



Commission Members:

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

City of Portland **Parks Commission Minutes** **December 2, 2021** **5:00 PM**

I. General Citizen Comment Period

Michael called the meeting to order at 5:05pm. There was no public comment. Amy Segal noted that Paul Drinan was present and would address the Commission later about interpretive signage at Fort Gorges.

II. Agenda Items

a. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes: November 4th, 2021 Action Item

Michael Catania made a motion to accept the minutes, Marie seconded. Michael performed a roll call vote. Amy abstained, the rest of the Commissioners voted in favor of accepting the minutes.

b. New Business

i. Recognition of Indigenous Peoples History- Presentation

Amy Segal gave an overview of what the Parks Initiatives Committee has been working on. Based on the success of the Baxter Trail interpretive signage this committee started talking about additional signs at Portland Parks, specifically working on signage at Fort Gorges. This project has taken a back seat during the pandemic. Essentially the Parks Initiatives Committee is looking at a different way of telling a complete story of indigenous peoples in Portland. Amy is looking forward to getting the project started up again and she is grateful that Fiona Hopper, Wabanaki Affairs Coordinator for Portland Public Schools is at tonight's meeting.

Fiona Hopper addressed the Commission and gave a background of her work involving Wabanaki curriculum for Portland Public Schools. Fiona is the Social Studies Teacher Leader and Wabanaki Coordinator for Portland Public Schools. She had been in this role for about 4 years and teaching in Portland since 2005. A law was passed 20 years ago that required schools to teach Wabanaki studies; it is referred to as LD291. There is not a school distinct to her knowledge that is in compliance with this law. Portland is developing the first comprehensive K-12 Wabanaki studies curriculum that hopefully will be a model for other school districts in the state and beyond. This work is happening along with input from tribal leaders and is guided by an advisory by indigenous communities that is known as present day Maine. They have begun professional development with 3rd grade teachers with a unit that centers around Presumpscot river watershed, it is called "take me to the river" and it highlights the indigenous history and long tradition of water protectors in this area. All of the curriculum for this unit will be drafted by the end of this year and the 3rd grade teachers will start implementation next year.

Michael asked what the 3rd grade curriculum would look like? On August 25th Fiona guided teachers on a 5 mile paddle of the Presumpscot River, she talked through the history of this area. There is no single resource that captures the indigenous history in one place. She has pulled from 25 resources to create this unit. She believes that good accurate signage would be a

powerful teaching tool and a way for the City Parks and Portland Public Schools to teach this hidden history of this land together. She is not a historian but she is working on creating a play based podcast that she can share with teachers that will be vetted by the Maine Historical Society, she is not sure when that work will come together. She advised that if there was a move toward signage there should be collaboration with indigenous advisors.

Michael asked if there is a consolidated view or perspective. She thinks that having a couple of indigenous advisors is very important. She mentioned advisors named Mihku Paul and Jared Lank as potential advisors for the Parks Initiatives Subcommittee to reach out to. She also listed a handful of tribal historians. She mentioned that April Fournier may also be able to lend some perspective.

She said that the Presumpscot River was used by first nations as a source of sustenance by the indigenous peoples. There is a place called the River Point Conservation area near the Hannaford on Hwy 100 in Falmouth, it is a 41 acre preserve. They have found charcoal was found there dating back 9,000 also artifacts at the river have been found dating back 6,000 and 5,000 years. A lot was dug up by a local farmer; he has donated most of his findings to the Maine State Museum. She is in the process of getting replicas made of these artifacts to use in the 3rd grade curriculum. She mentioned that there was also an important trade route between the White mountains and Casco bay and in the summertime Casco Bay was a central meeting ground.

She told Commissioners about a few significant events in Portland: in 1727 a treaty was signed after a multiple day long event on the Eastern Promenade and there was a Battle of Fort Loyal on the foot of India Street, this was an indigenous victory.

