



**PORTLAND PARKS BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES  
March 5, 2014  
8:00 – 9:30 a.m.  
Lovejoy Room, City Hall**

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**Board members present:** Mike Alexander, Judy BlueHorse Skelton, Kathy Fong Stephens, Dion Jordan, Andy Nelson, Jim Owens, Meryl Redisch, Linda Robinson, Tricia Tillman, Sue Van Brocklin

**Board members absent:** Mary Anne Cassin, Nick Hardigg, Tony Magliano, Shelli Romero, Bob Sallinger, Christa Thoresz, Julie Vigeland, Mauricio Villarreal

**Staff present:** Eileen Argentina, Margaret Evans, Warren Jimenez, Deborah Lev, Todd Lofgren

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**Call to order** Andy Nelson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:05 am.

**Park of the Month** Park of the month for February was Sewallcrest park. This month is the Community Music Center in Southeast Portland. Eileen noted that the Community Music Center is on SE Francis St. south of Powell. It is an old firehouse, and is one of our more challenged facilities in terms of asset management. On any given day, she said, it is a beehive of activity. It is really magical and vibrant. Our non-profit partner CMC Inc. has been very interested in outreach and they've done a great job reaching a broad community. It is a really fun place.

**Chair Update** Andy Nelson noted that the Board is taking nominations for the four Parks Board seats that we know are opening up. The process is on the PP&R website with application form. The nominating committee will include Dion Jordan, Jim Owens and Andy Nelson. Andy asked if anyone else is interested to let him know. He noted that their job will be to look at the applications, interview selected individuals, and recommend candidates to the board. He noted that they will look to vote at the June Parks Board meeting. As part of that as well, he noted, we will be nominating a slate of officers. Andy said that his term will end June 30<sup>th</sup>, so the nominating committee will look for a new Parks Board Chair. He told members of the Board that if they are interested, let the nominating committee know.

Andy announced that they will need to schedule the 2014 Board Retreat. Typically, he noted, this retreat is scheduled on a Friday in May or June. Last year, a tour was scheduled for the afternoon of the retreat. Andy asked board members if this format and timing worked well last year. Dion Jordan noted that he liked the format, and the tour was really eye opening to things we hadn't thought about before. Jim Owens noted that the focus of the tour was on maintenance needs, and it was good. He suggested that the focus be on a new issue this year.

**Comprehensive  
Plan update**

Andy thanked Jim Owens, Kathy Fong Stevens and Meryl Redisch for going through the Comprehensive Plan and drafting comments.

Jim Owens reported that there was a lot of bulk to go through in terms of the Comprehensive Plan. He noted that the first section was on goals and policies, and that while they were not specifically asked to comment on that, they did look at it. He noted that there was a cool map app online which was an opportunity to look at what is proposed for different parts of the city. Additionally, there was a piece on growth scenarios, which looked at patterns and projected growth in the city, as well as various urban design options. A key piece was the city wide systems plan – 400 pages by itself – where the policy direction is being translated to on the ground activity. Jim noted that this is where they concentrated most of their comments. He thanked the Planning Bureau for giving the Parks Board this opportunity, and extending the comment period. He noted that the key point they had was that when the City looks at parks planning, they tend to look as though every park is the same. We know that's not true. Not every park will meet open space and recreational program needs at the same time. He said that they are encouraging BPS to look at specific parks to see if needs are being met. Also, for infrastructure in the city, it would be easy for a reader to have the perception that Parks is 2<sup>nd</sup> tier. Jim noted that they called that out and pointed out that parks are just as essential for city function. He noted that they would like BPS to clean up that language a bit. Additionally, he said that the Comprehensive Plan could have better addressed the maintenance back log – the gorilla in the room. For the other infrastructure elements – the planning includes an investment strategy, but Jim noted that this was not there for parks, and they were not sure why. He said that most of the rest of the comments were specific improvements, and there were no major problems. He noted that they did have the luxury to look at the comments of Audubon and Urban Forestry Commission, and said that they wanted to endorse the Urban Forestry comments.

Kathy added that it was a good process. They looked at two 500 page documents and the map app. She said that it worked well with the structure of the committee. She also noted that the Parks Bureau has done a great job, and it was great to see.

A correction was noted by Sue Van Brocklin to the agenda and list of committee members. She noted that she was not on the committee, and that Meryl Redisch was. This correction was made.

The Parks Board voted to approve the subcommittee's comments on the Comprehensive Plan. It was unanimously approved.

Warren thanked everyone. Kathy commented that we will need to send the comments right away, and Andy noted that he would send the comments to BPS with assistance from PP&R staff.

