

Parks Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting information

Tuesday, September 12, 2023

5:00-7:00pm

Multnomah Arts Center 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, Crys O'Grady, Casey Mills, Erin Zollenkopf, Matt Shipkey, Patti Miles, Jonathan Beckhart, Adam Lewis, Adrienne Feldstein, Sabrina Wilson, Randy Gragg (ex-officio)

Board Members absent:

David Staczek, Erin Zollenkopf

City staff present:

Todd Lofgren (Bureau Deputy Director), Michelle Tran (Executive Assistant), Joey Furuto (Chief Coordinator), Maximo Behrens (Recreation Division Manager), Tonya Booker (Land Stewardship Division Manager), Melody Brooks (Interim Equity & Inclusion Manager), Margaret Evans (Workforce Development Manager), Kellie Torres (Commissioner Ryan's Chief of Staff), Chris Silkie, Nicola Sysyn, Sarah Huggins, Lauren McGuire, Melody Brooks, Brian Landoe

Others present:

Matthew Schick, Soren Underdahl, Virginia La Forte, Rich, Tonya March, Jake Wicks, Todd Zarnitz, Camille Russell, Colin McClean, Kim McGais, Gretchen Cole, Sarah Betts, Stephanie Antonoff

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

Deputy Director Todd Lofgren gave a statement regarding the incident at Montavilla Community Center and the passing of the young girl, and Dr. C.N.E. Corbin (Board Chair) held a moment of silence.

Agenda Items

Public Comment

Tonya March gave a public comment regarding the cooperation between Portland Public Schools and PP&R, specifically regarding Couch Park. The school community is seeking to close the restroom at the park, which makes it unusable.

Todd Zarnitz, President of the Northwest District Association, shared public comment regarding the future of Slabtown Park and the Conway Master plan, which offers a park plan to the neighborhood. At the end of 2023 the plan sunsets and so does the obligation for PP&R to acquire the land. Guardian real estate currently owns the land. If the land isn't turned over to the city at the end of the year, then the park could be lost.

Camille Russell, a member of the Grant Gives Board, which works on afterschool clubs, programs, and fundraisers, gave comment in support of the Grant Bowl Community Coalition,



formed on August 15 after the Grant Bowl was closed. Grant is the only school in PPS without stands or lights.

Colin McLean, a Grant Soccer Coach, gave public comment in support of restoring the Grant Bowl, strongly encouraging PP&R to give the lease to PPS.

Virginia La Forte gave testimony on behalf of the Grant Bowl Community Coalition. She has had experience fundraising for the Grant Bowl in the past. The athletes and their parents have to shoulder an immense burden to travel to other schools.

Sarah Betts, a neighbor living near Grant Park, gave public comment regarding the Grant Bowl. She wanted to give a different perspective, feeling a lack of engagement from all sides regarding the field. She believed that giving the field to PPS to install lights and stands would be detrimental. She still otherwise supported the replacement of the field.

Stephanie Antonoff, a parent to student athletes, gave public testimony regarding the Grant Bowl. Students will lose over a thousand hours this month in travel time because of the close of the Bowl.

Rich (no last name provided) shared virtual public testimony regarding the future Slabtown Park and Conway Master plan. He also commented that Wallace Park has two tennis courts that desperately need resurfacing and currently unusable. They are the only public tennis courts in the area of the district.

Approve August Minutes

Bonnie Gee Yosick (Board Member) moved to approve minutes as submitted, and Adrienne Feldstein (Board Member) seconded the motion. All voted in favor and motion carried.

Deputy Director's Report

Todd Lofgren gave an update on Grant Bowl. PP&R attended a Portland Public Schools (PPS) board meeting, where they passed a resolution encouraging PPS staff to work with the City to negotiate a longer-term lease for exclusive control at the Bowl. Commissioner Dan Ryan and the PPS Board Chair made a commitment to initiate that discussion as soon as possible. The bureau is currently waiting on information from PPS project staff. There is also a discussion on the timeline for the work currently being negotiated. PPS has been fully informed of these concerns with the Board.

Elana Pirtle-Guiney (Board Vice Chair) asked about the timeline of the project. Todd answered that PPS Board passed the resolution that a long-term lease should belong to PPS. School fields are different from regular parks as far as access and permitting. There are policy decisions that need to be reviewed, with school days and current athlete usage. Currently students occupy the field approximately two thirds of the time, with public access being one third of the total usage. There is some discussion if whether giving the lease to PPS would still grant public access use. Elana asked if this field got higher priority in maintenance. Todd answered that the field got regular maintenance as a turf field, but this type of field has a life span of approximately ten years, depending on its activation.

Patti Miles (Board Member) asked about the discussion on the solution currently with Grant students. Todd responded that PP&R has offered multiple fields to the school for practices and that the current solution was using Delta Park for home games.



