to \$141,000 in memberships in FY13-14, simply to get access to Recreational Pool (such as Otter Beach) and Open Lap Swim. He estimated that of that total, roughly \$18,000 to \$20,000 was being spent on swimming lessons, which help prevent avoidable fatalities. The next highest categories of service were \$12,413 for General Recreation (such as summer camps) and \$4,014 for Outdoor Recreation.

He summarized that family assistance was growing, largely for memberships. Staff believe that cost control was needed, and that cost control strategies would have to be immediately initiated for the short-term and long-term sustainability of the family assistance program. He highlighted cost control strategies listed on the last page of his report.

To be eligible, one's income must be below the 185% of the FPL, and one must live within Benton County. Individuals are awarded \$150 per individual; there are no caps on the number of members in the family. Because of the program cap, he said he was getting close to the point of having to send out cautions to members, pointing out that the program was first come, first served. Because of this, those who wait for a program in spring may not find the funds available to participate then. FAR funds may not be used for food or merchandise or refunded as cash.

As part of Family Assistance Program cost control strategies, he stated that staff now proposed considering limiting eligibility to Corvallis residents only; currently it is open to Benton County residents, though out-of-City fees apply, which decreases the value of the \$150 award. It is conceivable that some members of a family would not be served, since some families are dispersed both in and out of the city. He estimated that awards to out-of-City residents amounted to about \$29,850, with a 47% utilization rate.

Staff propose discontinue funding family memberships at the pool with Family Assistance (340 families do this), and replacing them with individual transferable admissions cards, with bar code and photo. This would allow better tracking of utilization, and help with budgeting and staffing

levels. This would be a new program, Open Recreation, under Family Assistance. The savings were estimated at around \$93,000, to be used to fund programming, not just admissions. He said this shows that having an entry fee is a barrier to using programs. The individual membership fee would require raising funds beyond what can be generated internally. Emery added that by funding memberships, the department was running out of money to fund participation in programs. DeGhetto estimated that there was around \$15,000 left for this fiscal year. He highlighted projected utilization rates over the course of the year.

He said that making a programmatic adjustment would not require people to use their Family Assistance scholarship money to get access into the pool building. Emery said it makes admission to the pool free to low-income families that meet eligibility.

Frei asked if there was a way to track how often people used family memberships to use the pool. DeGhetto replied that cards are swiped, but on a family basis, so tracking would be improved by using an individual basis. This essentially expands the program but without the same operating costs. It could allow us to serve more people, but it hinges on how many people are at the pool at any given time; Emery summarized that with this proposal, it would track when each individual used the facility.

Wolfenbarger asked how it would help staff; Emery replied that card swiping was automated. She said there is little impact on cost with open lap swimming; there are only additional costs when an instructor must be present. This proposal is only for open admission; Family Assistance could be used for classes, such as swimming lessons or therapy class.

DeGhetto said that regarding family memberships, we don't know what the 340 recipient families were doing with the memberships, and the dollar value has been undefined; this proposal allows us to improve data collection without putting up a barrier to access. He noted that the pool also provides a degree of daycare for some users. Frei asked what a membership paid for; DeGhetto said that it would pay for going in for a lesson, but not Open Swim or Otter beach afterwards.

Hays said the idea of tracking users was good. He said there is a likelihood of users not using their entire \$150 award. He said that there are ongoing costs to keeping the facility open, so there would be no additional cost; only if there is an extra instructor involved, or straining capacity. DeGhetto explained that the award was directed at active programming. He said that the program revenue increases of 7% going into the FAR and fundraising should make the needed adjustments to fund this evolving program.

Stumbo asked if pool use ever exceeded capacity; DeGhetto replied that that would be very rare, such as on a very hot day. He said the card swiping technology was already in place to help determine how much is being given away to cause capacity to be exceeded, but we can't measure that right now.

Emery asked for board input on restricting Family Assistance Program usage to Corvallis residents. Frei replied that she was concerned, since many low-income people can't afford to live in the City, and they need it the most. Emery noted staff didn't think it was the best approach either. Hays asked if this would have an impact on how fast the program \$125,000 cap gets used up; DeGhetto replied that he expected the reserve would be used up more slowly, and that users will make more conscious choices about the programming they use. He said we can live within our means with this adjustment. Emery explained that restricting usage to City residents is only

an option, and the main staff recommendation was to make memberships free to those eligible, and see how that goes for a year. DeGhetto said that it was a dynamic program, and staff would continue to report back to the board.

Wolfenbarger said that under cost recovery, the more data collection the better. DeGhetto said this would improve the department's demographic access. Stumbo asked whether the pool was subsidized by the County; Emery replied that it was not. Stumbo said that if it was paid for by the City, then it should be for City residents. DeGhetto explained that the school district owns the property, and pays for its own use (by the swim team, for example); the department operates the pool. DeGhetto stated that restricting access takes the department off mission somewhat, since its general focus is getting as many people active as possible. In this proposal, out-of-city residents would get access to the pool, but would pay out-of-city fees (25% higher) for programs, so their award would be less, along with their purchasing power under the award.

Deb Rose asked if the City had ever approached the County for financial support; Emery replied it had not, but she will bring it up with City leadership. DeGhetto said he would be able to prepare information on how many users came from outside the City. Hayes said there were already City-County partnerships in which expenses were shared. Rose asked if the Benton County Foundation provided support; DeGhetto replied that it supports a pool program to provide access to the developmentally and physically disabled youth, as well as summer camp meals at the pool. Rose suggested submitting another grant to the Benton County Foundation.

Wolfenbarger summarized that she was hearing overall support for the proposed changes.

