

Metro Parks and Greenspaces Advisory Committee
March 6, 2001
6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Metro Regional Center

Chair Rick Charriere called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. Other committee members present were Jim Battan, Jay Hamlin, Richard Reynolds, Brian Scott, Seth Tane and Chris Noble. Also in attendance was Councilor Carl Hosticka, Charles Ciecko, Lupine Hudson, Ron Klein, Patricia Sullivan, Mary West and Sheilah Toomey, Sauvie Island resident.

Introductory Comments and Announcements

Charles Ciecko gave an update on negotiations that have been ongoing for five years with the Division of State Lands for a significant acquisition near Wilsonville. It is located immediately adjacent to the urban growth boundary, the City of Wilsonville and the "Dammach site", the latter of which is scheduled for major development. A variety of habitats are included on the property: farmland, wetlands, approximately 60 acres of mature second growth forest and a perennial stream which flows through the property. Within a week the State Land Board will consider this issue and is expected to approve the sale. Metro will partner with the City of Wilsonville on management of this property with involvement from the West Linn/Wilsonville School District to make it available for environmental education purposes. The site is a key parcel in the Tonquin Geologic target area. It was pointed out that a deadlock in negotiations had existed prior to the involvement of Mike Burton, Presiding Officer David Bragdon and Councilor Carl Hosticka who worked with members of the Land board to strike a deal.

Note: The Division of State Lands has since approved the sale of the property consistent with terms and provisions approved by Metro Council.

Welcome New Committee Member

A welcome was extended to new member Chris Noble, representing District #1.

Thanks to Brian Scott and Bob Akers for their Years of Service

On behalf of the Department and the Agency, Ciecko thanked Brian Scott and Bob Akers for their six years of service. As original members of the committee, they provided a great deal of input to the program's evolution. Tokens of appreciation signed by Ciecko and Mike Burton were presented.

Update on Howell Territorial Park Conditional Use Permit

Ciecko provided the committee with background on this conditional use permit process. In 1997 the proposed Howell Territorial Park Master Plan was brought before the advisory committee, which recommended its approval. Metro Council subsequently adopted the plan, at which time discussions with Multnomah County ensued over the appropriate course for the land use application and approval of the improvements identified in the master plan. Less than a year ago, an application was filed, then reviewed and recommended for approval by county staff. Next it was forwarded to a hearings officer who denied the application due to concerns in three areas: 1) less than adequate analysis done on impact of park improvements on adjacent farm use, 2) concerns about impact to traffic and 3) concerns about the ability of the volunteer fire/emergency crews to serve expanded park users. Metro subsequently addressed each of the areas identified by the hearings officer and appealed the decision. At the appeal hearing held in October 2000, the County Commission decided not to take action at that time, requesting the Dept. work through remaining concerns voiced by county staff and new concerns voiced by island residents.

Additional efforts on Metro's part did not garner support from residents. A further examination of the process, however, found attempting to obtain a conditional use permit for park use in an exclusive farm use zone (EFU) like applying the proverbial "square peg in a round hole". In January 2001, therefore, Metro proposed to the County Commission that the conditional use application be set over (not withdrawn) until later in the fall, during which time the staffs of Metro and Multnomah County would explore the possibility of creating a park zone. In dealing with newly acquired open space properties, such a zone could also be applicable in other rural areas in Multnomah County, as well as Clackamas and Washington counties.

Ciecko thanked Seth Tane for his involvement in and support of the project. He was contacted by a number of island residents and provided insightful comments to Commissioner Diane Linn.

Update on FY 02-02 Budget Process

The Parks budget has been submitted to the Executive Officer and accepted with few changes. It includes the fund balance draw-down which has been discussed with the Committee previously. Burton's budget presentation to Metro Council identified Parks funding as his highest priority and subsequently the Council has identified that same challenge as one of its highest priorities as well. Parks staff presented its budget to the Finance Committee in detail on February 14. Ciecko believes the budget is likely to be approved in roughly its current form, which continues using the fund balance as a bridge to preserve programs and operations & maintenance until the broader issue of long term funding can be resolved. He expects there will be opportunities for the committee to provide advice and recommendations to Council as it continues deliberations on this effort.

Dialogues between Metro policy makers and those of other parks providers have been held, attempting to measure (among other issues) interest in participation in a possible region-wide funding measure. Positive feedback was received. Other meetings then followed hosted by Council, one topic of which included funding for Metro Parks and parks in general across the region. Invited were advocates and others who have demonstrated an interest in the parks program. Chair Rick Charriere participated in one of the meetings and spoke of the funding needs of the Dept. and the importance of its programs to the livability of the region.

Councilor Carl Hosticka, newly appointed as Council liaison to the committee, was welcomed to the meeting. He spoke of a Council retreat held recently at which one entire morning was spent discussing the Parks funding needs and related ideas. One of the discussion points was how to define and fund Metro's obligations to the land already acquired through the open spaces, parks and streams bond measure. Councilor Hosticka referred to the importance of committees such as this one in providing input to the Council in these types of decision making processes.

Regional Parks and Greenspaces Volunteer Services Annual Report

Lupine Hudson, Manager of Volunteer Services, presented the Volunteer Services Annual Report. Her job-share partner in the position, Mary West, was introduced to the committee, but was unable to participate in the presentation due to a case of laryngitis. Hudson highlighted a few of the program's many successes. One committee member observed -"what wonderful ambassadors these volunteers become for the Parks".

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.