



Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

4:30 p.m.

Vancouver City Hall

Birch Room

415 W. 6th Street

Vancouver, WA

Commissioners Present:

Haygood, Robbins, Wille, Thompson, and Fletcher

Commissioners Absent:

Piland, and Panter

Staff Present:

Perlick, Guzman, Gutierrez, Snyder, Cook, George, Donovan, Meade, Miletich, Stokke, Williams, Brosius, Tubberville, Hull, Lankford-Woo, Heath, Chun, and Nilo.

Guests: Dylan Morgan, Amy Zoltie

Item 1: Call to Order

Chair Haygood called the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) regular meeting to order at 4:34 p.m. in the Birch Room at Vancouver City Hall and online via Microsoft Teams. Commissioners Piland and Panter were absent.

Item 2: Approval of Minutes

PRAC approved the August 21, 2024 meeting minutes by consensus.

Item 3: Public Comment

None presented.

Item 4: Waterfront Gateway Plaza Master Plan

Roman Gutierrez introduced the Waterfront Gateway Plaza project, providing background that the project was approved by City Council in October of 2023.

Members

Jayne Haygood

President

Angilo Fletcher

Vice President

Jeremy Robbins

Jenny Thompson

Stephen Wille

AJ Panter, VPS

Cale Piland, EPS

Vacant, Parks Foundation

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The 6.4-acre site is located between the Columbia River waterfront and the historic downtown core. Plans include housing, office space, retail, a maker's market, restaurants, and parking, with the Public Plaza as a key feature. Civic plazas were added to Vancouver's Park classifications with the adoption of the 2022-2031 Comprehensive Plan; they are located within high-density residential mixed-use areas and can include commercial and industrial areas.

Burton gave an overview of community engagement, which aimed to inform the public about the project and invite businesses and neighbors to refine the plaza design. Engagement included pop-up tabling events, open house events, and community surveys to collect feedback on site activation and preferred public priorities.

Consultant Dylan Morgan shared a variety of plaza activities with the flexible space and the design evolution. Notable changes from the initial designs include replacing the ramp with a walkway, breaking up large expanses of hardscape to a more human scale, and increasing the tree canopy and planting space.

Proposed materials include brick paving and concrete bands, basalt columns, and wood seats at concrete stadium steps. Morgan shared concept images with an overview of intended public uses of the plaza.

Gutierrez reiterated that this project is a unique partnership with a private developer (Lincoln); the developer is responsible for completing the site design with City direction on the plaza.

The project timeline was reviewed. After PRAC approval in the fall of 2024, construction drawings and permitting will begin in 2025. Construction is estimated in 2026-2027.

An open discussion was held regarding the budget; Perlick confirmed that the budget is still being refined. Fletcher thanked presentors and commended the project. Haygood and Wille asked about parking solutions, and Burton reiterated that the development would include a 500-space parking lot. Street parking has not been defined yet; however, the Economic Development Department is working on a downtown parking assessment.

Haygood supported the preservation and addition of trees, as well as the lighting solutions. She inquired about the placement of public art; Gutierrez confirmed that the Culture, Arts & Heritage Commission will help define this. It was confirmed that the project is aiming for restaurant and retail space, as well as flexible space that is pedestrian-focused with room for cyclists.

Wille noted the consideration for historical perspective to be integrated into the project; Gutierrez affirmed that there will be opportunities to explore that lens.

Fletcher moved to approve the Waterfront Gateway Plaza master plan as presented; the motion was seconded by Wille and unanimously approved.

Item 5: Summer Update from the Environmental Youth Corps (EYC)

Riley Schleiss from Urban Forestry presented an update on behalf of the two cohorts from EYC, representing high schoolers all over Vancouver.

The goals of EYC included: Developing a green workforce; Youth professional development; Tree canopy restoration; and Tending to environmental justice.

Work locations were primarily along the Fourth Plain corridor, in historically underfunded and over-polluted communities.

The tracking tool, Tree Plotter, was used as a GIS tree tracker and health data source. Participants learned how to manage an urban forest, plot spots for potential trees, and estimate tree inventory. In addition, EYC participated in community connections and outreach, meeting new community groups, nonprofits, and nurseries.

