



Commission Members:

Chair Cynthia Loebenstein, Vice Chair Michael Mertaugh, Ana Lagunez, Marie Gray, Nathan Robbins, Zack Anchors, Shaylyn MacKinnon, Maya Lena. **Staff:** Ethan Hipple, Alex Marshall and Samara Ray

**City of Portland
Parks Commission Agenda**

May 6, 2021

5:00 PM

On Thursday May 6th at 5:00 pm, the Portland Parks Commission conducted a virtual meeting using emergency legislation approved by LD 2167; 1 M.R.S. §403A, that authorizes cities and towns to conduct meetings online.

I. General Citizen Comment Period

No citizen comment.

II. Agenda Items

a. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes: April 1st, 2021

Michael proposed acceptance with one wording change on the April minutes. The change will be made on the agenda packet. Marie seconded and the minutes were passed unanimously.

b. Old Business

i. Parks Handbook Draft Vote

The revised Parks Handbook has been developed by the Finance Committee after the Strategic Planning meeting. This handbook overviews Friends Groups and their relationships with the Parks Department and sets out the roles for each. This handbook also serves as a welcome packet to new commissioners. Commissioners shared their thanks to the Finance Committee and Commisor Michael for the work done in preparing this document. Marie made a motion to accept the Parks Handbook, Nathan seconded and it passed unanimously.

c. New Business

i. Needle Exchange Letter Vote

Ethan explained that the City runs a needle exchange program that is licensed through the state and has been ongoing for some years. The current policy is 1:1 to keep needle users safe. During the pandemic the State allowed for more needles exchanged at one time. The City stayed with the 1:1 policy. Recently the Health and Human Services Committee held a workshop about expanding the 1:1 policy. The Parks Division testified about the impact of discarded needles in the Parks. Parks staff have gotten stuck by discarded needles in the past. Last year the Parks Division picked up 6,000 needles. Some of the Parks Commissioners have expressed weighing in on the issue so the City Council knows how the Parks Commission feels on this issue. The letter would give feedback to the City Council from the Parks Commission. There are presently needle disposal receptacles throughout the city. Cynthia explained that this letter would go to the Health and Human Service Committee in an effort to support Park staff. Shaylyn noted that the wording was concerning since it did not take to light national standards on needle policies. She suggested edits to the proposed letter that would include: supporting national policy, including

facts based on needle collection data and supporting practices that are best for the parks system. Nathan, Zach, Maya and Ana shared they would be in favor of this approach. Cynthia has already spoken with Amy and Jon and they are in favor of the letter as is. Michael, Marie, Cynthia, Amy, and Jon will sign the letter individually and send it to the Health and Human Services Committee.

Amendment- Nathan is interested in the Commission discussing this issue further before sending out a letter.

ii. Land Acknowledgement Resources Conversation

The idea of creating a Land Acknowledgement statement came up in the Parks Initiative sub committee. This would be an opportunity for education on the indigenous people of Portland. The Land Acknowledgement statement would be a written statement that would be approved by the Wabanaki REACH before the Parks Commission were to use it. Shaylyn is looking into this topic further and will discuss her findings at the June Commission meeting.

iii. June 3rd Parks Commission meeting at Lincoln Park

The June Parks Commission meeting will be held in person by the fountain at Lincoln Park. Bring a chair if you are planning on attending. If there is inclement weather the meeting will be held via Zoom.

d. Communications/Updates

i. Land Bank Commission Report

ii. Parks Report

The meeting adjourned at 5:30pm