



**PORTLAND PARKS BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

April 6, 2016

8:00 – 11:30 am

Lovejoy Room, City Hall

Board members present: Jeff Anderson, Judy Bluehorse Skelton, Tonya Booker, Kendall Clawson, Ian Jaquiss, Dion Jordan, Andy Nelson, Jim Owens, Meryl Redisch, Linda Robinson, Gladys Ruiz, Christa Stout, Sue Van Brocklin, Julie Vigeland

Board members absent: Kathy Fong Stephens, Patricia Frobes, Tony Magliano

PP&R Staff present: Mike Abbaté, James Allison, Eileen Argentina, Margaret Evans, Art Hendricks, Warren Jimenez, Trang Lam, Kia Selley, Jennifer Yocom

Call to order Judy called the meeting to order at 8:05

Park of the Month Gladys Ruiz reported on Piccolo Park. Linda Robinson reported on East Holladay Park.

Commissioner's Update There was no update from the Commissioner's office.

Public Testimony No Public Testimony

Approval of the minutes Kendall Clawson moved to pass the March minutes, Dion Jordan seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

Parks Foundation Jeff Anderson reported that the Foundation is continuing to work on the Bridge over Burnside project. They are currently at \$820,000 (of the needed 2.5 million), including the City's commitment.

The Foundation will be moving their office, and relocating to the Crown Plaza. They will have an open house. Annual report for 2015 will be arriving in mailboxes or e-mail inboxes soon.

Julie Vigeland added that Walker Macy has been so generous in giving us a home, but it is where no one can see the staff. The Foundation will be a lot more visible in the new space. It is a huge move.

Reports from Committees Julie Vigeland noted that she hasn't been here as much, but she has still been doing Parks related things. She was asked to serve on the Washington Park Master Plan update. It has been fascinating. She added that she didn't think they wanted her, noting that they were going to be selecting a design firm to do the master plan, and she didn't think she had that kind of experience. They were given all the information, read through materials with great guidance. She went in with trepidation, but the reality is that what we have learned here, and what we brought from other experiences, does prepare you. Julie added that if other board members have this opportunity, jump on it. It was such a fair and thorough process. The

conversations were amazing, thoughtful. In the end, Place was selected, and of course we will be hearing more about that. She noted that the competition was fierce. People really want to be working with parks, so you have really top notch people.

Mike Abbaté added that this is a tease, because he will be talking later about two projects we will be asking parks board members to join.

Julie Vigeland also served on the committee for RxPlay. They met at Colwood Golf Course. Julie reported that RxPlay is a prescription from a doctor, for play for a child who is having behavioral or physical, or other problem. This program was funded, but we don't know if it will continue to be funded. They are proving statistically that this program is incredibly effective for kids. It is through a partnership with all kinds of people. Parks is in the lead. Julie added that she does hope we get the funding because it is something that should grow and benefit more kids.

Mike Abbaté added that we have an ask in the current budget. It was initially funded with innovation funds. The team will be making similar presentation to the City Council later this month. Julie noted that she will try to be there.

Julie Vigeland also served on the project advisory committee for Pioneer Courthouse Square. Not as actively involved, mostly reporting, but it is a very interesting process. They have hired Howard S. Wright to do the project. Pioneer Courthouse Square is going to look like it does now. It is mostly underbelly work. The bricks will not be in the same place, but they will all be there. It will look the same, but will be much safer and more welcoming to more people.

Tonya Booker was not here to report for the Equity subcommittee. Judy Bluehorse Skelton noted that they will be looking at the upcoming Board retreat as an opportunity to go a little deeper. Natural fit. Looking at what parks is doing so well, nature, families, community. How to strengthen that more, how to engage. It won't be done in one year or a decade, but it's an ongoing.

Julie Vigeland noted that she participated in a workshop at the Oregon Arts Commission. It was a facilitated session on equity and inclusion. She wondered if we might like to do something like that. Take the time, and do for a retreat, a day retreat, because when we started this topic here, a number of years ago, we were a different group. The conversation took place amongst the board. Now we have an equity committee, which is great, but really bringing it to the table for the whole group might be something we want to consider.