**Smoke free policy update**

Sue Van Brocklin reported that the smoke free policy subcommittee had their first meeting, and it was invigorating and exciting. The subcommittee includes Parks Board members: Mary Anne Cassin, Tricia Tillman, Julie Vigeland and Sue Van Brocklin. PP&R Staff assisting facilitating the subcommittee include Cynthia Castro and Warren Jimenez. Sue noted that they met with Erik Vidstrand, Multnomah County Environmental Health Department, who tracks smoke free parks in counties and cities. She said that Commissioner Fritz would like a recommendation on a smoke free policy by May.

Parks Board members asked if the recommendation will include a public involvement piece. Tricia Tillman said that there would likely be a public involvement piece if the Commissioner decides to move forward. Andy Nelson noted that it will be up to the Commissioner to decide if public involvement will be part of the process. Linda Robinson commented that there should be a public input process for a major change. Meryl Redisch added that the Zoo, Forestry Center, and other partners would likely be part of that process.

**PREP update**

Eileen Argentina said that she was excited to be here to talk about Parks Race and Ethnicity Project (PREP). She noted that the report says underway fall of 2012, but that planning work began in 2011. PP&R recognized for some time that we had a gap in terms of understanding who is coming to our community centers and sun schools and who was not coming. For that reason, she noted, we recruited a team – Terry Davis, West Zone Service Manager, who has a vast knowledge of PP&R Community Centers; Jason Smith, Senior Management Analyst, who ensures the work is data driven; and Alejandro Vidales, Outreach Coordinator, who has since left the bureau, but was key in getting the program started.

Eileen noted that we had a lot of anecdotal data, and opinions about who we were serving, but there was concern that we were not reaching all of the communities in Portland. The purpose of PREP is to better understand who is currently using services provided at Community Centers and SUN Community Schools. Understanding this information is a first step towards assessing a bureau wide performance goal of serving all populations. Eileen noted that PREP data currently only includes those who register for classes, not drop in use at Community Centers, park facilities, use of picnic venues, etc., so we know that there is a much broader group of park users. This is the first step.

Terri Davis said that she, Alejandro, and Jason wanted to start the project in a way that would be of value to the city. They soon realized that they would need some help, so they pulled together a core committee from customer service, sun schools, and community centers. The goal or outcome they were hoping to achieve was to gather data on race and ethnicity of users. They were hoping to capture as much as possible on how people self-identify. Given what we know about the demographics of the city, we could then see how we compare. She noted that they utilized a number of resources, including the equity section of the Portland Plan, Portland State University and Coalition of Communities of Color report on Communities of Color in Multnomah County, census data, and Portland Public Schools enrollment reports. Because the plan was to use the U.S. census and Portland Public School enrollment data as the two measuring tools, they aligned the questions asked regarding race and ethnicity by using the racial and ethnic groups already identified

as established populations by these agencies.

Terri noted that there were early problems that needed to be addressed. Some people are used to having these questions asked, others were not, and they wanted to make sure staff were comfortable asking questions. They developed a process, training program, and resources for staff to ensure consistency and accuracy. For the pilot project, they started with two sites – Peninsula Community Center, and Mt. Scott Community Center. The pilot began in spring, 2012. Terri noted that we learned a lot – about ourselves, and about our community. For ourselves, we learned that there are vastly different comfort levels within our staff, and we realized this was something we needed to bridge. Another challenge was developing ways to enter data. For some sites, we have a line out the door (eg. summer registration for aquatics). We needed to develop a way to get them through and ask the questions and record the data accurately. We addressed this by developing more tools. We knew we had Activenet program coming online, and that identifying race and ethnicity would be mandatory to registering with this new online registration system. Terri noted that most members of the community didn't mind being asked the questions. What they did mind, she said, was if they had a child running around, so the challenge was about time constraints. She noted that during the pilot, they had a huge number of declines. They also had a huge number who didn't see themselves in any of the categories. She noted that one gentleman said he was Columbian, and didn't see himself in any of the categories. Additionally, members of the Jewish population did not feel that their community was identified. Terri noted that they told these community members that the intent of the program was to stay as closely aligned with the U.S. Census and other collected data for comparison purposes.

The collection of data expanded from the initial pilot sites to all sites in June 2013. They developed a card that was handed to people when registering. The card did not include a decline option. Decline is still part of the system, Terri noted, but we didn't make it an overt option, and it made a huge difference. After summer, we worked through the challenges. She noted that staff needed support to make this effort consistent. They created a core group of champions made up of individuals on-site in each building. Terri said that PP&R has 80,000 unique customers that annually register with us through CLASS, we have gathered information from about 14,000 customers. Race and ethnicity becomes required with Activenet registration. Eileen noted that registrations are cyclical, for example we saw a big peak in June, and then again for fall and winter registrations. We are going through spring and then summer registrations soon, and we expect to get big peaks in data.

