

Tuesday, July 14, 2020

8:00 – 10:00 am

Zoom Virtual Meeting

Board Members Present

Punneh Abdolhosseini, Paul Agrimis, Alejandra Cortes, Mike Elliott, Bonnie Gee Yosick, Randy Gragg, Ian Jaquiss, Tamara Layden, Casey Mills, Alejandro Orizola, Juan Piantino, David Staczek, Paddy Tillett, Erin Zollenkopf

Board Members Absent

Jenny Glass, Katy Holland, Lorena Nascimento

City Staff Present

Tonya Booker, Claudio Campuzano, Tim Collier, Margaret Evans, Brooke Gardner, Sarah Huggins, Linda Law, Todd Lofgren, Adena Long, Lauren McGuire, Jamie Sandness, Robert Taylor, Everett Wild, Kenya Williams

Call to Order/Approve May and June Minutes

Paul Agrimis called the meeting to order at 8:03am. He asked if members had any questions or comments on the May or June meeting minutes. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Erin Zollenkopf made the motion, Mike Elliott seconded, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

South Park Blocks Plan Board Support Letter

Paddy Tillett shared that a letter has been drafted and distributed for the Board's review and approval. It is addressed to the Design and Historic Landmarks Commission regarding the South Park Blocks plan created by Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) staff, recognizes the plan includes the Green Loop and takes care of succession planning for trees. The Downtown Neighborhood Association is concerned about an increase of bicycles in the area. Paddy noted that the purpose of the Green Loop is for recreational walking and bicycling at comfortable pace. SW Broadway remains the main method for cyclists to get where they are going swiftly. The proposed letter supports the functions of the plan and provides historical context. The Board discussed the purpose of the letter and the contents of the letter. Randy Gragg shared more information about the South Park Blocks Master Plan Community Advisory Committee he served on as a representative of the board and the community engagement process. Paul asked for a motion to approve the letter. Paddy made the motion, Bonnie Gee Yosick seconded, and it was unanimously approved.

Director Long took a moment to introduce PP&R's new equity and inclusion manager, Kenya Williams, who joined the bureau on Monday, July 13.



Priorities Breakout - Continued from Retreat

Paul asked members to discuss the Board letter regarding the November 2019 Council Work Session and the PP&R Budget Advisory Committee letter to Council on the FY 20-21 budget.

Priorities Discussion

Ian Jaquiss shared that their group discussed continuing outreach throughout the pandemic as parks are places folks go during quarantine. It is a reminder just how vital parks are to kids and the community. Parks are a constant during this time of uncertainty. Further outreach can be done to remind people how important parks are.

Casey Mills' group discussed the bureau's deferred maintenance backlog and reliance on fee revenues. COVID has revealed the vulnerability of the bureau depending on fees and a levy if passed in November would support the bureau's operations. More about the levy effort will be shared later in the meeting agenda. There are other alternatives that will be considered after the November election. A levy supports operating needs but doesn't solve the capital maintenance backlog.

Paul's group discussed the operating revenues from a potential levy versus the capital maintenance backlog and the need to maintain an equity lens. They are grateful for the Parks Foundations support in expanding the Free Lunch + Play program.

Bonnie shared that her group discussed the need to make a stronger case for the critical infrastructure parks provides including safe spaces for people to gather. Deferred maintenance is a great concern and needs to be chipped away at continually. Staff is limited in what they can do, so the board, foundation and partners need to determine what they can do.

Tamara Layden add that her group looked at where interests are within the board and where they can lead. There is interest in being more intentional about community engagement and having a greater understanding about how the board and the bureau have done community engagement. There have been some frightening things happening in parks with parks staff, and Tamara would like to support Portland parks staff. As the board discusses where they want the work to go, they need to acknowledge these challenging situations. Paul agreed that this needs to be a focus for the board and they need to be intentional.

Todd noted that what Tamara shared resonates with what has been discussed within PP&R over the last few weeks. They know that some people do not feel welcome in parks and they have begun the work to be an anti-racist bureau.

Adena observed that they are talking about two things: why should the board care and what is the bureau doing to address issues of systemic racism. The bureau is communicating with users and stakeholders about how PP&R is working to address inclusion.

Working Group Reports

Community Development

Tamara reported that there are many ways the group could go, and she will be reaching out to those who have expressed interest in the group to discuss how they might be involved in bureau conversations and/or receive updates on anti-racism work. Tamara would like to have a full board conversation about engagement with the community and would like to hear from the full board. She would like to know more from PP&R about what is being done to address racist actions done against and by staff. Paul would like the working group to begin the discussion and bring the group report for discussion to the full board in the future.

Financial Stability

Mike Elliott noted that the working group met on July 2 and focused on the FY 20-21 adopted budget and Sustainable Future updates. Due to COVID, the Mayor's budget was reduced. Some of the gap will be filled by cost saving measure, but additional cuts will need to be made during the Fall Budget Monitoring Process (BMP). The bureau will need to make about \$2.7m onetime offsets. They are looking at holding back \$1m in major maintenance, \$1.3m in staff vacancy savings, and fill the remainder with an unplanned \$470,000 of Non-Park Use Permits (NPUPs). Ongoing cuts will be made to each division. The reliance on fee revenues has impacted the entire bureau. As the bureau makes decisions, they are committed to keeping equity and communities most in need at the center.

Land Use/Infrastructure

Paddy reported that the Rose Quarter I-5 project has been put on hold. The South Reach plan received comments mostly regarding the potential damage waves could cause. The board's recommendations about retail space in parks is generally accepted. The Off-Road Cycling Plan may come back to the board soon for comment. There are plans introduced for a new entrance to Forest Park and lodge in the Montgomery Park building plans. This would offer a proper and accessible entrance to the park but may be years off. The new streetcar expansion would go from the Hollywood District to Montgomery Park and would increase transit access to Forest Park. Lauren McGuire clarified there are no plans yet within the bureau to support that plan.

