

Parks Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting information

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

5:00-7:00pm

Portland Building Room 216 and Zoom Virtual Meeting

Board members present:

Dr. C.N.E. Corbin (Board Co-Chair), Elana Pirtle-Guiney (Board Co-Chair), Suenn Ho, Bonnie Gee Yosick, Ali Berman, Casey Mills, Erin Zollenkopf, Jonathan Beckhart, Adrienne Feldstein, Sabrina Wilson, Crys O'Grady, David Staczek, Adam Lewis, Patti Miles, Jessica Green (ex-officio)

Board Members absent:

Matt Shipkey

City staff present:

Adena Long (Bureau Director), Todd Lofgren (Bureau Deputy Director), Michelle Tran (Executive Assistant), Joey Furuto (Chief Coordinator), Nancy Roth (Acting Recreation Division Manager), Tonya Booker (Land Stewardship Division Manager), Melody Brooks (Interim Equity & Inclusion Manager), Lauren McGuire (Assets & Development Division Manager), Jenn Cairo (City Forester and Urban Forester Division Manager), Claudio Campuzano (Manager of Finance, Property, and Technology), Kellie Torres (Chief of Staff, Commissioner Dan Ryan)

Others present:

Matthew Schick (Community Member), Bob Sallinger (Community Member)

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

Agenda Items

Public Comment

Matthew Schick returned for public comment, and was frustrated by the lack of communication. Todd was able to update and say that there is a requirement for notification of permit-based film use. He commented that there should be a consent form rather than a notification. Corbin asked if Prosper Portland could do a presentation to give information for this community member.

Bob Sallinger, conservation director for Willamette River Keeper and former PP&R Board Member, gave public comment to express concern on what happened regarding city organization at City Council. He said that it was ill-advised that PP&R take over Natural Resources and did not believe that PP&R is prepared to take on the responsibilities. He asks first that Natural Resources be funded at current or higher rates. Second, it is critically important to bring natural areas to at least good or excellent condition. Third, to step into regulatory compliance arena, which PP&R has historically shied away.



General Announcements

PP&R advocacy letter for the Housing Production Advisory Council was sent to the Office of Governmental Relations (OGR) for review. Once reviewed, a copy will be sent to Council and Governor Kotek's office. Dr. Corbin personally thanked Ali Berman for helping draft the letter, along with Casey Mills and Elana Pirtle-Guiney for editing. The Board hoped to send this letter to the office by November 15.

There will be a change to the format of future Board Meetings to be "webinar" style, in order to run the public Board Meetings more smoothly.

Approve August Minutes

There was a correction by Casey and Bonnie Gee Yosick. Bonnie moved to approve with the submitted correction. All members voted to approve, except for Adam Lewis, who abstained from voting.

Director's Report

Two weeks ago, the Annual ORPA Conference took place in Portland. Director Long provided opening remarks and served on the Women in Parks and Recreation roundtable with three other Parks Directors. PP&R staff developed and presented 12 education sessions and 4 site tours; topics were informative and well-received.

Director Long stated her excitement and pride for the work the bureau and its stakeholders have undergone over the last several years - community listening and learning, updating organizational statements - mission, vision, values, and the equity and anti-racism commitment. Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland will transform both the way decisions are made and how things get done. The Board should have received the press release on the [Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland report](#).

At the City Council hearing on Wednesday, November 1, City Council passed a resolution approving a revised organizational chart. Organized by service areas, the new model establishes key leadership positions and realigns some services. A special thank you to Elana Pirtle-Guiney who was able to testify at City Council. The new organizational chart takes effect July 1, 2024, with the possibility of hiring an interim city administrator next year. That person would work closely with current City Council members, who will oversee the new service areas until Portland's new form of government officially launches in January 2025.

It's important to note, that by approving the resolution, the Council didn't commit specific resources to fund each aspect of the organizational chart. But rather, they'll identify resources through the budget process for the financial year that begins July 1.

A city administrator's office and executive leadership team that includes six deputy city administrators, an equity officer, a sustainability officer, and an assistant city administrator.

