

Tuesday, September 13, 2022

5:00pm – 7:00pm

Community Music Center on 3350 SE Francis Street, and Zoom Virtual Meeting

Members Present

Bonnie Gee Yosick, Erin Zollenkopf, Dr. C.N.E Corbin, Mike Elliott, Adrienne Feldstein, Ali Berman, Adam Lewis, Sabrina Wilson, Casey Mills, Elana Pirtle-Guiney, Crys O’Grady, Alejandro Orizola, David Staczek, Randy Gragg (Ex Officio)

Members Absent

Paul Agrimis, Nova Newcomer

City Staff Present

Serin Bussell, Michelle Tran, Todd Lofgren, Maximo Behrens, Tonya Booker, Margaret Evans, Lauren McGuire, Vicente Harrison, Victor Sanders, Jamie Sandness

Public Comment

No public comment at this time.

Call to Order/Social Time

Bonnie called the meeting to order at 5:02pm.

Announcements:

No announcements at this time.

Community Music Center:

A performance was given by some of the CMC’s violin students and their piano and violin instructors. Executive Director of the Community Music Center, Gregory Dubay, gave an overview of CMC’s operations since the pandemic.

Approve June Minutes

Adrienne moved to approve minutes, with Ali seconding. All voted in favor, with no opposition, and the motion was carried.

Director’s Report Q&A:

Ali asked to know more about the ADA accessibility work with the ADA Coordinator. How is PP&R going to train staff?

Todd answered that though Jonathan Simeone is the new ADA Coordinator, Parks does have inclusion specialists, and they work with PP&R teams across the Recreation division.

Erin asked about registering for Fall season swim. She noted that PP&R is prioritizing certain community groups, which is good thing, but emphasized that there’s not enough programming to meet the need. How is PP&R making sure that they are prepared in Summer 2023? What are the challenges in hiring – is it compensation or something else?

Maximo answered that Parks is looking at a new registration model to reflect our hiring needs. There will be more streamlined methods for things like marketing and outreach.

Erin: Have you looked at compensation?



Todd added that, yes, and there is a labor shortage in many areas, including aquatics. PP&R is in discussion with our labor partners about what improvements can be made to increase hiring.

Dr. Corbin asked about ADA accessibility. Is PP&R looking at hearing/sight/neurodivergent needs, or are they second to physical accessibility, and meeting the basic ADA requirements? She encouraged PP&R to push beyond just what is required.

Serin concluded the Director's Report with a quick announcement: An email was sent to the board about the North Portland Aquatic Center. The Community Engagement team is asking for Board Members to join the Project Advisory Committee to help advise on the progress of the build. Board members are encouraged to apply.

Working Group Reports

Note: This section is different from previous meetings. In the interest of time, the Parks Board was asked to review reports and come prepared with questions, if any, rather than having Working Group Chairs read out their reports.

Board Affairs Q&A

There were no questions.

Land Use & Infrastructure Q&A

Ali asked if 3-6 acres of Forest Park were going to be cleared for the powerline project?

Alejandro was able to provide context. There's a proposed expansion of PGE in Forest Park. For the purposes of what PGE is proposing, it would require Land Use approval. The position from both Parks and BES is aligned and the project can proceed, but PGE will need to explore ways to reduce the natural resource impacts. LU&I is tracking the process of the application. Bonnie asked for more information from Lauren to bring to the board about this.

Mike asked if this project will impact trails or more sensitive areas.

Lauren added that Brett Horner and Laura Lehman have been working on this, so she will follow up with them to get more information to the Board.

Financial Sustainability Q&A

There were no questions.

Community Engagement Q&A

Bonnie noted that there was a section of the report indicating that "there needed to be a deadline" in relation to public comment, and wasn't sure it was referencing.

Erin replied that the CEWG is still working on their process for receiving public comment and determining best practice for follow through. For example, they are still working through the process of responding to people who submit a question in advance versus at the Board meeting.

Dr. Corbin added that the question is whether the Board should give the public a requirement to ask a question 48 hours in advance to get a question at the meeting. And if the public comment is impromptu and during the meeting, what is the timeline for Parks to give an answer.