Jason Smith reported on the data that has been gathered, and what we are seeing so far. He noted that we have collected data from about a quarter of our annual registrants, and trends are starting to look pretty stable. Compared to the City of Portland demographics, we have a lot more people identifying as multiracial. In Hispanic/Latino populations, as well as black/African American populations, we are underrepresented. Declined is at 6 percent, and while anecdotal feedback from staff is that we get more declines from Caucasian individuals, we'll never really know what that slice of the pie is.

Andy asked how we know that the individuals answering the survey live in Portland.

Jason noted that we collect address information for all registrations, and so we are able to track all of our customers.

Jason noted that they compared PP&R data to City demographics, and to Portland Public School District and David Douglas School District enrollment records. He noted that the student population in the David Douglas School District is nearly a quarter Hispanic/Latino, so we can see that PP&R registration for Hispanic/Latino populations is low relative to the numbers in that area of the city.

Jason discussed related initiatives, and how we plan to use this data strategically to better serve populations. He noted that they expect Activenet to mark a huge shift in data collection because more people will start registering online. We can take data, and plot out addresses on a map, and make sure we are reaching communities where they live. For example, when addresses are plotted on a map, we can see clusters of participation in St. Johns and Foster/Powell area, but not as many in Cully or East Portland, so we know those are parts of town and populations that we are not reaching with our services.

Judy Bluehorse Skelton commented that for Portland Public Schools enrollment data, there was a drop in American Indian students and families when multiracial appeared. She noted that in visiting with NAYA, they got surveys back and none of the children identified as native, all identified as multiracial. The unintended consequence of having a multiracial category is that communities can get lost. She noted that the federal dollars attached to American Indian enrollment is also affected. Eileen noted that this is really critical, and said that we will want to research best practices on this issue.

Tricia Tillman commented that she applauds the bureau for taking this on. She noted that equity has been a topic of conversation at least since she has been on the board, and she really appreciates PP&R delving into this. In terms of using the data in the future, she recommended doing some work with future hiring. She noted that Multnomah County builds in culturally specific positions. She recommended hiring according to the demographics that the community centers are serving. Additionally, she noted that culturally specific advisory groups would be helpful in seeing underrepresentation in centers. She also recommended talking to past instructors, and noted that when she was at Matt Dishman Community Center, instructors experienced barriers, though she noted this may not be the case now.

It was also recommended that instead of using multiracial as a category, have customers select all that apply.

Linda asked of the 14,000 respondents, how many were just from the pilot, and Eileen said that very little was gathered during the pilot. She said that the 14,000 reflects all of the centers, and most has been collected since June.

Jim Owens commented that it will be interesting to see if the data changes as more information from outdoor recreation programs is collected. He noted that looking at participation by program will tell us if particular programs have more participation from specific groups. Eileen said that we should easily be able to do that since the data is collected during registration for specific activities, camps,

programs. She noted that we are not collecting for drop in, so if a family comes in to use the pool for the day, or drop in to play basketball, we are not seeing any of that data. Warren noted that the success of this project, and internally the value of collecting, will increase the sense of urgency and desire to expand the data collection.

Kathy Fong Stevens commented that in response to the issues raised by Judy and Tricia, she has seen a similar phenomenon with the multi-ethnic category in the Asian community. She also asked if the Office of Equity and Human Rights has been involved in the project. Eileen said that we have definitely relied on them. After our pilot, she noted, it was really eye opening. We did a retreat, and Dante James came, along with Mike and Warren, to encourage the group. Eileen noted that OEHR has been a resource for this project as well as our mobile playgrounds. They have been an important partner.

Meryl Redisch commented that friends groups, including Audubon, would love to participate in any of the training that you offered in getting staff more comfortable asking questions. She noted that this is something they have been challenged with as well, and they would like to have more information gathered on who is using natural areas. Eileen said absolutely, and that this is a great idea.

Andy noted that we are all really excited about this work. We will look to revisit in 4 or 6 months. He said he is excited to look at who is using our parks and recreation centers. Warren noted that we will see a huge data increase over the next two registration cycle, and that we should schedule an update in September (in time for preview to budget).

**Equity  
Subcommittee  
update**

Dion Jordan noted that last month Tricia Tillman did a wonderful job of sharing, and they have since pulled information together in three handouts to present. He noted that we do so much more than what the community knows we do. He noted that recommendations are highlighted in red on the handouts, and these are the items the subcommittee discussed, and would like to implement. Disability is one. The second thing is performance measures and recommendations we created.

The first handout is affirmation of equity. This is a three column handout with goals and performance measures and recommendations. One thing they highlighted is frequency to report back to board.

