

Parks Advisory Committee Minutes

April 9, 2012

Members Present: Cat Koehn, Pat Hoover, Carl Stiefbold, Damien Gilbert, Les Weinstein

Members Absent: Larry Dunlap

Staff Present: Mike Russell, Howard Schussler, John Moriarty, Phil Guyette, Dave Stockdale, and Sam Fox

Guests Present: 7 members of the public in attendance

Cat Koehn, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

- I. Public Comment – Joan Abbott, 211 Chapman Dr., Eugene, OR., Mrs. Abbott began with complaints that there were no minutes available on the website for January 2012 through March 2012. It was explained that there was no January meeting and that the February minutes had not been completed in time for committee review and approval by the time of this meeting. Mrs. Abbott then asked about Parks Superintendent Phil Guyette’s retirement at the end of May and inquired whether there had been a replacement Superintendent named yet. Parks Manager, Mike Russell, replied that there is a recruiting process that the County has to follow and that those procedures are now in progress. Mrs. Abbott then inquired as to the closure several years ago of Hileman Landing. Asst. Public Works Director, Howard Schussler responded that Hileman Landing was closed after flooding several years ago that rerouted the river which left Hileman mostly dry except for a small slough nearby, therefore no longer providing access to the river. Mr. Schussler continued that there is currently only foot traffic at this location and that the County is working on a partnership for wetlands and sensitive habitat restoration in the park area. Mrs. Abbott wanted to know if the Hileman area was closed off due to Sheriff’s responses, abandoned cars, vandalism or drug use, and Mr. Schussler said that it was. Mrs. Abbott then asked about the self-serve pay station seen at some LCP locations and inquired why there was not one at Whitely Landing. Mr. Russell replied that it was a volume issue, and that there are currently only eight fee machines in 70 of the Lane County Parks so LCP makes the passes available for purchase through local vendors such as Bi-Mart and REI Co-op. Mrs. Abbott also mentioned that several trees that were cut down at Whitely Landing as inquired as to when the area would be cleaned up. Superintendent Phil Guyette replied that a wood permit has been issued for the tree located near entrance to the address of 205 Chapman Drive. Steve Abbott – 211 Chapman Dr., Eugene, OR – Mr. Abbott gave Mike Russell photos he recently took at the Whitely Landing park and also distributed copies to the Advisory Committee members and parks staff. Mr. Abbott also inquired about comments that he has heard regarding Lane County making

Whitely Landing an alcohol-free park. Mr. Russell noted that this issue is listed on tonight's agenda as an Informational Item and that he'd prefer to address it later in the meeting if possible.

Mr. Abbott stated that he has contacted Mothers Against Drunk Driving about his concerns with public behavior at Whitely Landing and informed Mr. Russell that the local chapter will be contacting Mr. Russell and the PAC soon.

Mr. Abbott also asked about the process for establishing an alcohol ban at Whitely Landing, and Mr. Russell replied that this was also scheduled on the agenda and would be discussed later in the meeting. Mr. Abbott voiced his displeasure with Parks management stating that he feels that LC Parks is not taking the issue of alcohol use at Whitely Landing serious enough. He said that he has been in contact with the Santa Clara Neighborhood Association, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Lane County Sheriff's office, as well as several of the neighbors in the area, all of which he says have shown support in favor of an alcohol ban at this park. PAC chair Cat Koehn thanked Mr. Abbott for his input, and members Carl Stiefbold and Damien Gilbert each addressed Mr. Abbott's concerns. Mr. Stiefbold assured Mr. Abbott that his concerns were being heard by the committee and staff, and that he himself had made several trips to visit Whitely Landing since the last meeting so he could better assess the situation and view for himself the concerns that have been brought before the committee. Mr. Stiefbold stated that in all of his visits he did not witness any questionable behavior by any of the park users during those visits. Mr. Gilbert asked Mr. Abbott to address the committee with his concerns during the meetings, and encouraged Mr. Abbott and others in attendance to contact Parks staff anytime during business hours with their concerns, but informing the audience that the PAC meetings are designed to follow an agenda and are for the PAC and parks staff to communicate about all parks issues while still allowing time at the beginning of each meeting for the community to address the committee with their comments or concerns.