Dr. Corbin asked that regarding Board Affairs, what are the next steps for expanding working groups and what topics does the Board plan to cover?

Bonnie indicated she was open to this discussion and whether the Board should put this on a future agenda.

Casey noted that the Board has a series of possible topics to cover in working groups, such as environmental justice and climate resiliency. Some of them fall under Community Engagement. Some of the other topics could fall under Board Affairs. BAWG looking into whether expanding the definition of the working groups makes more sense. He echoed Dr. Corbin's suggestion and noted that if Board members have any thoughts or suggestions regarding working groups, to please let him know.

"A" Park and Wilson Pool Renaming Committee Report

Dr. Corbin reported that the committee had a meeting in September and are still trying to make sure they are honoring the community of Portland residents. They haven't come to a conclusion yet, but they are going to have more conversations.

Portland Parks Foundation

Randy reported that PPF has opened up the Fall application for their grants program, with the deadline of October 15. The Friends and Allies Summit will be in-person on October 20. There are workshops and a keynote speaker scheduled. There are two days of service on October 14 and 15, at Whitaker Pond and Leach Botanical Garden, respectively. There will also be a Board Retreat on the September 30, and right now they are moving and reorganizing.

PBEM Shelter Activation Process

Victor presented an overview of the lifecycle process for an emergency declaration. There are three major steps. The first step is typically 3-5 days in advance of a heat event. There is a City briefing that PP&R attends. During these first few days, Parks work with bureaus to review whether Parks needs to provide shelters and supplies. The second step is 2-3 days in advance of the heat event. There is a Unified Command model that is activated, giving the Mayor's office full authority over all bureaus and resources. This includes community centers. Typically, the Mayor will activate the emergency declaration, then communicate to Parks on what needs to be provide. PP&R's role in this model is the support role and responding to what the Mayor's office needs. This will sometimes interrupt our programs and require us to shuffle around our staff. The third step is 1-2 days in advance of the heat event, PP&R is now working closely with the county to be as helpful as possible. They review what community centers and what spaces within those facilities are available and also use this time to communicate to employees on what's to come.

Todd added that PP&R does a thorough evaluation of what programs are running and what they are able to move around at the time. When the shelters are activated, teen and senior programs are canceled, childcare, etc. There are policy choices being made, which affects access to the facility for some of the most vulnerable populations.

Adrienne asked what kind of flexibility Parks has to be more influential on when and whether to activate community centers during heat events.

Todd answered that PP&R does not have the authority to make that decision, it comes from the Mayor and the county. They are able to give feedback and advocate for Parks programs, but do not make the final decision.

Crys asked, given the state of wildfires and how that's leading to shutoffs, etc., have there been conversations about utilizing this process while also anticipating power shut offs?

Todd responded – the short answer is, when there is an emergency declared, the Mayor’s office and the county take the authority and judgments from the city (and by extension from PP&R). This may change with the new charter system vote coming up this election cycle, but right now, this is a rigid command structure.

Alejandro asked whether those who work in these shelters are given special training and if they are staffed differently?

Victor answered that the City and PBEM will ask all city employees for help and any volunteers need to take special training. City staff are given opportunities to take additional shifts and Community Center employees are highly encouraged to also volunteer. County employees run the trainings and manage volunteers. This is going to become more routine.

Dr. Corbin asked whether there will be a report at the end of this year? And will the board have access to it in order to make future decisions for 2023? In dealing with heat, freezing temps, air quality – how does Parks also deal with blackouts and brownouts? Is this something that’s going to be done each year so the Board can figure out not just who Parks is serving but also how they are serving the community? Does Parks also know how many events the County has stepped in to override the Community Centers (CC) this year?

Todd replied that he can find the exact numbers. During COVID and 2021, Charles Jordan Community Center had shelters ongoing for all hours, but a lot of the programming was halted. PP&R teams are constantly discussing this and collecting feedback amongst our teams. This is stressful, and there’s a lot of trauma that occurs, and this goes on for an indeterminate amount of time. Our city has not planned enough for intermittent short-term shelters and this will become more regular. PP&R has advocated that the city hire contractors so there won’t be staff that just have “just in time” training in the event of a crisis.

