



Commission Members: Chair Cynthia Loebenstein, Vice Chair Michael Mertaugh, Amy Segal, Jon Kachmar, Marie Gray, Zack Anchors, Shaylyn MacKinnon, Maya Lena, Jaime Parker and Mayor Kate Snyder. Staff: Ethan Hipple, Alex Marshall and Samara Ray.

City of Portland
Parks Commission Agenda
April 1, 2021

5:00 PM

On Thursday, April 1st 2021, 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. This meeting was held via ZOOM.

I. General Citizen Comment Period

Jake Kyle- brought up the Skatepark Expansion Project. Himself and others have raised \$100,000 and was told recently that this project will not be fully funded in this year's CIP, only \$50,000 will be funded. He wants the Commission to understand the importance of skateparks in the community.

George Rheault- from West Bayside stated he would like the Commission to look at their agendas and make it crystal clear to the public when there is an action item or vote on the agenda. He shared the importance of recording the Commission monthly meetings, he thinks these recordings should be on the city webpage.

II. Agenda Items

a. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes: March 4th, 2021

Michael made a motion to accept, Marie seconded, it was unanimously approved.

b. Guest Visitors

i. Executive Director - Friends of Congress Square Park

CJ Opperthausen, new Executive Director of Friends of Congress Square Park. He recently moved from Providence RI with a background in walkability. FO Congress Square is an 8 year old Friends Group. They host events and maintain the space. April 17th will be a clean up day, soon after that outdoor furniture will be put out and 3- 5 public art installations throughout the summer. They are looking to offer small daytime gatherings and hosting events to organizations that want to move away from ZOOM meetings during the warmer months. They also host pop up markets this year with local artisans. The first pop up will be May 23rd. There is construction planned this summer at High and Congress to increase the accessibility of this park. This construction will open the park up.

c. Old Business

i. CIP Updates

Alex reported that the Council approved the CIP requests and the projects that have been approved are as follows:

-Payson Park Playground

- Partial Funding for the Skatepark Expansion
- Continued funding for ADA paving at Deering Oaks
- Court resurfacing at pocket parks
- Golf Course HVAC and Drainage Funds
- Deering Oaks Playground Equipment
- Evergreen Columbarium Phase 2

All together the Department was awarded 883,000 for CIP projects.

ii. Green Space Gathering Update

Held virtually on May 6th from 5:30- 7:30pm. The Zoom link for the Greenspace Gathering will be the same as the May monthly Parks Commission meeting.

iii. Riverton Trolley Park Improvement Plan Update

Parks Conservancy hosted a virtual meeting on March 30th to offer public input on what improvements they would like at the Riverton Trolley Park. The Conservancy also offered a survey for community members to submit. The hope is to create an improvement plan that could qualify for a Land Water and Conservation Fund project.

iv. Baxter Woods Update

April 1st start of on leash season as created as part of City Council policy. Park Rangers have been in Baxter on a daily basis to educate the public on the new leash laws. There is an updated Baxter Woods website to help inform the public about these leash laws. The website features information from the Audubon about habitat restoration. The new leash laws are as follows:

April 1st – July 31st, annually: Dogs must be leashed at all times.

August 1st – March 31st, annually: Dogs permitted off-leash and under "voice control" from 6:30am-9am and from 3pm-10pm.

All Year Round: Dogs must be leashed in the habitat restoration area, at all times.

d. New Business

i. Public Landing Proposal Guest Speaker, Waterfront Coordinator, City of Portland, William Needelman

Bill shared a presentation to inform the Commission about the early stages of a potential public landing at the Ocean Gateway at the Eastern Waterfront. The proposed public landing location would be between Sail Maine and the Oceangateway. The public process moving forward is for this proposal to be presented at three public meetings: Portland Harbor Commission, Portland Parks Commission and the Sustainability and Transportation Committee. The SHIP Grant application will be submitted in May 2021 with the final design in May 2022 and the likely construction in 2023. The cost will be roughly \$360,000, \$80,000 will need to come out of the operating budgets of PRF over the next 2 fiscal years. Commissioners agreed there is a shortage of public water access in Portland. Bill welcomes comments from the Commission as this process moves forward.

Commissioners noted that shortage of public access space in Portland, Portland needs more public access- there is a modest cost. Since this is not in a Park the Parks Commission does not need to vote on this, just looking for public comment. Michael wanted to know if we could vote to show strong support, a motion was made for the Commission to send strong support for this project, this support for the project was unanimously approved.

ii. Baxter Woods Draft Letter Discussion

Cynthia discussed the letter to go to City Council supporting staff in the new Baxter Woods. All Commissioners present at the meeting shared their support for the letter.

e. Communications/Update

i. Edwards Lot

The Edwards Lot is the sliver of Deering Oaks across from the Post Office. The City is taking a team approach. There is a concerted outreach effort to provide services to people that may show up at this lot. The City will be connecting people to services with the idea that it is best to not let people camp and stay overnight in this space. Alex shared that the Parks Division added 5 trash cans to this general area last season. Alex will be getting these trash cans back to these areas soon. Marie suggested that more affordable trash cans could be distributed throughout the city. The Parks Conservancy is hiring another seasonal volunteer coordinator to facilitate cleanups throughout Portland Parks.

A template letter was shared with the Commission; it was a letter requesting Congressional Funding for public bathrooms. The grant application is due on April 19th, 2021. Cynthia suggested the Commission write a letter in support of the funding for a bathroom at a location to be determined. Michael moved for the Commission to draft a letter, this motion passed by the Commission., Cynthia will be drafting a letter on behalf of the Parks Commission to Shelly Pingree

- ii. Parks Report-** Cynthia encouraged everyone to look at the Parks Report as it contains a lot on Baxter woods and the CIP.
- iii. Land Bank Report-** The appraisal for the Riverton Trolley Park Parcel that the Lank Bank has been looking at. The appraisal was 15% lower than the appraisal in 2012. The Land Bank is going to keep looking into this property.
- iv. Parks Initiative SubCommittee-** Jaime wil connect with Amy about setting up a meeting.
- v. Finance Committee-** Working on a draft of updated Friends Handbook. The Finance Committee will be meeting within the next week to review the draft of the Friends Handbook and will be bringing it to the Commission for a full approval when it is ready.

Michael motioned to adjourn, all Commissioners were in favor. Meeting ended at 6:38 pm

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.