



**SALEM PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
DIGITAL MEETING
January 14, 2021
MINUTES**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Keith Norris
Alan Alexander
Micki Varney
Dylan McDowell
Paul Rice
Tony Caito
David Fridenmaker
Woody Dukes

MEMBERS ABSENT

STAFF PRESENT

Toni Whitler
Patricia Farrell
Julie Warncke
Milan Davis
Becky George

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dylan McDowell called the meeting to order.

2. ROLL

No board members absent.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Dylan McDowell moved to accept minutes from previous meeting. Keith Norris seconded. Minutes approved with no changes.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

a. Betsy Belshaw: Additional Park Ranger Funding

Betsy Belshaw complimented the Board for taking public comments at the beginning of the meeting. Betsy explained that she has submitted a proposal to City Council for funding to provide an additional park ranger, as one ranger is not sufficient to cover 46 parks. Ms. Whitler thanked Betsy for her proposal and commended her service to the Parks Foundation and as a long-time park volunteer. Dylan McDowell agreed that additional coverage would be ideal and confirmed that the Board has submitted a letter in support of additional rangers. Member Alexander complimented Betsy for her successful efforts to fund the current park ranger.

5. BOARD ITEMS/PRESENTATIONS

a. Officer Nominations

Dylan McDowell expressed interest in continuing to chair. Micki Varney expressed interest in continuing to vice-chair.

Motion: Member Alexander moved that current offices stay in place for 2021. Motion seconded.

Vote: All members voted to approve.

b. Letter of Support for Transportation Grant Application for Pringle Creek Path

Julie Warncke presented her request for a letter of support to submit to the Oregon Community Paths Program, an ODOT program that funds regional recreational trails and critical transportation connections. The proposed target for this grant is the connection from Riverfront Park across Pringle Creek to the existing path connection under Commercial Street SE and into downtown Salem.

Member Rice commented on the high cost of the project and asked if the 30% contingency is not needed, would grant contribution or city contribution be reduced? Ms. Warncke responded that the grant is a mixture of state and federal funds, only one of which can be awarded. The City may have to front costs and be reimbursed. Member Rice asked if the project could be phased. Ms. Warncke responded that the hanging structure under Commercial Street could potentially be phased, and the scenic overlook could be altered to reduce cost.

Member Alexander inquired if the City owns the right-of-way for the project. Ms. Warncke replied that the City has an easement for the path and permission to complete the project and is in the process of working to acquire additional property. Member Alexander inquired about the distance of the project and the cost elements involved in such a high cost estimate. She explained that the distance is approximately 600 feet and it is a complicated project requiring structural reinforcement around the river, as well as structuring to protect pedestrians from railroad debris.

Chair McDowell inquired about the City's timeline for this project assuming the grant is awarded. Ms. Warncke answered that if federal funds are awarded, the timeline is approximately three years. With state funds, the approximate timeline is five years. She believes federal funds are more likely, and the project would begin immediately upon funding.

Chair McDowell asked what would help create the strongest letter of support. Ms. Warncke answered that the grant is focused on transportation and trails, so a focus on the connection of trails and access to critical destinations such as Riverfront Park should be emphasized.

Member Fridenmaker asked if this would be considered a completion of the trail. Julie confirmed it would complete a network of trails. He suggested this information be emphasized in the letter.

Motion: Member Norris moved to draft a letter of support for the proposal. Member Varney seconded. Members Norris, Rice and Chair McDowell will work together to draft the letter.

Vote: All members voted to approve.

c. Work Plan 2021 Review

Ms. Whitler presented the draft 2021 Work Plan and asked for the Board's input. The members provided suggestions that Ms. Whitler will incorporate and return to the Board in February for adoption.

Chair McDowell opened discussion for interested parties to volunteer for committees. Member Alexander expressed he would like to continue to serve on Salem Park Improvement Fund (SPIF) where he also represents the Parks Foundation. Member Norris expressed interest in participating in SPIF; Member Rice yielded his position to Member Norris. Chair McDowell suggested Member Rice could serve on the Woodmansee Park Master Plan instead; he accepted.

Dylan McDowell expressed hopefulness that the park program facility tour will be able to continue in 2021.

e. Draft Parks & Rec Facts Web Page

Ms. Whitler presented the draft webpage. Member Varney suggested that information about dog parks, pickleball courts, skate parks, and senior wellness options be included in the find-a-park feature. Once the web page goes through the city communication team, a status update will be provided to the Board.

6. INFORMATION REPORTS - WRITTEN

a. Mission Street Parks Conservancy Quarterly Report

Christine Chute provided the final quarter report of 2020. Member Varney asked if the annual plant sale will continue, and/or if there is any intent to sell plants online. Ms. Chute said discussions have been held, but there are concerns about developing the online infrastructure. A sale of limited types of plants may be considered.

b. Urban Forestry Update - Milan Davis, Urban Forester

Member Rice inquired as to why trees are being removed around the Civic Center. Mr. Davis indicated that they are a short-lived species and are in the process of being replaced. Member Norris asked if the open tree trimmer position will alleviate service issues. Mr. Davis indicated a seasonal employee is being trained to potentially fill this open position.

c. Parks Planning Update - Patricia Farrell

Chair McDowell inquired about the City's involvement with Salem Audubon and whether this partnership could be called upon to provide additional educational resources about eagles. Member Varney inquired if the Climate Action Plan aligns with the State Climate Action Plan, particularly regarding emissions. Ms. Farrell confirmed efforts are being taken

to align with the state's plan. Member Rice expressed concern over gasoline-operated backpack blowers being used in parks and suggested a move to battery-powered. She said switches from gas to electric are being made wherever possible.

d. Parks Operations Update/Recreation Services Update – Patricia Farrell/Becky George

Member Varney inquired if all garbage from parks goes to Coffin Butte. Ms. Farrell answered that some items which are harder to dispose of may be sent to the landfill instead. Becky George confirmed. Chair McDowell inquired if the holiday lights program could be left up through the New Year to give more people a chance to enjoy it. Ms. George explained that due to concerns of vandalism and security costs, the decision was made to take down décor on December 28th. Dylan suggested a holiday run and ornament hunt sponsored by local businesses. Ms. George confirmed that there have been discussions about a holiday run, and these events would be a good way to encourage people to use parks in slower seasons.

7. NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

8. NEXT MEETING

Thursday, February 11, 2021

9. ADJOURN

7:12 PM

Minutes: Kimberly Retherford/Toni Whitler