Floyd Bard – 2000 River Loop #1, Eugene, OR – Mr. Bard handed out photos he took at Whitely Landing which shows litter in the park, as well as copies of signage from other Lane County Parks that indicate park hours and an ordinance that specifies leash requirements for dog while in county parks that he would like to see at Whitely Landing. Mr. Bard also discussed his recent communications with the Santa Clara Neighborhood Association as well as County Commissioner Jay Bozievich and his desire to work with LCP staff and the PAC committee to come up with a plan and give a report to the Board of County Commissioners that could aide in bringing the park users and the park neighbors together and work towards a better relationship for all parties. He also referred to Clearwater Park in Springfield, which is alcohol-free, and he believes that the park is so popular and well-maintained because the access to the park is through a residential neighborhood and near a school similar to Whitely Landing. Mr. Bard offered his assistance to do whatever was necessary to facilitate making Whitely Landing an alcohol-free park and followed up by voicing his concerns that with the summer months and nicer weather approaching that he is concerned that the bad behavior will increase as the park stays open later.

Chair Koehn asked Mr. Bard if there were documented reports of the dog fights that were referenced at the park, and Mr. Bard replied that he thought there was documentation but did not provide any, and he also referenced statements from last month's PAC meeting where citizen Barbara May from Willamette River Keepers stated that she had witnessed pit bull dogs running loose at the park and fighting among one another during her previous visits.

Jerry Finnigan, 1250 Irvington Dr., Eugene, OR – Mr. Finnigan is the chair of the Santa Clara Community Organization and he stated that the organization is concerned about access to the river since Whitely Landing is one of few access points available for public use. He hopes that Whitely Landing could not only be made safer, but also somehow be improved to make it more desirable to increase public use.

- II. **Approval of Minutes, Announcement/Agenda Modifications** – The February 2012 minutes were reviewed and there was a motion to approve.

Motion (Damien Gilbert): The PAC recommends approval of the February 2012 PAC meeting minutes.

Second: Les Weinstein

No further discussion.

Motion passed unanimously (4 in favor, 0 opposed)

- III. **Election of Parks Advisory Committee Chair and Vice Chair for 2012** – Discussion included a request from the current Chair, Kat Koehn, as to the process of how the PAC should conduct the election of Chair and Vice Chair. Parks Manager, Mike Russell, explained the process and order, which is to open the floor for nominations of a chairperson, then to close the nomination and then vote and approve the new chair. Then, the newly elected chairperson would open the floor for nominations of a vice chairperson, close the nomination, and then the committee would vote and approve the new vice chair. Pat Hoover questioned if April was normally the time to conduct elections, and Mr. Russell replied that no, the elections are typically held in January for the coming year, however, there was no January meeting of the PAC Committee, and there was no quorum for the March meeting so an election was postponed to this month. The election is to held annually, and chair and vice chair are to serve for the term of one year. Member Les Weinstein asked if the current chair could become the vice chair, and the current vice chair could serve as chairperson, and Mr. Russell explained that it would not typically happen that way, however, it can be at the discretion of the committee to proceed that way. Ms. Hoover asked if the vice chair duties are simply to stand-in for chair when they are unavailable at a meeting, and Mr. Russell confirmed that yes, that is the case, and Mr. Stockdale clarified that if the chair wants to make a motion on an item, then he/she would delegate to the vice chair for that action. Ms. Hoover then asked about the terms of office, and Mr. Russell confirmed that terms are typically up in December and the elections would be held each January. At this time, current chair Kat Koehn opened the floor for nominations and Mr. Weinstein nominated Pat Hoover as chair, and Ms. Koehn seconded. Ms. Hoover accepted the nomination and confirmed that her term is valid for the next two years. She was also able to confirm that all other members on the committee had terms that will not expire until the end of 2013 with one exception.

Motion (Les Weinstein): The PAC elected Pat Hoover as chair of the committee for 2012.

Second: Cat Koehn

No further discussion.

Motion passed unanimously (4 in favor, 0 opposed)

Ms. Hoover then discussed nomination of Les Weinstein as vice chair, which he declined due to being on another committee within the community and concern of taking on too many duties. Ms. Hoover then asked member Carl Stiefbold if he would like to sit as vice chair of the committee and Mr. Stiefbold accepted. There was a motion to approve Mr. Stiefbold as the 2012 PAC Committee Vice Chairperson and Ms. Koehn seconded.

