

Commission Members:

Chair Michael Mertaugh, Vice Chair Jaime Parker, Amy Segal, Jon Kachmar, Marie Gray, Zack Anchors, Eleanor Sears, Stephen Bentsen, Michael Catania and City Councilor Victoria Pelletier. **Staff:** Alex Marshall and Samara Ray

City of Portland **Parks Commission Minutes** **February 3, 2022** **5:00 PM**

I. Call to Order

Parks Commission Chair Michael called the meeting to order and welcomed City Councilor Victoria Pelletier to the Parks Commission.

II. General Citizen Comment Period

George Rheault commented that the Parks Report did not include a vendor for the Castle in Deering Oaks. He was wondering if the City had a prospective renter. He also wanted to know if there was any further discussion about the Norway Maple that was slated to be taken down for the ADA sidewalk project in Deering Oaks. He does not think that this tree needs to be taken down, but he does not remember the Parks Commission getting a briefing on this removal. He does not know how we are removing healthy trees when other residents cannot. Parks Director Alex responded that the Castle in Deering Oaks Request for Proposals went out on Monday. There was previous interest and the City is seeing what kind of interest people have for it now. Alex said that Norway Maple George asked about will not be removed.

III. Agenda Items

a. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes: January 6th 2022 Action Item (5 min)

The January minutes were accepted unanimously by the Commission.

b. New Business

i. Tree Canopy Work - Discussion (10 min) Liz Parsons, Avery Yale Camilla

Liz Parsons is the past president and current board member of the West End Neighborhood Organization. She gave a summary of the Tree Canopy Ordinance in Portland.

In the summer of 2019 a developer did some tree clearing, neighbors stopped the work before all trees were taken down. This was an awakening that there was no Tree Canopy Ordinance on the books. Troy Moon collaborated with City Arborist Jeff Tarling to create the ordinance and it passed in late 2020. Public awareness of the ordinance is a challenge and the idea has always been to expand and strengthen this ordinance. There are staffing challenges in Forestry presently.. Portland has multiple ordinances that are not easily enforced, she stated that we need additional City staff for our Parks.

Avery Yale Kamilla, co-founder of Portland Protectors said for the past few years they have been focused on the tree issue in Portland. Trees have been taking a hit by development and other factors like street expansion. She stated that in the 1930's there were racist red lining programs and certain neighborhoods were risky for investments, by the 1960s there were urban renewal programs and many trees were clear cut. There was some re planting but Forestry staffing took a hit in the 1980s and it never recovered. Underserved communities in Portland are places without a lot of trees, this is visible in the American Forest mapping. She noted that trees are crucial to an urban environment for a variety of reasons. She thinks that putting a monetary value on Portland trees could improve the effort to get resources to increase canopy.. Councilor Dion said that that monetary information would be great to have at budget time.

Michael responded by saying that staffing is a very important part of addressing this issue.

ii. Olmsted Bicentennial (5 min) Nan Cumming

Frederick Olmsted was born 200 years ago. Many communities are planning bicentennial celebrations in 2022 based on his legacy. Some discussion has been made already with the Parks Conservancy. There will be time allotted at the Feb 15th Strategic Planning meeting to brainstorm potential Olmsted events in Portland.

iii. 165 Sheridan Street Site Plan (10 min)

Michael M. shared that the Parks Commission will be reviewing this proposal at this meeting and will be voting on it at the March meeting. Approval will require the Parks Commission advisory recommendation and a supermajority of the City Council. Rick Meek with the Terradyn Consultants Civil Engineers. It is adjacent from Fort Sumner Park on Sheridan Street. The site is just below the park. On the City's website the address is listed as 165 Sheridan there was an existing residence and the new address number is in the center of the property is 155 Sheridan Street. The City's documentation represents the 165 address. The site is currently under construction. Rick is seeking a recommendation to enter a license agreement with the City, they are proposing soil nails that would stabilize the earth and encroach on Fort Sumner property. The contractor needs to stabilize the earth prior to excavating to build the building. Rick said there are two options, the first option is the soil nail proposal and the second is to drive steel piles into the earth along the Ft Sumner property line. The advantage of the soil nail is little noise and disruption to the neighborhood. The disadvantage is that they need a license agreement to install the soil nails. The advantage of the pile system is there is no encroachment; the disadvantage is that there would be significant noise and disruption to the neighborhood and the process would last a lot longer. The goal is to get a recommendation from the PC to allow the license for the soil nails to go into the Fort Sumner property.

