

ST. HELENS PARKS COMMISSION

Minutes for Meeting of August 17, 2015

Council Chambers, City Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jacob Woodruff, Chair
Howard Blumenthal, Vice Chair
Phillip Roddy, Commissioner
Elisa Mann, Commissioner
Stan Chiotti, Commissioner
John Brewington, Commissioner
Jerry Belcher, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT

Thad Houk, Parks Supervisor
Neal Sheppeard, Public Works Supervisor
Sue Nelson, Engineering Supervisor
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Jenny Dimsho, Assistant Planner
Sheri Ingram, Secretary

MEMBERS ABSENT

COUNCILORS IN ATTENDANCE

Doug Morten
Ginny Carlson

GUESTS

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CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Woodruff at 4:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chiotti made a **motion** to approve the minutes of the June 15, 2015 meeting. Motion was seconded by Roddy and approved unanimously.

TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR

NEW BUSINESS

New Commissioner: Woodruff welcomed new Commissioner Jerry Belcher. Belcher said he is glad to serve on the Commission. He has lived here since 1974 and was the head football coach and teacher at the high school. He has served on other Commissions and has ideas to make the parks better. He thinks we have an outstanding park system in St. Helens.

Right-of-Ways Through Parks: Graichen said way back when they put a street grid on paper, it didn't always make sense because of topography. The ROW through Godfrey Park was vacated in 1961. Half of Civic Pride Park has ROW that has never been vacated. The City has control so they have never worried much about it. Nob Hill has three ROWs that have never been streets because of the topography and they have never been vacated. The Millard Rd. property has no existing ROWs but the Transportation Plan shows it so it could be done in the future. It was designated as public lands in the 1970s but there has been a collector street plan in there since the 1990s. Belcher said when the School District built McBride, they used it for wetland mitigation so there is a wetland area and huge collection area farther back. Graichen said that is why it is zig-zagged in the 2010 version of the Transportation Plan.

Blumenthal said at the last meeting, Locke was talking about the possibility of putting a through street at the end of the block but he thinks some of that property was dedicated back to the property owners. Morten said that was made a nature park so it could be cleaned up and enforced by the police. Nob Hill was referred to as "surplus property" and Council agreed to make it a nature park. He thinks Locke was concerned about the flexibility of the Master Plan when it comes to the waterfront development. If there is any egress in that area, that potential shouldn't be waived. Graichen said the map shows Plymouth as a straight line but the street actually curves around the outside of the park. Blumenthal said the neighborhood is small and quiet. There are only two ways in and out. Neighbors have a hard time when it snows. One street usually gets closed and the other one has a steep hill with no shoulders to walk on. Morten said they have a group who will possibly come up with some kind of plan. They want to be transparent and they will bring it to the Parks Commission and that would be the time to weigh in on it.

6th Street Field: Susan Hirchi sent a letter requesting that the City add her father's name, John Warren, to the park sign. He was an umpire for 35 years and she wanted him to be honored for his love and loyalty to Little League. After some discussion, it was thought to be a better idea to name one of the fields after him and put a plaque up like they have at Campbell Park. Roddy made a **motion** to recommend that Council name Field One at 6th Street after him and put up a plaque in his honor. Motion was seconded by Brewington and approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Pay Station Updates: Nelson said the pay stations are supposed to be operational tomorrow morning. The tech has been working on it every day.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Dimsho had a letter of support that most of them had approved for a grant that she is applying for from Oregon Public Health Institute. It is for \$5000 to install a kiosk in Columbia View Park, updating the parks brochure and to get "No Smoking" signs for the parks. She will know in early September if we get it and will come back for input on the brochure and kiosk. She said the contracts were also signed today for the pedestrian bridge at McCormick Park. It will take four to six weeks to build and will be weathered steel with pine decking.

Houk said he has a Boy Scout leader who would like to stay at McCormick with 100 boys and play games after dark on October 2nd & 3rd. Park rules say it closes at sunset so do they make an exception? Woodruff asked if we do it for them, do we then have to do it for everyone else. They could use the big area down by the creek. The leader told Houk they did it last year but Houk wasn't aware of it. Sheppard said he thinks they did something on Sand Island last year. Sheppard asked when camping closes and Houk said October 31st.

Morten said he was going to recommend a ban on camping. Sand Island is getting out of hand and they should ban McCormick just for the fire danger. There are a myriad of problems including the barge of garbage every week. There are needles and dirty diapers and fist fights. People who live close can hear commotion over there all night long on the weekends and 911 gets a lot of calls about it. City police can't respond because we don't have a boat. Belcher said we could leave it like it is or ban camping or make people pay for permits. Regardless of the plan, we will have to have someone enforce it. Can City police go over on a regular basis? Sheppard said the City does not own the far side of the island where fishermen camp. We can enforce City rules because it is in the City limits but not Park rules. Woodruff asked if we could put this on the agenda to discuss at the next meeting.