Michael wanted to remind the Commissioners that this discussion is to get Commissioners thinking about interpretive signage in Portland Parks. Amy thanked Fiona for coming tonight and said she is looking forward to consulting with some of these resources and working as a committee to develop signage. Jaime expressed his thanks as well. He mentioned that many of Portland's trails have been trails for thousands of years. Michael hopes that Fiona stays in touch with the Commission. Fiona said she is looking forward to helping in any way she can.

c. Old Business

i. Update on Public Access to Committee Activity

Michael had a meeting with the Corporate Council and Parks and Recreation staff to go over what the state regulations are in relation to public access to meetings with 3 or more Commissioners. All Commissioner correspondence (written or oral) needs to be publicly noticed if there are more than 2 Commissioners involved. Michael wished for the Commission to follow these regulations this moving forward. He proposed that committee members touch base with their chairs and let them know if they have something to discuss and then it will be added at the end of the regularly scheduled monthly meeting so the discussion will be open to the public.

d. Communications/Updates

i. New Parks Commissioners

New Commissioner Eleanor Sears will be ratified by the City Council on 12/20. She will need to be sworn in before acting as a Commissioner. The City Clerk will be posting announcements for the additional 2 vacant positions in a week or so.

ii. Parks Report

Alex provided a summary of Parks highlights. The Parks Division has hired and filled 3 Parks Maintainer positions. Parks staff is full at the moment. No major projects this time of year. The Monument Square Holiday tree is a 40 ft spruce that came from Epping Street was put up 2 weeks ago, the tree lighting last Friday. Staff have performed the annual meadow mowing and

are geared up for winter operations. The Division maintains 100 miles of sidewalks, but they do not do Downtown District. There are 5 sidewalk routes and 1 trail route. Forestry crew does public safety fire lots and school lots. Ballfield crew helps with overnight downtown clearing. Still trying to refine winter ops to manage the sidewalks the best way possible. Parks also maintains winter recreation elements in City Parks like the grooming of regular cross country trails at Deering Oaks and Payson Park. A priority project right now is Dougherty Field Playground. The Planning Department is reviewing the plan right now, and Alex hopes to get the RFP out in the next couple of weeks, with the hopes of the playground done in the spring.

Additional updates

Paul Drinan with the Friends of Fort Gorges was brought into the meeting. He said thank you for inviting Fiona Hoppe to the meeting. About two years ago Amy Segal had started talking with the Friends of Fort Gorges about an update on signage at Fort Gorges. Paul is hoping there is an opportunity to work together to get interpretive signage out at FG. People often go out on their own so he thinks that signage would be a great public service. To him it seems like a highly fundable project. He talked about the possibility of the Parks Commission funding 2 large signs and the Friends of Fort Gorges funding 10 small signs. They have already been communicating with Nancy Montgomery, a graphic designer who worked on the Baxter Trail and Evergreen Cemetery signs. They also received a grant from Casco Bay Estuary partnership to hire a historian and create an official narrative for their guided tours. At this point budgeting for these signs is a concern.

Michael thinks this is an easy way to reach the public. Zach agreed that this is a great project and wanted Michael to consider the concern that this could potentially disrupt the historic character of the site; signs would change the visual landscape. Paul said there would be a site walk to make sure the signs would not all be visible at once. Beth wanted to make sure the signs would be accessible to all and would have a QR code to reach all populations. Jon Kachmar acknowledged his support for this project as well.

iii. Land Bank Commission Report

Significant project at Washington Ave including Haverty Field. Michael and Jon will be working with city staff to develop a draft ordinance change that would eliminate overlap between designated Land Bank properties and city parks.

III. Adjournment

City of Portland Commissions are not required to take public comment under FOAA and our Ordinance is silent regarding the duties of the Commission. The Commission has the discretion to not allow or allow public comment during its meetings, including the authority to limit the duration of comments. Since the Commission makes recommendations to the City Council, public comment is available at that level.



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

City of Portland
Parks Commission Minutes
November 4, 2021
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, 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

George Rheaul noticed that the big metal swings in Amythest Park disappeared and he heard they were being repaired. He was not sure if they ever came back or came back after they were fixed and then were taken down again. Alex said that the swings were vandalized and poles were snapped, they were removed and repaired and put back and they were vandalized again. They were taken down for a second time a couple of weeks ago. The Department is seeking an alternative solution for the next swing installment.

George brought up the fact that the Department has submitted two grant applications this year, one was for land acquisition in the North Deering area and the other was for recreational improvements at the Riverton Trolley Park. He would like to see copies of those grant applications to see what story is being told to the Federal government about what the grant will be used for.

The Commission Chair Michael noted that Nan Cumming, Parks Conservancy Director informed him that the \$250,000 Land Water and Conservation Fund grant for the Riverton Trolley Park improvements was approved on the state level and is pending Federal approval. This grant would be contingent on Parks Conservancy raising matching funds and money raised through CIP.

Jon Krachmar said that the other grant was also with the Land Water Conservation Fund and the City was working with the Trust for Public Land on this project. The project included the area behind 1931 Washington and Haverty field which is presently a privately owned ballfield. The project is being called North Deering Park.

