

MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, April 5, 2011
Assembly Chambers, 6PM

I. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chris Mertl, Dixie Hood, Jim King, Ray Howard, Kate Walters, Jeff Wilson

Members Absent: Odin Brudie, Melissa Goldstein, Jeff Sloss

Assembly Liaison: Bob Doll

Staff Liaison: Brent Fischer, Parks & Recreation Director; Jessica Beck, Administrative Assistant II; Sheila Fisher, Recreation Superintendent; Merrill Jensen, Jensen-Olson Arboretum Manager; George Schaaf, Parks & Landscape Superintendent; Gary Gillette, Port Engineer

II. PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS – none

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Mr. Mertl motioned to approve. Approved.

IV. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A. March 23, 2011 – Ms. Hood motioned to approve. Approved.

V. REPORT FROM ASSEMBLY LIAISON

Mr. Doll stated the Assembly is beginning to review the biennial budget. The biggest concern in the budget is the use of head tax funds for port facilities and private docks. The Assembly is going to hold an election to replace Assembly Member Anderson on Monday night. Ms. Hood asked if there were any PRAC related items on the budget. Mr. Doll said he hasn't seen any. The CIP list will also be reviewed. If there are PRAC specific things on the CIP list, he would like to know about them. Mr. Mertl said one of his concerns is money for maintenance of old and new facilities.

VI. CHAIR REPORT

Mr. Wilson welcomed Mr. Fischer at the new Parks & Recreation Director.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Fischer said it is a pleasure to become the Director and take on this committee. He has been working for the CBJ for 17 years. First he worked at Centennial Hall as the supervisor, then moved to Facilities Maintenance, and now as Director. He is very passionate about Parks & Recreation and is excited to be here.

There is one action item on the PRAC Agenda:

A. Marine Park/Seawalk/Under-the-Bridge Park: One of the planning efforts stemming from the 2004 Long Range Waterfront Plan was the expansion and enhancements to the Marine Park area and creation of a Seawalk. The PRAC has been involved with the developing plans since July of 2010. More recently, another presentation was made by Skye Stekoll at the March 2011 meeting. This project is in conjunction with Docks & Harbors.

Information Items:

A. Bathroom proposal at Hank Harmon Rifle Range: Volunteers Kathy McCasland and Mal Menzies will make a presentation on the proposed permanent restroom at the Hank Harmon Rifle Range. The current portable restroom is used by range users as well as hikers, bikers, skiers and others.

B. 16B, Statter Harbor and Douglas Harbor update: Port Engineer, Gary Gillette will be making a presentation and answering questions regarding the Downtown Cruise Docks (16B), Douglas Harbor rebuild, Statter Harbor Launch Ramp and their plans for a Marine Services/Maritime Museum building at the Under-the-Bridge site.

- C. Dimond Park Aquatic Center: Recreation Superintendent, Sheila Fisher will be giving us an update on the progress of the Dimond Park Aquatic Center, which will include scheduling, employee hiring status, pricing and opening dates.
- D. Jensen-Olson Arboretum: JOA Manager, Merrill Jensen will give us a report of the past year at the Jensen-Olson Arboretum and dates for upcoming events.
- E. Upcoming PRAC Retreat: General discussion to prepare for this year's retreat, including a review of past goals and deciding a tentative date and location.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Marine Park, Under the Bridge Park and Seawalk Development and Interim Under-the-Bridge Park Treatment

Mr. Wilson stated there is a memorandum from the Director. Last month CBJ Engineering gave a presentation. The recommendation by Mr. Fischer states "I recommend the following: 1) Request the CBJ Assembly to schedule funding for Seawalk projects both at Marine Park and Bridge Park. 2) Support the Phase I Bridge Park Plan of improvements (grass playing areas, foot paths, picnic tables, lighting, small shelter, and small playground for young children. 3) Marine Park is the cultural link between Downtown and the waterfront. Support the removal and/or relocation of the Marine Park shelter. Develop Marine Park into open public space that maximizes public opportunities, views and security. Provide picnic tables, a seasonal shelter facility, and historic displays and information for both residents and visitors. 4) Connect Marine Park into the North and South Seawalk components." Ms. Hood wrote a letter she would like to be used as a cover letter to the memorandum. Ms. Hood motioned to move to the Assembly the staff recommendation with the cover letter attached. Approved.

