



# PORTLAND PARKS BOARD

## MEETING MINUTES

October 2, 2011

7:30 – 9:30 a.m.

Lovejoy Room, City Hall

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**Board members present:** Julie Vigeland, Bill Hawkins, Bob Sallinger, Sue Van Brocklin, Katie Breene, Mauricio Villarreal, Andy Nelson, Linda Robinson, Tricia Tillman, Mary Anne Cassin, Shelli Romero, Keith Thomajan, Mike Alexander, Nick Hardigg

**Board members absent:** Nichole Maher

**Staff present:** Susan Keil, Deborah Lev, Karen Loper, Fred Kowell, Mat Sinclair, Mike Abbaté, Brett Horner, Eric Engstrom (BPS)

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**Call to order** The meeting was called to order by Chair Julie Vigeland at 7:30 a.m.

As Mauricio Villarreal was attending his first Parks Board meeting, introductions were made around the table. Mauricio relayed that he is a landscape architect and urban planner and was recently in Bogota, Colombia working on sustainability, urban livability and landscape place-making.

**Park of the Month** Overlook Park was this month's park of the month. Tricia Tillman reported that Overlook has a weekly Farmers Market every Wednesday. Bill Hawkins passed around photos he'd taken of the park and noted that the park has great views of the city and includes a nice meadow and large trees. He said the park was full of people when he was there and the site seemed very adaptable to multi-use. Next month's park will be Gabriel Park which is at SW 45<sup>th</sup> and Vermont.

**Board Resignation** Julie reported that Loen Dozono has resigned from the Board.

**Parks Director Update** Sue Keil reported that the recruitment process for the new Parks director is still ongoing, but progress is taking place. She hopes to have an announcement by November 1.

**Liaison Reports** There is no report on Sullivan's Gulch today; the next meeting is scheduled for October 19. There is no liaison report on the Intertwine, however Bob Sallinger says that the Intertwine is now officially a 501(c)3 and has split off from Metro. Bill reported that the Willamette Park Advisory Committee has not had a meeting yet. There is nothing significant to report on The Fields since Keith's update last month. However, PP&R will be breaking ground in January.

Mat Sinclair reported on a recent gift from Safeway to PP&R. Portland received the most votes via a Facebook campaign for most natural city and PP&R received a \$20,000 gift which will be allocated to the E205 initiative, along with a donation of 25 picnic tables.

The NRPA gold medal award won't be announced until the conference next month. There is no monetary award if Portland wins.

### **Board's Annual Report**

Julie distributed copies of a draft annual report via e-mail. In previous years, the information for the report has been gathered directly from Board agendas and minutes. Mary Anne Cassin said this year's report could be enhanced by listing two-three issues the Board has been involved in, such as diversity. She also felt the report should highlight the Board's interest in a future bond and their continued desire to keep it on the forefront. Tricia asked to add the Board's involvement in the Washington Monroe site. Linda Robinson said the E205 Initiative should also be added.

Keith felt a statement of editorial inspiration from the Chair should be added at the end, stating that the Board dealt deeply into specific issues, strengthened their membership, and were inspired and catalyzed. Karen Loper suggested adding a cover letter which could include those comments. Linda commented that this year the Board had more involvement in creating the Board's agendas than they had in the past. She also commented that a statement could be made regarding how the Board is going to act as the budget committee for the next fiscal year. Bob asked that the phrase "recreational facilities" in the report be changed to "parks and natural areas."

### **Portland Plan**

The Portland Plan draft is about to be launched. Several Board members have participated in the process. Eric Engstrom from the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) distributed a summary of the plan, which will be released to the public in the next 10 days and also be posted on BPS's website.

Eric gave some background on the process which began out of an update to the City's comprehensive plan and other land use plans. There's a State requirement to update these plans once a generation. This particular process began under Mayor Potter but Mayor Adams asked to have the focus of the plan shifted to make it a more strategic plan. The Portland Plan is not a traditional strategic plan, and includes both 25 year and short term goals and objectives.

Eric commented that those who worked on the plan determined that they didn't need to spend a lot of time on basic visioning as that's already been done. Also, many bureaus have written their own strategic documents and plans which didn't need to be duplicated.

