

**PORTLAND PARKS BOARD RETREAT  
MEETING MINUTES**

June 21, 2019 | 9:00am - 3:00pm  
Leach Botanical Garden

**Board Members  
Present:**

Paul Agrimis, Tonya Booker, Kendall Clawson, Michelle Dedeo, Mike Elliott, Pat Frobos, Jenny Glass, Randy Gragg, Katy Holland, Tamara Layden, Lee Novak, Jim Owens, Gladys Ruiz, Paddy Tillett, Erin Zollenkopf

**Board Members  
Absent:**

Bonnie Gee Yosick, Ian Jaquiss, Lorena Nascimento

**PP&R/City Staff  
Present:**

Megan Dirks, Brooke Gardner, Adena Long, Kellie Torres

**Leadership  
Transition, Misc,  
Board Member  
Introductions**

Pat welcomed the Board and passed the meeting facilitation to Paul, the incoming Board Chair.

Paul asked for a motion to approve the creation of a letter to Eileen, James and Art from the Board to thank them for their leadership as they depart their roles as division managers. Randy made the motion, Jim seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

The members introduced themselves and shared their connection to Parks.

**Board Functioning**

**Mission and Bylaws Review**

Paul reviewed the Board's founding ordinance that describes the mission of the Board and asked if the Board felt that there was need for any updates to the language. Paddy noted the long-term perspective the Board should bring. Randy noted the need to add a focus on equity. Jim suggested adding language from the Racial Equity Plan. The mission should reflect the new vision. Gladys shared that the mission statement lacked the people element. Pat added that the Board is advisory to the Bureau and to Council, and the language should reflect that level of advocacy. Tonya shared that she would like the public comment piece to be more of a discussion opportunity. Adena noted that the term





'neighborhood based' is limited. Randy and Gladys offered to help work on the language of the mission, and Pat offered to help with the bylaws update.

Kendall asked that the language be made clear about how the Board interacts with Council. She noted that the Board has not been advising Council on Parks related items they are voting on. Adena responded that the updates to the bylaws will clarify the Board's relationship with Council and will reflect how the Board wants to engage with Council and the Bureau. Kendall stressed that there needs to be more communication with the Board about issues, so the Board is empowered to advocate and support the Bureau.

Jim noted that the first step is to build a relationship with the Commissioner. He shared his disappointment that the Commissioner and his staff are not in attendance at the retreat. Jenny suggested that they look at other bureaus' Boards to gather ideas for how to approach the work.

Michelle and Kendall agreed that there is a lot of public comments at meetings and they would like a better process for what to do with these comments.

Lee noted that often the best way to guide the values of an organization is through the budget. Pat shared that the Board is uniquely situated to look at the long term rather than the decisions made day to day. The Board can help ensure the broader decisions are reflective of the mission and values of the Bureau. Gladys noted that Parks touches many areas of the city, so there are opportunities to connect with other Bureaus and Commissioners who are passionate about Parks.

Jim noted that the bylaws should be updated to make officer terms two years in length. Pat noted that the language in the bylaws around non-members serving on committees of the Board and the role of Ex Officio members from the Parks Foundation should be updated.





### **Working Groups**

Paul asked members to share what their experiences have been with the Working Groups to discuss how they might want to review them going forward.

Paddy shared that the Land Use/Infrastructure group has been a positive experience. The Working Group meets regularly with their Bureau staff contact. Michelle shared that with the focus on the budget, the Housing and Homelessness group meetings had dropped off. Tonya shared that the Financial Sustainability group's focus had been on the Cost Recovery work. They met about a month ago which was the first time since budget season had come to an end and they are back to meeting regularly.

Members discussed the need for a better understanding of the purpose of the Work Groups and what the restrictions are outlined in Public Meeting Law.

Jim shared that meeting at a regular time each month by phone has been successful for the Land Use/Infrastructure group. They try to get time on the Board agenda and distribute meeting notes to report out the work they are doing.

Gladys noted that the Community Development group stalled because the mission of the group was externally facing and there have been limitations in staffing with the Community Engagement team. She shared that there has been a challenge with the purpose of the group not being clearly defined. Jenny observed that having a staff point person is key for the success of the Working Groups. Due to transition and stress of staff point persons, the Working Groups haven't been as much of a priority. Members asked for staff support via a staff point person for the Working Groups and scheduling assistance.

Adena shared that she is rethinking the structure of the Equity, Inclusion & Community Engagement team and will be thinking about what opportunities there are for this team to work with the Board's Community Development group.