Mike said that the retreat is scheduled for June 3rd, and we are tentatively looking at Ross Island. He asked how many board members have been to Ross Island. We will take a boat, and then come back to Firehouse 21. We could do an equity discussion there.

Gladys Ruiz noted that we've been talking about it a lot, it seems like it would be good to all get on the same page.

Meryl Redisch noted that it could be a separate day. There are a lot of other strategic things to cover at the retreat, and it would require time.

Meryl Redisch gave an update on tree code status. She thanked the Board for their letter supporting the Urban Forestry Commission's recommendation. At least two City Council meetings have been held on the tree code. The Council voted unanimously to lower the threshold from 48 and 50 inches to 36 inches. Unfortunately, we didn't get that for the City and street trees. We also got an increased time for notification. Right now exemption for affordable housing is on the table, so they would not have to pay mitigation at the 36 level. Trees and green infrastructure is important for everyone. We can live with that exemption because this is a temporary thing. The tree code will be revised.

Meryl noted that we need to get affordable housing advocates around the table. They were not there 5 years ago. She added that one of the letters she read was from Habitat for Humanity. That is a lean organization. If there is a huge tree in the middle of the property, it would be difficult for them to pass that on to the homeowner who is trying to buy a first home. That's a very different situation than a large developer who is putting in 40 units, very different and should be treated differently than a Habitat for Humanity or CDC.

Linda Robinson said that she understands the reason for affordable housing exemptions, but it results in some neighborhoods that don't get SDCs, and lose large trees.

Meryl noted that it has to be approved in the budget, it is on the list of budget items.

Mike Abbaté added that we have a \$100,000 ask in the budget to do the amendments for the tree code. We have funds from the tree mitigation fees.

Gladys Ruiz asked, in talking about affordable areas not having trees, are there City funds to save and keep those trees?

Meryl noted that there is a provision by which City Forester Jenn Cairo has some discretion on whether we could support keeping some of those trees. We have that tree fund.

Mike noted that we have used that fund to pay for some staff, additional Urban Forestry staff.

Sue Van Brocklin did not have a report from the Communications Committee because they have not had any new assignments.

Mike Abbaté reported that the nominating committee is meeting after this meeting. We are looking to fill 4 openings, and have 9 candidates.

**Budget Process
Debrief**

Judy Bluehorse Skelton lead the budget process debrief. After the last round, Parks Board members shared concerns about process. Rather than waiting until the retreat because it gets a little stale, we decided to open up and talk about the

experience. Many of us have been doing it for 2, 3, 4, 7 years. Judy added that the first retreat she attended when she joined the board, it was the dominant discussion, it helped her prepare for the upcoming Budget process.

Mike Abbaté noted that board members received a handout that captures the dates, and order of the process, topics covered.

Gladys Ruiz noted that we've had miniature conversations. She asked if we are resetting to capture everything in one place.

Andy Nelson noted that it is a question of the BAC process. In 2016, unrealistic to get that level of involvement from public citizens. Most Portlanders don't have that kind of time. I don't know anyone who is not busy. It's a different time. It is set up to advantage some, and disadvantage some. We are missing a voice, I think there are other ways to get that. Logical, presents well, but if you are on a commission like this, and the BAC, it's a ton of time. City should look at that. It's an unattainable volunteer activity for most people.

Mike noted that we do surveys, and go out to the community. Are you thinking we need new tools?

Andy said that he thinks Elizabeth Kennedy-Wong probably has ideas, she is an expert. Go to where people are. Go to where they are already gathered. Ask them to make recommendations to this group.

Gladys asked for a process check. Are we giving feedback, or brainstorming? Should we give feedback first, and then brainstorm ideas to fix it?

Judy said that we should give general feedback first, and then possibly small conversation on recommendations.

Gladys commented on what she thinks we are trying to do vs. what is actually happening. It sounds like Parks, the process at parks, other agencies don't have. While it's not the best, it's better than what other city bureaus have. She noted that she appreciates, but that authenticity is huge. She thinks it can be done in a way that is authentic. That short time is difficult. When it's a short time, there are always voices that are not at the table. We know when it's going to happen, we know people don't have a lot of time. Think about ramping up before. One month for everyone to pack in is a challenge. Doing that throughout the year might be better.