Motion: New committee chair, Pat Hoover, nominated Carl Stiefbold as Vice Chair of the 2012 PAC Committee.

Second: Cat Koehn

No further discussion.

Motion passed unanimously (4 in favor, 0 opposed)

Mr. Russell thanked outgoing chair, Kat Koehn, for her duties as chair during all of the changes and transition that Lane County Parks has undertaken over this last year. Mr. Schussler agreed, and thanked Ms. Koehn and the entire committee for enduring the many changes that the Parks department has seen during their service. Ms. Hoover took this opportunity to address members in the audience and spoke in detail about the turnover in February 2011 of most of the Parks personnel and the many changes that have happened as a result of that turnover. She apologized to attendees on behalf of the committee, as well as staff, for the lapse of action regarding Whitely Landing and promised to get back on track.

- IV. **Committee Vacancies** – Parks Manager Mike Russell introduced Carlos Alvarez to the committee. Mr. Russell reminded the committee of their desire to incorporate diversity into the committee and their request to reach out to the Hispanic community. Mr. Russell did so by contacting Central Americano Latino who suggested Mr. Alvarez. Mr. Alvarez submitted an application to become a committee member, which brings the number to two applicants who desire to be on the Parks Advisory Committee. He stated that Commissioner Sorensen had already appointed Larry Dunlap to the committee so as far as Mr. Russell is concerned that position has been filled with Mr. Dunlap, it just hasn't been formalized with a Board Order. Mr. Russell would like to combine and submit one Board Order to the County Commissioners with the confirmation of Mr. Dunlap and the appointment of one other person. There are now two interested members of the public for the remaining at-large vacancy. They are Mr. Bill Fisher and Mr. Carlos Alvarez. Mr. Russell asked the committee if they would like to review the two applications, or wait to make a recommendation at the next meeting. Damien Gilbert suggested a subcommittee to review the applications and requested Mr. Russell's assistance in that process before conducting interviews for this opening. Mr. Russell volunteered to contact the applicants and to set up interviews with the subcommittee. Ms. Hoover suggested that this process happen before the parks tour which is scheduled for June so that the new member could attend the tour. Ms. Hoover feels strongly that the tour is a bonding opportunity for the committee as well as an important way for committee members to experience first-hand some of the locations and situations that the committee will be advising on throughout their terms on this committee. Mr. Gilbert, Ms. Koehn, and Mr. Stiefbold will represent this subcommittee, and Mr. Russell will be providing assistance where necessary.