Eric said the Plan tried to balance public involvement vs. the collection of enormous amounts of data, although the Plan is more data heavy than

many traditional City documents. Specific numeric goals and measures of success were set.

The main focus of the Plan proposes three basic strategies:

- Thriving educated youth
- Healthy connected city
- Economic prosperity and affordability

Some trends in the next 25 years are concerning, including increasing inequities, race issues and access to opportunities. The City's ability to do their larger work is in danger if these issues aren't addressed in a more proactive way. Equity needs were recently highlighted by the City Council when they established the new Office of Equity.

Portland has a good reputation for livability and many economic strategies have been built around that, but the City needs to look at a more aggressive economic agenda as they are beginning to fall behind some other cities in economic opportunity.

One sub-area of the strategy is the prioritization of human and watershed health. Plans have often relied on environmental objectives and they then relate public health to physical things. The Plan states that greater emphasis should be placed on building a set of neighborhood hubs around the city instead of focusing on areas that don't have walkable streets or access to transit. Another sub-area of the Plan focuses on building connections to natural areas. Streets should be thought of as areas of civic focus and amenities instead of just channels to move traffic.

Tricia asked how the dissimilarity index will be used. Eric said there 12 indicator areas and one of these relates to progress on equity. Tricia commented on a recent *Oregonian* article stating how people of color are not only moving to east Portland, but are moving out of the city. She asked how the City is addressing that. Eric said the City is ramping up work they're doing with housing strategies and policies, and will look at opportunity areas for housing to make sure they're in areas with high amenity options.

Andy asked how the plan arrived at the 12 indicators. Eric said they started out with a goal to develop just nine but realized there were more ways to track the city's health. He said more information will be on the draft plan that will be posted on the BPS website. Sue said PP&R pushed for a specific indicator related to parks but it was not included, although the parks sub-indicator was elevated.

Mary Anne commented on the link between parks trails, natural areas and economic prosperity and said there are demonstrated studies showing this. Keith asked what will happen to the plan now. Eric said the City will not just put the Plan on the shelf – there'll be a partnership element where the City will spend some time putting together intergovernmental and agency agreements that build specific objectives.

He said working with the Office of Management and Finance will provide some consistency with the annual budget process. That way, if budget cuts are occurring, it can be discussed how they relate to things in the Portland Plan.

Bob said the Portland Plan needs to be incorporated into other planning processes occurring as other plans may be using different criteria. Eric said future planning processes that come after the Portland Plan must, by law, address the framework built into this plan. Some plans, however, are being done in parallel to the Portland Plan.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Mary Anne noted that on page 3 of the September 7, 2011 minutes, in the third paragraph, \$60K should be corrected to say \$60M. In the second to last paragraph on the same page, last sentence, Linda asked to change "always tells" to say "frequently tells." It was moved to approve the minutes as corrected; all members voted aye.

### **Budget**

Fred Kowell said the biggest component in the City's budget is business license revenues. However, the current 6% reduction being requested (which is \$2.5 – 2.6M for Parks) is being driven by several additional factors - the Police training center (at a cost of \$15M), and the Emergency Communication Center, which has less financial impact. One unknown is a measure on the ballot next year that asks the voters to form a library district. Fred says there hasn't been much growth on the assessed value of property and with tax compression, passage of the library measure would cost about \$6M to the City, or a \$750,000 hit to Parks. Factoring in the sluggishness of the economy, the City's financial forecast is now being adjusted downward.

Fred said last year PP&R prepared a 6% reduction scenario, which the BAC will look at again this year. Although it's not known what will happen with the library district, it is polling well. The Council may elect to push the Police training center back and not fund it right now, which would have a positive effect on Parks.

PP&R will look at the prioritizations that have previously been done and make adjustments from those, rather than start over at the beginning. Business licenses and utility license fees are the real economic indicators and new construction is also clearly related to the economy.

Comm. Fish commented that the public generally isn't made aware of the impact that tax compression has on property increases. It was asked if the ballot language for the library district could state this. Fred said that the ballot language is controlled by the Secretary of State. Sue said paid arguments in the voter's pamphlet could include this kind of information.

Comm. Fish suggested that the Board could be involved in advocacy and send a letter to the editor explaining tax compression and the library district and how it affects Parks. Tricia said that would also be an opportunity to talk to the library about how their ballot measure impacts other agencies.

