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**Parks & Recreation Commission
Meeting Minutes**

**October 20, 2021
7:00 PM**

<i>Minutes Approved as Presented 11.17.2021.</i>

1. CALLED TO ORDER:

Sullivan, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Howard Sullivan, Chair; Brad Bafaro, Vice Chair; Aaron Johnson; Mackenzie Johnston Carey; Tammi McLaughlin; Susan Taylor; Glenn VanBlarcom; Paul Waterstreet; Malynda Wenzl (present at 7:55 PM); Megan Van De Mark, presenter for Backyard Habitat Program presentation.

ABSENT: Ralph Brown; Anne Lane, P&R Director; Sherri Mead, Aquatics Supervisor.

STAFF PRESENT: Tom Martin, Parks Supervisor.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

3. CONSENT AGENDA:

- a) *Approve Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes of August 18, 2021.*
- b) *Approve Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes of September 15, 2021.*

MOTION: Brad Bafaro moved, seconded by Tammi McLaughlin, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented/amended. MOTION CARRIED 8-0.

4. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS: None.

5. DISCUSSION/DECISION/PRESENTATION ITEMS:

a.) Backyard Habitat Program Presentation: Megan Van De Mark

Megan: I am going to go ahead and share my screen. The Backyard Habitat Certification program is a co-managed program with Portland Audubon society and the Columbia land trust. Our mission with this program is to work with residents of urban and suburban areas on how to successfully garden sustainably to benefit local wildlife. I will give a little bit of a history about this program. It started with a group of residents in southwest Portland who were trying to remove ivy in a park and realized they couldn't be successful unless they engaged nearby residents in the project who also had ivy growing in their yards. The program then expanded from this starting point. We work with several residential and community sites. We work with a lot of residential sites that can be one acre or smaller. In addition, we also work with a lot of community sites, places of worships, businesses, non-profits,

schools, parks, multi-family housing complexes etc. The closet community site we have been working with to you all is actually Centro Cultural. So, lots of different types of sites can enroll.

How the program works is you go to our website, (backyardhabits.org) and you enroll. We do offer our program on a sliding scale starting at \$5. We really don't want cost to be a barrier. After you enroll you'll get connected to one of our habitat technicians. They will schedule a time with you to come out and tour your site with you and talk about what your priorities are, and how to focus that using backyard habitat's five areas to focus on. We will then give a packet full of resources and a sign to put in your yard. Then you get to work, and we check in on you by giving follow up calls and emails. We also offer virtual consultations. After you have followed all of the recommendations you check in and we will send a volunteer to come back to your property and give certification based on elements you have implemented. Certification is valid for 3 years at which time we check in and see if you are maintaining it and if yes, we renew it and it is free. Even though it is a certification program, certification isn't the goal, the goal is to create habitats and gardens sustainability. Certifications are to give people goals to work toward. As you do more you can get higher levels of certification. We focus on five specific things. We frame the program through removing noxious weeds, naturescaping (landscaping with native plants), removing or reducing the use of pesticides, actions to support wildlife, and also actions to manage storm water. The reasons for these are because number one, noxious weeds become monocultures and then really effect the biodiversity of our region. We do have a list of weeds, and the harder ones are at the top. We focus on planting native plants species that are local to the Willamette Valley, in order to help native specialist insects that birds and other wildlife depend on. To keep it accessible to everyone we start certification at having 5% of your yard be native wildlife, the more you do the higher levels of certification you are able to get. We also encourage people to plant multiple canopy layers.

The third element is we use a resource called grow smart grow safe to encourage people to think about the hazard levels of products they use in their yards. To get initial certification we encourage people to not use products that are rated at the highest hazard. That is to start to work on reducing the use of pesticides and use less hazardous alternatives.

The next is we encourage folks to take additional actions to support wildlife. We offer a menu of options appropriate to your yard. Start by picking one, but you could always do more. Could be having a wildlife water feature such as a bird bath or reducing outdoor lighting during bird migration.

Finally storm water management, thinking about how to manage where rain falls.

How do we help capture that onsite? Things that help are having a large canopy tree or having a rain garden if it is appropriate. We do it as a menu of options to try to make it accessible for people and encourage them to do more over time.

