



**PORTLAND PARKS BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
December 2, 2015
8:00 – 9:30 a.m.
Lovejoy Room, City Hall**

Board members present: Jeff Anderson, Judy Bluehorse Skelton, Kendall Clawson, Kathy Fong Stephens, Patricia Frobles, Ian Jaquiss, Tony Magliano, Jim Owens, Meryl Redisch, Linda Robinson, Gladys Ruiz, Christa Stout, Sue Van Brocklin,

Board members absent: Tonya Booker, Dion Jordan, Andy Nelson, Julie Vigeland

PP&R Staff present: Mike Abbaté, Eileen Argentina, Art Hendricks, Warren Jimenez, Kia Selley

Call to order Judy Bluehorse Skelton called the meeting to order at 8:07.

Park of the Month Kathy Fong Stephens recently returned from a trip to Japan. She had a wonderful time, and visited beautiful parks, including the Ryoan-ji rock garden in Kyoto, which reminded her of Portland. Mike Abbaté added that some people say that Ryoan-ji is the most special garden in the world.

Patricia Frobles reported on November's park of the month, Kelly Point Park. She visited on a cold, but sunny day. She noted that the Willamette and Columbia Rivers meet at Kelly Point Park. It is a very industrial area to get out there. The park is 104 acres, and is gorgeous, with miles of beach, canoe launch, and open meadow with picnic tables. She said it is lovely, with views of Mount Hood. There were very few people there. It is a great place, and she highly recommends visiting it.

Piccolo Park will be December's Park of the Month. It is a small park off Division in SE Portland. It was the result of a conversion of 3 lots into a park. Linda Robinson noted that it is just a little bigger than 2 Plum Park. Gladys Ruiz will visit, and report back to the Board in January.

Sue Van Brocklin announced that the advertising/public relations firm where she works filmed a commercial at Southwest Community Center Pool. She commended the staff at SWCC, and said they were a great help. Thanks to Eileen Argentina and her team. It was a commercial for All Care Health, and they were filming older adults swimming.

Commissioner's update Warren Jimenez noted that Patti Howard is out, and there will be no report from the Commissioner's office this month.

Public Testimony Chip Halverson testified regarding his concerns about artificial turf at Duniway Park. He is concerned about potential carcinogens in artificial turf.

Mr. Halverson noted that his 11-year-old daughter thought that the woman facilitating the public meeting wasn't very nice. He said that she was condescending, and he was disappointed by that presentation from Parks.

Mr. Halverson discussed a study in California on environmental health hazards. He noted that we have a diabetes epidemic, and there is a push to get kids outside in parks, and we want those parks to be healthy parks. There is enough concern from California that they are doing studies. He also referred to a study at Yale, noting that there is solid science to these concerns. When we ask kids to go out and play, do we want to send them to a park that is emitting some of these known carcinogens? He noted that it seems the direction has been made, but urged the Board and PP&R staff to consider some of these studies.

Mr. Halverson added that he is not coming as a physician, but rather as a father. He is concerned about the health of our children. He asked the Board and PP&R staff to please consider postponing a decision until more science has been done. He noted that there is potential liability to the city. There are multiple people who have PhDs, and have researched the toxicology of these things, those concerns were squashed. Science can be proved depending on who you hire. Mr. Halverson added that he thinks about Kathy's discussion of Japan's parks, and that we should be at the forefront of health of our parks. There is a movement to keep the park green. In the future, it may require labeling these parks – cancer carcinogens in this field.

Mr. Halverson noted that NRPA is looking into this nationally. Crumb rubber is one of the issues here, but there are other infills. Nike, for example, has used ground up tennis shoes. He noted that his staff was selected to present on synthetic turf. One of the requirements for Buckman turf was monitoring Buckman field for drainage. He added that our country has a history of taking something toxic, mixing it with something else, and calling it safe. There are alternatives to crumb rubber. There is an urgency to this. It is something to look at. When the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) gets active and jumps on something like they are doing in California, there is something there.

Jim Owens thanked Mr. Halverson for bringing this issue, and proposed asking PP&R staff to come back with a more thorough update. He asked PP&R staff to respond to the implications.

Kathy Fong Stephens noted that in addition to impacts on human health, she is interested in the residual, drainage to the environment. What about impacts to plant and animal life?

Rick Lovett also testified regarding his concerns about the development of Duniway track. He noted that he seconds what Chip Halverson says. In addition, he came to speak from the traditional users of Duniway. We are a running community; nationally known for that. Duniway gets very busy. You can see hundreds of people there a week during the summer. Mr. Lovett is a volunteer coach for runners at all levels. He noted that lots of people who use Duniway share Chip's concerns, but the traditional runners primary concern is that we will get displaced because of other uses. He added that they will not have any other place to go. Duniway is unusual in that after work hours and noon hours, you can go to the track and have access.