Gladys would like to see a connection to the Five-Year Racial Equity Plan (REP) in each Working Group. Pat indicated that the Board has a role in keeping the Bureau accountable to ensure that they are doing what they set out to do – especially with the REP. Tamara shared that she would like the Equity and Community Engagement groups to be more prioritized and at the very least to receive an update on the REP and the Bureau’s work around homelessness. Adena responded that reports on these topics can be brought to the Board. She suggested that the Working Groups meet, but staff may not be immediately available.

Kendall suggested that as the Bureau is organizing themselves in this transition that Pat, Kendall, Paul and Bonnie meet with Adena and Commissioner Fish to get a sense of what the expectations are for the Board. She stressed that they need to identify new communication mechanisms and set roles/expectations going forward. Katy shared that she would like to see that consultation with the Commissioner going forward and would like the Board to be made aware of plans during the process of decision making rather than being reported back to.

Jenny noted that the Board has the perfect opportunity now to advise the Bureau in the restructuring of the Community Engagement and Equity & Inclusion teams. The Board would like to support to provide perspective and advise. Gladys noted that this is an opportunity to utilize the Working Group in a concrete way. Gladys and Kendall stressed the importance of bringing equity to every Working Group. Jim encouraged members to take initiative and ask for staff support.

## **Policy Engagement**

Director Long shared the FY18-19 financial overview, the 2017-20 strategic plan update, and the financial sustainability strategy outline.

Katy asked if the community survey results could be shared with the Board. Adena answered that staff can provide the





community survey information to the Board again – this was brought to the Board last year.

Michelle asked which of the items in the financial sustainability strategy framework are the big priorities. Adena answered that Level of Service and Cost Recovery are the key pieces. Gladys inquired how the task force is being created. Paul responded that he has been asked to join and one other Board member. Paul explained that there will be four meetings of the task force throughout the summer that will be facilitated by a consultant and will be lengthy meetings. The group will include nine community members.

Jim shared that he would view the Board as the group to convene the task force, and the Board should have a larger representation on the task force. He shared that he'd like to see the Board at the center of these foundational pieces of the vision plan. Pat echoed Jim's disappointment that the Board was not included in the discussion to form the task force prior to the retreat and that the Board's representation on the task force is so limited. Adena responded that she would relay this feedback to the Commissioner. She shared that the task force has not been created yet and staff is still working on forming the list.

Kendall shared that it would be ideal to have Todd or the Commissioner in attendance at the Retreat. She feels that the process hasn't included the Board and that communication about the work is not sufficient.

Paddy noted that the way the process is going now is that Parks is figuring out the finances and will figure out what they can afford. He suggested that they figure out what is needed first and then find the funding for it. He noted that the vision work should be happening now, and the Bureau should draw on the Board for the long-term view beyond the financial perspective.

Randy asked if there was more feedback from members about the financial sustainability strategy hand out that was distributed. Pat noted there were items on the handout that





had been presented to the Board in the past, and Claudio had included members in the financial work.

Jim shared that he would like the Board to be in a leadership role. Lee shared that the Parks Foundation Board recently went through a process to identify the role of their Board. Often the Board can advocate and do things that staff cannot do. Kendall highlighted the issue of a lack of process and communication with the Board and the opportunity for improvement. Kendall would like to see the Commissioner as engaged with the Parks Board as he is with the Foundation.

Adena thanked members for their feedback and support during the transition. She explained that the financial sustainability strategy plan was brand new that week, and the process of finalizing the work quickly is necessary while Council has their attention on Parks. She stressed that the purpose of bringing this plan to the retreat was to gather their feedback as it moves forward. Adena noted that the communication issues will be resolved, and she will ensure that the relationship is mutually beneficial. She will relay the concerns to the Commissioner's office and work to get the suggested meeting scheduled for Kendall, Pat, Paul and Bonnie to meet with the Commissioner.

Jenny proposed that the Board hold a work session on alternative funding so that there is Board representation on the task force. Paul stressed the importance of striking while the iron is hot while Council is focused on Parks. Gladys warned that striking while the iron is hot is often when exclusivity occurs. The Board should take time to think about who should be involved. Jim shared that there is an expectation that the Commissioner and Director will have better engagement with the Board than there was in the past.

## **Rethinking Community Engagement**

### **Recruitment**

Paul shared that there is a desire to look at Board recruitment to ensure they are proactive and starting recruitment earlier. He asked if the work should be ongoing and who would be able to commit to participate. Michelle





shared that the process with reviewing applications and interviewing went well. She noted that the Board should consider how candidates are hearing about the Board and should think about how to get a more diverse pool of candidates. Recruitment should start far sooner.

