



Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 17, 2024

4:30 p.m.

Vancouver City Hall

Aspen Room

415 W. 6th Street

Vancouver, WA

Commissioners Present:

Haygood, Wille, Kuntz, Thompson and Robbins

Commissioners Absent:

Fletcher, Otto, Piland, and Panter

Staff Present: Perlick, Guzman, Snyder, Tubberville, Stokke, Heath, Cook, Nilo, Burton, Hull, and Gutierrez.

Item 1: Call to Order

Chair Haygood called the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) regular meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. in the Aspen Room at Vancouver City Hall and online via Microsoft Teams. Commissioners Fletcher, Otto, Piland, and Panter were absent.

Item 2: Approval of Minutes

PRAC approved the May 15, 2024 meeting minutes by consensus.

Item 3: Public Comment

None presented.

Item 4: Update on Summer Parks Projects

David Perlick introduced the Capital repair and reinvestment program, as much of this work is done within existing master planning. Terry Snyder gave an overview of Parks Capital Projects happening in Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services.

Members

Jaynee Haygood

President

Angilo Fletcher

Vice President

Jeremy Robbins

Mathew Kuntz

Jenny Thompson

Stephen Wille

Kerry Otto

AJ Panter, VPS

Cale Piland, EPS

Vacant, Parks Foundation

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Community Parks updates include introducing elements of nature play at Oakbrook. We are currently working on a grant in support of Phase II of Shaffer Park. The Bagley master plan will be introduced next month, supported by ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act), to invest in communities with inequities that were strongly impacted by Covid-19. Additional funding is being reviewed and identified. We just awarded a contract for the new restrooms at Marshall, which should be in place by the end of August. At Esther Short, they will be restoring the tower and water feature.

The Burnt Bridge Creek Trail will be undergoing a bridge repair due to erosion issues. The bridge is still useable by pedestrians, and we are currently doing a feasibility study to explore the most effective solutions.

Neighborhood Park upgrades include Fruit Valley moving forward with construction designs and components, and we are aiming to get permits in by September to finish by summer 2026. We are narrowing down improvements to integrate at Evergreen and The Downs through ARPA.

Recently completed projects include Columbia Lancaster Park, Van Vleet Park, Fisher Basin Surfacing, Arnada Park, and the restrooms at Esther Short Park.

Item 5: Community Outreach Update for Homestead Park

Omar Guzman, Associate Landscape Architect, provided an update and background on the playground replacement. Homestead Park is a 6.2-acre neighborhood park serving the Cascade East and Cascade Highland neighborhoods in East Vancouver.

A community survey for neighbors revealed strong interest in the inclusion of standard swings, and in put was given on preferred concept designs. The survey had 234 total survey responses.

The final proposed master plan features ages 2-5 play area, ages 5-12 play area, swings, shadow play flower, log scramble, bench, bike rack, trash receptacle, artificial turf, wood chips, recycled wood chips, an existing path, and playground access. The play structures each include 16 different play features.

The playground replacement timeline has the project start and design development survey in March of 2024, followed by design refinement and permit applications in April-June of 2024. Last week, we shared the design with the community at an Open House and received positive feedback. We are currently completing the design and working to secure the contractor in August. Construction is estimated to start in September and reach completion in December of 2024.

An open discussion was held to address any questions from commissioners. Kuntz asked more about the concept design, and Guzman answered that it is an abstract theme of the sky. Haygood asked about tree removal, and Guzman shared that arborists could confirm that the design would not harm or remove the existing trees. Robbins asked if any shade structures were planned. Guzman shared that due to the nature of this park, there is a large tree canopy available surrounding the play structures.

Item 6: High-Level Budget Update

Dave Perlick highlighted an updated timeline of the biennial budget process. He highlighted that the City has a deficit in the General Fund for the next budget cycle, 2025-26 due to inflation and slowing construction. The deficit is projected at \$26 million per year, with a 20% impact on the PRCS budget. This is a challenge facing other cities as well.

Perlick noted that Parks Capital projects are based on revenues that are currently available and accessible to be used for their allotted purpose. To address this gap, we will be focusing on reducing services and overall staffing, most visibly in community events, recreation programs, and facilities.

As this reduction level will leave a strong impact, we are working to roll these changes out to the community in a transparent and mindful way. We are also exploring alternative revenue options to the extent possible. We are examining these decisions through a lens of community values and equity.

We will be submitting our recommended budget for review at the end of this week, though these decisions will likely be under review and refinement until September or October. We will do our best to address and respond to any questions that we can in the meantime.

Kuntz noted that while transparent and frequent communication will be vital, there will still be many upset responses from the community. He suggested that PRAC members advocate to demonstrate to the Council the highly negative impacts these cuts in PRCS will have on voters and the community. The purpose would be to illustrate the minimum level of funding needed to maintain our services. Haygood recommended attending upcoming City Council work sessions to testify during public comment or submitting comments electronically.

Thompson added it might be beneficial to remind Council of various ways that Parks can be creative in their approach to preserving services. An open discussion was held regarding an action plan for researching alternative funding.

Perlick confirmed that, while Grounds and Urban Forestry are both part of Public Works, there is a lot of intersection and coordination with PRCS. We will need enough support in place to continue our vital work.

Robbins expressed concern about budget impacts being a structurally recurring issue. An open discussion was held regarding remaining flexible and creative, including exploring legislative options to help fill the gap.

Thompson urged staff to continue sharing long-term strategy so that commissioners can continue to advocate in a unified and informed way.

Item 6: Director's Report

Perlick highlighted we have 3 candidates for the new City Manager position. More information is available on the City's website. Eric Holmes will continue to provide guidance as the budget is finalized and will overlap once the new candidate has started. We have 2 internal candidates and 1 external candidate with community Q&A sessions coming up this week.

Events season is underway. Perlick highlighted the Waterfront Concert Series kicking off with an estimated attendance of 2300 last Friday – the biggest event at Waterfront Park so far. This event is being embraced by the community, and we love to celebrate and enjoy the turnout this summer.

Also coming up is the second Vancouver Arts & Music Festival (VAMF). While our volunteer slots are almost full, there may be additional opportunities to volunteer. Please visit the event website for more information.

Perlick congratulated Jaynee Haygood and Jeremy Robbins on their reappointment to PRAC. Commissioner Wille has stated his intent to request reappointment at the end of his term later this year. Perlick also thanked Matthew Kuntz for his two terms of service on PRAC and hopes to collaborate on future community projects.

Item 7: Chair Report

Haygood attended the Homestead Open House last week and commended Melody Burton's impactful and positive communication with the community.

She will attend VAMF next month and will be assisting as a volunteer. Haygood invited other commissioners to volunteer and join, with only 5 volunteer slots left open!

Item 8: Evergreen School District Report

None presented.

Item 9: Vancouver Public School Report

None presented.

Item 10: Open Discussion & New Business

Haygood informed the group that the Pollinator meetings will now be held at the Library.

Wille recently had coffee with Mayor McEnery-Ogle to share concerns from community members who approached him regarding parks and water access. An open discussion was held regarding water access for plants. It was noted that some of the fencing around the parks is being chewed up by squirrels at Countryside and Fircrest Park. An open discussion was held regarding appropriate plants in natural habitats in parks in response to urbanization.

Robbins highlighted the need for accessible naturespaces, parks and trails. He has received several other reports from other community members concerned with ADA. He commended the recent successes on parks projects with accessible features, and Snyder confirmed that this is also on the radar for current and future Parks projects.

Haygood attended the Vancouver volunteer appreciation event and thanked the City.

ADJOURNED

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:43 p.m.