



Commission Members:

Chair Jaime Parker, Vice Chair Jon Kachmar, Marie Gray, Zack Anchors, Eleanor Sears, Beth Rabbitt, Stephen Bentsen, Michael Catania, Cheri Musgrave, Katie Mears and City Councilor Victoria Pelletier. **Staff:** Alex Marshall, Thomas Nickerson, Madeline Groeger.

City of Portland **Parks Commission Agenda**

October 6th, 2022

5:00 PM

On October 6th, 2022 5:00 pm, the Portland Parks Commission held a meeting using Zoom.

I. Call to Order -

II. General Citizen Comment Period (5 min)

Anne Pringle, Friends of Deering Oaks. Closing of Preble Street has caused an exodus in Deering Oaks. Overnight camping is not allowed in the park. Chronic homelessness of those who refuse to access services. Shooting in the park, stolen items. Extremely difficult situation to all those that are involved.

III. Agenda Items

a. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes September 1st: Action Item (5 min) Beth made the motion and Marie second. Motion to approve. Acceptance of 9/1/2022 minutes

b. New Business

i. Department policy regarding encampments - Alex reviewed the City policy for individuals who are experiencing homelessness. We do not allow camping to occur in Deering Oaks and Oxford Street. An ordinance is provided. Short staff of park maintainers has affected the ability to maintain DOP.

Beth Rabbitt asked, “what defines encampment?” Tenting, household belongings, overnight gear, tents... ” What is the policy when shelters are not at capacity?” No camping in any park. Current policy clean ups 2 to 3 times a week. Contract out for other efforts to clean the park. Our current staff are not able to be there every day. Collection of items policy. Items are tagged if individuals are not at site. taken to Amastad. Much of the

Marie asked, have we received any assistance from any other agencies?. Are there any other services doing outreach? Why are we not receiving additional services? Social services has not done enough to assist. We have at least 20 agencies that provide service to the homeless. Why are they not pitching in?

Katie asked, “what has the timeline on enforcement?” Alex responded, we never had this problem before the pandemic. There were smaller encampments but not to this level. 24 hour notice to encampments in the park. Pre pandemic we didn't have capacity issues in our shelters.

Elanor asked Alex to clarify if the unhoused are issues in other parks similar to DOP? Alex responded, yes but not to the capacity

Cheri said, we are doing an amazing job keeping things going in the city. She then asked if we have reached out to other areas experiencing similar agencies and municipalities? Alex has not had much feedback from other municipalities? Most of the focus is trying to take care of the staff and not burning them all out. She asked if there was anything the commission could do to thank the staff? Marie and Cheri will draft a letter to the staff and send it to Ethan and Alex.

Beth asked, if there was anything else the Parks Dept could do to assist the city? Alex answered, fiscal budgetary support to build the staffing ability. We need money in the budget to do this.

Jamie states, he supports a formal letter from the Parks Commission and funding assistance. Park workers are acting as social workers and other roles. A change in the condition that warrants additional funding. This has risen to an issue that needs to be addressed. Jamie would like the commission to be part of the additional funding source. He's not confident that the new shelter will take away this issue.

Cherie asked, if we have thought about creating part time positions to staff the parks. City has been trying to increase pay rates and stipends.

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-Impacts of the unhoused on city parks and the division - Alex said, midsummer park maintainers are spending most time picking up garbage and food and human waste. Had 2 park rangers and park custodians cleaning bathrooms. 60% of time working at campsites. Working on balancing that percentage. Alex will work at supplying a report for police activity, needle pick up etc.

Katie noticed there are needle drops in some parks but not in all. How do we determine where they go? Alex stated we have slowly increased the number of sharp containers. The needle exchange is currently emptying the sharp containers. We place them in areas known for drug use. Not all needles end up in the containers. Found stuck in trees, stuck in roots, hedges in the rose garden.

- ii. **Parks Commission Areas of Focus, Strategic Conversation** - Jamie asked, What is the focus of the Parks Commission? What can we do to be effective and efficient?

Beth commented, Committee works around green space and signage.

Jamie commented, More opportunity for the committee to do more outcome driven work. For example, advocating for parks that do not have "friends groups."

Katie commented, limited data is available to make priorities for next year. Usage data. Pedestrian counters. Create surveys.

Beth commented, Community Vision, talking to schools about parks, talking to the people. Try to better understand what people want.

Elanor spoke about the underutilized parks. Be able to articulate a vision.

Jamie stated, be aware of which parks have friend groups and which do not.

Zach asked, Partner with the Parks Conservatory? What is our niche? How can we achieve our mission?

Jamie mentioned doing Park of the Month.

Stephen, feedback from park users. QR codes on Park signs. Take a picture and send a note. Point of contact. Public Survey through the city. Tator report could highlight smaller parks and getting feedback.

- iii. **Fundraising ideas** -Zach, gift catalog has been an effective fundraising tool? Alex responded that it has not raised a lot of activity.
- iv. Cheri, suggested more of a variety of price points in the catalog. Jamies is not convinced it

is a good usage of time.

- v. **Orientation process ideas** - Katie, would like to know the laws of the commission. What you can and can not do.

Cheri asked, will this be a packet of information or a dedicated meeting. Jamie supports a packet. Many new people are on the commission and need to know their parameters.

When will new commissioners be seated? Thom confirmed, no updated yet. Alex suggested extending the timeframe of the meeting when commissioners are being introduced.

- c. **Communications and Update**

- i. Parks Report- Received in meeting packet. Alex invited folks to the Payson Park meeting. 10/20/22 at 6pm Zoom.
- ii. Land Bank Report- John had nothing to report on the land bank commission.
- iii. Food Truck Pilot program survey going out this week - Alex reviewed the Food Truck survey up until next week. results will be tabulated and reviewed and a recommendation will be shared for feedback.

- e. **Commissioner requests for Agenda Items**- Jamie, asked what people are excited about, what are the items you want to discuss, project idea passion. Send along agenda items and topics.

IV. **Adjournment Motion to adjourn**