



Commission Members

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

City of Portland
Parks Commission Minutes
October 7, 2021
5:00 PM

I. General Citizen Comment Period

Chair, Michael Mertaugh started the meeting and opened for public comment.

First comment was from Will Kessler of 77 Melbourne Street. He has a 10 year old that attends East End School. He is also a PAYSA coach, this is his third season of being a soccer coach. He sees the amount of people involved in this sport in the fall season and it is of his opinion that when the Parks Division closes fields due to wet weather this creates challenges to running the league smoothly. He thinks it is not a matter of liability as the Parks Department says as athletes sign off on risk agreements before they play, also he does not think that it is not a matter of maintenance. It saddens him that the fields are closed at the drop of a hat. Parks Director Alex did not wish to comment on this at the time. Michael noted that this will be discussed within the Department.

Peter Monroe from 32 May near Reiche, noted he is committed to renovating gravestones in the Western Cemetery. He and his neighbor Sam have educated themselves on gravestone restoration. They have taken over the Stewards of the Western Cemetery which is a Maine non profit, they expect to ramp up activity this Spring and start conservation in June. They have discussed getting access to water and a tool house in the Western Cemetery with prior Cemeteries Director Mike Muray. They would be willing to fundraise and they will be coming up with proposals for budgets as they are applying for a Federal 501 c3 in the Spring of 2022. Greater Portland Landmarks will be its fiscal agent prior to becoming a 501 c3. This is the first effort that he knows that is a systematic effort to try to restore gravestones He wanted the Parks Commission to be aware of this work moving forward and has already reached out to interim Cemeteries Director Marie Davis about the possibility of a tool house.

II. Agenda Items

a. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes: September 2nd 2021

Marie made a motion to approve the minutes, Stephen seconded. The chair took a roll call vote and the minutes were approved.

b. New Business

i. Portland Harbor Common Presentation

Christine Grimando, Director of Planning and Urban Development shared a presentation with the Parks Commission about Phase 1 of the Portland Harbor Common Project. There was a public forum in September and a meeting mid-summer as well about this project.. This project is a team effort between the Waterfront Coordinator, the Department of Housing and Economic Development, Parks Recreation and Facilities and the Portland Parks Conservancy. The Parks Conservancy will be helping with fundraising.

There is a long history of Eastern Waterfront planning and this project touched on a small part of this early planning work. The Portland Landing is another planning effort that is within the Portland Harbor Common, there was a large public process about the Portland Landing. The outcome had program elements like boating and open spaces etc. It was clear that the City was not prepared to put this vision into action, it presented some logistical challenges.

A group of volunteers came to the City about how to keep open space planning in this area alive. They offered design services and they brought an idea of this wider area,

Dick Barrigner, the Muskie school and design professionals offered designs. This is not meant to be a final design, it is a platform or springboard that invisions different flex spaces that can be developed in increments. This plan does not get into detail about everything but it is a starting point.

What will the implementation look like? The Amethyst lot is an area that is part of the larger PHC project. This is a great model as it could be referred to as Phase 1A; a parking area converted to a recognized open space. There is also a proposed public landing that is in the area of the PHC, this would be an additional enhancement of the waterfront.

Phase 1 is currently former queuing lanes. This area is being used as a parking lot but was not intended to be long term parking. The City has been thinking about what the next life of this area may be. The first phase would be converting the parking lot to open space. This open space would be built over time, the plan is very simple presently and nothing is completely set, there is more design work to come. She mentioned some initial feedback about trees, public art, parking, funding, native plantings and coastal resilience. Commissioner Marie Gray asked if this plan was brought to the Peaks Island Council. Chirstine said that it has not but Peak Islanders have been present at some of the previous public meetings. There may be direct outreach to the islanders moving forward.

Next steps will be looking at funding, RFP's and grants and looking at how to implement Phase 1. The Commission chair asked about getting impact fees from neighboring businesses, Christene stated that there is a specific list of projects that get funding from impact fees and she does not think that this project is presently on the roster for use.

There are future phases envisioned and the group working on this project would like to keep momentum and keep moving forward with Phase 1.

ii. Committee Membership

Michael started a discussion about Committee membership within the Commission. Michael went down his list of committee membership:

Parks Initiatives: Chair: Amy, Maya, Jaime, Zach and Michael C

Finance: Michael M, Michael C and Marie Gray

Annual Report- Chair: Michael M Michael Catania and Jon K?

The Outreach Committee (which includes Greenspace): Chair: Zach, Beth, Maya and Stephen?

Michael will reach out to Jon and Stephen to see what Committee they would like to serve on.

The Parks Commission ordinance says there is to be an annual meeting of Friends Groups to prepare budget requests. Michael was thinking that the meeting where we invited Friends Groups to bring their CIP priorities may serve that purpose. Michael would like to see the Friends Groups be better prepared for CIP proposals for their parks. He is looking forward to seeing what would be most useful in working with the Friends Group.

Beth said it is important to step back and see what the Outreach Committee is trying to do. She thinks it may be worthwhile to define who they are reaching out to and for what purpose. She thinks that Friends Groups are critical but additionally members of the Committee have been talking about outreach at schools and other places. She understands there may be limitations as to how they may be able to outreach in terms of social media et.. She mentioned that a Commission wide discussion about the mission of the Outreach Committee might be a good idea.

Amy wanted to note that Neighborhood Associations should be part of the conversation in terms of groups involved in outreach.

c. Communications/Updates

i. Parks Report

The Maine Conservation Corp finished up 10 days of working at the Riverton Trolley Park on Tuesday. Portland Trails helped out this year as well . They did trail work and rebuilt a bridge. Talbot School has had a drainage issue by the softball field, the culvert has been replaced and new material was brought in and laser leveling was done on this area. This work has shown a great improvement on the drainage issues. The Department will have UMO Engineering students work on Capstone project focussing on

Cutter Street improvements. Students will come and look at the area with Alex and hopefully by the end of the year have some engineering plans that the City can implement in this area.

ii. Land Bank Commission Report

The Land Bank's next meeting will be held on October 13th. The meeting will consist of a series of site visits. Interested members of the public can attend. The group will start at the Parks and Recreation office at 212 Canco Road Suite A and leave at 5pm.

iii. Future Master Plan Presentations

The Parks Commission will take a focus on the Master Plans in future meetings, this will be the main item in the agenda. Friends Groups will be invited to discuss their Parks Master Plans. The first of a Master Plan discussion will be the Deering Oaks Master Plan at the November Parks Commission meeting.

Beth Rabbit asked if there was a forward calendar that gave an overview of Parks Commission work through the year. Michael and Samara will work to create a calendar that can be reviewed by Commissioners.

Micheal C. made a motion to adjourn, Marie seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.