



# PORTLAND PARKS BOARD

## MEETING MINUTES

July 11, 2012

7:30 – 9:30 a.m.

Rose Room, City Hall

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<b>Board members present:</b>	Mike Alexander, Kathy Fong Stephens, Linda Robinson, Julie Vigeland, Mary Anne Cassin, Christa Thoeresz, Katie Breene, Sue Van Brocklin, Tony Magliano, Judy BlueHorse Skelton, Shelli Romero
<b>Board members absent:</b>	Keith Thomajan, Tricia Tillman, Nick Hardigg, Andy Nelson, Bob Sallinger
<b>Staff present:</b>	Warren Jimenez, Randy Webster, Jason Smith, Kia Selley, Margaret Evans, Mat Sinclair, Todd Lofgren, Brett Horner, Eileen Argentina, Deb Lev, Fred Kowell, Emily York
<b>Guests:</b>	Joe Poracsky, Claudio Campuzano

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**Call to order** The meeting was called to order by Chair Julie Vigeland at 7:35 a.m.

**Approval of the minutes** The minutes of the May 2, 2012 meeting were unanimously approved as written.

**Board Business** Board members have received information regarding meeting times for ad hoc committees. These committees will be meeting prior to the next Board meeting in September.

Parks' new Planning, Development and Asset Manager, Kia Selley, was introduced.

Several Board members met with Comm. Fish as a follow up to the Board retreat. One subject they talked about was their frustration with the outcome of their work on the BAC, although they realized some of this was outside of Comm. Fish's control. Julie said the commissioner promised that there would be changes in the process and he has also talked with the two mayoral candidates about this year's budget process.

**Director Update** Warren Jimenez updated the Board as Mike Abbaté was out of town. Warren commented that there's a lot going on at PP&R right now and Parks' is at their peak summer staffing. He mentioned that Mike and Comm. Fish had recently visited with the editorial board of *The Oregonian*. Warren also invited Board members to the Charles Jordan Community Center naming event on July 22.

Other upcoming events include the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Terwilliger Parkway on July 20 and the Washington Park Concerts Sponsor Appreciation Night on August 2.

**Sullivan's Gulch Trail Project** Mary Anne Cassin gave an update on the Sullivan's Gulch trail project, which, although viewed as a simple project, ended up being very complex. The Bureau received an MTIP grant two years ago for the project and they worked with PBOT in communications with Union Pacific. Brett Horner said there is an alignment along the track that can work but it's critical that Parks is involved in this type of project.

Sarah Huggins gave some background on the project. The conception is for a trail that goes from the Eastbank Esplanade to the future Gateway Green. There were two main issues to be clarified: Is it feasible to put the trail in? What would be the exact alignment?

The advisory committee was comprised of 13 members from the community. They held two public open houses and Parks provided an online comment form, and also communicated with adjacent property owners. The proposed trail would be on property owned by the City (26%), ODOT (4%), private ownership (6%), with the balance (64%) owned by Union Pacific. The cost of the project is \$36M. It is scheduled to go to Council on July 25 and the transportation plan would be updated to add in this project. The Board could play an important role in keeping this project on the forefront.

It was commented that Union Pacific has not generally allowed trails near active rail lines with the exception of the Steel Bridge. It's hoped that there will be some sort of a political trade in order to make this trail happen. Sarah commented that the process was a concept alignment and staff haven't looked yet at what to do to make the trail safer when it's near the rail line.

## **Candidate Forum**

Board members had previously discussed holding a larger candidate forum in the fall. Julie asked if there was still interest in doing this. If all Council candidates were to be invited, Board members would need to start planning soon in order for the forum to occur in October. Mary Anne commented that she felt what was most important to the Board was the bureau assignments as the Council member who is assigned Parks must share the Board's passion for passing a bond.

Board members discussed having Amanda Fritz, Mary Nolan and Steve Novick come in to speak to the Board. The questions the Board used for the mayoral candidates seemed to work well. Julie will contact the three candidates and ask them to come to the October Board meeting.