Julie reminded Board members that the Board is now functioning as the Bureau's budget advisory committee (BAC) and this will require more meetings, and more time. She suggested using the majority of the November Board meeting, then meeting every Wednesday in November, and the first Wednesday in December for two or three hours. Julie will poll members so everyone can get dates on their calendars.

Linda commented that when she was on the BAC previously, unions who represented Parks employees also sat on the BAC. Sue said that the meetings are public, and labor will be invited to attend. Julie said that last year's committee recently met and discussed this issue and the unions know that the Board will be serving as this year's BAC.

Tricia expressed concern over the parks priority processes that occurred several years ago which hadn't been presented to the Board from an equity standpoint. Since the Board has now had discussions over the value of equity, she'd like to see how that information fits into an equity framework.

Keith said the Board needs to understand what the cuts mean to services, jobs, and equity. Sue said the level of cuts this year are beyond thinning the soup and the Bureau must determine what their core business is, what generates revenue and what services they need to stop providing.

Mike Alexander said a larger issue for the Board is that they'll have to consider who can pay their way, which excludes those who can't pay from participating in programming. He said the Board will have to take a clear position on the work they did on equity or lose the intent of this work. Linda said one of her concerns is that after making cut recommendations, a lot of the people who need services most will not be able to come advocate before the Council. She said in previous years, programs that were slated to be cut were put back into the budget after citizens rallied before the Council.

Julie suggested that the Board can articulate decisions in writing, and get more exposure by attending Council sessions. Karen can send out possible dates and times when this could occur.

**Comments from Comm. Fish** The Mayor will release a budget memo tomorrow that documents the challenges currently being faced. The downturn in the economy, possible passage of the library district, weaker than anticipated receipts, higher inflation than anticipated, and labor contract negotiation are all affecting next year's budget. His sense is that there will be a dual approach to the preparation – a discussion of how bureaus will manage this crisis of cuts and then a discussion of how it all gets put back together by looking at every budget note and contingency, how the pot can potentially be increased in the future, and commitments that can be revised.

Tricia asked to make sure the BAC is involved in discussions if there are new revenues identified - this way the BAC won't just be dealing with cuts but can be involved in allocating surplus.

Bob said he had a sense of being disconnected at the end of the budget process and that BACs sometimes don't get information at the conclusion. He said he has a desire to stay engaged all the way through. Comm. Fish said this is a generic criticism with the Council, and is not Parks-specific.

Comm. Fish said he believes an announcement on the director search will come in 7-10 days. The final pool of candidates was outstanding.

Keith asked about the E205 initiative and the recent Safeway grant. Comm. Fish thanked the Parks team who prioritized all these projects, which included a children's play area, lighting and water fountains at Parklane Park. Gilbert Park also received trails and an upgraded play area and there are another six or so projects in the pipeline. He will be asking Council to support another \$.5M of one time money for E205.

Sue Van Brocklin asked for an update on the Washington Monroe site. Comm. Fish said that Parks owns 1/2 to 2/3 of the site, but not the building, which is still owned by PPS. Parks has done a master plan for developing their portion of the site. The community wants a recreation center, ballfields, and other amenities. However, when pieces of the package were polled for a bond measure, this project, unfortunately, rated near the bottom.

Shelli asked if there will be a process to look at crafting an add package in case the economy improves and there is more money in the budget. Comm. Fish said this would be the second add package as the mayor will allow an add package for existing programs this year. This could include teen programming, the E205 initiative or other items. The mayor could also take a portion of the one time money and put it into CIP, then Parks would compete with other bureaus for that funding. He'll be working with staff to craft one-time asks.

Comm. Fish asked if the Board is planning on weighing in on the mayor's race. He feels it would be appropriate for the Board to develop a set of questions to send to candidates, and then invite them to a Board meeting for discussion. He said the Board could potentially have a big role to play in this race.

The Board is working on updating their workplan and priorities set at last December's retreat. Julie asked Board members to read the revisions and send her any changes and comments. Some items may not be relevant anymore, and some may not be needed as the Board's real priorities for the coming year. Julie hopes to take some time to discuss this at the November meeting.

## **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 a.m.