Paul shared that the Level of Service (LOS) subgroup received a presentation from Robin Craig on community centers and where new centers need to be built over time – primarily on the east side – for distribution to be equitable.

Bonnie reported that the materials regarding the PP&R and the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) process improvement plan were sent out with the agenda. Late-Commissioner Fish charged the bureaus to work together to identify inefficiencies to better serve the community. There was a taskforce made up of PP&R and BES staff who discussed housing all city tree planting within a single bureau, and recommended PP&R to do this work. Some community stakeholders were not supportive, so a group has been convened to review this concept. Bonnie will serve as the board representative on this group and attend its three meetings this summer and report back as those meetings occur.

Parks Foundation Report

Randy reported that the Foundation just had their board retreat. Over half of the Foundation Board members have been with them six months or less. It is exciting and perfectly timed for the moment. Randy did a rebuild and expansion of the board to celebrate 2020 and this coinciding with the Black Lives Matter movement is inspiring the Foundation Board to vision their next 20 years. They have pulled together a guide for Portland's public gardens which includes both popular and less known gardens. In September, they will host the Friends and Allies Summit which will be equal parts inspiration and technical training. It is well timed before the levy vote and will help build constituent support for the levy.

Operating Levy Ballot Measure Update

Sarah shared a brief overview of the polling results, levy opportunity, and ask of Council to support the referral of a levy to the ballot. At the November 2019 Council work session staff presented three funding scenarios. They directed parks to seek funding to reflect the parks system the community wants and deserves. There are inequities in service and the bureau needs to work to address that. A levy is a five-year measure that could be replaced, renewed or be made permanent, but that would require a change in government and would take time to accomplish. A levy will help bring PP&R out of the current crisis and is a first step in budget stability for Parks. Polling showed support for a levy but not for both a bond and a levy. Results also showed there is not significant support for the City taking over maintenance of street trees. There is support for natural areas and access to recreation and community centers.

Levy funding would help end reliance on fees. Recreation would be based on what the community needs are, and fees collected would not drive programming. They could expand age and culturally responsive programming. Levy funding would keep parks cleaner, safer, and more welcoming for all. It would help PP&R plant new and proactively care for existing trees. Community partnership and equity will be centered in the utilization of levy funding. Sarah reviewed the timeline for next steps.

Todd noted that they are in a Scenario 1 world which means reducing services. During Fall, PP&R will look at what those cuts in services will be, but they want to reverse that. On July 22, PP&R will meet with Council at 2:00pm to present a levy referral that will include a brief presentation from staff, invited testimony, and public comment. Members of the Parks Board, Urban Forestry Commission, the Foundation Board, and community groups will be part of invited testimony. The Board can provide a letter to Council encouraging their referral to the ballot, and individuals can do advocacy within their networks. The Foundation has sent out communications about advocating for the levy support as well. A community survey has been shared with the Parks community and is open to fill out until the referral date.

Juan Piantino asked how the levy would impact taxes for the common citizen. Sarah responded that this would be a new property tax and would be about \$13/month for property with an assessed value of \$200,000. Everett Wild clarified that the assessed property value is different than the market value. Erin asked if there is an opportunity to provide testimony at the Council meeting. Staff confirmed there will be a link on the Council Clerk website available soon.

City Attorney, Robert Taylor highlighted that July 22 is a very important date for the Board as the rules change on this date if Council refers the levy to the ballot. Before that date, board members can advocate for Council to refer the levy. Once Council refers the levy, are prohibited by state law to support or oppose the measure in their official capacity. They cannot use city resources to promote the measure. They cannot use city staff or city meetings to support the measure. They cannot coerce staff to support the measure. Board members are allowed in private personal capacity to engage in political activity. When they take off their PP&R Board hat, they can engage but they cannot use their board member title when engaging in political activities. They must make it clear that they are acting in personal not professional capacity. They can express their personal political views during their official capacity, but it should be limited. They can provide factual, neutral, and objective responses to questions after referral. They should have their responses reviewed by City Attorneys before distributing information. After referral they need to keep a clear bright line between professional work and personal political activity. Paul asked if members could send a letter to media after the referral. Robert responded stating that yes, they may if they make it very clear that they are expressing their own views and not representing any organization.

Randy noted that the Foundation is working hard on this effort as well. They have a letter template that he will be sending to the board. Todd asked the board for a member to testify at the July 22 meeting and if the board would like to send a letter to Council prior to the meeting asking them to support the levy. Paul asked if there were questions or concerns about submitting a letter supporting the levy. Paul asked for a motion to approve the Financial Stability working group drafting a letter to Council in support for the levy. Bonnie made the motion, Mike seconded, and it was unanimously approved.

Juan asked about other funding measures on the November ballot. Everett summarized the other measures going to the ballot in November. The Mayor has been in partnership with other government elected officials to ensure that they are all aware and supportive of the Parks levy.

August Agenda Conversation

Paul encouraged members to bring items to the Board in the meeting or via email. Based on their earlier conversation they could bring safety and issues of racism to be discussed.

Tamara would like to hear what staff are hearing. She would prefer discussions rather than information. She will follow up with Paul about the Community Development members are interested in and what is beyond what one working group could do. Adena noted previous discussions about bringing reports on the 2020 Vision, Strategic Plan, and Racial Equity Plan to the August meeting. Staff can do these presentations at that time if desired or later. Paul will consider these items for the agenda and noted the need for discussion on how the Board will be advocates for anti-racism.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:02am.