Judy noted that has been suggested in the past, updates ongoing throughout the year, thoughts on whether there will be cuts. Or things that will need funding, that we weren't aware of before. There are always big ticket items that come as a surprise. That could be something we look at throughout the year.

Judy added that the process was a little awkward this year. The facilitation was often confusing. When people are coming after work or school, to feel confusion about the process. How we are all weighing in, and what the process was, was a little exasperating. She added that she thinks if we hadn't had the familiarity with the community, it would have been extremely challenging. For someone new to the

process.

Julie Vigeland noted that it turns out some of the same things are recommended every year to go on the cutting block, not because people don't think they are worthy. Every year they will come up, every year the same people will come out and put pressure and keep them from getting cut. Maybe that is why we rotate out, knowing that what we are saying is going to be X'd out. We are the dominant group in the room if we choose to attend. If we had more education, we could guide, and what we recommend would be more likely to be what is put in place.

Kendall Clawson noted along those lines, a little deficit in terms of our process. The onboarding of new members. Having an orientation for new members, I had no idea what I was going on. Informed my desire to participate or not participate. Work doesn't end for me at 5. To think about sitting in the room for 3 more hours, for people to talk at me. I will own the fact that I make choice. Because I wasn't attending, I got phone calls from the people staffing. Largely because people of color were not showing. The people of color are not representative of all the people of color. A least be more thoughtful of what we are looking for from those voices. Limited time, limited. Not saying targeted, did feel that way.

Linda Robinson added that she feels some of that same frustration. Had to make hard choices. Had to put some cuts on, people show up, and everything changes. Too often the folks who show up are the ones with stronger voices. The programs that serve underserved folks get people out, but too often it's the other groups that have the time. Everyone comes from SMILE, etc. those get put back and something else gets cuts. Those programs that get on the block every year, there are reasons, it's not because it is not a good program, but comparatively, and the cost of service, there is a reason. If you have a group of folks, blue collar, that are not used to advocating for themselves and others.

Judy added that there are other cultural groups that don't choose to advocate in the same way. Think about the ways groups choose to participate.

Mike asked the board if they feel that what we put in for requested budget is different then what comes out in the Mayor's approved budget.

Linda said we put a lot of time in, and then it doesn't get in.

Julie added it rarely gets in.

Meryl noted especially in a deficit year.

Linda added even in an add year, there are a lot to choose from.

Jim Owens noted that he felt less valuable this year than in previous years. He was most frustrated by facilitation. He was frustrated by one time funding packages and how they came together. He noted that it is important not to criticize but recommend improvements:

- First, this is only half of the BAC, there needs to be a mechanism for a full

BAC debrief.

- Timing—it's already getting stale, we need to debrief within 30 days of end to be meaningful.
- Public outreach – happy we are doing that – we are SE centric. We need to go out to the rest of the community. Go out at front of process. What does the public think we should be doing with parks money? Take that when crafting packages.
- One time gets less time than adds or cuts, but really critical, we need to spend more time and be strategic.
- Commissioner's involvement – we are blessed to have a Commissioner who wants to participate in the BAC. I don't think others do, at least not to the extent. Chilling factor in that Commissioner announces her priorities and that puts sideways the work of BAC. I would recommend she be more of an observer.
- What do we want to do with the budget? We typically have had conversations about values. What do we want to do this round with this budget? What do we want to accomplish, what are our goals?
- BAC process is microcosm of full budget process. If this board wants to be an advocate with City Council, we need to be involved year round. No idea where we are now. I could look that up, but having staff appraise us, how do we stay involved, advocate, who do we need to call and talk to?

Gladys Ruiz said perfect, Jim. Additionally, she noted accessibility, and how we talk about it. There were too many acronyms. Slowing down enough to really fully involve and appreciate the people at the table. Accessibility in terms of language. Not using acronyms. We have a lot of members of the community who do not speak English, we don't do any translation. Parks has done a lot in terms of translation for HR employment opportunities. For Budget Advisory Committee, look at child care, we are asking people to come and not providing child care.

Jim added that we need to acknowledge staff participation. It's not typical for senior management team to participate in Budget Advisory Committees in other bureaus, and Parks does a good job of being involved. He added that he appreciates that commitment from senior staff in the Bureau.

