Yamhill County Parks & Recreation Advisory Board – Meeting Minutes

Date: February 21, 2024

Time: 5:30-7:00pm

Location: Public Works, Lafayette Avenue, McMinnville

Conference Phone: 503-474-5036 (Videoconferencing also available upon request)

Board Attendance: Jim Culbert (Chair), Carla Chambers (Vice Chair), Neyssa Hays (Secretary), Christy Cooke, Tim Duerfeldt, Mike Firestone, Celine McCarthy, Amanda Melhoff, Robert Molzahn

Board Absences and (Proxies Assigned): Glenn Cloyd (Christy); Celine Hall (no proxy); Casey Heesacker (no proxy); Omega Rodela Garces (unable to connect to Microsoft Teams; no proxy)

Staff: Travis Pease (Parks Manager); Mark Lago (Public Works Director)

Visitors: Nick Chasuk, Yamhill Soil and Water Conservation District Board; Kit Johnston, Parks Liaison Commissioner

Meeting Called to Order: 5:28 pm by the Chair

A. Review Meeting Agenda  Added Rec Immunity Update (Carla) under New Business and inclusion of Blackwell Park planned meeting with Hampton Lumber under Parks Promotion Committee report.

B. Approve Dec. 13 Board Minutes - approved unanimously without change.

C. Staff Updates -

- Jim's and Neyssa's Parks Board terms expire in March. Both have said they are willing to continue. Travis has prepared a memo to the Commissioners requesting their reappointments, and asked if it was the Board's consensus to do this. Parks Board agreed, so the memo will be sent.

- Draft 2024-25 county budget is due at the end of February for the new fiscal year (2024) starting July 1. Currently the parks budget it is balanced and increased compared to last year by around $20,000. Allowed to keep carry-over. This is the first year that parks has its own funds, unfettered by the county justice department. A 7% increase to wages and benefits is included. The Special Projects Fund will aslo will have the $1200
• Donation from Cycle Oregon.

• RFP for master plan went back out at the end of Jan. Deadline is March 7th. Some informal contact has been made, but no formal proposals received so far.

• Rogers Landing. Commissioner Johnston and Travis met with the Newberg mayor about potential conveyance to the county of one city-owned lot that covers part of the parking lot in order to consolidate ownership. There is an informal trail that goes through the property; it is posted as closed on both ends, but people continue to use it. Question: can Newberg police patrol that area? Answer: the sheriff’s department has agreements with Newberg police that the sheriffs will patrol the area.

• Newberg Morning Rotary - Travis was contacted by this group regarding doing a presentation about Yamhill County Parks. They did a cleanup project at Rogers Landing last Fall that was publicized in the Newberg Graphic. Jim recommended that Fall activity be posted on the parks social media pages as well. Travis would like a couple of parks board members to attend if anyone is available for the presentation. Rob is a Rotary member and will be there. Others indicated interest, but need to know when.

• Yamhill County Fair July 31-Aug 3 - The suggestion was made to have a booth, either separately, or in conjunction with another organization, not necessarily staffed. Space would be free for county orgs., and some county departments have them. Is there a project that we’d like to promote there to the public, such as a survey, or promote the parks master plan? There is general interest in this, but people are unsure of their availability, and we need a coordinator to volunteer.

• Whiteson - The annual conditional use permit was renewed for 2024. There was discussion about reopening Monroe Landing, and we’d have to follow the phase 1 plan of the permit. The major issue is allowing public access. Another potential issue would be separating the property and public from the southern neighbor. Might be able to plant a hedgerow to keep people from going into his farm field. If we do just clear brush, and do other small maintenance, we can do that without input from other departments. Jim noted that an archeological study needs to be done in the area prior to any ground disturbing activities. Grand Ronde tribe has also stated that they are interested in this. Kit mentioned that the leasing farmer does not need archaeological clearance. Nick noted that private farmland is under different rules than parks working with federal funds.

• Yamhill River Steering Committee - Has been formed, comprised of the representatives from towns along the Yamhill River, The Oregon State Marine Board, Travel Oregon,
Visit McMinnville, and the Willamette Valley Visitors Center to promote access to the Yamhill River for non-motorized boat use. They plan some community outreach meetings Apr 8, 6-8pm, at Sheridan HS, Apr 9, 10-noon in the Kent Taylor Civic Hall, McMinnville, and Apr 9, 6-8pm, at Palmer Creek Lodge in Dayton. There is a grant application in the works for the steering committee to be able to work with a promotion consultant. Parks Board members were encouraged to attend one of these meetings.

D. Chair Updates - Jim attended the Yamhill Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board's public meeting held on Dec. 1, 2023, where they began planning for a protected lands program for the approx. 2500 acres they manage. In their pre-meeting handout, under Opportunities/Public Access, it was stated that "Yamhill County is the most park poor county in Oregon." Jim objected strenuously to this statement, and it's inaccuracies. The SWCD District Manager verbally responded that that was his perception from local media. This strongly suggests that Yamhill Parks needs to increase its public visibility by describing what it does. Jim resolved to find out the facts on county ranking, and contacted the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to get them. Then he wrote back to the SWCD Manager with some of that data.