Mike Abbaté noted that community use of the track will continue. There is no plan

for changing that. Just like today, when there is organized event, we keep two lanes of the track open.

Mr. Lovett noted that it's very hard to train for a competitive 5k if you don't have access to the inner 2 lanes.

Mike Abbaté noted that the track is 60 meters short/440 yards, so there will be no competitive events.

Approval of the minutes Kendall Clawson moved to approve the November minutes, Judy Bluehorse Skelton seconded. The Board passed the minutes.

Parks Foundation Jeff Anderson reported for the Parks Foundation, noting that they are moving forward with planning for a fundraising campaign for a footbridge over Burnside. There is a proposal, and design to build a footbridge and connect the wildwood trail. In many ways, it is primarily a safety issue, it would also improve the experience of trail users. Ed Carpenter is a well-known architect that has done the design. Kicking off active fundraising (with a goal of 2.6 million, city has committed 500k, private donors 150k) will begin in early 2016. Jeff added that some of you have been unlucky enough to not get a letter asking to support the PPF, but he brought extras.

Chair & board business Judy Bluehorse Skelton noted that Dion Jordan and Tonya Booker are unable to be here to report for the Equity Subcommittee. They are not meeting in Nov. or Dec, so there will be no report.

Judy gave a chair update, noting that there was a conversation last month about taking our board meetings out to the community. She has been hearing some excitement. The community engagement to get everyone to come, spending a little time between now and February, clarifying our goals for taking the meeting out to the community. Do we want to allow more time for public comment? There are a lot of great ideas, how much forewarning will there be? Ability to rally and get that kind of attendance, or will it be more like our retreat time? We get more awareness of what our assets are. There is a lot of time commitment to make that a successful engagement. Make sure we are clear and hear from staff.

Mike Abbaté noted that previously when the Board used to meet, that was prior to public testimony. The main purpose was to expose members to different facilities, meet staff, tour. If the intent is to make this a public meeting, that does take a fair amount of staff time. A different level of work than turning out 50 people to a parks board meeting.

Jim Owens noted that he is a strong advocate for city boards and commissions to go out to the community. He added that he thinks there is a compromise. First there is the opportunity to see facilities. Second, we should accommodate hearing from the local community, and give them an opportunity to share with us. That is essential. He added that it doesn't need to be the elaborate effort that is associated with a community budget meeting. It could be more informal.

Linda Robinson said that in east Portland, we have east Portland parks, we have

identified key issues and key things we would like to advocate for, a lot of coalitions have that. A time to say this is what we are working on.

Jim added that it could either be a longer meeting, or carve out 30 minutes.

Kathy Fong Stephens added that it is important that community members understand what the Parks Board role is (two way communications). She said that she wouldn't want a lot of people to come, thinking it is their one opportunity 1/2 hour a year to come talk to a Board, and it turns out this isn't the appropriate group to talk to about a burning issue.

This board is not a Board that holds public meetings. It's not the planning & sustainability commission. We have talked about this before.

Judy noted that community members have asked her if this is a new forum, and she doesn't think so.

Kathy said that our bylaws are pretty vague, but we need to be careful about setting up expectations we are not prepared to meet.

Meryl Redisch added that we should be clear about whether we will respond, and discuss, or if we are just listening.

Sue Van Brocklin noted that the last time we did this was at East Portland Community Center (EPCC), a fairly new facility, and it was good to hear from people for 5 or 10 minutes about what goes on at that facility. It will be good to learn about the facility where we are that day.

Warren Jimenez noted that it would be easier for staff to make it more informal, we are pretty stretched with the budget and other projects. If we could make a few strategic phone calls that would be pretty easy to do.

Judy noted that the presentation guidelines were sent out. Mike Abbaté said that the guidelines needs to be updated.

Kathy Fong Stephens noted that there was an update a couple of years ago, allotting time on the agenda to sign up to testify.

Mike noted that this is separate, and the update for public testimony should be rolled together with presentations from city staff.

Sue Van Brocklin added that Kathy is talking about public testimony. The presentation guidelines are for city staff, and outside groups that come for presentations.

Mike suggested that this document be updated to be the Parks Board statement on how you want information shared with you. If you want to incorporate public testimony, you can do that.

Sue noted that the communications committee will do that.

Gladys Ruiz noted that the equity committee can collaborate and send ideas.