IX. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Bathroom Proposal at Hank Harmon Rifle Range

Mr. Menzies gave a proposal for a permanent bathroom at the rifle range. Their current plastic facility will be replaced with a permanent concrete block, metal construction facility. It would be in the same location. The present facility was placed there by Parks and Recreation. It is the hopes of the Friends of NRA and Juneau Rifle Range that they are able to put in a men's and women's facility. If not, they would put in a unisex facility that includes a urinal. They have put in for several grants and received approximately 1/3 of the funding so far for two facilities. They are still seeking funds for the larger facility and hope to have enough by mid summer. Ms. Hood asked if this was on the CBJ CIP list. Mr. Menzies said no, they prepare their own budget. They have requested it be on the CIP list in the past but never received any money for it. They have most of the money needed for a single facility. They are trying to get more for two facilities. Ms. Hood asked if the users of the range are helping with closing the range at the end of the day. Mr. Menzies said there is a caretaker who opens and closes the range. Once the bathroom is completed, Parks and Recreation would maintain the bathroom and the pumping of the vault. Mr. Mertl thinks it's a great facility and is in support of anything to improve the rifle range. Mr. Wilson supports it and hopes that they work closely with staff on the project. If they would like PRAC to write a letter of support to help get funding, they can contact Mr. Fischer.

B. 16B, Statter Harbor and Douglas Harbor – Update

Mr. Gillette gave an update on Docks and Harbors projects related to the PRAC.

Downtown Cruise Docks: They are currently working on the Port/Customs Building which is scheduled to be complete in April. In October the contractors will tear out the existing Visitors Center and Customs Building. They will fill the open area with decking and will construct a plaza and new Visitors Center ready for spring of 2012. In October 2012 they will begin the Staging and Parking Reconfiguration project, also replacing the deck behind the tram. The Floating Berths project, beginning in October 2013 will be completed in two phases. Funding for these last two phases still has to be determined. Mr. Mertl said there is controversy over the Fisherman's Memorial. Mr. Gillette said they had objections to the floating berths coming in front of the memorial. They thought the area on the floating dock would be good because then they would be right at the waters edge but the Alaska Commercial Fisherman's

Memorial Board did not agree. Now they would like to move the Fisherman's Memorial further down the dock. They cannot do that because they would not have good enough clearances for vessels. They are now looking at different options and asking the private owners if they will work with them. Mr. Merti asked if the Storis Maritime Museum was still an option. Mr. Gillette said that's not an option anymore because it's not economically feasible. They are still working with them but a lot of other issues still arise. Getting it in the area and then removing it every few years would not work but grounding it may be an option. Mr. King asked if there was going to be a bond issue that we vote on. Mr. Gillette said that is something Mr. Duncan, the Finance Director, is currently working on. He doesn't believe there is going to be a bond that has to be voted on because most of it is funded by cruise passenger fees from the state. Mr. Gillette said the intent is for the floating docks to be open to the public when the ships aren't there.

Douglas Harbor Rebuild: It is still in limbo due to the mercury issue. All of their studies so far show that there is no issue with dredging the harbor and dumping it into the channel. There are no human consumption problems with the levels in the area. EPA has objected to the dumping in the channel. Mr. King asked if any of the mercury would end up in the refuge. Mr. Gillette said it's hard to see where any of the mercury is coming from and it may already be in the refuge. The mercury is naturally occurring. It is at a level less than any threshold that would concern any studies done around the world. They have spent \$600,000 over the past 3-4 years to study this. Their other option is to go to an upland facility. They would have to put it in a liner and cover it over. That costs \$2 million more than the other option. Another option would be to build a dike by the yacht club and fill it in to create usable land. That's \$2-2.5 million more than disposing it in the channel. The projects costs including disposing it in the channel are currently \$6 million and hauling it out of state would be an additional \$7-8 million.

Statter Harbor Launch Ramp: The project is currently in the environmental assessment phase. In a month or two they will work on the permitting. Another phase will include removing DeHarts and replacing it at Statter Harbor. Another project they are currently in the design phase of is repairs to the existing Statter Harbor. The plan currently includes a shelter for whale watching and other activities but it is relocated to a different location than the current one.

Marine Services/ Maritime Museum Building: They are contracting with an architectural firm to design a building for the area. The museum was an interpretive area but now it is more of a maritime museum. They are looking into if the space is big enough to handle office space and a museum. The building has to have a 3,500 sq. ft. footprint but it may have many levels.