Tricia noted that one of the desired outcomes is to finalize the affirmation of equity, which they presented at the last meeting. There was a question about the phrase “and the environment”, so they went back to their notes, and found that this wasn’t in the original affirmation, but was added without any discussion in the minutes. Linda said that she believed this to be a suggestion by Bob Sallinger, and may have referred to the distribution of trees and natural areas. There are some areas that don’t have access to these natural areas. This is related to geography. Tricia said they will need to decide do we keep it in, or take it out. The other question, she noted, was historical context, and that Tony Magliano suggested that historical context should include “historic implications of systemic racism”. The third question was the recommendation for “exceeding the broad diversity,” with the concern that if someone exceeds, than others might be underrepresented. What

we really want there, Tricia noted, is more representation from folks who have been historically underrepresented. The focus is on mitigating historic underrepresentation.

Tricia asked about the process for implementing the changes. Andy said that someone will need to make a resolution, for example “I move that we propose endorsing this with changes...”

Judy Bluehorse Skelton asked about Bob Sallinger’s addition of “environment” to include not just the lay of land, but the whole ecosystem, the flora and fauna, the animals. Linda Robinson noted that this could relate to the ecosystem functioning because some natural areas function better than others. Meryl Redisch commented that rather than referring to geography and environment, we may want to be more specific and call out the ecosystem. Jim Owens expressed concern on that point. He noted that the physical structure of the city controls whether there is access to natural resources or not. Outer east does not have the access that Southwest has. He asked, are you penalizing Southwest because they have it. Meryl noted that perhaps creating natural area parks is not an option in some areas, but perhaps planting more trees or being more intentional is possible. Mike Alexander noted that geography can mean a lot of things. That last phrase, preservation of access to natural areas, we want to make sure that it is preserved and managed, and not just be implied. Andy noted that the phrase “preservation of natural areas” can be used, with preservation of natural areas to take the place of the word environment.

Jim Owens also expressed concern regarding the changes to historical context, and noted that he is afraid that systemic racism is a loaded term. As written, he said, it’s not clear, but I’m looking for something that isn’t quite as loaded. Mike Alexander said that he tends to agree with Jim. Typically when you talk about this issue, he said, he prefers to not use incendiary comments. However, he noted for equity, this statement is an affirmation, and he thinks it’s important to be clear. If there’s a place where this language can be understood and clear in the context, he noted, this is it.

Andy said, with proposed changes, would someone like to make a motion. Jim Owens suggested one more changes, to take out “future” in the line “leaders in reflecting the demographics of the (future) population of Portland”. Mike Alexander proposed the word “shifting” to replace “future”.

Linda Robinson motioned to approve the Affirmation of Equity Statement with changes, Mike Alexander seconded, and the board unanimously approved.

Dion Jordan asked about the frequency of reports to board, noting that it will be important to check in regularly. Warren Jimenez noted that contained in the affirmation statement, should be measurements for frequency of reports. What should frequency look like? It was noted that it should be at least once a year. Linda Robinson asked if some of these items, for example contracting, change from quarter to quarter. The frequency could change depending on how much data is available. Linda noted that this may be overly ambitious. Andy said that the equity task force could look at frequency. Jim Owens commented that you can’t report on contracting on a quarterly basis. He noted that the City’s contracting process is cyclical based on money coming into the city. There are surges. It’s not year round.

Additionally, he noted that if the funding is federal, the requirements are different. He commented that annual reports would perhaps be more useful than quarterly ones.

Tricia noted that she put quarterly reporting in timeframe, because this is the schedule for the state, but she noted that she would recommend that we adopt the performance measures and recommendation, and the task force can come up with a frequency that we can give to the board chair. Andy said that the major action we want is endorsement on the goals, which Tricia noted that we adopted through the equity affirmation statement. Andy noted that we can spend the next month looking at it, and at the next meeting, in April, look to approve performance measures and recommendations.

**Director's update** Warren Jimenez announced that Activenet will go live on Monday, March 10<sup>th</sup> for a new and improved way of registering.

In other news, he noted that we continue to roll out SDC investments- Cully, East Portland, South Waterfront Greenway Trail. Later this week, he noted there will be more news related to acquisition. He said that we want to continue to monitor the conversation on O&M with new parks, a discussion with Council that was brought forward with the O&M for the Greenway. In times of limited resources, he noted, we need to determine the ongoing responsibilities for the Bureau when we bring in new trails, new parks, new responsibilities. We want to make sure we are taking care of those responsibilities.

Related to budget and direction on Council presentations. Work sessions will begin the first week of April. Warren noted that what we've seen so far, is a grouping around themes, in the work sessions to City Council. Claudio Campuzano noted that the schedule is being finalized now. The Budget Office is working with the Bureaus and elected officials, focusing on priority areas that were identified in budgets. Warren noted that for the work sessions, there will not be an opportunity for public comments, but there will be public hearings scheduled, and we will get those dates out as soon as they are confirmed.

**Adjourn** It was noted that the minutes from the February 5<sup>th</sup> Parks Board meeting were not approved, but several members had already left, and there was no longer a quorum. Andy Nelson said that the Board would approve these minutes at the next meeting. He thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting.