

Parks Advisory Committee Minutes

March 12, 2012

Members Present: Pat Hoover, Larry Dunlap
Members Absent: Les Weinstein, Cat Koehn, Damien Gilbert, Carl Stiefbold
Staff Present: Mike Russell, Phil Guyette, John Moriarty, Dave Stockdale and Sam Fox
Guests Present: 5 members of the public in attendance

Pat Hoover called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

- I. **Public Comment** – Bruce Irwin, Chimney Rock Ln., Eugene, OR., represents National Grant Services and is interested in soliciting Lane County Parks for grant writing services. Mr. Irwin has made an appointment with Parks Manager, Mike Russell, to further discuss his services, and Mr. Irwin wanted to introduce himself to the committee and talk about his qualifications in grant writing.

Barbara May, 1380 W. Broadway, Eugene, OR., has been working with the environmental group Willamette River Keeper as a volunteer river guardian and member of the board over the past 12 years. She has adopted a stretch on the Willamette river to protect and help enforce the Clean Water Act. One of her launch areas has been Whitely landing. Over the past 5 years she has noticed a degradation of the park area and has been avoiding the park due to the public element that currently uses Whitely park. She reports feeling unsafe accessing the park and when leaving her vehicle when she floats the river. She has seen pit-bull dogs off leash and will not bring her dog for fear of its safety. She suspects drug use at this location and also reports that she has seen people drinking alcohol as early as 9:00 in the morning, and then later in the day after her time on the river she sees these same people drinking and very intoxicated by 4:00 p.m. She told of an experience where she floated the river and her companion left a vehicle in the Whitely landing parking lot for the day and it was vandalized while unattended. She strongly recommends a drug and alcohol ban at Whitely landing and would like to see stronger enforcement of dog-on-leash requirements.

Floyd Bard, 2000 River Loop #1, Eugene, OR., was present at the February meeting and has returned with photos taken of Whitely landing but he decided not to submit them to Parks staff at this time. Mr. Bard reports that problems continue at this location with

heavy alcohol use by a certain group of park users, subsequent litter issues, inappropriate and rude behavior and dogs off-leash. He states that Whitely landing is not a boat landing anymore and that people are afraid to launch their boats at this location, or to leave their vehicles unattended while on the river. Mr. Bard feels that the name of this park should be changed to Whitely Park not boat landing. He referenced Baker Bay park in Dorena which the Army Corps of Engineers has designated an alcohol free park. He does not advocate for closing Whitely completely but requested once again to enforce an alcohol ban at this location.

Parks Manager, Mike Russell responded to Mr. Bard's question and to the Committee about a meeting that he had with Deputy Doyle of the Lane County Sheriff's Office about incident reports on Whitely landing. Mr. Russell acknowledges that the majority of calls were alcohol related. Mr. Russell also stated that as Parks Manager, his authority would be limited to a 30-day alcohol ban, and that the Board of County Commissioners would have to make the decision to enforce an alcohol ban or permanently close this park. He agreed that he needs to work with the PAC on presenting the issues to the BCC to enforce a permanent alcohol ban at the Whitely park location.

Jerry Finigan, 1250 Irvington, Eugene, OR., Chair of the Santa Clara Community Organization, was asked to attend this PAC meeting at the request of Mr. Abbott because of the issues that have been reported regarding Whitely landing. Commissioner Bozievich also attended the SCCO meeting, and Mr. Finigan stated that Commissioner Bozievich was looking into the BCC's authorization to enact an alcohol ban at Whitley. SCCO's primary concern is access to the river, and if Whitely landing were closed permanently then it would limit access even further.

Jeff Jackson, 205 Chapman Dr., Eugene, OR., arrived toward the end of the meeting and asked if he could still comment on Whitely Landing. The parks Manager and the acting Chair agreed to allow Mr. Jackson to share his concerns on the record. Mr. Jackson feels that in its current use, Whitely Landing does not meet the Parks mission statement by providing a diverse, high-quality recreational experience that meets visitors needs and expectations. However, he also realizes that as a Reserve deputy that Parks and Public Safety resources are limited and will only be further restrained with dwindling funding and projected cuts. His main concern is the amount of alcohol being consumed by the particular group of park users that have been discussed at these PAC meetings, and then those people driving from that location through a residential area when intoxicated when there is not adequate resources to enforce, or even monitor the situation. Mr. Jackson lives next to the park and has applied to be a park host at this location to help monitor the park and keep it clean by picking up litter. He commented that the group in question are not bad people and that they are just unwinding after the work day, but he also admits that he does not allow his small children to go that direction because he is concerned about the heavy use of alcohol and the fact that the drinkers will then get in

their vehicles and drive away from the park when it closes. He related that Whitely Landing is very much like living next to a bar, that people come to that location primarily to drink, and as a park location he would like to see people come there to use it as a park first, and a place to relax and enjoy a beer second, rather than *the* place to go to drink.

Committee member, Larry Dunlap, asked Mr. Jackson what he would do to change the situation if he could, and Mr. Jackson said he would hate to see the park closed, and he doesn't necessarily want to see an alcohol ban since a park and boat launch area should be places that people can go and fish and have a beer. He would like to see the neighborhood come together to find a middle ground on care and use of the Whitely Landing but feels there is just too much bad blood now between the neighbors and the current users of the park, and that they are just not motivated to that. He stated once again that although he believes alcohol should be permitted in public parks, he feels that an alcohol ban at Whitely Landing would solve the issues surrounding this park, whether it is drinking and driving, noise, aggressive behavior, litter, or conflicts between neighbors.

Mr. Dunlap asked Parks staff what it would take to initiate an alcohol ban, and Mr. Russell said that his authority would be for only a 30-day period. A longer or more permanent ban would have to come from the Board of County Commissioners and Mr. Russell will look into that process and get back to the committee at the next PAC meeting.

Ms. Hoover reminded those in attendance that even if a ban were enacted, there would be little, if any, way to enforce the ban due to lack of Sheriff and Ranger resources. Mr. Jackson, and Parks staff were all in agreement that a ban would be difficult to enforce, but Mr. Russell will continue to look into a remedy that will work for everyone.

- II. **Approval of Minutes, Announcement/Agenda Modifications** – There was no January PAC meeting, and the minutes from the February meeting were not completed in time for this meeting.
- III. **Election of Chair and Vice-Chair** – Because there was no quorum at this meeting, no business could be completed. The discussion of the election of a committee chair and vice chair was tabled until the next meeting.
- IV. **Committee Vacancies** – Parks department staff is currently working on a Board packet for Commissioner Sorensen's appointment to the Parks Advisory Committee. Larry Dunlap is Commissioner Sorensen's current appointee. The appointment would be for 2 years.

There is also one at-large vacancy on the committee, and at the PAC's request, Mr. Russell will be meeting with Centro Latino Americano next week to discuss the PAC's desire to have someone from their organization represented on the Parks Advisory Committee.

There was one other interested party to fill this vacancy, and Mr. Russell advised the committee that they could choose not to fill the position, or they could still exercise the option to re-post the advertisement if they wish.

- V. **Staff Reports** – Mr. Russell informed the Committee that the budget has been submitted to the County Administrator and the Budget Committee for approval. Mike summed up for the Committee that income remained flat but expenses went up. 30, to 40 thousand dollars were needed to fund Parks operations, so temporary and seasonal help positions have been reduced. This will result in the same number of permanent staff as last year with a reduction in seasonal and part-time help during the busy spring and summer months. Parks Superintendent, Phil Guyette, also added that the Parks department has made a major change to the way it has addressed maintenance projects because of the reduction in staffing by turning over minor maintenance of restroom cleaning, mowing and weed eating to contracted caretakers and local maintenance companies. This move will help staff to focus on maintenance of the key revenue-generating parks such as Armitage Park, the Fern Ridge parks, Baker Bay Park and Harbor Vista.

- VI. **Natural Areas update** – John Moriarty, Natural Areas Resource Coordinator, spoke about the Parks Tour which is tentatively scheduled this year for June 9th and may include the Berggren property, which is located on Camp Creek road, with the McKenzie River Trust and the Native Plant Society. Then once at the top of that location, venturing over to the neighboring Lane County Parks 80-acre Vickery park location for a view of a proposed demonstration farm and restoration area. If the Committee agrees to the proposed June 9 date, John will begin coordinating with MRT to secure that date for the tour. John also suggested adding a trip to Richardson Park Marina to view the dock replacement and the new marina if time allowed. Pat Hoover suggested that the tour at some point include Three Mile Prairie, a natural resource area in Florence that Lane County Parks is working to protect from off-road vehicle damage in sensitive wetlands.

- VII. **Good of the Order/Concerns of the Committee** – Dave Stockdale reported that Baker Bay Marina and Orchard Point Marina will open April 4th, Baker Bay campground and Richardson Park campground will both open April 13th, and all Day Use areas will officially open April 27th. He also added that production is moving along on the construction and replacement of the docks at Richardson Park Marina, with the opening date and ribbon-cutting ceremony still scheduled for May 18th 2012.

Phil Guyette added that the 'C' dock at Orchard Point has been disconnected, re-decked, and is ready to move to Richardson for use as the 'E' dock at Richardson once the water level rises enough to float it to the new location. Mr. Guyette estimated that the time frame for this move will likely be in the next 2 weeks.

Mr. Stockdale stated that although some moorage slip holders have opted not to return to the Fern Ridge Lake marinas this season, there have been a good number of new applicants which has brought the total number of slip rentals to around 297, roughly the same number as 2011. Baker Bay marina did see a turnover this year which resulted in a vacancy of a couple of slips, the first time in more than a decade. Those slips have now been rented, and Baker Bay is at full capacity once again. A waiting list of interested parties shows that there are still approximately 20 people who would like to moor their boat at Baker Bay if only there were slips available.

VIII. **Adjournment** – Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.