

ST. HELENS PARKS COMMISSION

Minutes for Meeting of February 13, 2017

Council Chambers, City Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Jacob Woodruff, Commissioner

COUNCILORS IN ATTENDANCE

Doug Morten

STAFF PRESENT

Thad Houk, Parks Supervisor
Sue Nelson, Eng. Supervisor
Sheri Ingram, Secretary
Jenny Dimsho, Assistant Planner

GUESTS

Rick Scholl, Mayor

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CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chiotti made a **motion** to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2016 meeting. Motion was seconded by Belcher and approved unanimously.

TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR

Scholl stated he has seen the idea of an RV park expanding McCormick Park. He thought it would be nice to incorporate the old Boise Park into McCormick and make it all one park. In the old Boise Park by the creek, there are still 20 fire pits and old metal frames from the picnic tables. He knows an RV park was talked about in the gravel area and maybe some camping down there. It's beautiful in there and they could see about getting a park host. It's something to think about.

Brewington thought the first thing to do would be to include it in the Master Plan and Dimsho said the RV Park was put in the Master Plan "if the property is acquired" because that was back before we got the property. Morten said they have talked about it extensively and there has been some opposition with some staff and the Council was reluctant to move on it now because they are moving on so many other things. He has looked at other parks and they are done well. We also own the FARA building which could be used as a recreation facility and showers and where a park host could work. It is another thing that would pinpoint our city as a destination. We need to find out all the ramifications with the property and a new sewer line.

Blumenthal suggested everyone try to walk to property before the next meeting. Belcher said they had an extensive talk about that a few months ago and he thought it was very expensive. Nelson said putting in the infrastructure will be very expensive. Dimsho said it is also zoned Heavy Industrial so we would have to meet State requirements to rezone it. We would have to have enough Heavy

Industrial property in the City to justify taking it out. They have a similar process for the Veneer site too.

Belcher said there used to be softball fields by the FARA building many years ago and it's a fairly level area there. It would be conducive for more sports fields. Blumenthal said he had heard talk of putting more fields on the Waste Water property after the lagoon gets filled in. That would be a good area because he doesn't know if they could build on that area. Morten said there was talk of maybe doing a sewer line down Kaster Rd. in a year or two and Nelson said there is existing sewer on Old Portland Rd. and they could hook to that for the parking lot area by the FARA building.

Blumenthal said he thought we should put it in the next agenda for more discussion.

COUNCILOR'S REPORT

Morten gave them copies of a lease agreement with Greater Parks and Recreation District that was drafted by the City Attorney for them to take home and read over. It outlines responsibilities and obligations for Civic Pride Park. We own the land and can terminate the lease every ten years if necessary. Dimsho said Civic Pride currently has no amenities and is adjacent to the pool, which has their own district and funding source. They would take over maintenance and would have the ability to upgrade and add amenities approved by the City and it will stay a public park. Morten asked everyone to look it over and e-mail him within a couple of weeks if they had any issues with it. He would assume they were all okay with it if he doesn't hear back from anyone.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of Officers: Morten had suggested that the Vice Chair become the Chair so Mann made a **motion** to elect Blumenthal as Chair. Motion was seconded by Belcher and approved unanimously. Blumenthal made a **motion** to select Chiotti for Vice Chair. Motion was seconded by Belcher and approved unanimously.

Letter of Support: Dimsho had a letter of support for a grant that is due Friday for the Veterans Memorial expansion in McCormick. It would include funding for more brickwork, a concrete pathway around and a proposed monument of some kind that would contain the names of county-wide vets who have died in more recent conflicts. Currently no other memorial in the County has those names. She will also get a letter of support from the VFW. The Commission was in support and Blumenthal signed the letter.

Columbia View Park: Dimsho said a group of PSU planning students chose the Columbia View Park expansion project. They had a kick-off meeting two weeks ago and the students came out and viewed the site. She will be going to PSU to meet the professor and see what other projects were selected throughout the state. They have a quick turnaround and June is their finishing date so she would like them to come to the April meeting to talk to them about what they would like to see in there. They may also do one or two open houses with the public and then give a presentation in front of the Council.

