

I. Call to Order

A regular session of the Gresham Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Drechsler on the 28th of September 2020, at 6:34 PM online via Zoom. The meeting was digitally recorded and minutes prepared by Jennifer McGinnis.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Paul Drechsler, Chair
Richard Anderson, Vice-Chair
Mike Bennett
Jef Kaiser
Sue Ruonala
Laura Pramuk
Phil Wich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Katherine Kelly, Planning & Implementation Manager
David Berniker, Urban Design & Planning Director
Tina Osterink, Natural Resources Planner
Steve Fancher, Director of Environmental Services
Amanda Lunsford, Administrative Analyst
Kevin McConnell, Senior City Attorney
Jim Wheeler, Development Planning Manager

COUNCIL LIAISONS PRESENT: Councilor Hinton

COUNCIL LIAISONS ABSENT: Councilor Widmark

II. Parks Concept Plans

Steve Fancher provided an overview of the undeveloped parks Council Work Plan project, which consists of planning for six undeveloped parks in Gresham. Mr. Fancher explained that they will be looking at the future of the parks system and exploring improvements for these sites. They have been working with the community and talking to people in the nearby neighborhoods to see what they want. Mr. Fancher described the project as a multi-year effort. He said that in 2020, they will be focusing on concept planning for the six undeveloped parks in addition to talking about potential improvements and identifying funding sources. He said that concept

plans are key because without them, it is difficult for community groups and the City to go after funding. Concept plans provide a vision and high-level cost estimate. He said that parks are challenged in Gresham due to their small budget.

In 2021, the next phase will be to identify future funding sources and conduct a feasibility study that will prioritize projects for funding. He said that there will be local share money coming from Metro. After that will be the master planning phase where the concept plans are taken to the next level of detail prior to construction. He described the current phase as being a high-level community discussion to identify desired improvements and understand maintenance needs and costs. He said this phase is not for project prioritization, creating an implementation plan, or allocating funding.

Mr. Fancher then recommended forming an advisory group as part of an equitable and inclusive strategy. This group would look at the funding feasibility study as well as the Parks & Recreation Master Plan update. He said the local share of the bond measure is to be spent on projects that provide access to nature and the advisory group could help them figure out how to prioritize projects for that money. Mr. Fancher said that the key questions for Council regarding the Advisory Group are:

- How many members should be in the group?
- How should the members be chosen?
- Should members be provided a stipend? If so, how much?

He added that there should be diverse participants including youth, neighborhoods, people of color, nonprofits, businesses, schools, planning commission, finance, council and staff. He said that there should also be more synergy between playgrounds and city parks, as this could enhance facilities at schools. Mr. Fancher then went over the funding feasibility study. He said that there are numerous options for mechanisms to enhance park services in Gresham, including creating a parks district, bonds, levies, and increasing and/or restructuring the Police, Fire, and Parks fee.

Tina Osterink went over the details of concept planning and described the goals, which include providing access for underserved communities, looking at future growth areas and how parks can help mitigate redevelopment pressure, catalyzing economic development, and strengthening community identity. There are a total of six undeveloped parks: Two parks are community parks that are meant to serve the entire city and four are neighborhood parks that are smaller and meant to serve those within walking or biking distance.

She said the process was initiated by Council in 2016 to identify improvements, which was elevated by the Planning Commission and Kelley Creek Neighborhood Association. Ms. Osterink said that park development has not kept pace with population growth in the City. She explained that the scope of this project is to explore and create high level designs, understand costs, and engage the community. She said that focus areas were determined by conducting analysis on people of color, limited English speakers, and those with limited income. She said that communities of color have historically not been actively engaged in investment decisions and

that the demographics of the City have changed significantly since adoption of the 2009 parks plan.

She then described the three community engagement phases:

- Phase 1: This phase happened last fall and included creation of 6 on-site parks concept plans, 2 online parks surveys, 4 neighborhood park questionnaires, a series of meetings with individual Neighborhood Associations as well as the Coalition of Neighborhood Associations.
- Phase 2: This phase happened last fall and included open house events last fall, where participants weighed in on the location of amenities. This phase also included a Council listening session in January.
- Phase 3: This phase included targeted outreach with Community Based Organizations using an online storymap tool provided throughout the summer in both English and Spanish. This phase involved youth, seniors, and special needs groups.

Feedback received from the community included direction to keep parks safe, protect habitat, consider ongoing maintenance, parking, accessible trails, and pollinator habitat, and to make targeted investments so everyone can enjoy the benefits.

