

METRO REGIONAL PARKS AND GREENSPACES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
December 3, 2002
Meeting Notes

Chair, Chris Noble, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Other committee members in attendance included Rebecca Banyas, Jeffrey Kee, David Manhart, Sylvia Milne, Chris Noble, Richard Reynolds and Aleta Woodruff. Also in attendance were Ron Klein, Dan Kromer, Jeff Tucker, Laurie Wulf and Pat Sullivan.

Introductory comments and announcements

Sylvia Milne reported on the well-attended Springwater Corridor Trail ribbon cutting ceremony held on Nov 26.

The Volunteer Recognition Dinner was held at the Oregon Zoo on Nov 17. The 2002 Chinook Award was presented to the RPAGAC for its outstanding volunteer group contribution to the Parks Dept. Aleta Woodruff accepted the award on behalf of the Committee and suggested it be displayed in the Parks Dept. office.

ODOT easement request on Canemah Bluff open space

Laurie Wulf presented a request from ODOT for an easement on Metro owned property at Canemah Bluff in Oregon City above Highway 99E. The easement will allow that agency to install mesh screening on the cliffs which will secure unstable rock cuts and reduce the incidents of rocks falling into the travel lanes of 99E. The request meets all criteria set forth in the Metro policy regarding easements for non-park uses. ODOT will be responsible for maintenance of the screen and will pay Metro's cost and expenses to process the permanent easement request and \$2,775 fair market value of the easement area.

A motion was made that RPGAC endorse the staff recommendation to grant ODOT the proposed easement. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

Committee letter of support for Trolley Trail project

Committee members' suggestions for a few minor revisions to the letter of support were mailed to each of them following the November 5 meeting. A letter incorporating those changes was brought to the meeting for review and approval.

A motion was made and passed unanimously to approve the letter as written.

Open spaces acquisition program update

Jim Desmond reported that 230 open spaces transactions have been completed since 1995 in which 7,793 acres have been acquired. The high volume of transactions has slowed considerably, although there will be the usual year-end push to finalize deals near closing. Nine properties are currently under contract and between 20 and 25 are in active negotiation. Although the remaining funds, including projected interest earnings, is approximately \$14.5 million, the program is in a closing down phase and should be completed sometime before June 30, 2004.

Recommended FY 03/04 Parks Dept. budget

The urgent need to secure additional long-term funding for the Parks Dept. was the focus of the FY-03/04 budget discussion, as it has been for the last number of years. In the coming fiscal year Parks

will likely bring forward two proposals that will be presented to the Committee and then to Metro Council questioning whether or not to pursue them.

One is to implement a wetlands mitigation banking program. It will make available for sale mitigation credits to developers or public agencies whose projects include unavoidable negative impacts requiring mitigation. Major wetland enhancement/restoration projects completed on Metro Open Space properties will provide a source for those mitigation credits. There have been conversations with Division of State Lands and ODOT both of which are very interested in working with the Dept. on such a program. There are, however, potential and obvious policy implications that will require further discussion.

The other proposal will be to install cremains niche walls (for cremated remains) in some of the pioneer cemeteries. Land space is becoming more and more limited and there is a growing market for this type of cemetery service.

Both of these projects will require a capital investment by the Parks Dept. and require additional research as to their feasibility.

Discussion that followed included:

Cemeteries -

- Advertise in the yellow pages; no budget for additional advertising
- A survey is taken every year to make certain prices are competitive (neither "lead or lag").
- Graves and services are actively marketed.
- 2 years ago a letter was sent out to other cemetery providers across the northwest soliciting interest in or proposals for taking over pioneer cemeteries. Proposal removed from consideration at that time due to negative public response and no interested parties.
- **Suggestion from Committee - Advertise for graves/services In the GreenScene at no cost**

Smith & Bybee Lakes Fund

- No legal restriction to drawing down the S&B Fund to pay for ongoing operations. The concern is not prudent in long term.

Wetland Mitigation Banking

- Has potential to be a significant funding source and accomplish restoration at same time
- Staff encouraged to accelerate review process as can take years to establish program
- Possible downside? - An argument that suggests lands that have been acquired by the public for protection of their natural resource values should not be made available for mitigation credits
- Possible upside? (ecological support) - There are many small projects that require mitigation for which a small-scale wetland is created and ultimately fails - problems with hydrology, soil, plant material, etc.; not having positive impact on water quality or wildlife. Theory is - "more bang for the buck" to do a large-scale wetland restoration project which should have more potential to succeed.
- Committee would like to hear from organization which has experience in successful wetland mitigation banking.

Ciecko reported that Jeff Tucker has done a considerable amount of work researching this concept. Staff wants to come to the Committee at the earliest opportunity with a cohesive and coherent presentation which will include anticipated policy issues.

Following is a list of points the Committee brought up that may be included in its letter to Burton concerning the budget.

- Encourage Council to consider a funding measure and to begin its planning. (Questions needing answers: when, from where it ought to come, how much and for what?)
- Review the buck-a-ton excise tax before it expires June 30, 2004
- Convene a revenue task force to explore long-term funding sources for Parks & Greenspaces (such as Green Ribbon Committee); they will consult with Advisory Committee as they progress.
- Support perpetual care fund for Pioneer Cemeteries

A statement from the RPGAC was requested regarding the budget in letter form, which describes major concerns and their urgency, priorities and possible options. It is needed by the third week of January.

The next RPAGAC meeting will be January 7, 2003, 6:30 p.m. at Metro Regional Center.