

METRO REGIONAL PARKS AND GREENSPACES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

July 8, 2003

Meeting Notes Summary

Chair Chris Noble called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Other Committee members in attendance included Rebecca Banyas, Jeff Kee, David Manhart and Richard Reynolds. Also present were Margaret Branson and Jim Edwards, members of the Trolley Trail working group. In addition the following Metro Parks staff attended: Jim Desmond, Jane Hart, Ron Klein and Patricia Sullivan.

Introductory comments and announcements

The Spring Special Edition of the *GreenScene* included an insert of the updated Regional Trails & Greenways System. It was later decided to publish the insert as a "stand-alone" version of the document including additional updating and expansion. That publication was distributed to the Committee.

With the winding down of the acquisition program spawned by the 1995 Open Spaces, Parks & Streams bond measure, the agency felt it important to point out the promises made during the 1995 campaign and the promises kept during the 8-year acquisition program. A colorful fold-out document was produced for that purpose which was also distributed to Committee members.

A question was raised by the Committee as to whether a celebration of those accomplishments was in the offing which would also bring together all the partners that made it possible. The Committee thought one or more of these partners would be willing to sponsor such a party which could, in turn, be a springboard for a next round of fundraising. Jim Desmond responded that this was an excellent idea, well worth exploring.

Trolley Trail draft master plan

Jane Hart acknowledged the diligent citizens referred to as the "Trolley Trail working group" who participated in the master plan process for the last year, two of whom were in attendance – Jim Edwards and Margaret Branson. They contributed many hours to the effort as well as invaluable local knowledge. Hart also recognized Sylvia Milne's extensive contribution as representative for the Advisory Committee on this project. In addition, the importance of the partnership with North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District in this venture was cited. That organization was represented at this meeting by Krista Harnaday.

An application for federal funding submitted last winter has been approved covering the cost of design and engineering for the entire corridor and the construction of the northernmost segment of the trail in Milwaukie from the Junction St. boat ramp to Courtney St. The funding will likely become available in the next two years. The draft master plan will be presented to the Metro Council again next week in a work session and then brought back to the local jurisdictions and this Committee for final approval.

Two of the citizens in attendance, Branson and Edwards, addressed the Committee in support of the Trolley Trail project. Edwards advocated the 12 ft. trail width, describing it as necessary for purposes of safety, particularly for small children, novice bike riders and wheelchair users. Branson also supported the plan wholeheartedly including the 12 ft. trail width.

Highlights and expectations of the Parks Department in the new fiscal year

Jim Desmond announced that Michael Jordan is Metro's new Chief Operating Officer, responsible for the day-to-day operations of the agency. As Desmond and the Parks Dept. now report to him, staff will try to arrange for Jordan to meet with the Committee in the future.

Council President David Bragdon has arranged for a number of Metro tours this summer and fall. A school bus has been rented for the purpose of taking interested citizens to visit some of the open space sites which have been acquired through the 1995 open spaces, parks and streams bond measure. In his opinion, these are the best proof of the success of the program, yet very few people are familiar with them. For more details of the tours, Bragdon's assistant, Cary Stacey, can be reached at (503-797-1560).

Parks funding is on the "front burner" of Metro's agenda at this point. Council President Bragdon has proposed putting together a new version of the Green Ribbon Committee to advise him on whether Metro should go to the voters for a funding measure and, if so, when and for how much. It was indicated that RPGAC would be represented on the new Green Ribbon Committee. Timing on when this committee might be formed is not yet known.

The master plan for Cooper Mountain is in the FY03-04 budget. The Home Builders Assoc. will pay \$6,500 towards the master plan according to a recent agreement which will allow them to park cars for this year's Street of Dreams event in a grass field on Metro-owned Cooper Mt. property. Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District and the City of Beaverton have also committed money for that project.

A feasibility study for the alignment of the trail through Smith & Bybee Lakes Wildlife Area is also planned for the new fiscal year. There are various engineering questions and wildlife habitat issues that need to be resolved. The City of Portland and Metro Solid Waste and Recycling will help fund the work.