Six service areas, each led by a deputy city administrator:

Budget and Finance

City Operations

Community and Economic Development

Public Safety

Public Works, and

Vibrant Communities, the new name for the Parks and Recreation service area



The resolution moved the City Arts program to the Vibrant Communities service area. It added Citywide Operational Natural Area and Tree Management to the service area with Parks & Recreation and the Portland Children's Levy. The resolution included language that stated that "as part of the FY 2024-25 Budget, all City bureaus should align natural area and tree management positions, funding, and services to an "Operational Natural Area and Tree Management Unit" with Parks & Recreation, not including the Bull Run Watershed management."

Further, the resolution combined Permitting and Development Services into a single entity in the Community and Economic Development service area. And finally, the resolution added a chief sustainability officer to the city administrator's office.

It is important to note that the approved resolution also included the following text: "BES, BPS, PBOT, PP&R, and PWB are currently assessing natural resource service delivery and potential process improvements. This team is evaluating opportunities for alignment of service delivery, which could include the potential creation of a new natural resources organizational unit, including citywide response to climate change. This unit is not referenced on the organizational chart as the assessment is still in progress, but the transition team continues to be very supportive of its development." We anticipate continued dialogue with the Board in the upcoming budget process related to this resolution.

[Read about the council decision](#)

[View the organizational chart](#)

[Sign up for community updates](#)

City Council will begin meeting virtually starting November 29 while City Hall is closed for renovations in order to accommodate the expanded City Council in 2025. Staff and invited speakers will be able to attend meetings virtually or in person at the Portland Building, which will also be open to the public to watch meetings and provide testimony in person. In-person Council meetings will resume in mid-January 2024 at the City's Development Services Building, at 1900 SW 4th Ave., Room 2500.

Todd Lofgren successfully negotiated lease terms with PPS for their use of Grant Bowl and the upper field. The lease is currently under review by PPS leadership.

New replacement light poles have been installed at Colonel Summers Park and the contractor is now currently working in Sellwood Riverfront Park. After they complete there, they will move onto Irving Park.

During the October Board meeting, there was an update on a refresh of polling to inform potential ballot measures in 2024 to renew the Parks Levy and/or move a bond forward that could begin addressing the \$600 million capital maintenance backlog. This was also an update topic with the Financial Sustainability Working Group at their October meeting.

Polling schedule is moving forward—the bureau worked with Council offices and a consultant during October and early this month to finalize the polling questions, and the polling is now underway. Polling results will be shared in December.

Adrienne Feldstein had a question about the Natural Areas and how they are managed now. Director Long replied that the majority of natural areas are managed by PP&R, about 8,000



acres. PP&R also has an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with BES, who has about 800 acres in their purview. They will be working with other bureaus to transfer management. All bureaus have their own standards and practices, and so the reorganization provides one approach.

Sabrina asked about how to engage before decisions are made. The movement of city reorganization has moved quickly in certain ways that has not let community engagement give input. Director Long said that the Natural Resource Service Delivery work will continue so that this action does not preclude the larger conversation around the topic. Todd added that the budget process may be very dynamic. Kellie Torres also commented that the amendment was done on short notice in the interest of PP&R. Todd added that it may be a good idea to have a Board member designated in order respond quickly during these times.

Dr. Corbin added comment that it was important to be able to give feedback because this is not moving at the speed of public trust. In doing so, the Board is unable to perform their public duty to the community. There should be a middle ground on how quickly things need to move.

Elana commented on the new amendments surrounding the service area that PP&R now has. She had given testimony at City Council to reiterate the importance of having natural resources in the same service area as PP&R. She noted that there were topics that did not get addressed by the Board's letter, but did involve PP&R, so they were not able to respond to all points of the amendment.

Adrienne requested that this city reorganization discussion be a set agenda item for the next few meetings. It would be good to stay on top of practical outcomes.

Suenn Ho asked, what can the Board do to make the process better or help respond quickly? Corbin commented that WG chairs to update their language on their priorities and values at PPR in their next few meetings.