So those are the 5 focus areas of the program. We try to think about it from a bird's eye view. Creating spaces to meet what a bird or other wildlife might need, for example to find shelter or to find insects they might need. Want to create corridors

of connectivity. This is a snapshot as of January of our current habitats. All of these dots are people who just got certificated in the last year. We have gotten to the point in the program throughout the four-county region we have 8200 properties enrolled. We already have 15 in Forest Grove. People have dedicated a lot of volunteer hours to this program. We do a lot of this with community partnerships. Some partnerships we have been building more recently in Washington County is City of Hillsboro, City of Beaverton, Tigard, Tualatin, Clean Water Services, and City of Cornelius. There are a lot of different ways that our partners support our program, and there are lots of different ways that you all can support the program as well. Start by helping get the word out.

Question from Paul: Some myths about cats, once you start attracting more wildlife particularly birds, that you will actually neutralize any increase in birds because cats will be outside doing their hunting. The second is if you have bird feeders that the feed that drops on the ground will start to attract rodents.

Megan Answers: In terms of cats and wildlife, one element of the program is we do encourage people if possible to keep their cats indoors. The more you create habitat you do attract more birds, that doesn't mean you don't attract less cats. They are just kind of there one way or another. But to make certain I understand your question, part of that is we encourage if possible for people to transition to having cats indoors. Or if they are going to continue to have cats outside that they are thoughtful about when their cats are outside.

Paul: We have a lot of neighborhood cats that wander all the time and wonder if there is a negative impact with drawing more birds.

Megan: It is tough, we do have resources we can provide so that people can be thoughtful about having outdoor cats. Always the risk that cat will come into your yard because there are more birds there. In terms of the birdfeeder point we don't actively recommend that people use birdfeeders. We don't discourage birdfeeders, but one of the downsides of a bird feeder is it creates a point source and can spread disease among birds. And may draw rodents to the point source and may want to consider removing bird feeder if you are having issues with rodents. We recommend planting native plants instead to support that insects that are going to support the birds.

Question from Brad: Have you had discussions with the City of Forest Grove and Anne with the Parks and Rec department?

Megan Answers: We did meet with Tom Gamble right before Covid and we had talked. I have communicated with Anne since then.

Brad: I do suggest scheduling a meeting with Anne and having that discussion.

Question from Howard: So when you work with these cities are you on their website?

Megan Answers: It varies by city. We work with a lot of cities. Some cities, like the City of Gresham have a whole page dedicated to the program, and other cities have similar things on their websites. Some cities this might not be their preferred option, so we work with them to put out newsletters via the city and other things.

Question from Glenn: Do you work with the Habitat for Humanity? As they design

and build these homes could they establish something ahead of time for someone to keep up as they develop homes for people?

Megan Answers: To date we have more worked with folks after they have moved in. We have reached out to Habit for Humanity and haven't been able to establish any yet. It would be great to think about it from the front end rather than the back end.

Question from Paul: Have you worked with clean water services and any of the wetlands in the area?

Megan Answers: We haven't, but we are just starting to work with clean water services right now. We are going to work with on a project to work with some HOA's. We would love to do more of that. We always like to find more places to do demonstration sites. Our closest one to you guys would be Jackson Bottom.

b.)Levy

I. Continuing discussion from the last meeting

Glenn: In regards on when to do the levy I'm leaning towards May 2022 to get a real feel for how things are coming down to play. I would hope we could be prepared by then, and I think we need to go for enhanced services due to our growing community.

Paul: I did a little bit of research on past levy's and this is what I found: Nov. 2002 passed; Nov. 2006 failed; May 2007 failed; Nov. 2007 passed; May 2012 passed; Nov. 2017 passed.

Glenn: There is a lot more voter turnout it Nov.

Paul: I am not sure what else is on the ballot for these past years as that effects it as well.

Brad: The school district is working with Jesse to stagger the school districts ask with the city's ask.

Glenn: It would be a huge consideration as to what else would be on the ballot along with the levy.

Tammi: I think it is very important to poll public opinion. I agree seeking enhanced services is the right thing to do. We need to take into account the education factor, and allow more time to educate the public and not just take polls. The public would be willing to vote in the enhancement level if they understand what they're going to be paying for.

Paul: Has anyone heard anything from PCC or anyone else if they're planning on any operating levy?

Howard: Not sure about PCC. But my approach for the levy is a la carte, you put everything out a you get x,y,z; b you c & d etc. Let the patrons vote on a la carte, now you know what your voters say. Present 4-5 categories and let the patrons vote on them and you can really see what the patrons want. If we stay the same, we will actually be losing services, as costs go up we will have to diminish services.