Bonnie asked about possible solutions in light of the closure of Mt. Scott Community Center and was concerned about the community's access to water safety and swim. Todd answered that the Aquatics team is discussing different solutions on how to teach water safety. This can be a future agenda item to present to the Board. Dr. Corbin said this could be discussed at a future Board Affairs Working Group meeting.

Dr. Corbin asked what community members could do to support PP&R in getting the resources they need. Todd emphasized on the importance of elections, since a lot of PP&R has been supported by bonds and levies. The last levy in 2020 has helped stabilize operating costs, but there continues to be a maintenance backlog.

Working Group Reports (Q&A only)

Board Affairs

There were no questions.

Land Use & Infrastructure

Elana asked about the Slabtown/Conway project – this is no longer a project that's being watched by LU&I. Since this was being commented on by community members during public comment, is it still on LU&I's radar?

Matt Shipkey (Board Member) answered that it is on the radar and that there will be a discussion at the next WG meeting. Randy Gragg (Ex-Officio) asked about it being a high priority. Todd answered that it is a priority, but it is a matter that is still being negotiated. Lauren McGuire (Assets & Development Division Manager) reiterated that the negotiations that are still being worked on, and there is high concern of cleanup costs after the acquisition of the property.

Financial Sustainability

There was no FSWG meeting.

Community Engagement

There were no questions.

Board Annual Report

Dr. Corbin asked members give feedback via email.

City Reorganization Update

Todd reviewed the new proposed draft of the Organization Chart that Chief Administrative Officer Mike Jordan sent out that afternoon, highlighting parts of the draft that would affect the PP&R bureau. This draft shows an organizational structure of a City Administrator overseeing multiple Deputy City Administrators, who then manage various categories of bureaus. PP&R was initially categorized with the Public Works and other infrastructure Bureaus, and there is a potential new bureau called Natural Resources.

Crys O'Grady (Board Member) asked that since there is now possibly an Asset Management bureau, does this mean that aspects of the maintenance backlog will go to that bureau? Todd replied no, it will be like a leadership group similar to Human Resources.



Casey Mills (Board Member) asked about the cost of additional administration and how the reorganization will result in additional costs.

Dr. Corbin asked if there a commissioner would be assigned to certain bureaus from each district. Todd answered that as it's currently proposed, there is no liaison role for City Commissioners at the moment.

Elana asked if anyone has a sense when the shift to these new groups will happen. Todd answered that there are a few different paths, but the thought process is that the budget will be finalized in July to prepare for FY24-25.

Dr. Corbin proposed that all working groups gather their thoughts and then convene all feedback by the next Board Affairs Working Group.

Matt asked if the Parks staff saw any obvious challenges. He is curious about whether, he as a constituent, would be able to interact with the bureau in the same way. He also asked about the involvement of OCCL since they are very light.

Todd answered that there are continuing pieces being worked on to help with access to the bureaus from the public.

Jonathan Beckhart (Board Member) asked about the transition with the election – is there a recruiting plan? Todd answered that other than building it into the FY24-25 budget, there is currently not much of an update. There will be little impact for most of PP&R staff, , with the exception of executive roles such as Director or Deputy Director.

Sustainable Future and Capital Projects Update

Sarah Huggins and Lauren McGuire gave a presentation on how PP&R assess and determine assets that may require closure.

Bonnie commented that many of the assets that were identified had partnerships with non-profit organizations working in conjunction with the bureau. There could be a way to better leverage those partnerships that we can help dig the bureau out of the maintenance backlog.

Ali Berman (Board Member) was wondering if disability was factored in the equity score calculation. Lauren answered that it is not in the equity score, but the discussions are had with every capital project prioritization. Ali highly emphasized that it be included in the equity score. Todd added that in the annual allocation, \$1 million (20%) is dedicated to accessibility improvements.

Randy Gragg (Ex-officio) asked about whether a bond will be put on the 2024 ballot. Todd said there is work on this being done with Commissioner Ryan but there will likely be no update until at least next month.

Crys commented that the \$5 million allocated in the general fund for asset management is extremely low. It will be very important for the Board and community advocates for how this is determined.

Public Comment

Gretchen Cole, a parent to two Grant High students, gave public comment on the importance of the Grant Bowl. She referred to needing stands and more lights as well.



Rich asked about the levy and why it was used for access to park assets but not capital maintenance. Todd answered that the levy can be used for day-to-day maintenance and operating costs. However, the presentation mentions capital maintenance of failing assets, which is a different category.

Community member Emily made a comment about Delta Park being on the list of failing assets, which was concerning because this is the only field that Grant students are able to play on. Todd clarified the list was for assets within 5 years, and Delta Park's field is scheduled to be replaced in 2-3 years. At the moment, it is fine to be used by the Grant student athletes.

Meeting Adjourned

Corbin adjourned this meeting at 7:23pm.