**Riverview Natural
Area Management
Plan update**

Emily Roth reported on the Riverview Natural Area Management Plan, noting that it was completed October 2015. Explain main concepts. 1st, PP&R and BES partnered on purchase and management plan. Riverview has been touched by many hands. City staff, contractors, and the public. The property was acquired for watershed health, and access. The property connects to Forest Park and Tryon Creek Natural Area. Also connected to the Willamette River, and across the river. Clean cool water to the Willamette for endangered fish. We have recorded more than 45 species of birds so far. City acquired in 2011 in partnership with Metro and TPL. At the time of purchase, the site was in poor ecological health.

Jim Owens asked about cycling.

Emily noted that at the time that we did the plan, off-road cycling was out of the process. Riverview is being considered once again for cycling with the off-road master plan.

We originally developed the plan that you will see. When cycling was included in the planning process at the time it was taken out. Would we share trails, would we have certain days cycling would be allowed. The intent was that the trail system you will see was for both cycling and pedestrians. It's not off-road trail cycling ever. Always on a trail. It's off-road, but it is always on a trail. The plan would protect the ecology of the site, but would allow compatible use. We are suggesting that it would be on the trail system that you will see in a minute. We would not consider adding more trails to accommodate cycling. They would be shared use.

Jim noted that there is a potential conflict between planning processes.

Emily noted that when the site was acquired, it was in poor ecological health. There were elaborate tree forts that students from Lewis and Clark actually lived in. party sites, ivy. We have planted over 75,000 native trees and shrubs. Through outreach to our neighbors, they are also removing invasive species on adjacent properties. We still have challenges, including illegal camping, dumping and cycling.

PP&R worked closely with neighbors, user groups, project advisory committee – Mauricio Villarreal was advisory for the Parks Board, majority of members recommended moving this plan forward. Mountain biking advocates submitted a minority report not recommending the plan because it did not allow cycling.

Emily noted that the first open house was dominated by the mountain biking community. 250 people attended, and 200 who signed in were from mountain biking community. At the second open house, 125 attended, and half were from the mountain biking community. At that time, mountain biking had been removed from the plan.

Emily discussed access concepts – there will be 2 loop trails, at the top there is a trail that goes across we will put a viewing platform, top trail is a mile, beginner trail, not too steep. Larger loop of the trail is very challenging because of the steep

terrain. We are working with Lewis & Clark – they have been a great neighbor.

Emily noted that the plan includes proposed stormwater treatment, parking and a sidewalk – ½ street improvement. The construction estimate is just over \$5 million because of the terrain. The goals of the management plan are to protect habitat, water quality, improve forest health, foster community engagement, environmental education and research, and protect and enhance the ecological health of the site. There is a focus on water quality best management practices, protecting the cool, clean water entering the Willamette. PP&R is working with partners and volunteer stewards to achieve long term success. Emily thanked the project advisory committee, consultant team, and technical advisory committee.

Emily announced that PP&R will go to Council on January 14th, 3:00-5:00pm (the time certain has since been changed to 2:00 – 4:00pm on January 14th). She added that she has a limited number of copies of the plan if Parks Board members would like a hard copy, we can provide that.

Meryl Redisch asked about mountain biking – do you find mountain biking criss crossing on the gentler terrain, if it is steep and challenging, how much erosion and increased difficulty it will make for other users?

Emily said that if mountain biking is allowed back on the site, the family friendly loop will be the 1 mile upper loop. Everything that is approved has to meet PP&R guidelines for all shared use trails. As part of the plan, we use sustainable, best practices – all of those would need to be met. The lower trail is very steep, so it would only accommodate very advanced bikers.

Mike Abbaté added that it would be a project that is SDC eligible, and we may be able to do some joint funding. Emily noted that Metro hasn't been involved at all in the restoration, just purchase.

Jim Owens said that there is the opportunity to put to bed controversy around mountain biking. The proposed management plan adequately addresses off-road cycling with City-wide off-road cycling.

Mike said that currently, no off-road cycling is allowed at Riverview. The city is looking at compatible sites, and will look at Riverview. But currently mountain biking is prohibited.

Emily added that if it is allowed, it will not be reopened to put in additional trails – it will be on the current trails.

Mike added that there is no interest or desire to do a trail alignment. We want to protect that interior habitat.

Emily noted that the trails, except the upper loop, will be at edge, so we have the interior site preserved for protected habitat. She added that the recommendation from both technical and advisory committees is not to allow dogs. They will be prohibited because of off-leash problems. This site provides clean clear water to the Willamette, the most cold water refuge in the city. We are trying to keep that

water cool and clean.

Tony Magliano noted that the design of a mountain bike trail is different. Mountain bikers will use elements of the trail, switch backs. How would you open them up, if the design wasn't made for that, you will have to go in and make changes?

Mike said that we haven't done the detail design. By the time we do that, we will know whether we need to accommodate biking.

One concern, Mike noted, if this was opened up for biking, it has been used by advanced, and expert mountain biking, what we don't want is a trail through the center.