Wayfinding Project: Dimsho said last year we wrote a grant through Travel Oregon and were successful in getting a \$40,000 grant for a \$70,000 project to develop a Branding and Wayfinding Master Plan. Wayfinding is how you direct visitors to the community who have never been here before showing downtown, the waterfront, historic district, landmarks, library, parks etc. They had a kick-off meeting with an advisory committee made up of Council members, Arts & Cultural members, Bikes & Ped members, Shedco and the Chamber of Commerce. They will also hold two open houses

for that where they will present three different designs. She would like it if Parks Commission members could attend the open house. They don't have a date yet but are looking at early April. She will make sure they are notified when she has a date.

Belcher said at a previous meeting they had discussed the intersection at Plymouth and Old Portland Road. He thought it would be a good place for a pocket park and a kiosk but the City said they were going to put a roundabout there. Dimsho said there are a number of intersection options for that area and a roundabout is just one of them and that is also another grant project. Belcher said he thought that might be part of the branding program because there is a lot of traffic on that road. Dimsho said those intersections are being looked at because there will be more traffic in the future with the waterfront redevelopment and that is already a problematic intersection. She will be curious how we deal with pedestrians in that area with the grant because it is such a funky area.

Morten said they should offer suggestions on what they think the parks signs should look like as far as being different from other signs in the project. Belcher said in his opinion, there should be a hub with maps that show where all of the parks and trails are located. It would be nice if there was something like that by the docks so people coming in on boats would know where things are. He asked if there used to be something like that down there and Nelson said yes but it was geared more towards businesses. Belcher said they could do something like that and money from the businesses could possibly pay for the boards and have parks, trails and restaurants listed so they can navigate the town. Nelson said this is exactly what the Branding & Wayfinding project does. It strategically locates maps and color codes areas and amenities and those are the kind of ideas they will bring to us and ask suggestions. Dimsho said as far as design, they will also come up with trail markers for off-street trails and they will have markers made for them that you can navigate along.

Scholl said he has heard comments from boaters that there is no St. Helens sign that can be seen from the water. A friend of his boated over to take his mom to lunch and couldn't find any restaurants because they went the wrong direction and there are no signs saying where anything is.

Blumenthal asked if updating the Parks brochure was part of what this group would do and Dimsho said no, that was something that is more parks specific but they will create a map to go in the kiosks. Blumenthal thinks we should get it updated in the next few years.

Exclusive Use Permit: Ingram said Girls Softball and JV have put in their annual permit for Campbell Park and there are not conflicts. Belcher asked if it was normal for them to reserve it from 8am to 10pm and Ingram said yes. He asked if that means no one else can use the fields and Ingram said standard practice has been that other people can play on them but if a team under the permit shows up for practice or a game, the group without a permit has to get off the field. The permit was approved unanimously.

Capital Improvement Plan: Dimsho said the Finance Director asked her what she thought would be a priority for the next five years so she put together a handout. The top part is all grant related. For the bottom of the list, she talked to Houk about small projects that would make a big impact. One they thought of was dugout renovations at 6th Street Fields and Campbell Park. They also talked about the restrooms at Campbell but instead of replacing the whole restroom, they have been replacing the fixtures as needed because it's cheaper and the building is structurally okay so that is something they might want a line item for. Another simple project might be extending the utilities to the Campbell picnic shelter. There is water for pressure washing but no power so it might be cheap for Public Works to dig the ditch and have an electrician run a cable out. She said Belcher had wondered about the Heinie Heumann dog park and Nelson said it is scheduled to be done this spring when it dries out. Nelson also said they have been putting together a preliminary budget for 2017 and Houk mentioned to her that they have had a decrease in the number of picnic tables. They used to have well over 100 and now they have about 75. She has put in the tentative budget for next year

money to purchase frames and lumber so they can start replacing the ones that are irreparable. They would like to put a little money in for upcoming years so they can keep replacing them as needed. Chiotti said we need to add more people to the Parks budget because we keep adding more property. Nelson said the Council has asked for alternative funding ideas.

OLD BUSINESS

Park Reports: Ingram stated since Woodruff wasn't there and Brewington wasn't at the previous meeting, they could just hold those reports over until the next meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Belcher said there is a Bike & Pedestrian meeting on February 23rd and he was planning on being there but may now be gone. He understood Dimsho walked Nob Hill and the 5th Street easement area and he'd like her to talk about it because he hasn't done it. She said there is an 80 foot easement through there so you can go up the staircase on Old Portland Road and walk all the way to Nob Hill on right-of-way property. She was in between back yards nearly the whole way. Belcher asked if they could build a trail through there and she said there were definitely some wet areas. There is standing water but she doesn't know if they are wetland areas so there might be some mitigation involved. Morten asked if she walked the northern section to Columbia Blvd and she said no, they walked as far as they could but it gets pretty steep.

Belcher said he is big on having trails people can see on the internet so they can come to town and walk their dogs. He thinks they should have a trail now that starts at the waterfront and goes up through Nob Hill and down 4th Street to Godfrey Park and down the cliff and back to the waterfront. He thinks it should be put on a website so people can see it and come to town to walk. Dimsho is concerned about 4th Street not having sidewalks. Belcher said you could then go down the stairs to Park Street and there is a very small section with no sidewalks. He sees new houses being built with no sidewalks in front of them and he thinks it should be required where it's reasonable. He thinks they should ask Bikes & Peds if they would like to meet with Columbia City about a loop trail from the dog pound around the lake to Pixie Park and Veterans Park. He thinks these things should be on a website so people come to St. Helens.

Dimsho said in the Master Plan on page 118, she took a stab at making a map of routes people can walk now and a lot of the routes Belcher mentioned are already on there. If he thinks this map is legible enough, we can get it uploaded online. Belcher thinks we should talk to the Bikes & Ped Committee since a lot of this is their territory to get their support and we should get together with Columbia City. Morten says he encourages them to partner with Bikes and Peds to form a committee to do just that. Not everyone from each group will be interested in working on the committee but if they work together, he thinks they will come up with something remarkable.

Blumethal said he still has a problem with the 4th Street trailhead because someone has posted private drive signs in front of the park signs. We need to have the City make a clarification on the right-of-way. Nelson said we will have to go out and look at it.

OTHER MATTERS

Dimsho said there will be an Urban Renewal open house in the Council Chambers on February 21st at 6:00pm.

Blumenthal said they will have the Nob Hill wildflower walk on March 18th and a work party in the beginning of April. He wanted to thank the City for painting over the graffiti on the Veneer property and replacing the no smoking signs in Columbia View. He was hoping we would get the staircase going because they will have to have machinery out there and they start getting a lot of wildflowers in March. Dimsho said she would talk to Sheppeard but it's too wet out there right now. We have to finish the grant by October so we could potentially do it in July or August.

Blumenthal said there has been a guy "treasure hunting" along the cliffs and digging into old dump sites and exposing trash. Nelson said there is no digging allowed at all in the parks. He also asked if rock climbing was allowed because there have been kids tying ropes off on the oak trees and going down the cliffs. Also over the weekend, there are still people going across the trestle on the Veneer property. If we would extend the fence another 15', it would stop people from being able to get in there.

Roddy stated they will be starting repairs soon on the exercise areas at McCormick Park.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 10, 2017, at 4:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sheri Ingram
Secretary

2016 ATTENDANCE RECORD							
P = PRESENT / E = EXCUSED ABSENCE/U = UNEXCUSED ABSENCE							
Meeting Date	John Brewington	Elisa Mann	Jacob Woodruff	Jerry Belcher	Stan Chiotti	Howard Blumenthal	Phillip Roddy
2/13	P	P	E	P	P	P	P