

**Parks Advisory Committee
February 12, 2007**

Members Present: Emily Schue, Merle Bottge, Marie Kennedy, Catherine Koehn and Johnny Medlin

Members Absent: Damien Gilbert

Staff Present: Todd Winter and Christine Johnson

Guests Present: Ollie Snowden, Director, Lane County Public Works, Howard Schuessler, Asst. Director, Lane County Public Works

Damien Gilbert, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

I. Announcements/Agenda Modifications

There were no announcements or agenda modifications.

II. Approval of Minutes – January 12, 2007 Parks Advisory Committee Meetings

Medlin asked that the minutes from the January 12, 2007 meeting be approved. Schue moved that the minutes be approved as submitted. Bottge seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous in favor.

III. Public Comment (Maximum of 20 Minutes)

There was no public comment at this time.

IV. Ridgeline Trail Overview – Jeff Krueger, LCOG

Jeff Krueger began by introducing himself. He's a Landscape Architect with the Lane Council of Governments. Mr. Krueger came here this evening with a brief presentation to let this Committee know what the Ridgeline Open Space Vision is, where they are, and where they are going. Mr. Krueger stated that he will probably be coming back to this Committee in about four or five months to request an endorsement. Most of the information in the PowerPoint presentation was included in the handout (Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision and Action Plan background draft), which everyone was given. Mr. Krueger said that because this project crosses so many jurisdictions, a partnership was formed which includes the Long Tom Watershed Council, the City of Eugene, McKenzie River Trust, Willamalane Park and Rec. District, the Nature Conservancy, and BLM. A Technical Assistance Grant was also received from the National Park Service. Mr. Krueger proceeded to describe the project area, which extends from the Orchard Point Park area on Fern Ridge Reservoir, then east following the ridgeline through the South Hills and the Spencer Butte area all the way to the Howard Buford Recreation Area.

Mr. Krueger said that one of the main goals in this effort is, as a group, taking all the partners and develop an open space vision similar to the Rivers to Ridges visioning process that occurred about three years ago. And then develop an action plan, which will rely heavily on the partners. They are currently in the start up phase of an 18-month process. Mr. Krueger went on to talk about what type of land and habitat makes up the project area as well as some of the history. They will be seeking endorsements, as the vision moves along, first from interest groups, then the Eugene City Council, Willamalane's Board, and the Board of County Commissioners.

More information is available on LCOG's website. Medlin thanked Mr. Krueger and asked if the Committee had any further questions. There were a few including what was the ultimate goal of this plan and Mr. Krueger said that it was implementation of the vision as well as preservation of declining habitats along the project corridor. Another question was about parking areas near the access points to the trail, particularly in neighborhoods. Mr. Krueger said that where space was available, additional parking would be established that would follow certain design and placement standards but in neighborhoods, the access points would in most cases be used by people that lived in the area and could access the trail on foot.

V. Possible Reallocation of the Car Rental Tax

Winter stated that the County has started the budget process early because of the possibility that Public Law 106 (Secure Rural Schools) will not be reauthorized. Lane County's General Fund relies heavily on this money. Dept. Manager's have been asked to prepare two budgets, one for if PL 106 is reauthorized and another for if it doesn't. If PL 106 is not reauthorized, part of the recommendation from the Dept. Manager's to the Board is to reallocate the Car Rental Tax into the General Fund. Lane County Parks does qualify for Transient Room Tax money because of our campgrounds and we are eligible for about \$400,000 from TRT, which we could use to backfill loss of over \$900,000 (about 44% of our budget) from CRT. But it still means a loss of over \$500,000. Winter went on to say that Park's challenge is to determine what effect that loss would have on Parks – he estimates that we would lose about 10 FTE, which would then mean park closures. Winter will be going to the Finance and Audit Committee on February 22, 2007 with some recommendations, which include increasing the per person fee at Camp Lane, contracting out minor maintenance functions, and charging an admission fee at all parks all year round. Schue asked how we would collect these fees. Winter said that we would make season passes and single day use passes available at more locations. Pay tubes would be added where needed and we would continue to use the VenTek machines we currently have.

