



Commission Members:

Chair Michael Mertaugh, Vice Chair Jaime Parker, Amy Segal, Jon Kachmar, Marie Gray, Zack Anchors, Eleanor Sears, Beth Rabbitt, Stephen Bentsen and Michael Catania. **Staff:** Alex Marshall and Samara Ray.

City of Portland
Parks Commission Minutes
January 6, 2022
5:00 PM

Due to the existence of an emergency or urgent issue, the Parks Commission conducted this meeting by remote methods/technology at the Zoom link provided below, in accordance with the requirements of 1 M.R.S. section 403-B and the Parks Commission's Remote Participation Policy.

I. General Citizen Comment Period

No public comment

II. Agenda Items

a. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes: December 2nd 2021 (5 min) Action Item

The December 2nd, 2021 minutes were unanimously accepted by the Commission.

b. New Business

i. Land Bank Presentation- Jon Kachmar (15 min)

Land Bank representative Jon Kachmar gave a presentation about the Land Bank. His presentation went over the differences between the Parks Commission and the Land Bank and provided insight into the overlap of the two city ordinances: Chapter 2, Portland Land Bank Commission Fund and Chapter 18, Parks, Recreation and Public Grounds. The Land Bank Commissions main objective is to acquire and conserve open space where the Parks Commissions main objectives are to oversee the parks, maintain an inventory of them, educate the public on and enhance them. Jon went through a detailed question and answer session. What establishes the scope of work for the Land Bank and Parks Commission? Section 2-43 (c) says that the LB "recommendation" to the City Council is binding, so Land Bank approval is needed to dispose of property. Disposition of leases in LB recommendation, but PC has a separate section. PC is an "advisory opinion"

No cemeteries or schools are in the LB or PC. A portion of the 100 acre woods in Evergreen Cemetery is in the LB. Evergreen Cemetery is zoned for ROC (recreation open space)

Jon confirmed that University Park is not a Park, it is in the Land Bank. Jon provided the commission with lists of Land Bank Properties and Parks Commission properties. The Fore River Sanctuary was not on either list. Jaime Parker clarified that 90 acres of Fore River Sanctuary is owned by the non profit Portland Trails. The Commission chair Michael asked if Baxter Woods needed to be under Land Bank protections, Alex said he does not think it needs to be as it already has a deed attached to it. Michael asked if we have other deeds attached to other properties. The Council cannot override the Land Bank based on the ordinance because their recommendation is binding. Jon shared that Deering Oaks Eastern Promenade Western Promenade, Baxter Woods, Baxter Pines, Riverside Golf Course, Payson Park and Stroudwater

Parks are protected under either a deed or covenant and these properties have an extra level of protection. Some of these properties are Land and Water Conservation Fund properties and that is why they have additional protections. In terms of the City's Capital Improvement Projects, the Parks Commission works collaboratively with the Parks Department during the capital improvement process to identify priority projects whereas the Land Bank receives .5% of the total CIP money for the City. Michael asked if there were any questions.

Michael C asked what determines what list a property or park goes on. Alex said the traditional Land Bank properties always had the most protections but there was a push a number of years ago to put more properties under the Land Bank to provide further protection. Alex noted that there are some properties the City owns now that are not listed as parks or put in the Land Bank yet.

Michael M asked if it was correct that Land Bank properties were not to be improved upon. Jon said that that was correct.

Jon said that there have been discussions between the Parks Commission chair, himself and City staff about the possibility of drafting new ordinances. There were a fair amount of Committee meetings a few years ago that addressed this issue. Michael thinks it would be good to have a clear statement on the overlap in the ordinance and potentially update the ordinance to add newly added properties. Michael finds it comforting that there are additional layers of protections protecting Portland's parks and open spaces. Michael said that this would be something to keep discussing moving forward.

Michael thanked Jon for the presentation.

c. Old Business

i. Historical Signage - Battle of Deering Oaks (10 min)

Amy wanted to follow up that she had reached out to two professors to get the ball rolling by making those contacts and she wants to start formulating a team to work on signage. She is trying to get her head around the Battle of Deering Oaks, she has read reference material from Fiona and found that the inconsistencies in historical reference were really interesting. She is focusing this signage work on Deering Oaks, Eastern Promenade and the Riverton Trolley Park. Amy would like help with this initiative. Beth Rabbit said she would be interested in being part of this initiative. Michael M said he would like to focus on the land and water stewardship practiced by the indigenous peoples of this area and steer away from battles. He would like to focus on the positive. He would like to piece together a history that may include nutritional habits and animal husbandry. Nell Sears also said she would be interested in helping with this. Jaime said he thinks it is not up to us to tell the indigenous history of the land but would hope that people would come forth to tell the stories.

ii. Tree Canopy Initiative- Alex (10 min)

Alex addressed the Commission about this initiative. Recently the City received a tree equity score for canopy coverage. The Bayside neighborhood was identified as having 3% canopy, which is the lowest in the City. This neighborhood is a challenging place to grow trees. There were strategies last year to plant a minimum of 30 trees in this area. The Forestry Division has received a \$250,000 ARPA grant to go towards a blitz of planting in the Bayside neighborhood. They will hire out for this project, work will include raising tree wells where is heavy salt use and coordinating with Dig Safe and Public Works. Plantings will focus in particular at the Somerset and Kennebec intersection and along the Bayside trail and Marginal Way. Alex said that we are always trying to grow and learn more about forestry management, how to maintain the current canopy with a small staff and limited equipment.

Michael asked if the AARPA funds would allow the Parks Division to tap into contractors to help with planting. Alex said the problem we are facing right now is that contractors are hard to find right now. 20,000 street trees are actively maintained by the City and there is a decline in

interest and availability from tree contractors. Planting trees is easy but planning and planting safely and maintaining the trees efficiently is the hardest battle in achieving more canopy. Jeff Tarling the City Arborist, Luke Lermond and Liz Deletetsky plan the tree planting for the Department. Out of the 250 trees a year last year 50 of those trees were part of the Co-op program. Michael said that the Co-op tree program deserves promotional effort. Michael asked what are policies about planting under power lines and could the policy be more restrictive? Alex said he would need to talk to the City Arborist about a more restrictive policy for planting under power lines.

d. Communications and Updates

i. Commission Seats (5 min)

The Commission welcomed new member Nell Sears to the Parks Commission.

ii. Parks Report (5 min)

Alex gave a summary about winter recreation opportunities in the parks. There is a new element at the Payson Park hill. Park Rangers will be grooming Deering Oaks and Payson Park for cross country skiing. The premier cross country skiing is at the Riverside Golf Course. UMO engineering students are working on a capstone project surrounding the Food Trucks at the Eastern Promenade. This project will limit the food trucks' negative impact on this area and will be implemented this spring.

iii. Land Bank Commission Report (5 min)

The 2021 Land Bank Annual Report is to be accepted by the City Council on Jan 19th, 2022. The Report will be sent to all Parks Commissioners after its acceptance, it will also be posted on the Land Bank website.

The Land Bank is in the process of purchasing a small parcel, the Hale Parcel, adjacent to the Riverton Trolley Park. The Land Bank Commission is waiting for a completed purchase and sale agreement before bringing it to the City Council. This property will enhance the current Trolley Park.

e. Commissioner requests for Agenda Items

No requests

III. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.