Adena suggested that the Board use the Community Development work group to look at how they do recruitment. Gladys noted that the Board doesn't currently have set goals for diversity of skills and equity for them to achieve. Work needs to be done to determine what these are. She also noted that the Board should get clear on the work they do and how the members are compensated for their time.

Paul shared that he would like to discuss a regular schedule for meeting location rotation. Tamara and Gladys stressed the importance of age diversity on the Board. Tamara would like to know where there is flexibility for members as this would help with recruitment.

Adena suggested engaging potential non-Board members in the Working Groups. This could potentially lead to them joining the full Board.

Mike echoed the need to know the goals for recruitment before doing outreach. Gladys suggested that the goals could be included in the mission update work. Kendall suggested looking at who is terming off the Board next year to make sure they maintain the representation that the membership currently has. They should seek to broaden representation from communities that should have more representation on the Board including the Native American community and students.

Randy asked why there are 15 members of the Board. Paul noted that fewer is not enough and any more is difficult to get necessary participation. Randy would like to make sure that the Board has representation from the aging population and advocates.





Gladys suggested that they think about meeting structure and diversity in meeting styles. At the retreat there is a lot of discussion, but in regular Board meetings there is not as much.

Katy would like the Board to consider inviting a high school student to serve on the Board. There is a large teen program at Parks, and that population should be included. She supported looking at alternative meeting locations. Katy added that members could pair up and do presentations at community organizations to recruit members.

Erin would like to seek out parents who frequently utilize parks and community centers. Jim would like to see a Board Buddy system for new members. Lee echoed that Board Buddies have been very helpful on the Foundation Board. Adena noted that the community engagement team may have strategies for recruitment that the Board can utilize.

### **Rethinking Community Engagement**

Megan Dirks and Kellie Torres of the Community Relations team shared the Friends & Partners work that the Bureau does. Paul noted that there is a desire to hear from the public in a more meaningful way and to understand how engaging with the Friends & Partners could be part of that. Jim would like to hear from the Friends Groups more for information exchange, education and the opportunity to be a sounding board. He would like to hear from staff what the five to six groups the Board should be interacting with.

Jenny asked for clarity around the Friends Groups, how they are founded and how they become non-profits. Megan shared that the groups usually initially meet with the park maintenance supervisor, then staff learn more about the purpose of the group to determine if it aligns with Parks' mission and work, then they create a liaison relationship. She noted that the program needs to be developed, but the staff support isn't there. Jenny offered to brainstorm with staff as the program is being developed.





Randy shared that the Foundation has spent time looking at how to engage with Friends Groups to systematize efforts to build constituency and solve issues without burdening staff.

Pat noted that the Friends Group policy should be written with an external audience in mind and be used as marketing material. She noted that Friends Groups are a tremendous resource and should be encouraged. There should be sensitivity with how messages are delivered from the Bureau.

Mike asked what role Neighborhood Associations have. Megan shared that Friends Groups are often a subcommittee of a Neighborhood Association. Jenny shared her concern about equity when hearing about neighborhoods that can do fundraising. East Portland can't do that to the same extent. The more affluent have better connections and relationships to decision makers. The Foundation should fill the equity gap. Randy noted that the Foundation will be part of the discussions around engaging the Friends Groups.

Paul would like to see an analysis of two scenarios: cost and return on investment of two additional FTE and cost and return on investment of four additional FTE.

### **Reshape Public Comment**

The Board discussed the lack of clarity around what they are supposed to do once they have taken public comment. Randy proposed that they are more specific about what they take comment on and what the venue is.

Pat noted that the Board didn't used to have public comment. It was during Commissioner Fritz's leadership that the Board began taking public comment. Pat noted that they might consider having invited testimony related to their agenda items. Members expressed concern about invited testimony excluding comments. Jenny asked for clarification about the process for selecting issues the Board reviews. The Land Use/Infrastructure Working Group looks at parks related projects.





The Board discussed a process where the public can submit a letter that will be reviewed by the appropriate Working Group. They will be directed to the appropriate body/staff or invited for face time at a future meeting. The form should be friendly and accessible and guide the public to provide the information necessary for the Board to determine how to respond.

### **Parks Board 2019-20 Priorities**

The Board reflected on what the top priorities should be for the coming year. Voting showed the following range of priorities:

- Financial Stability 7
- Vision Plan 7
- Increasing Board Visibility 7
- Clarifying Board Role 6
- Proactive Board Recruitment 4
- Improving Interaction w/ Friends Groups 4
- Clarifying How We Use Committees 2
- Defining Transition for Four Exiting Members 1
- Widening PP&R Understanding Thru Field Day Fridays 1

### **Parks Board Meeting Adjourns**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:57pm.

**Next meeting is Tuesday, July 9, 2019.**