Brewington made a **motion** to recommend that the Boy Scouts apply for a Special Use Permit so they could specify days and areas that they want. Motion was seconded by Chiotti and approved unanimously.

Houk said the campground is filling up with homeless people. They are paying the fees but getting around time limits. They have clothes lines up and blue tarps. Houk said they leave garbage and make messes in the restrooms. The police were there today making sure the people who were supposed to leave were leaving. He has had people complain that they don't want to come to the park because that element is there. Mann said she has noticed campfires in other areas of the park too. Since the risk of fire is so high right now, could we cancel camping for the rest of the season? Houk said it is posted "No Open Fires" so if they see that, they should report it right away. He said they had people from out of state stay the night before and then moved on and that is what it's designed for. We don't have shelters or designated homeless camps for people so this is where they go.

Brewington made a **motion** that they recommend banning camping right now in the interest of public safety. Motion was seconded by Chiotti and approved unanimously. Morten said in an emergency situation, he can meet with Sheppard, Nelson and Walsh and they can close camping due to fire danger. The Commission can then discuss it at the next meeting to decide what to do for the long-term.

Carlson said the homeless campers are driving people away from the other features of the park. The other thing she thought of that might curb some of that is she camps all over Oregon and there are places with coin-operated showers. As a resident who sees the rising water rates, she wonders what their input is on that idea. Houk said camping or not, when the showers are open, people will just drive in to use them. She also wonders if anything could be done about the swings at Godfrey Park. The hinge at the top sounds like its grinding away and very rusted. Houk said he would look at them. He also said it sounds like we are going to get the handicap swing grant.

Roddy said at one point they had discussed putting up something at the shelter in McCormick to protect the signs. To give an example that may push the issue further, he put up a copy of the permit for the Lions picnic three days before the event and on the day of the picnic, it was gone. There were people there having a picnic when he came to unload his van and they left when he talked to them but he could see that being a problem at some point. Houk said they have a board that they are working on just for that purpose.

Houk said the summer helpers have been painting a lot. They also made a sign for Campbell Park. He was also asked to make a sign for the off-leash area saying "Dogs May Jump On Cars – Beware". The dogs get very excited when their friends show up and they know which cars they are in. Mann said the fleas in the dog park are getting bad. Even dogs that are treated end up taking some home. She was wondering if they could get some diatomaceous earth to sprinkle on the ground. It's not harmful to the environment and won't harm the plants or animals but it will kill the fleas. The powder is sharp to fleas so it cuts through their exoskeleton and they dehydrate and die. She thought it may be better than a pesticide.

Chiotti asked if the splash park got fixed and Houk said the City plumber worked on it and it has been working fine.

COUNCILOR'S REPORT

Morten said when they get the new Master Plan, he would like to see each commissioner be responsible for reporting on certain parks. He would like them to think about each park's potential, upkeep and needs are. Maybe they could report on a quarterly or semi-annual basis so nothing gets passed up.

Maybe they could team up and work together. He thinks it is a more effective way to monitor the parks. If they don't want to do that as a Commission, that is fine but this is just his recommendation.

In 2013, he attended the National Conference of the League of Cities and sat in on a two-day presentation on incorporating youth into City Government. He did a report on it to Council and Margaret Jeffries said she was already doing that at the library. They had a youth that sat on the Library Board and it's working well. Now Carlson and Locke are working with the Youth Council and he would like to encourage one of them to sit in on Parks Commission. He will be working on that.

OTHER MATTERS

Blumenthal said last year he asked the City to pay for the Intertwine Alliance membership of \$25 and it got authorized. He should have asked if they could get reimbursed yearly so he is asking that now. Chiotti made a **motion** to extend the reimbursement to an annual thing. Motion was seconded by Brewington and approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 19, 2015, at 4:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sheri Ingram
Secretary

2015 ATTENDANCE RECORD							
P = PRESENT / E = EXCUSED ABSENCE/U = UNEXCUSED ABSENCE							
Meeting Date	John Brewington	VACANT	Jacob Woodruff	VACANT	Stan Chiotti	Howard Blumenthal	Phillip Roddy
2/09	P		P		P	P	P
4/20	P	Elisa Mann	P	Jerry Belcher	P	P	P
6/15	E	P	P	E	E	P	P
8/17	P	P	P	P	P	P	P