V. **Staff Reports** – Mr. Russell took this opportunity to provide some history of his experiences regarding Whitely Landing since he has been the manager of Lane County Parks. He explained that one of the first things he was advised on upon his acceptance of the position of Manager in May of 2011 was to address some of the issues regarding this park. In doing so, Mr. Russell advised Park Rangers to increase patrols of the park and to make contact with the park users to inform them of park rules and to more strongly enforce the park rules to get better compliance from the park users. Mr. Russell referred to the photos of litter at Whitely Landing that were submitted to earlier in the meeting and acknowledge that he too has seen evidence of litter during park hours as the photos depict however upon reinspection by both Mr. Russell and various Rangers the garbage has been removed before the park reopens the following day. He explained that he learned that discarded aluminum cans are being collected by a person in a neighboring area per an agreement between this person and the persons discarding the cans. The garbage can in the photos Mr. Abbott provided is not a Parks issued garbage can; it is one provided by this group of park users so that this agreed upon person can remove the cans on their behalf. Mr. Russell is also aware of some of the behavior issues by park users that have become of great concern for Whitely Landing neighbors, and during discussions with the group in question has been able to confirm that this group has enforced their own sort of peer pressure from within that they believe has helped to deter some of the less desirable element that was once part of the problem of these concerned neighbors. Mr. Darrell Bowes, the caretaker of Whitely Landing attended those meetings along with Mr. Russell, who felt that he was making progress and gaining an understanding with members of this group. Mr. Abbott, one of the neighbors voicing concern over this group, once took it upon himself to close the gate to Whitely Landing early which caused even more of a rift between the neighbors and the group in question. This action, along with contacting the Sheriff's office seemed to refuel the tensions between these two groups. Mr. Russell took this opportunity to address the committee as well as those in attendance to apologize that it may appear that he was not concerned in addressing the issues regarding Whitely Landing. He stated that he felt that he was having success and moving on a positive track in his own way of dealing with those issues with this group of park users. Mr. Russell commented on the number of incident reports he received from the Sheriff's office as a result of the repeated calls to the Sheriff's office from neighbors of the park and admitted that many of them were alcohol-related, meaning that the Deputy would respond to a call for service at the park and the Deputy would then realize that incident was a result of behavior influence by alcohol use by the persons that the Deputy made contact with. As a result of the increased number of calls over the past 8 months to the Sheriff's office from the neighbor, the Sheriff's office contacted the Parks Manager to discuss the main issue of drunken driving as these users leave the park. Ms. Hoover asked Mr. Russell if he felt that the Sheriff's office was confronting him or challenging him for action and what was his feeling at this point of why the Sheriff's office was contacting him? Mr. Russell responded that he feels that because he is new to the parks organization that the Sheriff's office wanted to make him aware of the time and resources that their Deputies are expending on the Whitely Landing issues, and that was grateful to finally have some concrete evidence therefore giving him a better understanding of some of the issues since the Parks office had not issued any citations or other documentation of actual incidents during visits by park Rangers. Mr. Russell stated that as a result of the meeting with the Sheriff's Deputy that it is within his authority initiate and enforce a 30-day ban on alcohol use at this park location and then the Board of County Commissioners (the Board) would have to authorize any further action. Action after the 30-days

would need to be as a result of formal action from the Board. Mr. Russell acknowledged that in discussions from last month's meeting committee member Les Weinstein commented to parks staff John Moriarty that at one point last year the committee had made a recommendation to ban alcohol at Whitely Landing. Mr. Russell investigated this through prior meeting minutes from February 2011 and realized this to be accurate. Mr. Russell again apologized to members of the audience and the committee that he had not been aware of the PAC's recommendation, and that at this point he would like the PAC to reconfirm their intent to recommend Whitely Landing become an alcohol-free park so that he can proceed with a formal request to the Board. However, Mr. Russell did make it a point to remind the committee members, as well as those in attendance in the audience, that neither Lane County Parks nor the Lane County Sheriff's office have enough resources available to consistently enforce the ban forcefully.

Cat Koehn made a motion at this time to direct the Parks Manager to submit a request to the Board to ban alcohol at Whitely Landing. Carl Stiefbold asked for further discussion stating that he has visited the park numerous times since the last PAC meeting and feels the area needs some attention because the park does currently tend to attract a family element as its main park user, regardless of alcohol use. He commented on the erosion of the boat launch and muddy areas and how the times that he has visited the park, the main users mostly seem to congregate in the parking lot. He suggested a concentrated effort toward beautification of this location to help attract more families so that the alcohol-using people would become less comfortable hanging out and just drinking beer. Les Weinstein agreed there is a need for more neighborhood involvement to make the park cleaner and less inviting to the less desirable element that tends to gravitate to this park. Damien Gilbert agreed that other activities need to be occurring at Whitely to attract a more diverse user to this park. Mr. Gilbert is open to an alcohol ban but does not think this action alone will change the condition or use of the park. Ms. Koehn suggested a different parking configuration for the parking lot so as to draw people away from their vehicles and further into the park for exposure rather than encouraging a behavior where users typically congregate in the parking lot and linger near their vehicles. It was pointed out by Mr. Russell that because of the weather and muddy conditions of the park most of the year that people do tend to remain in the parking lot to relax and enjoy the park, but that when the weather allows, most of this group moves to a picnic table area to pitch horse shoes in horse shoe pits that they built themselves and donated to the park for all park users' benefit.