VI. PARKS AND REC MASTER PLAN DEDICATION TO BETTY GRIFFITHS.

Members expressed general support, but there was not a quorum, so it will be presented to the next meeting.

VII. ILLEGAL CAMPING AND ILLEGAL ACTIVITY ACTIVITY IN PARKS UPDATE.

Parks Operations Supervisor Jude Geist highlighted the ongoing and increasing numbers of illegal campsites, primarily in natural areas and along trailways. He distributed a handout with photos of examples of illegal camps taken during a recent cleanup, which took two days. The cleanup required most of the department staff (about fourteen people), and several ODOT staff assisted as well. Several 40-yard dumpsters were filled with debris. Often, removal is slow and difficult, since the presence of hypodermic needles, soiled bedding, and human waste requires great care in removal, and sites are often muddy or on difficult terrain, and without a pathway. There were recently 14 to 20 campsites cleaned up at Orleans and Berg Parks. Two weeks later, staff cleaned up seven camps at Berg Park on the east side of the Highway 34 bypass. The camps have returned quickly, and he anticipated a similar cleanup later in spring. There are also sites at the BMX track and nearby ODOT property, but there won't be access for cleanup until soils dry up in spring. He highlighted photos of campsite debris, noting that floating trash washes downstream, causing environmental impacts.

Geist stated that the Central Park gazebo is not usually the site of camping, but there is often evidence of other illegal activities, such as drug sales. There is sometimes human waste in landscaping and walks there, causing a health risk, so a PortaPotty was put installed, despite the

cost. An ADA PortaPotty was also placed near the skate park. Increased litter, broken glass and cigarette butts are usually found near them.

He outlined the process, saying that when a camp is called in, or when staff see a camp as a major concern, staff call it in to the police. The police will post the camp, and Parks staff come in afterwards and do a cleanup, and the time required varies according to the size of the camp. Camps typically reappear a week after posting and cleanup, so it is not a sustainable activity. Items of value are stored with Police or if Parks staff know the camper, we will hold for them to pick up. It results in staff time and dumpster fees; he said there was not a staff recommendation for a solution. Emery said the department will also estimate the cost to police, along with the cost of staff injuries during cleanup. Geist noted that one staffer injured during a cleanup was out all summer, when even a single staffer out has a big impact on the small department with sixteen staff. There are also strains and muscle pulls during cleanups. One option would be to use a service contract with the Department of Corrections, but it would be an additional cost, and the department would still have to provide protective equipment and training.

Frei asked if fencing high-use areas would help; Geist replied that illegal campers often cut fences or go around them, and camping usually happens in areas with little supervision. He said positive use of an area would help, but there is sometimes camping right next to well-used trails or out in the open. There are campsites in Pioneer Park. Rose asked if there was an estimate of how many people were involved; Geist replied that it was hard to estimate. He noted that all postings are done by police, since they are trained to properly respond to confrontations.

Frei asked how other communities respond. Geist replied that some cities have opened tent villages, but some people wouldn't agree to live there. There is not just one solution and camp cleanups only address removing immediate hazards. Emery said the department's motivation is to try to be a good steward of the land, and trying to keep garbage and toxic materials out of the river and away from other park users. A group of local officials and volunteers are working together to determine root reasons why some people are living illegally in the park system and on public property; the department can only manage impacts.

Geist said the department needed to do outreach to well-meaning groups that were distributing bedding, food and clothing. A side impact of food handouts is generating lots of waste food that becomes litter, since the homeless lack food storage. Old clothing and bedding also gets thrown out and staff must clean it up.

VIII. MAJESTIC THEATER UPDATE.

Director Emery said the department began operating the Majestic Theater on January 1. The department was given direction to do so by the Council in November, and it has two years to come up with the new operating model. It is transitioning from the non-profit approach to a municipal approach. She is currently spending roughly 20 hours a week on the transition, but expected that to greatly decrease once staff are hired. A supervisor should be hired in February and an administrative assistant in March. She is talking with many users to get their ideas and opinions. The musical "Les Mis" will be performed in May.

IX. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS. None.

X. STAFF REPORTS.

Emery highlighted Jackie Rochefort's staff report. The Marys River boardwalk is moving forward; staff are completing a model to determine river flow during floods and are getting agency permits. Staff will present the board-reviewed CIP Plan to the CIP Commission on February 4. The Comp Plan amendment regarding the Parks and Recreation Master Plan goes to the Planning Commission on February 18. Staff are preparing a grant application for Franklin Park playground equipment.

Staff are preparing a scope of work to replace the roof on the Owens Farm house; an Oregon Cultural Trust matching grant will pay 50%, and donations have already been received for the remaining 50%. She said it was a top priority, due to the amount of water getting in. Stumbo said he'd been inside about five years ago, and even then it seemed both a disaster and dangerous. He asked for a report to the board on the house, the barn, and the entire property; Emery said an assessment was just completed on the barn and a final assessment is upcoming on the house, and she will update the board in March.

Geist reported he is continuing work with dog committee members to implement recommendations to improve brochures and signage. There was an inventory of signage for the entire system. Staff will be meeting with OSU on initial planning for the oak restoration project at Chip Ross Park and adjoining OSU lands prior to putting out a contract.

DeGhetto listed Recreation highlights, including the January 1 Polar Bear swim. Friends of Parks and Recreation raised \$26,000 from Toyota for the indoor climbing wall at the pool. The Activity Guide for spring and summer is being prepared. The Recreation Division is being restructured following the upcoming retirement of long-time Adult Sports Program manager Dave Evenson. New outdoor recreation programming is coming out, using open space sites. The Admin Division is revamping refund policies.

XI. COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT. None.

XI. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.