II. Agenda Items

a. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes: October 7th, 2021

Michael Catania moved to approve, Marie seconded. Michael took a roll call vote and the Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

b. New Business

i. Discussion on Proposal to Rename Bedford Park as "Noyes Park"- Action Item

The Chair shared that he would like to get the Parks Commission support prior to the November 15th City Council meeting where this name change proposal will be on the agenda.

Anna Noyes Benoit addressed the PC to share her family's perspective on this. The triangle of

land in 1928 was given by her grandfather to the City of Portland to be used as a park. Sometime around the 1950's it took the name of the developer Mr. Bedford. The family did not know of the name change until the sign went up in about 1980. This area used to be farmland which included an orchard that extended to what is present day Deering Oaks. Her dad lived there with his sister in the Deering mansion that was built in 1804.

Her family's request is that the Council correct the mistake of naming this park after the developer. This requested change has gone to the City council for the first reading already and the second reading will be on November 15th. Historian Herb Adams has researched this area and written letters of support for this change. The family did not call attention to this until 2017.

Beth Rabbitt commented that she thinks that after reviewing the documents provided that the way we are telling the history of Portland is insufficient. She thinks it is important to ask for deeper analysis. The Chair said that the Parks Commission does need to dig deeper in pursuing this matter, but he thinks the naming of the new waterfront park could be a chance to look at names that came from the people indigenous to this area. He also shared that the Parks Commission could look at how the Native Americans relied on the natural bounty and how we could model this to be good stewards to this land. Beth said it is important to acknowledge that any recommendation the Parks Commission would make with regards to naming parks would not be a certification of the way the history has been presented in the documents. Anna expressed that she is in full agreement with this and thinks that native names could be used more often in naming public places.

Michael made a motion to bring the Parks Commission support of this proposed name change from Bedford to Noyes Park to the City Council reading on Nov 15th, Marie seconded and Micheal conducted a roll call vote. The Commission voted unanimously for this motion to pass.

ii. Deering Oaks Master Plan Presentation - Anne Pringle

Anne Pringle addressed the Parks Commission; she is the co- founder of Friends of Deering Oaks and former Portland mayor. Anne gave some prepared remarks about the Deering Oaks Master Plan. The park is 54 acres that has been acquired by the City over time. City Engineer William Goodwin designed the park. The overarching principle was to preserve this park as common ground of the community for all. "A public breathing space", said Goodwin. Over time improvements have been added like the duck house, fountain, the playground. By 1889 \$3,150 was put in place for the park, over half of the park's budget at that time. Deer Oaks declined in the 1970's some of the park was lost for the construction of 295. In the 1980's Deering Oaks, like many parks around the country, was poorly maintained and deemed unsafe by many. The Friends of the Parks Committee was established in 1989 (presently known as Parks Commission) by the City Council to be a citizen's oversight. A Master Plan Committee was appointed in 1993 by the City Council with representatives from all over the city. 4,000 surveys were given out with an 11% response rate. Results of this survey showed that passive use of the park was a priority, activities such as sunbathing, picnic, and rose circle. The survey also reflected safety concerns of the public. The Master plan was created based on these results and it was vetted in numerous public meetings. It received unanimous support of the City Council in 1994. There were three tiers of priorities: high priority, moderate priority and longer term projects. Anne believes the Deering Oaks Master Plan is 85-90% complete and is the most complete of all the Master plans.

The essential recommendation of the Master plan was to create a Friends Group. This Friends group serves as a partner of the City to generate private donations to support the park and serve as a watchdog for the park and make it an inviting place for the visitor. The Friends of Deering

Oaks was established in 1997 and will be 25 years old next year

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Friend of Deering Oaks has partnered with the City on many projects: the ravine rehabilitation, castle restoration, fountain replacement, playground improvements, signage and the rose circle redesign. They have raised over 900,000 in private donations for these and other projects. The Friends Group has also advocated for two way traffic on state and high street and for safety in the park. Anne feels the 27 year old Master Plan is still relevant.

Anne thinks that Alex and Ethan and the parks crew have been dealing with the Parks issues very well. There is a lot to celebrate right now in the park like the park activation by Park Rangers this summer and many physical improvements. There are some serious concerns within the park. She would like to see a year round Park Ranger in the Park. We cannot let it slide back into having some of the issues that were commented on in the 1993 survey. Alex said that the relationship between the Parks Division and Friends of Deering Oaks is strong and he appreciates the partnership. He believes it is an important space and there is a lot to do. The Department will submit funding for sidewalks on Tennis Park Road and pond wall and ravine repairs in this year's Capital Improvement Plan requests. Ann said she is an insistent Friends Group, sometimes the Friends Group and the Parks staff disagree but they are glad for the engagement because they bring perspective.