Casey noted that they were shown how things should work, but asked if it actually works that way? If so, is this enough time?

Todd answered, in short, no. 1-2 days in advance for being told that your resources would be taken over for 1-6 days is not enough time. The Mayor’s office and the county are the ones that determine the timeline.

Erin asked how closures affect the compensation for hourly staff that were originally scheduled, for example Zumba instructors, etc. – if their services are cancelled, are they still being paid?

Maximo answered that in an ideal situation, if there’s enough advance notice, Recreation can set the schedule in time. But depending on the emergency declaration, the Mayor has the authority to take over the schedule and what’s impacted. There could also be other opportunities other locations to regain those hours.

Todd added that for short-term/part-time staff, it is up to BHR/the city and the county regarding compensation. PP&R managers want to be employee centric and support their teams, but the policy for this is determined at each emergency event.

Dr. Corbin asked if PP&R is seeking guidance from the NRPA or another organization on training, verbiage, or ways to support staff?

Todd answered that Maximo’s team has been doing research in other jurisdictions and not just regarding emergencies, but other issues, such as interacting with individuals dealing with drug and alcohol addiction, mental health, homelessness, and other groups that Recreation did not really have to interact with on a regular basis, until now.

Maximo added that, yes, Recreation is trying to connect with other organizations and municipalities, such as Seattle. There are other areas that they are finding out about because those organizations and cities have established infrastructure. For example, with the current electrical and mechanical infrastructure, the systems that cool and heat PP&R spaces are not built for these emergencies or the increased frequency, so learning how other organizations and cities are handling their infrastructure needs.

Dr. Corbin noted that this is an opportunity for Parks to center themselves as critical infrastructure. If community members are facing blackouts and brownouts, even if they have the necessary cooling/heating systems, it would be detrimental. The CCs would be a place to support those community members during blackouts/brownouts. The bureau and the Board needs to articulate this to the leaders.

Warming/Cooling Shelter Evaluation Criteria Discussion

Todd noted that the criteria for selection of shelters in the community is based on the weather and type of emergency declaration. It also depends on the location of the shelter and what vulnerable populations would use them the most, essentially the availability of shelters versus community members that live outside.

Bonnie indicated that this discussion would help inform the Board about whether there are other assets that are available for services for permanent and intermittent shelters that Parks controls. What is the range of assets utilized during emergency situations?

Casey asked if there are criteria for determining which CCs to activate? And who holds and controls it? Todd answered that Parks has criteria for the supply side of the equation. The Mayor's Office and county are not asking us for the policy tradeoff of who PP&R is serving with our programming versus who the shelters are serving.

Casey then asked if the public could see the criteria or list? There are assets all over the city – how do they make a decision on using a community center versus a library?

Todd responded that the city has never provided their criteria to the bureau and how it plays into that system. CCs are fixing a different need; libraries are for daytime only. CCs include overnight shelters; this includes shelter beds that they already have.

Vicente added that ultimately, it's based on existing shelter beds within the infrastructure of housing that's available. The venues they look at for determining what becomes a shelter is the Mayor's call. The accessibility criteria, which is where our CCs fit into the equation, are two-fold: 1) It's the demographics of the region in which they're located, and they want to have accessibility in areas with vulnerable populations, such as East Portland/urban island area, and 2) The ability to be converted. A library is less likely to be converted since shelving and inventory would need to be moved. Gym spaces at a CC are empty and can easily add shelter beds.

Todd also noted that there are a lot of public schools, and even though they're closed during the summer, those are overseen by school boards and the school boards are the ones to determine if they could be used as shelters.

Dr. Corbin asked, has there been an inventory done on empty buildings to see what buildings are available? If a school doesn't want a "certain population" there, then does it mean the school would be open to hosting Parks programming that would be impacted there? How much of this is COVID related/social distancing related?

Todd answered that it's not COVID/distancing related anymore. Though he loves the creative idea for schools to open up for Parks, there is trouble accessing them due to logistical things like wanting labor represented janitors to be working, which is reflective of the institutional friction.