Important to understand PCC, Metro, and School District etc. so you can give yourselves the best chance to be successful. Does anyone know when 50/50 rule doesn't take into effect? I think that rule doesn't fall in Nov.

Susan: My concern is continually falling behind, if we don't go for all of it. My

concern is the personnel issue, we have very few personnel for the amount of parks and rec services we have. We need to support them.

Aaron: I look at this from a slightly different perspective as my career is based in the recreation side not the parks side. I think Forest Grove doesn't fully understand the recreation they are missing. There are enterprise opportunities through recreation programs to offset some budgetary deficits. Going for an enhanced levy is the smart choice. I think you can add to parks by giving an opportunity for the recreation side to potentially fund a recreation supervisor that could bring in revenues that would help the department as a whole.

Question from Howard: Can you explain a little bit more on how that would work?

Aaron Answers: Yes, in my experience in McMinnville they started me out at a 32 hour a week job for 18 months and if I could make it a viable position that paid for itself I could stick around. I was able to accomplish that and turn it into a full time benefited position just through recreation classes and programs. The goal of every class and program was to bring in 120% of your expenses, to offset other costs and potentially subsidize other programs. Most cities on the west coast lean toward more of an enterprise model for recreation services. I believe this approach could benefit Forest Grove as a community and could be used to benefit other programs such as the parks, and other aspects of the department.

Question from Paul: Are guys suggesting that we need to go with a survey to start out with to see what people are most interested in and willing to pay for?

Howard Answers: It is really important to know what the patrons think. To kind of build off of what we did this summer with the recreation programs is put together a survey that has this is what we want in various areas and have that survey go out to the community and have a polling group do it. The school district reduced the budget down to a dollar and had a presentation with the different services reduced down, i.e. 65 cents goes to x etc. They did this in multiple meetings and were able to have a good understanding and ask good questions.

Tammi: As a voter having a line by line survey to know where my money is going is very helpful.

Malynda: Could someone give me a recap of the highlights of your discussion that I missed? I would like to be able to take back what this group is saying to the council on Monday. Where we are at from the last work session is we are going to hire a pollster and poll at 199 and that would be enhanced services, 204 would be the complete enhanced services. We could make up the difference through generating revenue or looking into other funding sources. We need to know the other rate we are going to poll, do we want to poll 184 which would maintain services or poll 160 which is our current levy, but it would reduce services. Another question that will come up on Monday is fees. Another way the city can make up some revenue is to adjust fees.

Howard: Gave a brief recap of the levy discussion that Malynda missed: Paul's past levies comment, Glenn's new houses comment, Susan's additional park space to take care of comment, Aaron's enterprise model comment, and Howard's a la carte comment.

Paul: A while back there was as parks improvement committee, does anyone member any specifics as to what was talked about?

Howard: When we were doing the parks master plan Susan and I met with a lot of community members and a lot of the community members were coming in and wanted more parks and recreation. At that time the city was talking about a new police station and a building for parks and recreation. Paul Downey came in and said the city only has so much that they can borrow. The number of support was in the 60's so you still have a large group that doesn't want their taxes to go up.

Aaron's comment on enterprise is something to look at really strongly.

Brad: It would be a good idea for Anne to potentially share at the next meeting that comprehensive parks and recreation overview. To get more information about what came out of that because that was a big process.

Malynda: We could get cliff notes from the needs assessment and make it more accessible for community members. In order to get enhanced services we are going to need to get creative and find other funding sources besides the levy. Coming out of Covid makes it a bad time to ask our community to pay more money.

Question from Howard: Was the 199 set because it was under 200?

Malynda Answers: That is one of the reasons. It was also the same increase that we did last time we did an increase.

Question from Howard: Rachael, does the parks and recreation have a website?

Rachael Answers: We do have parks and recreation on the city website. On Civic Rec we will be able to register through the site as we build recreation programs, and we will be able to reserve park shelters and things like that.

Question from Howard: A question for Aaron, in McMinnville is the stuff you are working on their website?

Aaron Answers: I do not work in McMinnville anymore but it was, yes. They also had a similar software to CivicRec that listed their programs.

Brad: It would be good to have information posted on the website about the process we went through before to be able to share with the voters.

Paul: If you go to the city's website and work your way through to the parks and rec department the master plan that came up is the 2016 plan. It is there and available it just takes a little bit to get to it.