C. Dimond Park Aquatic Center – Update

Ms. Fisher, Recreation Superintendent, gave an update on the Dimond Park Aquatic Center. They are hoping to have the facility turned over to the CBJ within the week to start moving equipment and staff into the building. The staff has had training on the retractable bleachers, slides and mechanics. The aquatic manager left in the middle of February and Ms. Fisher took over that role. Kathrin Millhorn is now the new Aquatic Manager. She will take over full time in June. Daniel Chase is the new Dimond Park Aquatic Center Manager. They are without a permanent Augustus Brown Manager. They have several positions open, including head guards, lifeguards, a building custodian and an administrative assistant. Employees will be cross-trained to work at both facilities. A ribbon cutting ceremony with refreshments, tours and music will be held on May 21st. A soft opening with limited hours will happen on May 23rd-June 3rd to get staff used to operating the facility. On June 4th a Grand Opening will occur. It will be a free swim day. There will be several swim sessions to get lots of people in the facility as there are capacity limits for each pool. The people waiting to use the facility will be able to go over to Thunder Mountain High School where there will be a DJ and other activities. They are still looking at a 70% cost recovery during the first year. Kinks still being worked out with the ground source heat pumps and they should be working by the end of the week. Mr. Wilson said this is the first pool in the nation using ground source heat pumps. Ms. Fisher said they have currently sold 35 season passes. Mr. Wilson asked about the attendants being at the top and bottom of the slide. Ms. Fisher said they do

need someone at the bottom in case the person gets into trouble and they need someone at the top telling people when to go. They are going to look into it and it is possible that they can hire attendants for the top at a lower rate than lifeguards. Mr. Fischer thanked Ms. Fisher for all her hard work with getting the new Dimond Park Aquatic Center open and dealing with the different issues as they have arisen.

D. Jensen-Olson Arboretum – Year in Review

Mr. Jensen, Arboretum Manager, said that spring is here and everything at the arboretum is about to break loose. Over the last year they had over 4,500 visitors from 44 states, 14 countries and 15 Alaskan communities. He has been working on the Plant Collections and Acquisitions Policy. He would like to have the largest primrose collection on the continent but still has a way to go. May 28th will be Alaska Public Gardens Day. The Primrose Festival is usually mid-May but it depends on the weather. There will also be volunteer work days. Two projects they are working on this year are creating a small fruits trial area, and getting control of the woodland garden area. They are going to dismantle the old fence surrounding the vegetable garden and replace it with a cedar picket fence, purchased by the Juneau Garden Club. The Rotary Club will install it. He has an intern from UAS this year who will be working on the new Alaska native beds that have been created. Of the 100 invasive plants listed in Alaska, the arboretum has 29 of them. She will also work on surveying and mapping them. They are still waiting to hear if they have received any funding from STIP/TRAAK Grants for an interpretive center and new parking area. Mr. Mertl asked if it was possible to change the name to “botanical garden” because it’s not really an arboretum. Mr. Jensen said he has brought that up before but it will not be changed because it is what Caroline wanted to name it. An arboretum is a garden that is specifically designed for the study of trees and woody shrubs. Mr. Mertl asked if there was possibility of expanding. Mr. Jensen said there is a little area that goes down towards Peterson Bridge. The area is currently an alder wetland area. Mr. Wilson asked if he coordinated with the Landscape division to use their greenhouse. Mr. Jensen said he doesn’t because they are already over capacity. They are starting their 5th season this year.

George Schaaf gave an update on Parks & Landscape. The Melvin Park covered playground is going forward. Michele Elfers from Engineering has been helping. The design hasn’t changed. They added gutters to the project. The Capital Park play structures are going to be installed on June 15th. They have bike racks that are going to be installed around town. The Under Thunder Pathway will be seeing more work soon. It could potentially be finished all the way to Egan Drive. They are starting work on the Outer Point Trail improvements. They are also working on the planning and permitting of an ORV park.