Suenn asked about the boat vessels on the river and why the vessels on the river were the responsibility of PP&R. Director Long responded that PP&R has management of all the docks in the Willamette. If it is not tied to the docks, then it belongs to state lands. If it is tied to the docks, then it falls under PP&R's purview. Many abandoned boats did not have owners and it made this difficult to reach owners when the boats had sunk.

For written record, below is Elana Pirtle-Guiney's testimony at the hearing at City Council:

Good afternoon, Councilors, and thank you for allowing me to speak today on behalf of the Portland Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

When I say I speak on behalf of the Portland Parks and Rec Board please know that we are a Board who lives from the west side of the river to Rockwood, from the farthest reaches of NE Portland south to Sellwood, and neighborhoods in between. Our Board includes disability rights activists, first generation outdoor enthusiasts, parents of playground and swim-lesson aged children, runners, retirees, swim lesson instructors, recreation consultants, policy consultants, researchers, organizers, and environmental and nature advocates. We bring these perspectives, and many more, to the table when we think about the future of parks in Portland.



And we are thinking, a lot, about the future of Parks in Portland – both parks with a small p – what are doing to ensure we have parks and open spaces as our City grows, and what will that look like – and Parks with a big P – how does the alignment of our Parks and Recreation Bureau within the new structure that you all are creating enhance, or detract from, the work that our Parks Bureau does, and the experiences Portlanders have in our parks, and in our natural spaces more broadly.

You received a letter from our Board previously weighing in on the initial proposal for a restructured city government. As your conversations have moved forward from that initial proposal, we wanted to follow up with a few more nuanced comments. Our principles, however, remain the same.

I'd like to focus, today, on one specific issue, which we raised in our initial communication to you all:

We believe that it is critical for Parks and Recreation to be aligned with a new Natural Resources group within the same service area.

There are three reasons we believe this is necessary for the optimal functioning of our City:

1. It allows for holistic planning

As Commissioner Rubio said when I sat before your Council this morning, it is important for us, as a community, to think holistically about parks.

As a parent of two young children I often look to our parks as playgrounds, sports fields, and places for my kids to engage in recreational classes and learn new skills. But our parks are also centers of local ecosystems. They are community gathering places, a backdrop for community art, and also home to countless plants and animals. They provide places for us to stay healthy, and for our watersheds to stay healthy. They are sources of shade, they keep our air clean, and they must be part of the solution to our climate crisis.

Approaching our natural spaces and our tree canopy holistically, we believe, requires placing the thinking around our trees and natural spaces together.

2. You have already started the work

You all have directed your collective bureaus who touch natural resources to better coordinate their work. As a Board, we have followed this work and were pleased with the recommendations on further collaboration which we were briefed on a few months ago.

One of our Board's takeaways from those recommendations was that centralizing the work around tree canopy, specifically, and natural spaces, broadly, could create significant efficiencies within City Government. Creating a place for this work to occur within the new City structure, and placing Parks and Rec and the operation of Natural Areas together, builds on the work your Bureaus have already begun.

3. And finally, it allows for the best operationalization of the work



At the end of the day the choices you make here will affect how the City operationalizes our values. And we could debate, ad nauseum, what Bureaus should be aligned where based on values. But ultimately, I hope you make a choice that creates the best environment for implementing the work – because at the end of the day that is what will allow us to continue to build on Portland’s reputation as an innovative, green, city.

Parks and Recreation oversees the vast majority of land management and tree management in our City today. It can anchor this work. But it can’t do it alone. It aligns well with programming like the Children’s Levy and our City’s arts programming, which we know you are considering including in the same Service Area.

We believe strongly that Service Area *must* be a place that can address our natural areas, broadly – a place that can efficiently implement workplans to maintain natural spaces and increase our shrinking tree canopy – in order to allow for the most efficient management of space and services for Portlanders.

To that end, we urge you to adopt the amendment, offered by Commissioner Ryan, to add a Citywide Operational Natural Area and Tree Management unit to the service area that currently includes Parks & Recreation.

Further, we continue to believe this alignment is only as strong as its initial implementation, and therefore we ask that the work begin now to ensure that in the 2024-25 Budget all bureaus align natural area and tree management positions, funding and services to this new “Operational Natural Area and Tree Management Unit.”

