

**PORTLAND PARKS BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

March 6, 2018 | 3:00 – 5:00 pm
Congress Center | 5th Floor, Room 513

Board members present: Patricia Frobos, Gladys Ruiz, Paul Agrimis, Judy Bluehorse Skelton, Jeff Anderson, Meryl Redisch, Tonya Booker, Michelle Dedeo, Kathy Fong Stephens, Christa Stout, Ian Jaquiss, Jenny Glass

Board members absent: Kendall Clawson, Joseph O’Leary, Jim Owens, Paddy Tillett

PP&R Staff present: Mike Abbaté, Amy Archer-Masters, Margaret Evans, Jennifer Yocom, Heather Randol, Lauren McGuire, Jamal Fox, Hailee Vandiver

Commissioner’s Office: Commissioner Fritz and Cristina Nieves

Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions Pat Frobos called the meeting to order at 3:08 pm

**Discussion:
Mayor Wheeler
and Parks Board**

Pat introduced the discussion by summarizing the Parks Board priority concerns: (1) the development of a comprehensive, long range vision for our parks and open space system that will guide the city’s decision making for the next 10-15 years; (2) the impact of houselessness on the environment and on park users and employees; and (3) achieving financial stability for the city’s parks and natural areas. Mayor Wheeler thanked the Parks Board for overseeing the city’s commitment to the values and objectives reflected in the 2020 Vision. He stressed the importance of focusing on services that are relevant for the next generation of park users, while maintaining core values, including environmental protection, equity, and inclusion. The Mayor discussed his desire to connect residents to the Willamette River and re-establish the Willamette River as a central force in community life. He cited the pilot project carried out last summer at Poet’s Beach as a first step toward encouraging residents to recreate in and near the River. Mayor Wheeler then asked for questions from the Parks Board.



Pat commented on the fact that the Mayor's remarks reinforced the importance of creating a community based long-range plan that accurately reflects the priorities of an increasingly diverse city. She noted that the City Budget Office has recommended against funding the Bureau's request for money to develop such a plan and asked the Mayor what he thought about the need for a long-range vision.

The Mayor responded that while Portland is experiencing record revenue, costs are increasing more quickly than revenue. The year's budget exercise is intended to more closely align revenues and costs so that when the economy turns the city's structural deficit doesn't increase. The Mayor noted that while he had asked each of the bureaus to submit a budget reflected a 5% cut, that did not mean every bureau's budget would be reduced by that amount. He further indicated that the Council would consider the Bureau's request to fund long-range planning, despite the recommendation made by the City Budget Office. With respect to Poet's Beach, Pat brought up an incident that occurred at Poet's Beach last summer as an example of some of the impacts of houselessness on parks and parks users. The incident led to a dramatic drop in the number of visitors to the beach. Pat acknowledged that the problems associated with houselessness are enormously complicated and asked the Mayor how the Parks Board could be a part of a solution. For example, there seems to be a lack of clarity about whether camping is allowed in parks. Pat asked the Mayor if he could clarify the policy and ask how the Parks Board could help communicate the correct policy? She also asked if the Mayor supported more resources to support park rangers.

Mayor Wheeler responded that camping is not allowed in city parks. He noted that by the time park rangers come in contact with houseless folks, government has already failed them on several levels. He acknowledged that the city does not have sufficient resources to solve the problems associated with houselessness. Accordingly, if someone is camping in a park, but minding their own business and does not a danger to themselves or others the chance of an intervention is zero.

Pat followed up by pointing out there is confusion in the community about what the policy is for camping and the Parks Board would like an idea about how to help the mayor communicate the policy to the public. From what she has heard people think that people are allowed to camp in parks and there is confusion.



The mayor responded that they work with social services providers who work with people experiencing houselessness and we post our parks as well. The mayor clarified that rangers are instructed to create de-escalation and humane interactions while connecting houseless folks with one of the social service providers.

Kathy Fong Stephens noted that park rangers have been very effective in helping campers relocate when required to do so. She also asked how the Parks Board could help clarify the policy regarding camping in parks.

The Mayor responded that Parks Board members could work with Parks partners and providers, use social media, and visit editorial boards to talk about the policy. In addition, Nathan Howard from the Mayor's office offered to work with Kathy and the Houselessness Working Group on developing ways to more broadly communicate the policy.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz added that the city doesn't have the resources to move everyone who is camping in a park. She also pointed out that everyone is free to use parks during the time that they are open and there is no limit to how much property you can bring into a park. However, no park land can be claimed as a permanent living space

Pat mentioned that the Parks Board is considering a future bond issue to fund critical capital improvements. She asked the Mayor to share his views about using bond issues as a component of achieving financial stability.

The Mayor said he thought that he public should be asked to support public services. People love the parks in Portland and it is entirely appropriate, particularly in a resource constrained era, to ask the public to provide support for the parks.

Finally, Pat asked how the Parks Board and the Mayor could continue this conversation begun at the meeting. The Mayor offered to attend another meeting in September and encouraged the Board to attend the budget hearings.

