

Parks Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting information

December 12, 2024

5-7pm

Portland Building Room 216 and Zoom Virtual Meeting

Board members present:

Dr. C.N.E. Corbin, Ali Berman, Matthew Shipkey, Suenn Ho, Patti Miles, Casey Mills, Allison Snopek, Sameer Kanal, David Staczek, Adrienne Feldstein, Bill Van Bang, Crys O'Grady, Erin Zollenkopf,

Board Members absent:

Sabrina Wilson, Jessica Green (ex-officio)

City staff present:

Adena Long (Bureau Director), Todd Lofgren (VCSS Deputy Director), Joey Furuto (Chief Coordinator), Michelle Tran (Executive Assistant), Maximo Behrens (Recreation Division Manager), Tonya Booker (Land Stewardship Division Manager), Lauren McGuire (Assets and Development Division Manager), Jenn Cairo (City Forester and Urban Forestry Division Manager), Claudio Campuzano (VCSS Finance, Property and Technology Manager)

Others present:

Sharon Corbin, Megan Steffek

Meeting called to order at 5:00pm with roll call following.

Agenda Items

Public Comment

Megan Steffek submitted public comment regarding the recent announcement from Portland Public Schools on cost savings. Cleveland HS students and staff are concerned about cuts on design elements. Athletic projects at other schools have been postponed. With the meeting between PP&R and PPS, she asked that they invite community members to be part of the process and to be able to give feedback.

General Announcements

Crys O'Grady (Board Member) said that Portland Parks Foundation's Friends and Allies Summit Committee is looking for another representative and she encouraged Board Members to apply.

Dr. Corbin (Board Chair) mentioned that in the Board Packet, one of the attachments was the previous letter written in July regarding the PGE Harborton Project. Since the public comment period will open January 2025, the Board should consider resubmitting the letter and updating if need be.



Approve November Meeting Minutes

There was a correction in the November minutes. The motion to move October minutes was made by Sameer Kanal (Board Member), not Casey Mills (Board Member).

Sameer moved to approve the November minutes with the above correction, Adrienne Feldstein (Board Member) seconded. All voted in approval, with Crys O'Grady abstaining due to absence, and the motion passed.

Director's Report

The Community Initiated Fundraising Parks Proposal Process was previously reviewed by the Board and has now been approved by DCA Schmanski. The program was renamed to "Fundraising for Park Improvements." This new structure for fundraising for park improvements retains the legacy park bench and rose bed-giving programs and adds new opportunities to donate towards new park amenities, critical park system needs, and large-scale projects.

This updated process creates a more manageable and transparent fundraising approach. By establishing clear guidelines and equity-focused criteria, PP&R can ensure that fundraising efforts are directed where needed while fostering strong partnerships with the community. The website plans to go live by January 15.

Last Board meeting, four community members spoke passionately regarding the request to install turf at Powell Park. The Director responded to them, thanking them for attending the meeting and requesting the improvements of the sports fields to support student athletes. The bureau is welcome and willing to have a broader discussion with Cleveland High School/Portland Public Schools about possibilities for the site and are in the process of scheduling the meeting with PPS.

On November 20, City Council unanimously passed a resolution directing PP&R to bring a levy referral in spring 2025 or earlier for the May or November 2025 ballot. Following the November 20 resolution, PP&R held a briefing with Mayor-elect Wilson, who supported moving forward with briefings for the new City Council members during their onboarding.

Fulfilling a commitment made to voters, PP&R also conducted an independent audit of the Parks Levy, and while the final report will be issued later this week, the consultant firm has notified the bureau it will be a clean audit with no recommendations. The report reads: "The audit found that Levy funds were used in compliance with voter-approved commitments, and that Levy dollars were clearly tracked using strong financial systems and tracking mechanisms to ensure transparent management of funds. Portland Parks and Recreation developed and used a methodical model to ensure Levy resources were used last as a supplemental funding source, and employed an effective framework to operationalize day-to-day management of the Levy. There were no recommendations."

Congratulations and thanks to Levy Coordinator Claire Flynn, Sustainable Future Manager Sarah Huggins, Finance Manager Claudio Campuzano and the Parks Levy Oversight Committee on stewarding this important work with efficacy, transparency and accountability!