In total, 411 trees were established and maintained, with 45.3 cubic yards of mulch applied, 515 gallons of weeds removed, 96 trees pruned, 1030 trees inventoried, and 316 planting sites identified.

Impact on participating youth included an increase in tree identification/inventorying, and in the ability to explain environmental equity. The program successfully introduced youth to potential environmental career pathways and empowered youth to spread their knowledge and presence within the community.

A special thank you went out to acknowledge Hailey Heath and the Naturespaces & Volunteer Programs.

Robbins commented that it is inspiring to see this valid and important work being done. Thompson seconded her enthusiasm to see our youth making a difference through this great program. Wille agreed and commended the program connecting kids to green careers. Haygood asked if there were any opportunities for collaboration going forward with the project. Schleiss confirmed she is connecting with programs in the local school districts, as well as Next Step, which helps young adults who are not in school. This fall there will be more tree planting, and there is a 3-year grant for this program to keep it growing.

Item 6: Pre-Report: Fourth Plain for All Update

Omar Guzman gave an update on the Fourth Plain for All initiative, with a focus on The Downs and Evergreen Parks.

Perlick shared an overview of Fourth Plain for All and ARPA funding (American Rescue Plan Act), which identifies projects through a community-led process to invest \$25M into neighborhoods near Fourth Plain Blvd. \$7M was invested in Parks. Projects include housing, community building, public health, transportation, economic development, and parks & public spaces. Parks in the project area include 6 neighborhood parks and 3 community parks.

The Downs improvement priorities include a new “leaky roof” picnic shelter, a new half-court basketball court, irrigation, and a security light. Guzman gave an overview of the concept plan endorsed by the committee. Community engagement and design concept preparation will begin in early 2025.

Evergreen Neighborhood Park priorities include playground replacement, new benches, additional picnic tables, a Portland Loo, a half-court basketball refresh or new location, and a lighting upgrade. Community engagement and design concept preparation begins in June 2025.

Next steps: Create a community engagement plan; Park planners explore Evergreen playground theme options to present during community engagement; Keep the investment strategy committee informed on schedule and community engagement.

Wille noted the lighting impact on pollinators, and Guzman confirmed that as a factor to use the latest make/model as a best practice for this project.

Item 6: Director's Report

Perlick highlighted that construction notices for Homestead are going out later this week for neighbors who live nearby. We are expecting to start work by the end of the month with construction running through January 2025.

The new Portland Loos at Marshall Park are almost finished. We are going through the final installation checklist to make sure everything is ready for the public. We expect to have them open by the end of next week.

Wintler Park has been closed to vehicle traffic since Sept. 9 to accommodate the Public Works Sewer Interceptor Rehab project. It will reopen to vehicles on Saturday morning. Updated construction schedules are on the City's website.

The water feature at Waterfront Park closed for the season on Sept. 16 for fall and winter weather.

The fitness center at Firstenburg tied with Lakeshore Athletic Club for the best gym or fitness center in the Columbian's Best of Clark County contest. Congratulations to the Firstenburg team!

Save the date for our annual Dia de Muertos celebration on Saturday, Oct. 19. This event has been consistently growing each year and invites people from all backgrounds to commemorate the holiday and learn about this important cultural celebration.

You may have seen a story about the Arts Hub in the Columbian earlier this month. Funding to complete critical building repairs like the roof replacement was requested in the 2025-26 biennium budget. Other funding sources, including grants, are being explored for future building improvements. People can learn more about the project on the City's website.

As a reminder, we expect the citywide budget to be posted in early October. At next month's PRAC meeting, we will be able to share an overview of potential impacts and answer more questions.

Item 7: Chair Report

Haygood shared a shout-out to Luepke Center's line dancing instructor. She also received a notice from the Watershed Alliance that they will have their funding removed.

Item 8: Evergreen School District Report

None presented.

Item 9: Vancouver Public School Report

None presented.

Item 10: Open Discussion & New Business

Robbins noted that Oakbrook Park has come back to life now that natureplay equipment has been installed, and he is looking forward to the full remodel soon.

ADJOURNED

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:56 p.m.