Open Spaces Acquisition Report

Desmond reported on seven properties closed in the last three months totaling approximately 57 acres. At this stage of the acquisition program, most of the purchases are attempts to close gaps in target areas. One 28-acre parcel in the Clear Creek Canyon target area purchased in May was selected by the Oregon Zoo (together with an adjacent 44-acre parcel previously purchased by Metro in 2000) as the location for the proposed Condor Creek Conservation Facility. This will serve as the off-site breeding complex for the California Condor Recovery Program.

Parks fact-finding trip to Minnesota

David Bragdon led a trip of 31 people to the Minneapolis/St. Paul area May 8 and 9 to study their regional parks system, considered one of the best in the United States. Some of the points learned about the Minneapolis/St. Paul regional parks system were enumerated by Desmond:

- In most of the Twin Cities regional parks 80% of the land is set aside for open space and 20% is heavily developed with swimming pools, ski lifts, driving ranges, playgrounds, parking lots etc.
- The distribution of funding is based on usage; operating expenses are partially subsidized through a regional and state fund.
- The Twin Cities system has a long-term capital improvement plan.
- Most of the capital funding comes from the state.
- The regional system, although composed of facilities owned and operated by local (and state and federal) agencies is readily identifiable to the general public as a regional system on coherent maps published by the regional government.

A main point gained from the trip was the importance and value of the unified and cooperative structure of the Twin Cities regional parks system involving local, state and federal parks jurisdictions. The focus of the park jurisdictions is to work cooperatively to make the parks funding "pie" bigger and acquire more money for the regional parks system.

Committee Structure

As part of the leadership transition at Metro, one issue being explored by Council is the role of committees. Currently there are three such committees which serve Metro Parks. (1) RPGAC, Regional Parks & Greenspaces Advisory Committee (made up of citizen volunteers) deals with issues internal to Metro Parks operations, e.g., budgets, master plans, user fees, easements, etc. (2) GTAC, Greenspaces Technical Advisory Committee (made up primarily of park planners from other jurisdictions) considers issues more regional in focus that might also affect other park providers. (3) Metro Committee for Citizen Involvement (MCCI) which deals mainly with issues of public involvement.

One of the persons who participated in the Twin Cities tour, Mike Houck, put forward a written proposal to Council President Bragdon. In essence it would merge RPGAC and GTAC to form a new parks advisory committee and elevate its status to one which would report directly to Metro Council and be employed by the Council as an important advisory organization. It would be made up of approximately 9 to 15 people who would include the executive directors from the largest park providers. The smaller jurisdictions, as one group, would nominate one or two representatives. A number of citizens-at-large would also have membership on the new committee; it was considered important that at least one of the members should come from the current RPGAC.

According to Desmond, the proposal is being taken under advisement by Bragdon. At some point, it was hoped, the opinions of RPGAC members will be sought. New COO Michael Jordan said it will be important to have a discussion with Council on the possibility of such major committee changes. A retreat in August is being scheduled by the elected officials, which will likely include such a discussion.

Parks Advisory Committee members' responses to the proposal and related discussions included the following:

- RPGAC was created in 1994 by council resolution and was to serve in an advisory capacity to the Parks Dept. and Council but, for the most part, was used to advise the Dept. and, only in a peripheral way, the Council. Why the change from the role described in the resolution was not known.
- Seizing the moment and Bragdon's enthusiasm to move on a parks initiative soon seems a good idea.
- The concept of getting the leadership from the different park jurisdictions into Metro's orbit to develop effective political constituencies could prove advantageous.
- There was anxiety that the new committee will consist of only parks managers and staff. A significant representation of citizen activists would seem to be called for as they have demonstrated impressive credentials at being able to fill many roles including building political constituencies.
- There was also reference to prominent citizens with substantial financial resources becoming effective committee members able to persuade others of similar means to join forces in fundraising efforts and campaigning.
- If the fate of the committee is going to be discussed by those in authority before the next RPGAC meeting, members will be contacted.
- There was some interest among committee members in calling a special meeting to make suggestions about the format of the committee. Desmond stated that if any committee members individually or as a group want to brainstorm and put something formal or informal together for submission, Bragdon is very accessible and is easily reached by e-mail bragdond@metro.dst.or.us

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.