- Using 2019 parks data collected by OPRD and 2022 census data, the following is correct: Looking at only county-owned parks (not including Parks and Recreation Districts) in each of Oregon's 36 counties, Yamhill County ranks:
  
  8 in number of county parks
  19 in total acres of county parks,
  26 in per capita per park acres.

- OPRD also provided GIS data on all parks in each county (including city, community, Parks and Recreation Districts, but not except Crater Lake N.P., and Yamhill County ranks 33 by total acres and 34 per capita.

- Jim suggested this data would be good to include in the introduction to the parks master plan. Christy Cooke noted that agriculture is a very important part of this county and that protecting that is imperative. She feels other counties have been losing the ability to farm partly because of the growth of parks. Carla noted that parks and agriculture are not mutually exclusive. Kit went to the next SWCD meeting after Jim wrote his letter because he felt that there is a clear communication issue.

E. Parks Promotion Committee Report - The Committee reported on their Feb. 8 meeting.

- West Valley Community Outreach – Christy and Carla created a list of community
organizations in the Sheridan and Willamina area. A letter will be sent all of them to introducing Yamhill County Parks, asking if they’d be interested in helping to improve parks in their area. Casey has volunteered to deliver the letter to the fire departments by hand. Parks have also been assigned Parks Board Members to serve as liaisons between organizations, the general public, and Travis. Liaisons would also help with publicity in their respective parks. Liaison assignments are as follows: so far: Omega (Stuart Grenfell); Amanda (Blackwell); Casey (Deer Creek); and Mike (Ed Grenfell). In addition, some additional Board members volunteered to serve as park liaisons outside the West Valley, as follows: Neyssa (Huber & Chas. Metsker); Jim (Lafayette Locks; and Celine M. (Menefee). We still would like to have liaison volunteers for Rogers and Dayton Landings.

- **Blackwell Park** - Amanda contacted Hampton Lumber to see if they would be interested in helping with Blackwell Park. The manager put her in contact with a mill manager, Bill Blackwell, who is interested. Amanda and Travis are going to meet with him at the Park to discuss ways they might be able to assist. Hampton has a strategic investment project fund (SIP) that they must spend in the West Valley as part of a payback for their tax break from the county recently in exchange for mill improvements. One possible project would be to improve drainage in the Park. Jim also suggested considering the placement of a sign in the park about its history, using a standard format that could then be used in other parks in the future.

- **Summer Parks Quest** - The Parks Board agreed to organize this activity in 2024. Five parks were chosen, and Parks Board members were assigned to develop clues for them before the March Parks Board Meeting. These parks will be Stuart Grenfell (Omega), Rogers Landing (Rob), Huber (Mike), Menefee (Celine M) and Lafayette Locks (Tim). A master question and answer were discussed, and Jim will finalize it for the record.

For promoting the activity, we are considering either a 2-page flyer that can be distributed with a link to the county parks website, or a tri-fold, instead of a full passport. Full information would be placed on the county parks website. Amanda knows a designer willing to help create the advertising. Carla said we’d like to distribute advertising through the schools, but Neyssa noted that many school districts don’t allow flyers to go home with students, and instead they use an online platform. Amanda volunteered to work on the copy for insertion into McMinnville Parks and Rec and CPRD print materials.

- **Social Media Campaign** – Casey has volunteered to help administer the Yamhill
County Parks Facebook page site, but getting him administrative access is still an issue. He will also be pursuing an Instagram page, and select community groups or forums for us to join as members, allowing us to share our posts with these groups and reach a bigger audience.

F. New Business

• **Parks Archives** - Casey has created a Google Drive account for parks promotion and archives. Travis showed it briefly to the Parks Board. **Casey** will share the link with everyone. Each park will have a folder on the drive, and there will be others for general parks administrative subjects as well. Parks Board members are requested to put pictures that you have of various parks in the appropriate folders. But, do not provide pictures of children without written permission! There is a permission slip available; it will be posted in the Google Drive.

• **Recreational Immunity** – Carla accompanied the Oregon Trails Coalition and went to the State Legislature recently to support a proposed Senate 1576-10 bill to fix the recreational immunity issue on a short-term basis. It clarifies the temporary change and will not affect past or ongoing court cases. It retains all the language that CityCounty Insurance Services has said, if passed, will lead to recission of their guidance to close trails. It has passed the Judiciary Committee and is going to the State Senate, followed by the House for further consideration. This short term Bill would be in effect until January 2026, allowing the 2025 Legislative Session to find a more permanent fix. Carla felt that they were very favorably received by members and staff they visited, and that parks were supported. One point is that our planned parks master plan is going to be more difficult to develop and implement without this fix.

• A discussion of the Ash Tree Borer and collecting parks usage data was postponed until the March Parks Board meeting.

• **New County Website** – The county has implemented a new website, and there is a new link for county parks: https://or-yamhillcounty.civicplus.com/302/Parks. **Jim** has volunteered to coordinate providing a review of those pages so that they can be improved, and made consistent. Parks Board members are urged to review the pages and provide Jim with comments over the next few months. Travis said he should be provided with the ability to update the parks pages himself.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm.
Upcoming Calendar Items

**Mar 7, 2024** - Parks Promotion Committee next meets at 8:30 am. Responses due for Parks Master Plan RFP.

**Mar 20, 2024** – Parks Board Meeting, 5:30-7:00pm, Public Works Conf. Room.