Synthetic Turf Kia Selley introduced PP&R staff's presentation on Synthetic Turf. PP&R has been installing synthetic turf for over 15 years, starting at Delta Park. Over the years, Kia noted, we have had opportunities to improve safety, including ensuring that infill is sourced from the United States. We are going to continue to monitor studies, and ensure we provide the safest product for the community.

Maya Agarwal presented an overview of turf options, challenges, and recommendations. Maya noted that PP&R's goal is to meet demand. Portland has significant participation in organized sports. One significant challenge of living grass fields is our rainy climate in the Pacific Northwest. We often must close our fields in the winter.

Mike Abbaté added that Board members may have noticed we recently had to close a number of fields due to rain.

Maya reported that synthetic turf meets the high demand, can be played on year round. In addition, we permit the field, so they also represent a revenue source. The most important benefit, she noted, is that synthetic turf evens out the playing surface, cushions, protects players from impact. She added that a synthetic turf field, all weather, all play surface, contrasted with living grass fields – far fewer hours of play on the grass field because it is seasonal, and quite unreliable. Some have to be closed because they get too soggy.

Kia added that effectively you get 250 hours of play each month (3,000 year round) vs. approximately 800 year round on a living grass field.

Jaime English lead the second half of the presentation, and covered concerns about infill, particularly crumb rubber. Jaime noted that as we looked at infill options, synthetic turf has evolved a lot over 25 years. She presented key topics happening in the industry now, including management considerations, health and safety, recreation value of product, lifecycle and maintenance. She noted that PP&R staff talked to our partners in the Northwest, what their experiences have been, and what they plan to do in the future.

Jaime gave an overview of various turf products, including petroleum based (post-industrial crumb rubber, products), sand, plant based. She discussed management considerations – health (exposure, injury), environmental, Recreation value (reliability, playability), installation and maintenance costs. She noted that PP&R staff scored each product with areas of concern, or area of benefit or manageable. None of the infill options eliminate all concern.

Post-industrial products – they are recycled, so it is harder to keep track of what made up the original product, whether it was tires or shoes. If we can ensure it was made in the U.S., that helps to know the recipe. Jamie noted that there has been a lot of research on post-consumer crumb rubber, and so far research is inconclusive. Many would like to see more research done. Heat is another concern with post-industrial turf products. We have cooler days than Texas and other regions of the country. We can manage the heat.

Jaime noted that there is a larger carbon footprint for new infill products. Sand is a little bit harder surface. Heavy to transport, chemical exposure is a concern. Growing, harvesting, and transporting materials is a concern with plant based infills. There are also concerns about the hours of availability with plant based products. Cork can float, so there is some concern about even play surface over time. All infills have some migration. Plant based products would need to be replaced every 2 or 3 years. That significantly contributes to lifetime costs.

The majority of synthetic turf fields in our area are crumb rubber, with which you get maintenance costs reduced, increased hours, revenue stream.

Jaime noted that Tualatin Hills Parks & Recreation Department has 4 synthetic turf fields, and are planning a post-industrial grind field and a cork field.

Seattle has 80 synthetic turf fields, mostly crumb rubber. Those fields are coming to end of life, and they are evaluating the costs of organic infills.

We are looking at these organizations, and will continue to monitor outcomes.

Kia noted that we recognize that synthetic turf is not perfect. Research is still inconclusive. We are conducting analysis of 3 petroleum based products as an alternative for crumb rubber. We will compile additional data as to which is the safest for our community. We will continue to monitor studies from credible sources. Will continue to monitor what the industry is doing, so we can make better and more informed decisions in the future because the science will change.

Judy Bluehorse Skelton thanked Kia, Maya and Jaime, noting that she appreciates the links that were sent. She said she clicked on a few, and some of her concerns, right away was the article on the goalies, and research showing 34 developing cancer, specifically Non-Hodgkin lymphoma. That is way outside the normal. Hypothesized the number of diving on the turf, dust getting up in mouth, and cuts.

Judy noted that she also wondered about rainfall going through the surface, and if there is any concern that they would drain into a deeper water table.

Jaime English noted that we work with the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES), under the surface. Retention before water goes into the storm system and soil adjacent.