Mary Anne asked if the Board could state a position regarding the bureau assignment. Mike Alexander asked if the Board wanted to state that they wished to stay with Comm. Fish. He felt it might be more fruitful if the Board waited until they know what all the options are. Shelli Romero suggested having a conversation with Comm. Fish to ascertain his

feelings, and then having the Board advocate their desire to stay with Comm. Fish. Mary Anne commented it needs to be clear that it is important to the Board where Parks is assigned.

## Strategic Plan

The Board has previously been briefed about the Bureau's progress on the strategic plan and theme statement. Staff have also held a series of meetings with employees on goals and initiatives. At today's meeting, staff are asking the Board for their feedback in order to prepare a fuller discussion document by the end of July. They will then have key conversations with stakeholders.

Two things have been heard so far in the process:

- What does the issue of play mean?
- How does the Bureau ensure that they are tackling the issue of equity and it is front and center?

Why has PP&R used the word play? All activity connects to create a healthy community. The themes document shows what the performance measures are so staff will know how play will be measured.

Why this particular play strategy? PP&R is uniquely positioned to have this goal, and to continue on the issue of equity.

Comments from the Board included:

- It's critical to look at performance measures, i.e. people living within ½ mile of a park/facility. PP&R needs to make more progress in this area.
- How does the Bureau close the gap in trails?
- Parks needs to ensure through their programming that they know who they are serving and be able to target underserved communities.
- The Bureau continues to improve the diversity of the workforce, but what does the staff look like now? Do they reflect the community?

Board members were asked what resonated when they looked at the research. Mary Anne commented that she felt there was good information in the *Words on Play* document. The core concern with her remains what the data says vs. the public perception. Parks needs to be taken as seriously as Police and Fire. There needs to be a low cost scientific poll as to what "play" means in regards to funding.

Kathy Fong Stephens wondered how "play" translates into a rallying theme for the Bureau and connects to a 2020 update and a bond information campaign. Warren said that historically the strategic plan has been more of an internal document as that has been its focus. Judy BlueHorse Skelton commented that play has been cut in schools, but research shows, however, that play is important to brain functions. There

could be an alliance with schools to show evidence that unstructured play is valuable.

Sue Van Brocklin wondered if the Bureau has talked to Multnomah County about their advertising using the word “play.” Randy Webster said they had not been contacted yet. Staff wanted to get the document completed before they start talking to partners. Sue said she is interested in finding out exactly what the County is doing to help Parks know how to move forward. Eileen Argentina said the document has been an internal piece to guide staff. They’ve talked about Parks being named an infrastructure bureau and how to show that healthy parks affect property values. “Play” is uniquely PP&R’s own, and they need to broadly define play as something that’s done outdoors, indoors, in an unstructured way, or in whatever format people choose to spend their free time and resources on. It’s not just a focus on playgrounds. Todd Lofgren said the document is core to what the Bureau does and closing the play gap is core to internal motivation.

Brett said the messaging needs more work to be able to tie it into health and community-building. Mary Anne commented on Keen Footwear’s recent ads that focus on recess so she wondered if people are taking play more seriously now.

Randy went on to talk about how the strategic planning is management focused but doesn’t include everything Parks does. It does focus on what needs to be changed or improved. As an example, property acquisition and the SDC program aren’t included as they don’t currently need a lot of focus. Strategic planning is viewed as a stepping stone to fulfill the 2020 goals and the workplan and strategic plan will guide this work.

Randy distributed a handout that shows the alignment of the strategic plan goals with the 2020 goals, with the themes down the left hand side of the page. The bubbles in the center of the page show the goals, with the 2020 goals across the top.

Randy also went through the themes of the goals and their explanation. The six themes are health, recreation programs, access and equity, trails, asset management and sustainability. The four perspectives (or lenses) of community, process, financial and organization capacity view the strategic plan to make sure staff are covering all bases.

Randy then asked Board members to review the larger 10-page document on themes and initiatives.

