



In attendance: Commission Members: Chair Cynthia Loebenstein, V. Chair Michael Mertaugh, Councilor Mayor Kate Snyder, Dory Waxman, Zack Anchors, Amy Segal, Ana Lagunez, Caitie Whelan, Jon Kachmar and Marie Gray. City Staff: Sally DeLuca, Ethan Hipple, Alex Marshall, Alli Carroll and Liz Deletetsky.

City of Portland
Parks Commission Minutes
June 4, 2020, 5:00 PM

On Friday, June 4, 2020, 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 workshop was conducted remotely using Zoom.

I. General Citizen Comment Period

Sharon and Frank of the Friends of Lincoln Park came to say hello. They are eager to find out if the furloughed employees will be coming back soon. Ethan explained that budgets are tight due to the amount of revenue that has been lost due to COVID-19 restrictions. As we start to reopen, some staff will come back, but it may take a lot of time to get back to pre-coronavirus levels.

Marc Lesperance of the Friends of Baxter Woods asked about the constables and Jeff Tarling, City Arborist, patrolling Baxter Woods. He also had questions regarding the Friends Group Questionnaire the Parks Commission sent out. The Commission will be looking at the Questionnaire again to see if a second could be sent out. Ethan explained that due to the COVID-19 restrictions, they have asked additional staff in the City to patrol and enforce park rules. Jeff Tarling is a constable and able to do so.

II. Agenda Items

Liz introduced herself as she will be taking on the administrative duties Alli has been responsible for. Alli has temporarily stepped into the Principle Administrative Officer position with the Department and will be unable to continue her administrative duties for the time being. Ethan shared that the department has lost significant roles recently, including the Park Supervisor and the Financial Administrator.

Another loss the Department will soon go through, is Sally DeLuca's retirement. The Commission took time to formally thank Sally for all of her years of dedication to the park system. Everyone took a turn to thank Sally.

a. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes: May 07, 2020

Dory moved to accept the meeting minutes of May 7th, 2020. Marie seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

b. Communications/Update

i. COVID19 Staff Update

Alex shared that the City is in a hiring freeze. In spite of that, the Parks Division is still charging ahead. Jeff Tarling is taking on additional work by stepping in as the Operations Coordinator while being the City Arborist. Recreation and Aquatics staff will be going back to their summer programs shortly. The Parks Division did get approval to hire a limited amount of seasonals.

There was a general question of how the Commission could help empower the community who enjoys the park system during this time. Sally explained that what is needed most right now is staffing and that cannot be helped by outside bodies. A great example of help was when the Friends of Baxter Woods took initiative and put out signs to remind community members to pick up trash in the park.

Cynthia shared that the Parks Conservancy is also asking the same questions as the Commission. They may form a subcommittee and help Nan Cummings in finding a volunteer coordinator position. Cynthia, Dory, Michael, Amy and Ana showed interest in the subcommittee.

ii. Friends Group Questionnaire Update

The goal of the Questionnaire was to have an understanding of the financial challenges and constraints the Friends Groups are having and how the Commission can help them. The idea is to keep equity in the City. As a friends group, there is a responsibility to that and we should become a guide and help them succeed.

Zack raised a question regarding how clear the ordinance is in the Commission's role in the Friend's Groups finances. It is something the Commission should be thinking about as the ordinance is sunseting.

Marc Lesperance added that it should also align with the Friends and Community Partners Handbook which could use an update.

iii. CIP Update

There is no update at this time.

iv. Subcommittee Reports

Finance: Has not had a full meeting but did have a discussion regarding accountability and how we can be stronger in supporting the friends groups.

Community Outreach: Haven't met.

Annual Report: Haven't met.

Parks Initiative: Haven't met.

v. Land Bank Commission Report

Jon shared a handful of acquisitions at the last meeting. Two have had movement. Rand Road on the Westbrook/Portland line: has agreed upon a price with the owner and are now on the due diligence with the City and Portland Trails. Riverton Trolley Park parcel seller is interested in selling and the Commission put in a price that wasn't the asking price. There are conversations going back and forth to come to a possible agreement.

vi. Parks Report

Marie complimented Alex's work. Caitie asked about the Futsal Court. The City went out to bid but they didn't have any bidders.

Amethyst Pop Up Park has broken ground. They are demo-ing asphalt and replacing it with perennial beds. They have been working with Sail Maine to keep them operating. The park doesn't have a name yet.

Zipline down at Deering Oaks will be another exciting thing for families to do this summer. It will hopefully be open July 1st depending on the COVID-19 restrictions.