Marie wanted to comment that a Friends group can provide an on the ground analysis of what is going on in the park. This can be like grassroots information you can feed to staff. Alex said that it is great to have the visitor's perspective.

Michael asked Alex, what could the Parks Commission do to make the Friends Groups and Parks Group relationship grow?

Alex said it would be great to have the Parks Commission and Friends Groups to advocate and mobilize trash clean ups. Trash clean up is an effort that seems to be always needed in the parks.

Is there any way to ask for more on the ground Park Rangers in Deering Oaks, how can they ask for more money in the budget to the City Council for more money to police the Parks. Alex would like to continue this conversation in the future.

Anne mentioned that they as a Friends Group will advocate to the Finance committee on occasion for their priorities since the Parks staff may be more restrained. She mentioned there is a Green Space Coalition of Friends Groups which meets and can share experiences as Friends Groups outside of the public process..

Michael C asked if it was time to think about a new master plan? Anne responded that she would like to finish the original master plan first.

Beth asked how does a citizen get connected to the Friends Group? Anne said their website is out of date but the website will be getting improvements soon.. So stay tuned as the website will be getting improvements will be a better way to connect with the Friends of Deering Oaks and they do have a Facebook page.

c. Old Business

i. Committee Membership

Stephen B. has agreed to be on the Outreach committee and Jon k has agreed to be on the annual report.

The Chair said he wanted to go over the State guidelines on how Committee membership should be followed for the Parks Commission. Alex stated that we have to post and allow public access

to any meetings over 2 people. He thinks it may be a good idea to seek an extension to the monthly meeting so Committee members can check in with their group while it is accessible to the public and then assign tasks to do on their own. Michael was wondering if a meeting requires public notice does it also require public comment? Samara, Parks admin staff will find out and report back. Michael said that emails and documents could be shared freely, Alex noted that this is not the case and any information shared between Committee members such as emails and documents must be limited to 2 Commission members or less. Samara will check with Legal to confirm this is the case and report back.

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ii. Committee Communications - No communications at this time.

iii. Parks Commission Annual Timeline

Beth has mentioned it would be great to have a preview of what is coming in the next year. Michael said that a retreat or Strategic Planning meeting is held in February. A series of activities related to the CIP budget process will resemble next year what we just went through this year. In December there will be an Indigenous People's presentation, In January a Land Bank presentation by Jon Krackmar in January. Ideally a timeline of annual activity for the Parks Commission will be shared with the Commission in the coming months. A draft timeline has been started.

d. Communications/Updates

i. Parks Report

Alex confirmed that the Stroudwater bridge is a new bridge. This is a partnership project to connect Portland Trails Fore River trails to the Unum property. Jaime said that they are working on a revised easement with Unum. It will not be a cheap project. Maybe 3 years out we could look at CIP for this once the City owns the land.

Alex said that the Parks Division has been short staffed for many months now and as of today they are recommending a few people for hire which is exciting. In the Springtime Alex brought up the idea of a portable toilet design to the Commission. There is a need for public restrooms. How do we make our current porta potties safe for users. Now we are in the process of getting 3 of these pilot porta toilets fabricated. They will be built very rugged. They will go to Fox Field, Eastern Promenade and Deering Oaks Portland. This pilot program will determine how the Department moves forward in public restroom placement and design.

ii. Land Bank Commission Report

Jon had to leave the meeting early. He told Michael he would forward written copy of Land Bank happenings to Samara and Samara could add to the minutes.

III. Adjournment

Michael C made a motion to adjourn, Marie seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.



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**Parks, Recreation & Facilities Department Parks, Recreation & Facilities Department Ethan Hipple,
Director Alex Marshall, Parks Director**

Memorandum

TO: Parks Commission and Land Bank Commission

FROM: Alex Marshall, Parks Director, Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

SUBJECT: Parks Division Update

DATE: December 2021

Parks Division Staffing

- Vacancy: Athletic Facilities Steward

Monument Square Christmas Tree

The annual placement of the Monument Square Christmas tree took place on Thursday, November 18th this year. The 40' Balsam Fir was donated from a home on Epping Street and escorted all the way to Monument Square where it sits today. For the second year in a row there was a wonderful story of how the original homeowner planted the tree in hopes it would be the Monument Square Tree someday. On Friday, November 26th, the tree was lit at 4pm during the annual tree lighting ceremony sponsored by Portland Downtown and all their partners. A special thanks goes out to Shaw Brothers Construction, Keeley Crane, Portland Forestry Division, Portland Police, Portland Parking Control and Portland Downtown for all their help in coordinating this wonderful event each year.