Winter said that some of the park closures would include Ada Park near Florence, the Rock Dock in the Dunes National Forest, Siuslaw Falls, and the Vaughn Recreation Area down on Dorena Reservoir, Blue Mountain Park, Wildwood Falls, Lasells Stewart and Fall Creek Park. We would also lose the ability to pay the Caretaker at Mt. Pisgah, or continue trail maintenance there except for what is done from the Adopt-A-Trail program. Above Hendricks Bridge we would like to be able to keep the boat ramps open by possibly contracting out the maintenance, otherwise we lose a lot of MAP funds we receive from OSMB. Armitage Park would remain open and we would proceed with the construction of the new campground, as it will be a big revenue generator. At Fern Ridge we would close Zumwalt except for the Oregon Country Fair and we would be asking them to prep the sight. Perkins Peninsula would be closed, the day use area at Orchard Point, and possibly the day use at Richardson. We could keep Richardson day use open if we could contract out the mowing. Winter said that at this point there are so many unknowns. However, reallocation of the Car Rental Tax would require a Public Hearing before it can be reallocated.

Ollie Snowden added that during the meeting of the Dept. Heads, he made an argument for Parks but when it comes down to feeding babies (WIC program) and keeping the bad guys in jail (Sheriff's jail space), parks just can't win – it was an 11 to 2 vote against parks. Winter said that he also suspended the interview process for the vacant Parks Superintendent position and let the applicants know that it was on hold. Winter is asking this Committee to endorse his recommendation going to the F & A Committee. Bottge reviewed for clarification that we will be leaving the campgrounds open because they generate revenue, we would be closing some of the reservable picnic areas, but not all and we are hoping to charge admission fees at all park sites all year round. It is either charge at the parks or close the parks. Winter said he will be

trying to maintain quality while reducing quantity given the staff reductions and the budget we have left.

Motion: Bottge moved that this Committee endorse Option No. 1 of the proposal going before the Finance and Audit Committee as presented with the addition of exploring the feasibility of establishing a fee zone for commercial use of the boat ramps along the McKenzie River. Koehn seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous in favor.

VI. Division Manager's Report – Todd Winter, Division Manager

• **Vacant PAC Position Process -- Update:** After interviews were conducted, a recommendation made and a Board packet prepared to go before the Board, the Commissioners decided that they would like to take a look at standardizing the selection process for vacant advisory committee positions. Jim Polston, our recommendation to fill the vacant position on this Committee, was informed that selection process has been put on hold until the Board has a chance to discuss it, possibly in April. Both Gilbert and Schue, who both have elected to serve another term, will be allowed to continue as well until such time as the Board comes to a decision. Snowden added that with the PL 106 situation, the Board may decide to discontinue a number of the committees.

• **Wildish Property – Update:** With the budget situation the way it is, Lane County will no longer be taking the lead role in the acquisition of the Wildish Property. A Memorandum of Understanding is being drafted to allow the Nature Conservancy to take over the lead. Lane County will continue to work on due-diligence with the appraisal. The County has hired an appraiser to conduct an independent appraisal, and County staff is working with Wildish's appraiser to review the assumptions made in their initial appraisal. Winter will keep this Committee updated as this process proceeds.

• **Other:** Winter would like this Committee to play a more active role in prioritizing some of our Capital Projects – especially if the CRT gets reallocated – and possibly holding some public hearings. Bottge asked if the CRT gets reallocated will it delay the completion of the Parks new master plan. Winter said no, that we will be putting some SDC funds towards finishing it as soon as possible.

VII. Good of the Order/Concerns of the Committee

Nothing was presented for the Good of the Order.

VIII. Adjournment:

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:05 p.m.

Submitted by Christine Johnson, Secretary