In 2025, the Council sessions are currently only designated to have full sessions the first and third Wednesdays/Thursdays of each month, along with the committee meetings. In preparation, the bureau is compiling potential future council items for the next six months.



Allison Snopek (Board member) asked about the Bond Scoping Program that was mentioned in the Monthly Report. Lauren McGuire answered that this is an effort to scope out projects that are part of the maintenance backlog and the costs for some of the individual large projects.

Adrienne asked about PP&R raising private funds and comparisons to other models. Director Long answered that on ActiveNet, a program that PP&R uses, there is a function for accepting donations. There are also community groups that are highly interested in aligning with PP&R on specific projects. For example, Friends of Mt Tabor and restoring the Mt. Tabor Park shelter, North Portland Little League improving University Park, etc. It is important to manage expectations, but there have been some opportunities for larger scale naming opportunities.

Crys asked about the state government's advocacy or lobbying community that would impact PP&R's budgeting. Todd replied that any state legislation is manager through the City's Office of Government Relations.

Working Group Reports (Q&A only)

Board Affairs

Casey reported that they will be starting the Nominating Committee early, so if there are those that want to join, please let Casey and/or Corbin know.

Land Use & Infrastructure

There was no meeting. They will be reconvening in January due to the holidays.

Financial Sustainability

Casey reported that the WG is focused on the Levy since it supports more than a third of Operating Costs.

Community Engagement

Suenn Ho mentioned the meeting's highlights on how the board can help with onboarding for the Mayor and new City Council members, including whether there can be board representation. She also mentioned the urgency of the PGE Harborton letter.

Portland Parks Foundation Report

Jessica Green was absent during the meeting.

Organizing, Advocacy, and Education Discussion

Corbin opened the floor for discussion on what to include in the Annual Report. She also clarified that the Annual Report is more around the value of the Board itself, rather than the bureau. This Report also should serve as an introduction to the Board for the new incoming Council and Mayor-elect.

List of suggestions:

- Recognizing the vast amount of work that PP&R covers
- Erin Zollenkopf (Board Member) said that in her tenure as a Board member, the past 1-2 years have had much more public comments than before. Visibility to the public has been significant.
- Matt Shipkey (Board Member) mentioned how the Board serves as a conduit for the community and outreach.



- Crys suggested a summary of all the letters that were submitted to Council as well as mentioning letters that will be pending to Council from the Board, e.g. Harborton Project.
- Sameer mentioned access to encompass programming and drop-in as a priority.
- Suenn mentioned trying to meet at Community Centers for Board Meetings again.
- Crys added the topic of Community Centers being used as severe weather emergency shelters.
- Patti Miles (Board Member) brought up the challenge of competing assets (e.g. pickleball courts, skate parks, community gardens, dog off-leash areas) and how best to share with community.
- Matt added creating opportunities for new park spaces and facilities in currently developing areas that are underserved.
- Patti said response to climate change, such as when parks and other spaces are affected by trees falling during storms. How can we deal with them as a parks system?
- Todd added that the Board is seen by the bureau as a previewer or focus group before programs and projects are brought out to the wider public in early stages.
- Highlight how the bureau has been using the Levy funds efficiently and the way voters wanted
- Casey said the theme should be twofold – 1) Parks and Recreation should be seen as a utility for the city. 2) The tension between operational funding and maintenance funding.
- Suenn said the importance of being creative about communicating Sustainable Future and advocacy to Council. Every bureau needs money, what will differentiate us from the others? The general public doesn't understand the complexity of spending restrictions and funding sources. Corbin added asking Council to give Parks and Rec more space and creativity on their fund capability.
- Patti mentioned championing how the bureau has been fiscally responsible, as reported in the audit.

Matt asked staff what is the compelling aspect of PP&R that has historically resonated with Council? Todd replied that looking into the past is likely not the answer, especially with the incoming new 12 members of Council. Currently, PP&R's aspirations do not align with the expected funding path.

Adrienne emphasized on the importance of an optimistic viewpoint could be easier to accept amongst the many bureaus that will be going to Council for more funding.

Public Comment/Other Business

There was no public comment.

Sameer made an announcement that since he will be part of the incoming City Council, he will be resigning from the board effective immediately.

Meeting Adjourned

Corbin adjourned the meeting at 7:00pm.