Mayor Wheeler then left the meeting.

Commissioner Fritz thanked everyone for prompting the discussion on houselessness. She reported that on Monday the City Budget



Office put out it's recommendations that about half of the total recommended budget cuts come from the Parks budget. The Commissioner stated that she will attend the next month's Parks Board meeting to talk more about the budget. She also encouraged members to show up to budget meetings

Commissioner Fritz left the meeting

Director's Update

Director Abbaté reported that the next step in the budget process is a presentation to the City Council on Friday March 16th at 10:30. There will be a twenty-minute presentation followed by a forty-minute question and answer session. He also reported on the work underway to revise the 2004 cost recovery policy. Tonya Booker has worked with the Bureau staff developing the revised policy. The revised policy will be presented at a future Parks Board meeting and then presented to the City Council for approval.

Approval of the minutes

Approval of the January minutes was moved and seconded and passed unanimously.

Approval of October minutes was moved and seconded and passed unanimously.



**Public
Testimony**

The Board heard public testimony as follows:

Off-road Cycling: Dr. Catherine Thompson described negative encounters between bikers and hikers in Forest Park, including bikers running into pedestrians. She urged the Parks Board to consider the safety of the pedestrians in the Park and strategies for protecting them including not allowing bikers on single track walking paths.

P. Sydney Herbert (Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs) stated most of her partners have issues with mountain bikes and California clubs are trying to get them banned from national parks. Andrew Jansky (Northwest Trail Alliance Advocacy Chair) mentioned that most mountain bikers are environmentalist and are concerned about protecting natural areas. The experience at Powell Butte has shown that that claims that off-road cycling results in environmental damage are not accurate. Mountain biking is a family sport and helps children learn to respect and engage with nature. The draft plan is providing hope to the mountain bike community.

Paul Hobson indicated that as a licensed civil engineer in the State of Oregon, he has not found any peer-reviewed scientific literature indicating that mountain biking on narrow, single-track trails has any more impact on the trail than hiking and trail running. He pointed out that many children ride bikes and stated that every child deserves a chance to experience nature on a bike. Cycling connects children and adults to the natural world, fostering their appreciation of it and the desire to preserve it.

John Miller testified that Forest Park is not solely owned by parks and that other city bureaus are involved. He suggested that the tension between cyclists and hikers will play out in court. He also stated Portland is a unique city and need not follow the trend of other cities allowing mountain bikes in natural areas. [Note: Mr. Miller testified later in the meeting. His remarks are included here so that the Off-road Cycling Plan comments can be read together].

Other Matters: Susan Gilbert, two-year resident of Portland, testified that there are deficiencies in communication with the public. She commented that the Parks Board website was difficult to navigate and that she had trouble finding the meeting date, location, and time of the Budget Advisory Committee meetings. She said she did not receive a response to an email to the Director in January. She also indicated



**Public
Testimony**

that she had intended to fill out the online survey on the Bureau’s budget, but the survey was taken down earlier than the posted date. Additionally, she requested the Board have a microphone and sound system at their meetings because it was difficult for her to hear.

**Additional
Comments**

Pat pointed out that the Off-road Cycling Plan is not a Parks Board or Parks Bureau plan it is a Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) plan. BPS will be presenting a final plan to City Council in September. At its April meeting, the Board will consider making comments on the current draft plan. BPS will decide whether or not to incorporate any of those comments. Pat indicated that there would be an extended public comment period at the April meeting. The format of the comment period has yet to be decided.

**Consideration
of Request for
Extended
Testimony**

The Board considered Marcy Houle’s request to give a fifteen-minute presentation on off-road cycling in Forest Park at the April Board meeting. The Board decided not to grant the request given that the Board has already received a substantial amount of testimony on the topic. It was moved and seconded to invite Ms. Houle to submit written testimony with a five-page limit and verbal testimony with the time limits applicable at the April meeting.

Director Abbaté stated the when the April meeting is over the Board should review its guidelines for receiving public testimony.

**Board
Working
Groups**

Pat summarized the need to clarify the role, authority, and responsibilities of the existing Board working groups. It was moved, seconded to adopt the revised description in the form attached as Attachment A. The motion pass unanimously.



Introductions to New Senior Managers Director Abbaté introduced Lauren McGuire who has taken over Ramiro Villalvazo’s position as the Assets and Development Division Manager, Hailee Vandiver as the new Senior Administrative Assistant, and Heather Randol who has been hired as the new Health, Safety, and Environment Manager.

Finalize Board Members for Nominating & Officer Committees The motion to approve the composition of the Membership Nominating Committee and the Officers Nominating Committees was moved, seconded and unanimously adopted. Kathy requested that anyone interested in serving as an officer let her know by the first week of April. Both Mike and Pat encouraged Board members to reach out to potential new Board members and encourage them to apply.

Meeting Adjourned

Pat Frobes adjourned the meeting at 4:56 pm

Next Meeting April 3, 2018