Ms. Hoover then asked Parks staff if there are plans to enhance the park in the near future that might help change the current direction of this park. Mr. Schussler replied that funding is uncertain, especially now with the current economy and lack of personnel to do anything more than minimum maintenance to all park locations throughout Lane County Parks and that any money that comes into the County can be used at the discretion of the Board to direct where they see the greatest need at that time. He also reminded everyone that simply initiating a ban on alcohol use does not automatically mean there will be the ability to enforce it. Park Rangers can cite a person, but if there is dangerous behavior, a Park Ranger is not armed, and therefore not equipped to handle a dangerous situation that may involve a group of intoxicated people and potentially dangerous dogs at large, and would therefore be directed to contact a Deputy, and a Deputy may not always be available. Mr. Schussler did agree that other

structural changes are warranted but if the behavioral changes do not happen then we'll still be in the same place with having to have the Sheriff's office respond. Mr. Schussler referenced Hayden Bridge park in Springfield where Lane County Parks is having similar difficulties with maintenance and behavior issues and have been unable to enforce anything more than the parking requirements. Other issues are transferred to the Sheriff's office for Deputy response as one becomes available. Les inquired whether Whitely Landing is inside or out of the Urban Growth Boundary and whether the City of Eugene should be taking over jurisdiction of this park due to more available resources. Mr. Russell and Mr. Schussler both confirmed that the City and River Road Park & Recreation has declined interest in taking over Whitely Landing or Hileman Landing.

Damien Gilbert made recommendation to the PAC that it suggest the Park Manager impose a temporary 30-day alcohol ban at Whitely Landing as a trial period and allowing time for Mr. Russell to prepare a Board packet requesting a permanent ban of alcohol use at this location. Mr. Gilbert also recommended adding dog-on-leash signage to this park and Mr. Russell agreed. Staff will be directed to add dog on leash signage. Mr. Russell stated that he would like to make an effort to talk with the group in question prior to initiating the ban just to advise them that it's coming and to encourage them to participate in any public PAC and Board meetings that may result from the Board of County Commissioners making this decision.

Ms. Hoover again addressed the audience showing support of the PAC decision to tentatively make the park alcohol-free but to also encourage the people who spoke at this meeting to not only become more involved in the clean-up and maintenance of the park in order to show their support of making it a more desirable location for all, but to also bring their own families to the park to help show how this park could and should be used. Mr. Russell also complimented Mr. Bard on increasing community involvement on behalf of this park. Ms. Koehn commented that private volunteers often have access to more resources for things like donated materials such as sod or gravel where Lane County cannot solicit for those kinds of items or services.

Mr. Gilbert asked for clarification as to the difference between a temporary one-month ban on alcohol vs. a permanent ban ordered by the Board as far as enforcement. Mr. Russell admitted that enforcement would remain the same, which is very little due to the lack of resources for both Lane County Parks and the Lane County Sheriff's office, however, it would give the Sheriff's Deputies more authority to enforce park rules.

Mr. Weinstein asked how the City of Eugene addresses alcohol use in their jurisdiction and it was said that the City does not allow alcohol use in any of their parks, and that their only way to enforce it is through law enforcement as it is available. Mr. Schussler admits that it is a chronic problem for the city and that they are experiencing the same difficulties of enforcement with current funding and resources.

The PAC voiced their support of the request from 2011 to enforce a full alcohol ban at Whitely Landing. On a 3-2 vote the PAC voted to recommend to the Board for a permanent alcohol ban at Whitely Landing. Ms. Koehn and Les Weinstein were in favor of a permanent ban and Carl Stiefbold and Damien Gilbert were against, with Pat Hoover breaking the tie to recommend the ban.

Mike Russell indicated that he would proceed with a 30-day ban under his authority under Lane Manual.

Parks Manager Mike Russell discussed what he sees coming in the Budget Committee process for the FY 12-13 budget. He said he expects both Car Rental Tax and Transient Room Tax revenue sources to be discussed and possibly redirected to Public Safety. This could be significant to the Parks Budget. Mr. Russell explained that internal overhead rates for the Division were forecasted to be 20% more than the previous year. Parks expected around an 8% increase.

With these and other factors, Mr. Russell submitted a budget that cut two seasonal (520 hours) field positions and one half-time (1,040 hours) office position. These positions were not filled in the current fiscal year so, in effect, the number of actual employees will remain the same as Parks has this fiscal year.