E. Upcoming PRAC Retreat

Mr. Fischer said that the Dimond Park Aquatic Center may be a possibility as a location. It depends what day the retreat is held. Mr. Wilson said the PRAC Retreat is normally on a Saturday but he would really like to have it on a Tuesday this year. Mr. Fischer said that if it’s during the week it should probably work at the DPAC but it won’t work on a Saturday because they will be doing training at the facility. Ms. Hood said she prefers a Saturday morning, rather than a Tuesday. Mr. Howard said that people start losing enthusiasm after work on a Tuesday and Saturday may be a better day. Mr. Wilson said that tying up a Saturday in May could be an issue. Mr. Mertl said he likes Tuesday afternoon. Ms. Hood said that she believes that once a year people can give up a Saturday morning for the PRAC Retreat. Mr. Howard and Ms. Walters agreed. Mr. King said that Saturday works for him. Mr. Wilson and Mr. Mertl said that Tuesday works better for family outings on Saturdays. Mr. Fischer said that if it’s on a Saturday the DPAC would not be a possible location. Mr. Wilson suggested Tuesday May 10th as a date for the retreat. Ms. Hood motioned to hold the PRAC Retreat on Saturday, May 7th. Ms. Walters said she enjoys having it on a Saturday. Mr. Howard is concerned that if the retreat is on a Tuesday there wouldn’t be enough time to cover all the topics they need to. Mr. Wilson added a friendly amendment to email everyone to see if Saturday May 7th works or if a Tuesday would work better. Ms. Hood said that would be okay as long as it’s not left open for everyone to vote again. Approved. Mr.

Fischer said he would have to look at a place to hold the retreat if it's on a Saturday. Tentatively May 7th has been decided and Mr. Wilson will send an email out tomorrow to see when everyone is available. Mr. Mertl suggested looking at the Comprehensive Plan to see what items are in there. Mr. Wilson suggested that PRAC dedicate one meeting to each of the different plans and get a summary of each one.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Youth Activities Board: Jeff Sloss – absent

B. State Parks Board: Jim King – The new State Parks Director came to the last meeting. He is interested in building more cabins and getting better access to some of the parks. Three cabins are going to be built this summer, one of which will be handicap accessible. They are also rebuilding the ground floor of the Wickersham House this summer.

C. Lands Committee: Jeff Wilson – The CBJ received land that has four communication towers on and they are reviewing the leases for the towers. They had a report for the Affordable Housing Coordinator for funding for FY12. The Juneau Watershed Partnership is going to do a conservation plan for Peterson Hill by Auke Lake.

D. Juneau Urban Forestry Partnership: Chris Mertl – They meet on the 22nd and they are putting out a new brochure called 'Plant a Tree'. They were at the Home Show. Arbor Day Celebration is coming up on May 14th. They are going to give away free trees. A second event will be on the third Monday in May at Evergreen Cemetery with 4 classes from Harborview Elementary. Earth Day is Saturday April 23rd at the Mendenhall Glacier.

E. Aquatic Facilities Advisory Board: Melissa Goldstein – absent. Ms. Hood asked about writing a letter to the Aquatic Facilities Advisory Board regarding the exercise equipment. Mr. Wilson suggested waiting for 6 months or so until after the facility is open and we see how it runs.

F. Jensen-Olson Arboretum Advisory Board: Kate Walters – nothing

G. Docks & Harbors Board: Dixie Hood – They have a meeting coming up in a couple weeks.

H. Playful Cities USA: Kate Walters – nothing

I. Trail Mix, Inc.: Ray Howard – Trail Mix has a newly appointed Executive Director. Mr. Howard is on a fundraising committee and they are looking at sponsoring some bridges at Eaglecrest. National Trails Day will be coordinated with the Forest Service at the Mendenhall Glacier in June.

XI. CORRESPONDENCE – none

XII. CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS – none

XIII. BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Mertl – The trees in Evergreen Cemetery are getting big and declining. This would be a great opportunity to look at a Master Plan for the cemetery and looking at the trees.

Ms. Hood – Would like to invite Joe Geldhof regarding the Storis Project.

Mr. King – He was at the Forest Service Science Symposium in Cordova during the last meeting. He was the only person who could tell about a project before the 1964 earthquake.

Ms. Walters – There's a lot of cuttings from trees at Cope Park.

Mr. Wilson – Thanked PRAC. The agendas are getting fuller. He wants to keep up the pace and he appreciates everyone's patience. He also thanked the Assembly Liaison.

XIV. NEXT MEETING – PRAC Retreat

XV. ADJOURNMENT: 9:34pm, Mr. Mertl motioned. Approved.