

Parks Advisory Board Meeting Minutes March 27, 2019

Chairperson Norma Hernandez called meeting to Order at 6:48 am.

Present- Norma Hernandez, Natalie Osburn Jessica Schleif, Carla Oya, Andrew Fick, Jim Holen, and Michele Tompkins.

Absent- Howard Rub, Eric Halverson, and Josh Saranpaa.

Staff- Tim Williams, Jonah Dart-McLean, Terra Patterson, Jacob Olson

Public comments

1. There were none.

Approval of Minutes

A. The February 2019 minutes were approved with the following corrections:

- What Do You Hear – Third Sentence: “Jonah Dart-McLean said people were welcome to call ***the Astoria Police Department*** and the City would address the camping issues.”
- What Do You Hear – Last Sentence: “He attended a meeting at the CCC on identifying a location where those who wanted housing could come forward to ask for help and take steps to change their situation.”

Jessica Schleif abstained from voting as she was not present at that meeting.

President Hernandez

A. What do you hear- Jessica Schleif heard the Soil and Water Conservation representative was denied a request to rent the Customs House for a native plant sale. Jonah Dart-McLean explained that the Customs House had been adopted by the Lower Columbia Historic Preservation Society and the grounds and location were not conducive to a plant sale. Director Williams added that the sale would interfere with the baseball games going on at the same time. The Parks Department did not want to promote sales on City properties because sales would be difficult for Staff to manage. However, Staff would consider implementing a policy.

Jim Holen heard that people were enjoying the Column and Cathedral Tree Trail. However, the construction site and materials at the Column are unsightly. The work has been going on for about a year and he asked when the project would be complete. Director Williams said he would follow up with the Friends of the Column and report back with more information.

President Hernandez heard from a woman who was very happy about the changes at the Aquatic Center.

Michele Tompkins heard that people want the City to reconsider a non-resident fee at the Aquatic Center. People feel that raising the non-resident price would show the Aquatic Center was catering to Astoria’s taxpayers. Director Williams agreed that would be a good idea.

Natalie Osburn said maintenance at the Aquatic Center was always great and the lifeguards are very vigilant.

Employee and Volunteer Recognition

- A. Director Williams and Terra Patterson recognized Jacob Olson as the March employee of the month.

Old Business

- A. Jim Holen gave an update on the Parks Foundation. Run on the River volunteers can now sign up online. The route is still being established, but will avoid the construction as much as possible. Dates for Parks After Dark have been chosen and the Foundation is soliciting pizza donations for the events. He listed the movies and noted who was sponsoring each movie. He reported on the Foundation's finances and said their goal was to fund swimming for 4th grade students.
- B. Director Williams updated the Board on Staff's efforts to implement the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Staff was focused on better maintenance at the cemetery and on the ball fields. He noted that his weekly reports were just highlights as the department had many projects going on.
- C. Carla Oya provided an update on the Scandinavian Heritage Association Monument. The association raised about \$45,000 at a recent fundraiser and they have been preapproved for some large donations.
- D. Director Williams provided details about the Maritime Memorial expansion project. He gave Board members a handout and said the project would be complete by Memorial Day.
- E. Director Williams gave an update on Friends of the Column. Their lighting policy was approved by City Council and the new lighting system has been installed. A grand opening has been scheduled for April 15th and will include a 15-minute light show at about 8:30 pm. He also reported that the decommissioned radio tower was being removed.
Andrew Fick noted the Column was congested when tour busses were present and it was no longer a friendly visitor experience. Director Williams explained how emergency services practiced rescues at the Column. Staff and Board members briefly discussed the parking fees. Director Williams said he would get more information about the fee policy and request that a member of the Friends provide updates to the Board.
- F. Director Williams reviewed current staffing levels and efforts to recruit temporary seasonal employees.

New Business

- A. There was none.

Staff Reports and Upcoming Events

The following reports were presented to the Board as part of the agenda packet:

- A. Maintenance
- B. Aquatic Center
- C. Recreation
- D. Lil Sprouts/Port of Play
- E. Communications/Marketing

Staff answered questions about the Staff Reports with the following key comments:

- The increase in Lil Sprouts revenue was due to better payment collections management.
- Adult basketball leagues are signed up for the spring season. The spring season was added to Parks programming to revitalize the league and avoid competition with other sports seasons.

Dream Big Ideas Exercise and Discussion

Director Williams provided the details of Staff's Dream Big meeting and asked board members to share their big ideas.

Board members shared and discussed ideas for improving Parks facilities, events, and programming. Some of the ideas included:

- Trails improvements
- Yappy Hour
- Concerts in the Park
- Create a youth commission
- Improve brochures
- More accessible after school programming
- Collaborative agreements with community partners
- Robotic programs
- Summer hours at the Aquatic Center
- Address equity for families
- Allow camping in unused space
- Rock climbing and bouldering
- Create pickle ball courts
- Riverwalk improvements – lighting and emergency call phones
- Hire a horticulturist
- Implement the Master Plan
- Walking tour of important trees
- Educational programs at the community gardens
- More community gardens
- Artist in residency program at the Column
- More cultural and educational signage in parks

The Board and Staff briefly discussed the importance of implementing the Master Plan and ways to get more involved with high school students.

Future Meetings

- April 24, 2019 at 6:45 am in City Hall, Council Chambers
- May 22, 2019 at 6:45 am in City Hall, Council Chambers

Next meeting will be held Wednesday, April 24, 2019 at 6:45 am at City Hall in City Council Chambers.