Mr. Stiefbold asked how Phil Guyette's retirement fits into the budget. Mr. Russell explained that the position will be reclassified from a Superintendent to a Supervisor classification, which is a lower classification. Ms. Hoover asked if this was a budgetary decision. Mr. Russell explained that it was partly a budgetary move, but also that it was part of a restructuring of the way he wanted to operate the Parks Division. Ms. Hoover asked if there was consideration of losing Mr. Guyette's knowledge. Mr. Russell explained that effort has been made to document what Mr. Guyette does and that there are qualified internal candidates that could apply and bring a knowledge base with them.

Mr. Stiefbold asked for information regarding Mr. Guyette coming back to work as a temporary employee. Mr. Russell explained that he needs Mr. Guyette's expertise in event management to help with three large events planned for Howard Buford Recreation Area this summer and also with providing continuity to the Code Enforcement/Compliance program for this season.

Mr. Russell explained that, until the budget is adopted in May, we will not know exactly how the Parks Division budget will be impacted. Mr. Schussler discussed the struggle the Sherriff's Office is facing as well as changes being discussed for Animal Services.

Mr. Russell explained the proposed changes coming to Lane County Animal Services. Mr. Russell said that the City of Eugene is opting to pull out their funding of the service, thus requiring a restructuring of the way the service is provided. The proposed model is for each agency (Lane County and Eugene) to provide licensing and enforcement while contracting out for shelter and adoption services. Lane County will transfer one Animal Control Officer and one Office Assistant to Parks to continue to provide licensing and enforcement.

Mr. Weinstein stated that the main issue for opponents of the change is that euthanasia rates will increase if that function is turned over to a contractor. Mr. Russell explained that transparency and reporting requirements are paramount based on feedback from the public on the issue. Mr. Russell stated that his goal is not to reduce level of service provided to rural Lane County for licensing and enforcement issues. Mr. Russell also explained that Animal Services was coming to Parks with their own budget and he did not anticipate that it would compete for Parks Division resources.

Mr. Russell also reported on storm damage both at the coast park locations as well as the valley. He stated that there is at least four week's worth of clean-up as a result of the recent back-to-back storms. The January storms brought a large amount of water to the coast locations which have drastically affected the boat ramps along the McKenzie and Siuslaw rivers which has resulted in silted-in boat ramps, downed trees, and structural damage to the boat slide at Farnham Landing. Camp Lane also had several downed trees and structural damage to the foot bridge leading to the event field. In February there was a significant snow storm that blanketed the valley and the coast causing more fallen trees and clean-up issues. Mr. Russell reported that there is still about five weeks worth of storm damage clean-up and repair to be completed before all of the parks open for the season on April 27th and he has asked the Road Department as well as the Vegetation Management crews to assist when possible if they are working near a park area, however, that assistance comes at a cost to the Parks budget just like any other service. There was discussion on wood gathering within the parks and it was noted that wood cutting permits are being issued through Special Use Permits as interested parties contact Rangers or the Parks office.

John Moriarty announced the date for the annual Parks Tour which will be June 9th, 2012. The tour replaces the June PAC meeting providing members an opportunity to visit some of the Lane County Park locations to learn more about proposed projects or projects that are currently in progress or recently completed. Mr. Moriarty's agenda will include the Vickery property and nearby Berggren property which is owned by the McKenzie River Trust who has been working closely on watershed conservation and restoration in that area with Lane County Parks, and then a trip to Richardson Park to view the completed marina replacement project.

- VI. **Good of the Order/Concerns of the Committee** – Ms. Hoover commented on her observation of the blossoming of the plant in Armitage Park that was planted in memory of long-time Armitage Park caretaker, Dean Grossman, who passed away in 2011. It was noted that Mr. Grossman had chosen the plant before his passing.

Ms. Hoover also asked about Tsunami debris preparedness along the Oregon Coast, how this might affect our park lands, and whether Lane County Parks is involved in any preparedness planning. Mr. Russell replied that Lane County does have an emergency response plan in place which is coordinated through the Lane County Sheriff's office Emergency Response Coordinator Linda Cook. She contacts Mr. Russell as necessary if issues come up.

- VII. **Adjournment** – Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.
The next meeting is scheduled for May 14, 2012 at 6:00 p.m.