Ms. Osterink then went over the Concept Plan Report, which included park evaluations, details about community engagement, cost assessment, analysis and design with maps of adjacent properties, existing conditions, and zone diagrams for active and passive amenities. The undeveloped parks in the Concept Plan included:

- Southwest Community Park, the largest undeveloped park of the group, located in the Centennial neighborhood. This park is envisioned as a wetland complex.
- Southeast Community Park, a 16-acre park in the Kelley Creek neighborhood
- East Gresham Park, a 7-acre park in the Powell Valley neighborhood. Ideas for this park include a range of passive recreation, such as a contemplative forest walking experience.
- Jenne Butte, a 15-acre park in the Southwest Neighborhood. Suggested future improvements to this park included a wetland viewpoint, play area, dog park, and pollinator garden.
- Southeast Neighborhood Park, a 6.5-acre park in the Kelley Creek neighborhood. Suggested future improvements to this park included activities and amenities near the existing entrance, a nature play area, lawn, accessible trail, wetland viewpoint, play area, crushed rock path, and dog waste station.
- Columbia View, a 7-acre park in the Wilkes East neighborhood. Suggested future improvements to this park included a nature play area, picnic shelter, community garden, dog park, accessible trail network, courts, and passive recreation to take advantage of the views of Columbia Gorge. Feedback from nearby neighbors resulted in two key points: they want the park to be kept in a natural state with limited upgrades and wanted staff to consider eliminating the courts and picnic shelter or move them closer to the school.

Ms. Osterink stated that the next step is a policy development session with City Council on October 20th to discuss the proposed Community Parks advisory group. She stated that the topics for discussion in this session will include how members should be chosen and the scope of the group.

Public Testimony

Carol Rulla: 5162 SE 28th Dr, Gresham, OR 97080: Ms. Rulla thanked staff for their work on the project and the Commission for allowing public comment after the presentation. She stated that she was pleased the City is looking at doing a feasibility study. She suggested open recruitment to allow for the group to be representative, in addition to identifying some groups to target such as Mt. Hood Community College. She also encouraged the City to formally adopt the plans at some point. She added that the project is about bringing the opportunity to add amenities to undeveloped parks so that they can be at the same level as developed parks. She stated that the Kelley Creek Neighborhood has had a lot of development since System Development Charges for parks were added and has put in a lot of money but hasn't seen the benefits yet. She added that Powell Valley also pushed for this project and that it is very important for people in southeast Gresham.

Commissioner Wich stated that he thinks it should be a requirement for members of the advisory group to either own a business or be a member within the area.

Commissioner Pramuk stated that the neighborhood associations should have a heavy hand in membership of the advisory group. She stated that they should be given the opportunity to nominate someone as well as people who live in the neighborhoods. She said that stipends may not be a good idea since there are a lot of advisory groups. She likes the idea of open recruitment but wants to get feedback from people who participated in the surveys and other outreach to see if they want to nominate someone. Lastly, Commissioner Pramuk stated that terms should be limited so that membership changes every couple of years.

Commissioner Kaiser stated that the problem with the Green Ribbon Task Force was that it was so big it was unwieldy, so the ability to manage the group should be considered. He asked if it would be a task force or an advisory committee. He recommended a partnership with the school districts, as a fair amount of money is invested in creating natural and outdoor experience for schools. He asked if the group would be specifically for undeveloped parks or for all Gresham parks. Mr. Fancher responded that the group would help with a number of items such as prioritizing undeveloped parks for funding, examining funding feasibility, and looking at the overall parks master plan. Commissioner Kaiser stated that he recommends a manageable task force assigned to specific problems, with an overarching committee.

Commissioner Bennett agreed that there should be a residency or service requirement. He added that one of the issues with selecting members is the need to have some financial advisement from the community because the project could substantially hit the budget. Mr. Fancher responded that he was envisioning outside additional financial assistance for the feasibility study. Commissioner Bennett suggested recruiting a finance committee member to

support and be on the advisory group. He stated that school districts have good input but that should be tempered with what the community needs because they don't always align. He added that neighborhood groups are a good resource. He said that committees should have seven members or less in order to be productive. There is more input with more members, but at least one or two leaders are needed to filter the information.

Commissioner Ruonala suggested a working group that would bring in interested parties. She agreed with open recruitment in addition to having a City Council member select one or two members. She suggested Lee Dayfield and Carol Rulla in addition to new people. She agreed that members should be residents or business owners in the city. She stated that she agrees with Commissioner Pramuk about stipends.

Commissioner Anderson agreed that members should be residents or business owners and positions should be filled by open recruitment but with targeted outreach. He added that he thinks someone from Planning Commission and the Finance Committee should be involved. He thinks there should be no more than 11-13 members. He does not think a stipend should be offered because the whole budget would be spent paying people. Commissioner Drechsler echoed the sentiment to limit membership and stated that he agrees with a residency requirement. He said that there are a lot of ways the task force can grow and there is room for a longer standing group, but not for the initial effort.

Commissioner Bennett noted that community gardens were suggested in several parks, which can lead to maintenance problems. He cautioned against including amenities that may become a deterrent due to poor maintenance. He stated that the processes for the development of the Center for the Arts Plaza, Gradin Sports Park, and improvements to Main City Park would be beneficial to look at.