Mike Abbaté added that Buckman is post-consumer shoe grind, we or BES did some monitoring to make sure contaminants were not leaching. Jaime added that we have monitored fields for that concern.

Judy asked if at this time, the industry does not have a good way to recycle the whole field. She expressed concerns regarding the cost of and environmental impacts of shipping to a landfill.

Jaime noted that it is evolving quickly, and there is a way to recycle to a certain degree. You have to pull the turf carpet, and that gets recycled into a new turf carpet, the infill gets combed out, and you can use the majority as an infill over time. That is a little costly.

Judy asked if everything in the earth underneath is starved for oxygen.

Jaime said no, and that the surface is permeable.

Jim Owens said great job on the presentation, and great questions, Judy. He asked PP&R staff about how they determined manageable benefits and concerns.

Jaime noted that as a Parks & Recreation agency, our job is to really manage risks and benefits for recreation. Some management around the risks. Through maintenance, we can manage risks of wear and tear. How much effort is it to manage toward benefit?

Kia noted that an example of a managed concern might be heat exposure in post-consumer product rinds, or crumb rubber, we might choose on an especially hot day to close those fields because of risk to players – heat stroke.

Andy Nelson noted that in terms of public health, there is the benefit of getting people moving. He asked, to what extent is this an issue, and do we need to take a position on this?

Mike said that it is up to the board to decide.

Andy asked, how much of an issue is this for you? Is there significant concern around chemical exposure?

Judy asked, what does most recent research show? Look at children and families. How many weeks do we close because of rain, how many days do we close for heat?

Jim noted that this presentation is a result of a request from this board in response to public comment. The Board felt it was important to understand the issue. I think the recommendation is that it is a monitoring exercise at this point.

Jeff Anderson noted that the public comment was mainly a chemical exposure concern.

Jaime noted that in the California study, she is not sure if they are looking at the new materials. They are looking at the existing fields, trying to understand through different exposure paths, chemicals may be exposed to the body—saliva, intestinal, does something in the lungs interact differently? They are trying to find a plan for how to test for that. There is some time for getting that solid information from them.

Kia noted that it will be a multi-year study, and people's health will be monitored over time. It is active research, and we will continue to monitor the science. We know the recipe for these new products, so there is more available knowledge for us than with post-consumer product, or crumb rubber. So looking at maintenance, can we keep up with the replacement costs? What is the capital costs of new products, is it 1 ½ times, or 2 or 3. We had a good conversation. Public health is a concern, so is the cost. It's not the determining factor, but it is a factor. We want to be clear, we are not going to wait for the California EPA or U.S. EPA to make a determination because that is going to be a multi-year effort. We have fields that are moving forward. We are going to have to monitor the science, and make our decisions at that time.

Judy said that it would be great to continue to be updated.

Director's Update

Mike Abbaté noted that we are starting the master planning process for 2 projects. One is for Mill and Midland, another for 150th and Division. We are using a different approach to public involvement for these two projects. Mike asked for volunteers to represent the Board for these two master plans. Hun Taing added that the time commitment will involve up to 5 meetings, 2 hours each over the span of a year, starting in June. She noted that we have dwindled down the level of commitment so more people from the community can participate.

Gladys Ruiz volunteered to participate in the planning for 150th and Division.

Elizabeth Kennedy-Wong added that we would encourage someone who hasn't done this in the past. It is a pretty interesting process.

Judy Bluehorse Skelton volunteered to participate in Mill/Midland.

Mike reported that this is a time of unprecedented change in the Bureau – we have a number of retirements, funding from Council to create new positions. Fourteen people took the retirement incentive. We are moving desks, we have recruitments. We are paying for an HR specialist from BHR to help us. One thing we can use help with is filling openings. When we send openings, please quickly send them out to your networks. We want diverse pools. For the most part, we are doing external recruitments, and we want the biggest pools possible.

Gladys Ruiz noted that often times in meetings, Mike is rushed. She requested that we bump up the Director's update to where the chair updates are, so that we have time to ask questions.

It was decided that the Director's update will be moved up on the agenda.

Meeting Adjourned Judy adjourned the meeting at 10:39 am.