Brad: It would be most effective if we were able to incorporate that information into a one page document.

Susan: I agree, it would give good perspective on where we are and where we want to go.

Howard: Good to show that we have followed what we set out to do in 2016.

Tammi: I love the idea of having more, but I think education is the piece and we need to be able to set out a vision to the voters. I think we all want enhanced services but a lot of people really can't afford more right now. Voters need to know what they are paying for.

Glenn: I agree, educating people is very important. We should lay out what we want and some emphasis put on what we have done with the amount of money we have. It costs more to do better. Important for people to know what we have

accomplished.

6. B/C COMMUNICATIONS:

a.) Update from Parks and Rec Director

I. Recreation Exploratory Committee (REC)

Tom (on behalf of Anne): Launched a recreation exploratory committee that had an initial meeting on October 11th that was attended by Forest Grove School District, City of Forest Grove, and City of Cornelius. Part of the meeting was to determine who else needs to be at these meetings. It was agreed that an invitation to participate should be given to Pacific University, Adelante Mujeres, Centro Cultural, Forest Grove and Cornelius's chamber of commerce's and the Forest Grove Senior and Community centers. These invitations have been made and been met with a very positive response. The committee is meeting next on October 25th. The REC was established to bring partners together to pursue establishing long term sustainable recreation services that positively contribute to the livability, health, and vitality of all members of the community. This committee is together to find ways to pursue continued active recreation opportunities in the City of Forest Grove and the local communities. Hoping to bring together a one year pilot project soon.

II. CivicRec Launch Party

Tom: Running a new program for the rec side of the house called CivicRec. We are going to have a launch partner the first week in November in the lobby of the Aquatic Center. We will have set times where staff members will be available in the lobby to help users set up accounts and get used to the site.

b.) Update from Parks Supervisor

I. Fire mitigation planning

Tom: We have been working with Erik Jacobs in forestry, the fire marshal, and Anne. Erik Jacobs has given us other resources, people to contact and some grant funding sources to pursue. Will continue to pursue this project even as we approach the rainy season.

Question from Susan: The fire mitigation, are we talking about using goats here?

Tom Answers: We are taking something probably a little more extreme than goats, the goats came in and did a nice job at Forest Glenn, but they are not taking out everything that needs to be taken out so we are looking into other methods of mitigation. May potentially be using equipment. Our focus right now for the program is inside the city limits with the current resources we have available.

Question from Brad: Do you have your new person on board yet?

Tom Answers: Yes, we brought on Katelyn Kirk and she is fitting into the team magnificently, and bringing new skills to the team.

c.) Update from Aquatics Supervisor

I. Staff recruitment

Rachael (on behalf of Sherri): Sherri is unable to be with us due to the ongoing

lifeguard shortage she is on the lifeguard stand tonight. We are currently registering for our Nov. lifeguard class and since she wrote this we have 3 registered so far. If you know anyone who would like to become a lifeguard definitely send them our way. We also started a new complete swimming class which has been a partnership with the Forest Grove Swim Club which we filled with 8 participants, and had a successful first day last night. As for swimming lessons all of our timeslots are almost completely full and we have lots of kids on the waiting list. Also on the recreation side we are doing a little spooktacular pool party which has also filled in less than a week.

Question from Paul: Can we have a little explanation on your spooktacular event?

Rachael Answers: Yes, that is on a no school day. It will be led by two of our lead guards, the first half will be craft time and the second half will be in the pool. The age range is 5-9 and we have 20 registered.

7. **STAFF COMMUNICATIONS:** None.

8. **COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT:**

MayInda: We are working on the levy. CCI has been offering quarterly town hall meetings. We are currently changing the sequence of the councils retreat and the annual town hall meeting. The council retreat will be in January when the annual town hall was and the town hall meeting will be moving to February. The goal with these changes is to make the meeting more accessible to our community and for them to get more out of the meeting and get better community feedback. We have to be careful that members of the commission only educate about the levy and don't advocate. CCI would be willing to do a QTM about the meeting.

Another exciting thing is about Fresh Foods. In their initial proposal they were going to have affordable housing on top of their building but council denied the affordable housing. The good news is that council is still okay with the food store (Fresh Foods). The housing portion is off the table but at this point the grocery store is still on the table.

There was a light and power increase that will go into effect in January.

9. **ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be held on Wednesday November 17th, 2021 via zoom.

10. **ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.