Commissioner Wich asked what criteria would be used to determine the prioritization of parks. Mr. Fancher responded that he envisioned the advisory group helping to determine the criteria used for prioritization. He explained that they would typically look at available grant opportunities and base the project around the grant's criteria. However, for this project, they know they have money coming in so they need a process to prioritize projects based on need. Commissioner Wich stated that neighborhoods that don't have SDCs need to get funding in some other way. Commissioner Ruonala asked how it will be decided where the Metro money goes and if it will go to areas that are low-income or deficient. Mr. Fancher responded that the final criteria hasn't been released by Metro for how projects can qualify. He added that this is expected to be completed in October. The intent is for cities to have a public process with a list of projects. This will first be approved by City Council then Metro Council. The only information he has now is that the projects need to provide access to nature and there is a preference for meeting the needs of underserved communities.

Ms. Osterink explained that SDCs were implemented in the early 2000s. Mr. Fancher added that other parks were created before this, but there was more of a focus on the police and fire departments through the years, so the parks budget has been stretched thinner. Commissioner

Ruonala asked if land can be donated by the developer as part of planning a larger development since they are adding people. Ms. Osterink responded that sometimes a certain portion of new development is required to be designated as parkland, but usually SDCs are required instead because of how the methodology was adopted. Mr. Fancher added that land acquisition is identified in the SDC methodology. He added that there are some areas identified in Pleasant Valley and Springwater. He further explained that when a development comes in, the developer exchanges land for SDC credits. Mr. Berniker stated that this methodology was adopted to promote equity in park locations. Ms. Osterink added that the 2009 Master Plan found that in order to meet the needs of a population of 112,000 people, the City needs to add 88 acres of community park land and 81 acres of neighborhood park land in order to meet basic needs.

Commissioner Ruonala stated that the City hasn't prioritized parks or acquiring land for parks. If they don't preserve land, it will be developed as residential. Commissioner Pramuk agreed with Commissioner Ruonala and said that there are communities that have rules in the code about developing a certain percentage of land as parks per certain number of residential units. She asked for elaboration on the concerns neighbors expressed about the development of Columbia View Park. Ms. Osterink responded that the neighbors didn't want amenities too close to their backyards. They wanted to preserve natural areas while adding access. Ms. Osterink added that there is history with a disc golf course causing issues in the neighborhood. Mr. Fancher added that there is hesitance to development from those living near the parks because amenities may bring new people in. He said they need to find positive voices because the parks serve more than those that live right next door. He stated that there will be a group that fights against any changes so they need to come up with a strategy because most parks are a huge asset and raise property values. Commissioner Pramuk stated that there are legitimate concerns about crime and outreach and discussions with neighbors about those kind of concerns are needed. Mr. Berniker stated that they want to think strategically about nearby existing amenities and find where they can work together.

Commissioner Bennett asked if the parks will be designed for partial build out. Mr. Fancher and Mr. Berniker said yes. Ms. Osterink responded that capital grants will come with the bond in addition to the local share. Part of the advisory group's responsibilities will be to look at all funding options. Commissioner Bennett stated that there is precedent for requiring land to be donated by developers and they could look at adding this to the code. Mr. Fancher responded that there is an open space requirement but sometimes they would rather have the money if a park should be developed elsewhere. Commissioner Bennett suggested to start by looking at City-owned properties and assemble a list of properties over an acre. Chair Drechsler stated that he understands wanting cash, but if it is developable in future, there could be a preference to land bank. He stated that preserving land is preferred by him unless it is undevelopable.

Chair Drechsler added that they need to seek out the youth and parent perspective since they are going to be using the facilities. He stated that he noticed a recurring theme is nature play but he thinks the City lacks good play structures and would prefer those over nature play. Ms. Osterink responded that this idea came from the community. Mr. Fancher added that Main City

Park has the oldest playground set in their inventory and it is due for replacement. The replacement will be good for all age groups. He agreed that nature play is costly to replace compared to other playground structures.

Mr. Berniker said that they need to consider the individual resource and that some of these areas have amazing environmental habitat that should be preserved. The next question is where and how to allow active recreation. They have heard from the community that they just want the parks to be cleaned up. They are trying to elevate the nature of undeveloped parks and prepared the concept plans to set the stage for further conversation and find synergies.

Chair Drechsler stated that there is bias on how they get input in that the outreach tends to cater to homeowners and people who have time, not necessarily the demographic that will heavily use the amenities. Mr. Berniker responded that he agrees but also that the parks effort is one of their better efforts in terms of outreach. He stated that the change in leadership may lead to a greater understanding of the importance of having a more transparent dialogue with community. He agreed that they should reach out to children. Ms. Osterink added that they have had a lot of success with their recent engagement efforts reaching out to communities of color and that they could look at a community liaison model. Chair Drechsler said that it is an opportunity to be creative and this is a start.

IV. Other Business/Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Chairperson

Recording Assistant

Date

Date

A full recording of this meeting is available upon request.