- Trails strategic theme
  - There are still 68 miles of trails to build to reach the goal. Trails are on all types of properties and our management of the system is not as efficient as it could be.
- Asset Management strategic theme
  - Staff are still working on the goal of having a park or natural area within ½ mile of each household.

- Another goal is to lower the systemwide risk of asset failure to provide established levels of service. This is to ensure that PP&R delivers the level of service that's been promised.
- Sustainability strategic theme
  - Parks already has received their recertification of the Salmon-Safe designation. The Integrated Pest Management program is also helping to extend the Bureau's sustainable landscape practices.
  - The Bureau has also done much to reduce the consumption of water, especially in irrigation.

Randy commented that various "bubbles" on the chart will be assigned to staff within the next three years.

Tony Magliano commented that he sees the gaps in trails listed, but there are also gaps in community centers and playgrounds. He wondered where that is covered in the plan. Randy said acquisition is ongoing work so it didn't become a strategic focus. Mary Anne commented that asset management may be a hard issue for many to understand as it sounds like an endless task. Randy agreed and said proper asset management is a permanent discipline in the Bureau. He said he hopes to get it moving in three years. In response to Linda's questions, he said the development of acquisitions shows up in an orange bubble as "develop parks."

Mary Anne said she's happy to see some progress on trails, although there's more to be done. Tony commented that where there are gaps in structures or community centers it would be helpful to see visuals to see what the priorities are for aligning and using the tax money in the most efficient way. Parks needs to work together with schools on this. Warren said it's critical see have that conversation when the Bureau is looking at funding.

Shelli said she'd like to see a list of parks that have already had a master plan done and where those plans are in the Bureau's priority list. Linda said she would also like to see a list of undeveloped parks that have not been through the master planning process yet.

- Health strategic theme
  - Health care brings a specific mindset. Emily York suggested expanding or broadening the phrase "health care" to say "public health" or "community health."
- Recreation strategic theme
  - The Bureau is strategizing to determine what they need to do in order to operate as efficiently as they can.
- Assess and equity strategic theme
  - The performance measure of increasing the percentage of households within ½ mile of a park is directly related to the 2020 goals.

Mary Anne commented that the health care community is interested in trails so this should be connected on the chart.

Linda would like to see how visits are counted – some people are counted every time they visit a park or facility, and some are not counted at all. She suggested developing new measurement techniques. Randy said this is something that staff struggle with. It's very difficult to count participants at playgrounds or in natural areas. The Auditor's annual survey does ask how many times a person has visited a park during the year. PP&R could add additional questions to that survey.

Shelli asked if seniors will be a focus or if staff will be focusing on youth. She is also interested in adding a socio-economic status to the tracking.

Christa Thoerecz said that participation in sports can mean savings on health care and wondered if staff that looked at that correlation. Randy said that while staff work was not done on this, it is clearly a benefit. Todd Lofgren said staff currently don't measure one type of activity against another. Deb Lev wondered if there's any financial perspective to the larger benefits to health. Randy said this section was intended to be about what needs to happen within the Bureau's budget to support the goals.

Julie said what she has heard throughout the conversation is that many are struggling with the word "play" a bit and if Board members are struggling, then she feels there's some concern over others not understanding "play." Warren said staff appreciate the feedback and part of their communication strategy will be to talk about how to address "play."

Randy said the next steps will be to work on a fuller discussion draft by the end of July. In August and September they will have conversations with key stakeholders, but they will need feedback on who those stakeholders are. He said he'll get a list out to Board members for their thoughts. A final document will be place by October/November.

Mary Anne asked how this work feeds into a bond discussion. Warren said he sees it as a concurrent discussion that needs to happen in the upcoming months. Randy said since the bond is focused on capital, asset management will show staff where the priorities are to inform the decision. Warren sees this as a draft roadmap that leads to a funding piece. Todd commented that staff are already doing some of these things but now have a new emphasis.

#### **Other Comments**

Emily York said Comm. Fish has told both Mayoral candidates that he wishes to keep Parks, however, there are no guarantees or promises. Both candidates have talked about the importance of Parks.

#### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 a.m.