Annual Meadow Mowing

Many have seen the various meadows that have been popping up across the city. The most recognizable ones being the Franklin Street Meadow, The North Street Hill on the Eastern Prom, The Deering Oaks Meadow, and the Western Prom Meadow. There are also meadows in parks such as Payson Park, Riverton Trolley Park, Baxter Woods, PATHS and Harbor View, just to name a few. These spaces are not only beautiful in their representation of a natural landscape but beneficial in ways like they provide pollinator plants for bees, butterflies and birds as well as they are carbon emission free with no regular mowing required. Each year these spaces requires an annual mowing to keep the grass and wildflower growth healthy as well as to suppress any invasive growth that may be eager to take over. This process takes about 6 weeks in totality to execute but well worth the time for the beauty and benefit they bring

Winter Operations

Winter is upon us as some have seen their first snowfall of the year. Our Parks Maintenance Crew morphs into a sidewalk clearing operation during the winter months with the help from Horticulture,

Ballfields and Cemeteries. That team covers over 100 miles of sidewalks and trails each storm with a handful of them working on heavy snow load, heavy ice, pinch point and tip-down locations. The Forestry Division diverts from tree work during each storm to focus on Public Safety Buildings, on-peninsula School parking lots, snow ban parking lots and various other city parking lots. Our Ballfields division participates in overnight sidewalk clearing in the Downtown District and then helps with sidewalk pinch points during the day. The Playground Division keeps City Hall Plaza and the Police Station

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**Parks, Recreation & Facilities Department Parks, Recreation & Facilities Department Ethan Hipple,
Director Alex Marshall, Parks Director**

open while also clearing and maintain the ice on three citywide ponds (Payson Park, Ludlow and Deering Oaks). Finally, our Park Rangers help with shovelling various city buildings and will also help keep the cross country ski trails open at Deering Oaks this year.

Park Projects and Department Updates

Staff are working on the following Park Improvement projects:

- Dougherty Field Playground: We are finalizing the stormwater design and creating the site work bid documents to be advertised later this Winter. Playground equipment has been purchased. Construction and installation Spring 2022.
- Park Walkway improvements: Deering Oaks bid documents are being finalized and reviewed by the Planning Department.
- Fitzpatrick Drainage Improvements: Drawings are complete. An RFP is ready to be advertised in the Fall to seek bids for Spring 2022 construction
- Talbot School Basketball Court Reconstruction: We have reallocated site specific CDBG funds to help us bridge the gap in the construction market and plan to have this bid out in the beginning of the year.
- Lyseth Playground: This project is in the design phase now that groups have been offered the opportunity to weigh in.
- Skate Park Expansion Phase II: Preliminary RFP for design development is being finalized and will be advertised when funding is in hand.
- Stroudwater Bridge: City Parks and Planning staff are working with Portland Trails and the Stroudwater Preserve Development Team to develop the plan for installation of the bridge that sits on the side of Westbrook Street before the I-95 bridge. Grant funding will be essential as City funds are limited.
- Preble Street Field & Stormwater Project: Final design and landscaping plans are being finalized. 2022 is looking to be the summer where we get the elevated natural turf field back. If construction stays on schedule, the field should be restored in fall of 2022, with play resuming Spring of 2023.
- Riverton Preserve: Recreation improvement plans are in progress and will consist primarily of a trail network with other improvements. This project is intended to fulfill LWCF conversion requirements, and final approval of the improvement plan rests with the state and National Park

Service, which has a public engagement process.

- Riverton Trolley Park: The LWCF grant has been submitted. The City Council gave their approval for the City to proceed with the grant application. Project budget will be an estimated total of \$500,000 (\$250,000 PPC/Private/City and \$250,000 LWCF)
- Western Promenade Welcome Signs: Three new historic Welcome Signs are being ordered and installed as the weather permits. Spring may be the desirable time for this
- Lower Western Prom Park Improvements: Final design improvements have been made and construction/bid documents are to follow in the coming months.

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- Community Garden Fence and Gate Installations: We will be replacing 6 Community Garden fences and 3 sheds. A fencing bid document will be advertised this Winter and installation is planned to begin in the Spring.