Maximo added that there are definitions tied to what is considered a cooling site versus a cooling shelter. Cooling sites are places that can continue regular operations, but people can go there to be cool like some CCs and libraries. It's the activation of "Cooling Shelter" locations that require the additional logistics and preparation.

Dr. Corbin commented that this is a life-or-death situation and to hear that certain bureaus or organizations don't want to participate is unacceptable. Would like to have staff tell the Board what they can do to communicate this to our community. It is past the point of just not wanting this happening in our neighborhood.

Erin noted that the Mayor doesn't control PPS. Since PP&R serves our youth, there should be a natural connection that needs to be made. She asked if the Parks Board could use their position to reach out to the school boards to see if they would be willing to hear us out. And noted that it would be beneficial for our board to see written information and/or data on who are the users and what is actually happening when control is taken over at these spaces.

Crys asked that as an advisory board, what can the Board do on a state-wide level? The compounding effects of COVID, winter storms, heat events have shown that the city is not prepared. Incident management teams have to be set up really fast and are not properly trained in time. What can they do as a board to show help with community input?

Maximo said that our already vulnerable populations are accessing our sites and are part of the financial assistance pilot program, so Recreation is hoping to use the quantitative data from these programs to then help inform leaders on who is using the shelters and how the CCs would be impacted and how they impact the vulnerable population.

Ali noted that she liked the idea of having schools support Parks programming if Parks CCs are being used for shelters. Besides Portland Public Schools, there are universities, private schools, and other community spaces that the Board could possibly tap into.

Bonnie commented that PPS has been a partner with Parks for a while, and has provided support with their pools, for example.

Casey noted that he'd like to bring this conversation back to the BAWG because it has to do with the advisory power of the board. He will be sending out a proposal on what our next steps are.

Dr. Corbin also added that Director Long did provide a document for us – it's not necessarily brick and mortar, but "soft" infrastructure.

Financial Assistance Pilot Program Discussion

Maximo gave a brief overview of the Financial Assistance Pilot Program and the new Access Pass program. The Financial Assistance Pilot Program Report was provided to the Board. Maximo asked if anyone from the Board had questions or comments.

Mike asked, if someone isn't aware of the registration window, are they out of luck for the next signup period?

Maximo answered that people can sign up for the access pass at any time, so each user has their own timeline to renew at the end of 12 months.

Jamie also added that all of the folks who participated in the access discount last year will need to renew this month. This amounts to about 2,000 people.

Adrienne asked, how are PP&R is marketing this program?

Jamie answered that because there is a supply and demand challenge on what is available, this isn't being shared everywhere. PP&R wouldn't be able to handle increasing waves of signups for this. They are strategically marketing to community partners who know which communities are most vulnerable versus marketing to the general public.

Ali asked if there was an option for those with higher incomes to pay more than what's required to help offset the access program? At Audubon, folks could choose the option of paying 110% or 125% of the cost.

Jamie said that there is an online option for users to donate to the Rec program, but it was used very little.

Dr. Corbin asked, based on the conversation we just had about closures, how are we going to compensate folks when their programming gets shut down and they paid for access to those programs? Jamie answered that they do have the ability to fully refund if closures are from PP&R's side. If closing with 7-days' notice or less, then there is a prorated refund. If there's an unexpected closure, they can fully refund.

Erin commented – regarding donations – it's unlikely for people to donate to the government, and we should celebrate that the Levy was able to make the Access Pass program possible.

Maximo indicated that even with the revenue support as a result of the Levy, they are still making sure they price programs accordingly and then use the Levy to offset costs for those who need assistance. There is a formula in place to evaluate those costs against things like inflation.

Casey asked if PP&R was advertising that this program is “the Levy dollars at work”, so people know it's thanks to the Levy that this is possible.

Maximo answered, yes, there is information available online and at the sites where we do the registrations. As we continue to roll this out, we have 5 different programming sessions that influenced our pilot process. We still have some opportunity to review information, incorporate lessons learned, and adapt.

Public Comment

There was no public comment at this time.

Meeting Adjourned

Bonnie adjourned the meeting at 6:58pm.