Michael asked if this was just about soil stabilization and Alex confirmed that yes this advisory opinion is only about soil stabilization.

Rick went over the supporting documents that were attached to the Agenda Packet. He said there is also a hybrid type of construction that could be possible without the use of soil nails.

Amy said it was a bit challenging to understand the diagram, she wanted to know if there was a better diagram that illustrated the extent of the soil nails. She requested a diagram that is easier to digest with a clear cross section. Rick said he can send that along for review prior to the March Parks Commission meeting.

Michael C asked what the impact would be on the park? What restrictions would there be on future use of the property? These soil nails are permanent and would be more expensive than the piling would be, but there would be permanent restrictions on the Park.

Alex asked what the duration of time would look like if they went the hybrid way that only required piling on one stretch along the park. Rick said he would get an answer to us before the next meeting.

c. Old Business

i. Vacancies (5 min)

There are 4 Parks Commission seats vacant, applications are due tomorrow, Feb 4th. Victoria asked if there have ever been people of color represented on the Parks Commission. There was a discussion to please urge people of color to apply. One of the vacant positions is a seat for Friends of Evergreen but this group is dormant right now. Amy Segal and Beth Rabbit will both be reapplying.

d. Communications and Updates

i. Parks Report (5 min)

Alex provided a summary of Parks' happenings. There will be a third portable bathroom installed on the Eastern Prom on the street side, it will go in a similar location to the porta potty that has been on the Promenade. Amy asked about Riverton Preserve, Alex said that the Department was still working through paperwork on the Hadlock field conversion. Once the conversion is approved then work can commence in the Riverton Preserve. A request for proposals for 6 community gardens will go out this month.

ii. Land Bank Commission Report (5 min)

Jon K gave two updates. There is a Purchase and Sale agreement for the Land Bank to purchase for 1 acre to purchase and become part of Trolley Park. This will go to council on Feb 28th 2022. A priority property went up for sale off of Kennington Ave near Windsor Terrace on the Bay, the Land Bank will discuss this property and will act to purchase as quickly as possible.

iii. Strategic Planning Meeting- Feb 15th, 5:00pm-6:30pm (5 min)

This meeting will feature a discussion about Olmsted Bicentennial projects.

iv. Green Space Gathering in May (Tree Initiative) (5min)

Jeff Tarling will be in attendance. The idea will be to partner with immigrant communities and connect with community members. Michael requested that Victoria send Michael a list of organizations that serve or are made up of immigrant communities. Ideally the Greenspace Gathering will be in person and outside. Michael is hopeful that they will meet in person and may push it later so it can be done in person.

v. Committee Updates (10)

Amy gave an update. Nell and Michael and Beth and Amy are working together to create interpretive panels about indigenous people who lived here and locating parks to put these signs. Michael has done outreach to potential resources. They need to set a date to meet for a committee meeting. Amy has had good conversations with Nancy Montgomery.

Michael has had many conversations with these resources. Amy wanted to give Nell time to talk about establishing the goals they are trying to achieve.

Michael summarized the main points that have come through from his resources:

We don't come with a pre-cooked idea. We don't keep it all in past tense, indigenous people are still with us, they hold the same values as their ancestors. It is important to compensate people for their time. But we do not have a budget for this~ we don't get an allotment like Land Bank and public arts commission.

Inability to protect scenic vistas. Things can be put in Master Plans but until there are ordinances in place view sheds may not be protected. He thinks it would be a good idea to see what other cities have done to protect viewsheds. He would be happy to work on this topic.

e. Commissioner requests for Agenda Items

Michael C. noted that it may be good to bring up the topic of park diversions at future meetings. He thinks that decisions such as the Sheridan street proposal should not happen in a vacuum and they should work to create policies that discourage park diversions and encroachments so it is harder to request these types of things in the future.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.