Emily added that the goal is ride to ride. People want to get on bike, after work, for 1 or 2 hours of exercise. The goal of the city wide master plan is to connect sites to safe routes to create that ride to ride experience for mountain bikers.

**Employment
Zoning project**

Jim Owens presented on the upcoming City Council review and Planning and Sustainability Commission on the Employment Zoning Project.

With Comprehensive Plan hearings underway, Jim noted, we commented last year. We were generally in support of what was being proposed. Jim presented a draft of a new letter to be submitted to Council members from the Parks Board. This letter expresses general support for the comprehensive plan, but recommends changes to the specific sections on employment zoning. Jim recommended that we echo staff comments, and resubmit our previous statements on this issue. He does not recommend that we sit for hours and hours at the hearing, noting that written testimony can have the same effect.

Jim noted that the proposed zoning change is contrary to City policy – parks are allowed in all zones in the city. Reiterate long standing City policy.

Part B – Planning & Sustainability hearing. Originally, our perspective was that the City was taking a draconian approach to prohibit parks in employment zones. That has changed, now anything over 2 acres would have to go through amendment. Jim said that is still draconian in his opinion, noting that it is planning for industrial uses, without a comprehensive approach. Industrial use trumps other land uses. How do we accommodate multiple uses? Jim noted that he struggles with the City's approach to this. In his opinion, the City should hold on this until we do a more comprehensive plan.

Tom Armstrong from the Bureau of Planning & Sustainability will come talk to the Board in January. Jim recommends that we submit testimony to City Council.

Kathy Fong Stephens asked how likely is it that employment zoning will be tabled? Mike Abbaté said that it is unlikely. Kathy asked Jim if you suggest that we testify that it be tabled, what is our fall back?

Jim said that our recommendation goes back to the Comprehensive Plan.

Sue Van Brocklin asked if our letter will be submitted?

Jim noted that the Parks Board has submitted one letter on Employment Zoning. There is one more in draft form to review and approve today. There are ongoing conversations between PP&R and PBS. Tom Armstrong will come, and there will be time to make changes to the draft.

Gladys Ruiz asked if in discussing parks in Comprehensive Plan, is there a place for us to talk about displacement? In focusing on equity and inclusion, can we have a bridge discussion on the Comp Plan, and a separate move around displacement? Gladys added that looking at this as an environmental justice, social justice issue, is there a way to include that in our comments? Parks have a tendency to displace a lot of people by raising the value of the homes in proximity.

Linda Robinson noted that they would be essentially banning parks in areas of the City that have equity issues - Inner Northeast, Outer Northeast, Columbia Corridor.

Mike Abbaté noted that the Board might want to have a fuller conversation, but he is very concerned about ascribing responsibility of gentrification to parks. We have many areas of our community that do not have access. He added that the last thing he wants is another argument to not put a park in an area where there are none. Displacement is real. He said that he has been in meetings with planners who have said we shouldn't put a park there because that will lead to gentrification. If that is true, then what other policies can the City put in place?

Judy Bluehorse Skelton noted that all of these conversations are related, water quality, employment zoning, gentrification, and deserve more time for those conversations. Judy thanked Jim for picking through threads. She added that having Tom Armstrong will be a great opportunity for us to have a good conversation with him. She suggested that the subcommittee plan a meeting and invite others to join if they are interested.

Jim proposed action on the Comprehensive Plan, asking City Council to specifically reiterate long standing City policy

Kendall Clawson noted on the earlier piece, she wants to exercise caution on what appears to be a defensive stance on equity issues. She added that she hears what Mike is saying, but would like to take opportunity to lead on this discussion. Parks represents luxury to some, housing for some (low income housing because they don't have other options). She thinks we all need to be held accountable, people are in parks because they don't have a choice. People are needing parks because they don't have other options. Parks are central to this issue, and not something we can push off to someone else.

Judy added that it is important in looking at what land is left.

The Board was running out of time, and Jim Owens moved to submit the proposed letter on behalf of the Parks Board as testimony. Meryl Redisch seconded. The Parks Board passed unanimously.

Director's Update Mike Abbaté said that we will talk about the reorg in January.

Linda Robinson asked about the changing relationships and contacts for neighborhoods, noting that zone managers used to go out to the communities.

Mike said that a big part of the reorganization is relationships with friends groups, neighbor groups. Maintaining those relationships are front and center. Some will remain the same, there will be new contacts for others. All of those liaisons are skilled. It is an expectation of all of our zone managers. We will have big friends and partner events in February and March – a big part of that will be handoffs. Mike added that we will begin implementing, phased in February & March. The budget process will assume this new organization.

Meeting adjourned Judy adjourned the meeting.

