



**SALEM PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING - February 11, 2021  
MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Dylan McDowell, Chair  
Micki Varney, Vice Chair  
Alan Alexander  
Tony Caito  
Woody Dukes  
Dave Fridenmaker  
Keith Norris

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Paul Rice

**STAFF PRESENT**

Mark Becketl  
Gretchen Bennett  
Josh Eggleston  
Becky George  
Rose Henlin  
Tammi Starrs  
Toni Whitler

**1. ROLL CALL**

Member Rice, absent.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Member Alexander moved to accept the minutes from the January 11, 2021 meeting.  
Vice Chair Varney seconded the motion.  
All in favor.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

The first public comment was from Carol Snyder. She is currently the President of the Salem Parks Foundation but was not speaking in that capacity this evening. She had concerns about the ongoing Cultural Management Landscape Plan as it pertains to Bush's Pasture Park and Deepwood Gardens.

She recently had a conversation with Patricia Farrell regarding this plan, but she still has concerns in two areas, the timeline and outreach efforts. She questioned the validity of virtual open houses for such a large and important park as Bush's Pasture Park. She would like to move the open house timeline out past where it is affected by the pandemic, but Ms. Farrell told her that moving it to a time later in the year would affect budgeting if it pushed it to the next fiscal year. Ms. Snyder was also concerned about the outreach efforts since most participants seemed to live in the 97302-zip code. She thought that since the park is open to everyone in the city that there should be more of an effort to reach other neighborhood associations to participate in the process and provide feedback about the plan.

Chair McDowell encouraged the Board to invite any neighborhood associations they are involved in to listen to the final presentation. He also mentioned that the last two virtual open houses were well-attended with 259 at the first one and 438 at the second one. Patricia sent out an email inviting other neighborhood associations the opportunity to listen to the presentation.

**QUESTIONS:**

Member Alexander commented that since Bush's Pasture Park is such a significant park in the City that the neighborhood association for which he is chair, Sunnyslope, would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the final report. The final plan is slated to be presented to SPRAB

in May. We are going to be faced with the current challenges for a while yet.

Member Fridenmaker asked what provisions are being made to include those people in open houses who don't have access to the internet or the skills to use electronic methods.

Ms. Whitler said that efforts were made to reach out to people through the news media i.e. Statesman Journal but it was not very successful; there have also been signs posted in the park and the City has utilized an email network hoping that it will extend out past the recipients of email. There is also a Spanish version on the City's Facebook page.

Public comment from Cory Poole, Chair of the SEMCA Neighborhood Association. He runs a mobile home park on Turner Road SE that borders Cascades Gateway Park. He shared his screen and presented a slideshow of just a few of the camps of unsheltered individuals that have lived in the park for almost a year now. Mr. Poole said no City residents have been using the park since the City allowed camping because no one feels safe going there. He added that the volume of human waste is astounding, hundreds of trees (small and large) have been cut down to be used as firewood or to build structures, and the banks of Mill Creek have been torn apart. He believes it will take a long time to clean out once the camping is no longer allowed, but it will take decades for the natural landscapes in the park to recover.

QUESTIONS:

Chair McDowell thanked Cory for his input and his advocacy for the parks and asked if there were any questions from the Board. No questions were asked.

**4. BOARD ITEMS/PRESENTATIONS**

**a. Work Plan 2021 Adoption**

The work plan, a copy of which was included with the minutes, was adopted by the Board with a unanimous roll call vote.

Member Norris didn't see anything in the work plan about the review of the Master Plan for the parks in the timeline, which he had mentioned before. Ms. Whitler said that she had removed it from the work plan because it is more fluid with regard to budget or timelines or consultants. Community parks usually have a year-long timeline; neighborhood parks are a little less. It is probably time to update the schedule and bring it before the Board. The typical process for a master plan effort after public input, is to go to the associated neighborhood association, then to SPRAB for a recommendation to Council and then to City Council for formal adoption.

**b. Capital Improvement Plan – Tammi Starrs, Public Works**

Ms. Starrs, Program Manager in Public Works Engineering presented the City's 5-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The 5-year CIP plan (2022-2026) is currently being evaluated/scored and it includes projects for Parks Planning, Parks Operations, Utilities and Transportation. Parks has six to eight individuals in different groups to score the plan as it pertains to Parks. There should be a draft available in March.

There will be a public hearing on the 5-year CIP plan in April 2021.

#### QUESTIONS:

Member Fridenmaker asked about how citizens without internet or electronic access make project requests. Ms. Starrs replied that they can call her in Public Works, and she can send them a form to fill out. Ms. Starrs will try and come up with a way to let people know if they don't have electronic access.

Member Fridenmaker asked about the equity in underserved areas, how is that weighted in the scoring? Ms. Starrs offered to send objectives and the weighted scores to the Board for their suggestions and ideas.

Chair McDowell asked whether the scope of the plan was exclusively Parks. Ms. Starrs answered that it is Citywide; Public Works takes the lead but there are requests from every department in the City.

Member Norris asked if the budget of Parks was compared with other departments and was put in line with their priorities. Ms. Starrs answered no, each department sets their own priorities and Parks was not evaluated with other departments. There are separate committees, separate priorities with separate funding sources. They don't cross lines – you can't use transportation SDCs to pay for park planning or improvements.

Member Norris asked whether the funding in the CIP process was just for the plan development or included implementation as well. If it is just for planning, does the implementation part of the process automatically roll over into the next year's budget?

Master planning pays for the consultant, staff time, and public outreach. Sometimes in the CIP a master plan may be included along with initial improvements.

Member Alexander asked about the minimum cost threshold to be considered for the CIP budget. Ms. Starrs answered that it is \$50,000. Projects over that amount have to be included in the CIP.

Vice Chair Varney asked about Title VI requirements. Ms. Starrs invited Gretchen Bennett to help answer the question. Ms. Bennett said that it is a Federal requirement for inclusion in planning and service with disproportionate impact to different groups of people. It is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

#### **c. Introduction of Bond Measures – Josh Eggleston, Finance**

Josh Eggleston provided an introductory presentation on General Obligation (GO) bond measures.

#### QUESTIONS:

Chair McDowell asked about the timelines of submitting ideas for bond measures.

Mr. Eggleston said that there is a finance committee of the City Council working on long-term bonding strategy. Sometimes bond measures are planned and sometimes issues rise to the surface while doing business. It usually takes a couple of years to get a bond measure on the ballot. The planning usually includes an information campaign to assess the impact of the bond

measure. He added that there is a big difference in bonds and levies. GO bonds cannot be used for maintenance or operations. A local option levy is typically used as a vehicle for maintenance funds for the capital improvements made through GO bonds. Attempts to obtain funds for Parks by bond measure have not been successful since 1980. Bonds get into the system the same way as CIP; there are a lot of competing demands for capital dollars.

Jennifer Kellar mentioned that there was no current data on needs assessment for Parks and there is a needs assessment in the works with Engineering.

Mr. Becktel added that in 2006 or 2007 the Parks bond and levy both failed. There were several different bonds on that ballot and people were hesitant to commit to all of them, so they chose other bonds instead of the Parks bond. May have to look at repairing or rehabbing existing features than building something new and not have the money to maintain.

Member Alexander commented that the economy was pretty bad in 2006-2007; home values were diving, and people were reluctant to approve more taxes.

Member Fridenmaker asked if the bond needs to be park-specific or can it be combined with other areas of the City. Mr. Eggleston said that it is very important for the measure language to be clear; it doesn't have to be park-specific.

**d. Coordination regarding unsheltered individuals in Parks - Gretchen Bennett, City Manager's Office**

Ms. Bennett gave a presentation on finding workable solutions for the unhoused individuals in the City. She spoke to the difficulty of finding solutions and the deadline of June 1 of removing the allowance of camping in Cascades Gateway and Wallace Marine Parks but the deadline is not hard, there needs to be active alternatives in place. Following her presentation, Ms. Bennett asked how SPRAB would like to be kept apprised of the situation.

QUESTIONS:

Vice Chair Varney thanked Ms. Bennett for the update and said that it was helpful to have this information.

Chair McDowell asked that any decisions or plans being developed be forwarded to the Board as they come up.

Ms. Bennett said she would keep SPRAB in the loop of any decisions that are made. She would like to make a system of checks and balances, so everyone is in the loop.

Chair McDowell suggested a quarterly update in-person if time allows, especially in the next couple of quarters as the camping in the Parks is reduced, providing opportunity for questions to be asked. Ms. Bennett invited solutions and welcomes the Board's input. She said she is working on a policy document and would welcome SPRAB's input to the City's policy on Parks.

Member Fridenmaker asked how basic human needs are being met for the individuals camping in the Parks.

Ms. Bennett said that there are no open flames allowed in City parks but people can have contained propane heaters for heat and cooking but she also said that there is a broader strategy of having services and supplies available elsewhere in the City which could also give a point of referral for case management instead of just bringing the supplies directly to them and removing that point of contact.

Mr. Bechtel added that potable water has been made available and there are several chemical toilets that are serviced every other day in both Wallace Marine and Cascades Gateway. There is increased garbage pickup, but the system is overwhelmed with the amount of trash generated. Food garbage is not the issue; it is dumping of household items such as used clothing or even furniture that has been donated or scavenged. Cleanup is an issue because the union contract states that AFSCME employees can assist with picking up trash, but not directly clean up human waste. Inmate work crews are not available because of the pandemic and the closing of the Mill Creek Correctional Facility. *ServiceMaster* is all that is left and that leaves only one big cleanup per month.

Member Norris mentioned that there was obviously a lot of thought going into the situation and is concerned about Parks Operations staff's safety in this situation when they are just doing their job. Ms. Bennett said that Police presence is limited because their staffing ratios dictate that police have higher priority like protests or violent crimes, which take precedence. This is another facet of the problem since we can't control the complete pipeline of enforcement. Judges and courts don't want to see police issuing citations to unsheltered individuals since that is a waste of City resources as well; they don't have the resources to pay. Since the City has no jail facility, no arrests can be made because there is no jail space. There are limits to our efficacy in enforcement. The parks staff are not the only places where confrontations have happened. People at Civic have had to deal with it as well as employees that park in parking structures. She added that the whole experience of dealing with this issue is a maze: just when you find a different corridor to go down in the hopes of finding a solution, you hit a wall. She has been working diligently on researching what other cities are doing, reading everything she finds on the subject. She stated that finding a solution is not for lack of trying – it is for the lack of finding something that works.

Chair McDowell thanked Ms. Bennett and Mr. Bechtel for their insight and input into this difficult situation.

## **5. INFORMATION REPORTS**

### **a. Mission Streets Parks Conservancy Minutes**

There were no comments or questions from the Board.

### **b. Urban Forestry Update**

Milan Davis was not in attendance; Jennifer Kellar said that he is dealing with an emergent

situation because of the incoming bad weather.

Chair McDowell said that he was impressed by the amount of information on the tree report and everything that was going on, seeing all the trees planted and all the partnerships.

Member Alexander asked what was meant by “the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile methodology” in the tree canopy report. Jennifer Kellar said that Patricia Farrell, who was absent, would be able to answer that question.

Member Dukes found an explanation of the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile mentioned in the Parks Planning update. It has to do with the Community Forestry Strategic Plan which was based on a plan used in Vancouver, WA. There are 19 neighborhood associations and they are ranked by how much tree canopy they have greatest to least. 75 percent of 19 is 14 so the 14<sup>th</sup> neighborhood association is used as an example to set the goal for tree canopy.

Toni Whitler will send the Board a link to the web site.

#### **c. Parks Planning Update / Climate Action Task Force Update**

Since Patricia Farrell was not in attendance to talk about Parks Planning, Chair McDowell gave an update on the Task Force he is involved in (43 members). There was a meeting in January and another one this month; he will give a report in March. He said that it is in the planning stage, so they have been coming up with a list of strategies and there have been a lot of great ideas put forth. Now it is a matter of whittling them down to a manageable level to be put into the report. He said that the one issue that everyone seems to agree on is transportation emission reductions.

Member Norris talked about the Parks Planning report and that he appreciated that links were included for anyone that wanted more information. He also appreciated the birding update from Mike Zieker, the City’s Park Ranger. Chair McDowell asked if there was a possibility to go on a birding tour of the different parks.

Chair McDowell asked who on the board would be interested in this outing and everyone raised their hand. Jennifer Kellar asked that Toni Whitler coordinate dates and times as well as social distancing protocol to allow this event to happen.

#### **d. Parks Operations Update**

Member Norris asked what the plan was for restoration of Parks after the unhoused individuals were removed from the areas. Mr. Becketl said that once most campers were out of the parks there would be two phases to restoration. The first phase would be cleanup, and he estimated that it would take a minimum of 2 weeks and would probably cost about \$100,000, which would be over and above staff time to do the work. The next phase would be assessment of mitigation – grading stream banks, damage to facilities, re-vegetate the areas and re-plant and make sure that plants get re-established. It will be a multi-year effort and probably be around \$200,000 total.

Member Norris asked Jennifer Kellar for a status on the relationship with the Salem-Keizer School District. Ms. Kellar said that because the City no longer has an agreement with the school district; there has been communication on re-establishing a maintenance agreement. The City has received the agreement back from the school district and is in the process of reviewing it and assessing what might require additional dialogue.

**e. Recreation Services Update**

Member Norris asked about online registration and whether efforts are made to address people's ability to register if they don't have access to a computer or the internet. Becky George answered that the City is new to online registration. It has only been happening for the last two years. One thing that has changed because of the pandemic is on-site registration for events is no longer allowed. This could cause too many people to be registered for the event and staff would be unable to follow state protocol for gatherings. On-site registration was only about 5-8% of the attendance totals. And, of course, business is still done over the phone and by mail.

Member Caito asked if summer events have been rescheduled to fall because of the pandemic. Ms. George said that a lot of the events have decided to cancel in the last week or so: Art Fair, World Beat Festival, and FishFest.

Co-chair Varney asked if there are issues with the unhoused population at Wallace Marine Park when using the softball complex for upcoming events. Ms. George stated that there will be no spectators for the events again this year, but they will be allowed to be outside the complex. There were no problems last year, but it remains to be seen how to keep everyone safe. The recreation staff will work with other City departments and there may even be a need to hire additional security for events. Jennifer Kellar added that DPI is still patrolling Wallace Marine Park on a regular basis.

**6. NEW BUSINESS**

No new business.

Ms. Whitler also mentioned that the Boards and Commissions committee is coming up so the vacancy on SPRAB will be filled.

**7. NEXT MEETING**

Thursday, March 12, 2021

**8. Adjournment at 7:35 p.m.**

Minutes: Rose Henlin/Toni Whitler