Working Group Reports (Q&A only)

Board Affairs

There were no questions.

Land Use & Infrastructure

There were no questions.

David added that there was an action item that PP&R present on Darcelle XV’s temporary activation plan, which has some challenges that requires some discussion amongst the full board.

Financial Sustainability

There were no questions.

Bonnie commented that BAC process is coming up for the BMP so they will replace the next future FSWG meetings for a few months.

Community Engagement

There were no questions.

PLOC

There were no questions.

Programming and Recreation



Adam Lewis gave an update on the new working group. There was a lot of comprehensive feedback from PP&R staff and WG members on what the possible priorities could be.

Director Long commented the importance that topics are not duplicative of the Capital Selection Process – two working groups are already tracking infrastructure and funding sustainability. Adam said that the WG will start agenda setting so they can focus on other items.

Suenn has asked about the City Arts talks with reorganization and what that means for this working group. Director Long responded that they are still going to be their own office so there will be discussions on what the partnership with would look like. Kellie added that there was a work session today regarding budget priorities for the Council offices going forward. These will happen through May.

Portland Parks Foundation Report

PPF is currently in fundraising season. Jessica Green shared that the Thompson Elk Fountain is still in the design phase. There will be a landmarks briefing on December 11. The project is on schedule to hand over completed design work by January.

There have been three playgrounds identified for funding, one in North Portland, one in East Portland, one in SE Portland. PPF is actively recruiting for new steering committee members for next year's Friends and Allies Summit.

Emergency Sheltering

Chris Carey from Portland Bureau of Emergency Management (PBEM), Hayley Blonsley from the Mayor's Office, and Grace Zarpak from Commissioner Gonzalez's office, gave a presentation on the current landscape of emergency planning in the city and the city's partnership with the county.

Bonnie asked a question regarding thresholds and the function of the joint office. Is there something that can be done to improve the partnership? Hayley answered no, there are two connected, but different efforts. She asked about alternative shelter sites, specifically ones that were already being actively used (e.g. convention center). Hayley replied that the Convention Center, for example, is actually paid. Places like Lloyd Center have offered services, but there also needs for someone to identify and ask the organizations.

Patti Miles asked if there is a separate pot of funds for seismic event. This seems like something that should be worked into the current plans. Chris answered that the state has become much more mobilized, but they still have not completed a plan. Hayley answered there is no emergency funds for seismic events—there is one for general emergency response (\$1 million), but that was quickly depleted within the year.

Casey asked where Portland Public School is in all this. If they're not in the picture, why not? Hayley answered that they can only give weekends if events are not being used. They are not very easy to mobilize and demobilize.

Ali asked about audit on whether the city is prepared to support people with disabilities. Chris replied that there has been.

Elana commented that there are some publicly owned properties that get reimbursed on when their programming is interrupted and PPR properties do not. She then asked what counts as a



life-saving event, and regarding communities that are displaced from interrupted programming. Are summer events treated differently from winter events. Chris agreed on needing a holistic approach to emergency sheltering. In his experience in southern California, giving A/C units were one of the most effective ways of helping the community cool down. Grace also added the important efforts by Community Organizations Active in Disaster, orchestrated through PBEM. They have recommended that the County do a similar planning process. Council is very united on how to do future planning and echo the same frustrations as the bureau.

Adrienne asked regarding selecting city sites, who ultimately makes the decisions? Hayley answered that the County makes the request of the city locations. Historically, the city sites are named by Health and Human Services.

Sabrina commented that it's important ensure that the shelters could also benefit families and children. A lot of shelters when they are activated are not a diverse or safe place.

Dr. Corbin asked that Emergency Management return in May/June to discuss this further. Is the city looking at other cities on how to respond or is this a uniquely Portland problem with the logistical restrictions that we're currently facing? Adena answered that the limitation is the relationship. The city cannot ask for state assistance without the permission of the county.

Dr. Corbin asked if there is a body or platform that the community can engage with the county? Hayley answered that there is not. Kellie added that there are media opportunities and testimony with council coming in the next few months that she plans on sharing.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Meeting Adjourned

Corbin adjourned this meeting at 7:17pm.

