M I N U T E S

Mayor's Advisory Committee–Parks, Recreation and Open Space Comprehensive Plan
Public Works Maintenance--Large Conference Room
1820 Roosevelt Boulevard, Eugene, Oregon

November 5, 2003
7 p.m.

PRESENT: Nancy Nathanson, Chair; Steve Johnson, Cynthia Girling, Linda Swisher, Dan Arkin, Art Farley, Corey Dingman, Roxie Cuellar, Merle Bottge, Dale Berg, Terry Leary, Avishai Schermerhorn, members; Renee Grube, Tim Patrick, Library, Recreation, and Cultural Services; Andrea Riner, Carrie Peterson, Sarah Medary, Scott Duckett, Mark Snyder, Parks and Open Space Division; Denise Kalakay, Lane Council of Governments; David Sonnichsen, Citizen Planning Committee for Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park; Jon Belcher, Jefferson Westside Neighbors; Sally McIntyre, Misty Fisher, MIG, Inc.

I. WELCOME

Ms. Riner convened the meeting and asked Ms. Grube and Mr. Patrick to introduce the new members of the committee.

Ms. Grube introduced Terry Leary, the equity and diversity coordinator for the 4J School District. She said Ms. Leary was active in the community and would be a welcome addition to the committee representing the Santa Clare area.

Mr. Patrick introduced Avashi Schermerhorn, a senior at South Eugene High School who planned to attend the University of Oregon. He said Mr. Schermerhorn had also served on the Library Foundation and was currently involved in a number of library activities.

Those present introduced themselves.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Nathanson invited members of the public to speak.

Jon Belcher distributed a draft conceptual master plan for the Jefferson-Amazon Greenway. He said the plan was a cooperative effort between the Jefferson Westside Neighbors and the Fair Board. He said there were two goals for the area south of the Amazon canal:

- naturalize Amazon Creek through the area
- preserve and enhance the open green space and passive recreation nature of the area

Mr. Belcher asked that the concept be added to the City's Parks, Recreation and Open Space

Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Bottge noted that a large portion of the open space was used by the fair for parking. Mr. Belcher replied that it was a win-win situation because the area was used for parking only a few days each year and the remainder of the year it was available for passive recreation.

Responding to a question from Ms. Girling, Mr. Belcher said the decision about eventual ownership of the property when the project was completed would be decided by the Board of County Commissioners.

III. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FINDINGS: Park and Natural Area Inventory

Ms. Riner and Ms. McIntyre presented the park and natural area inventory findings in a series of tables and highlighted information in each table.

Table 1. Park and Natural Area Standards and Anticipated Need Based on Acres per 1000 Population

- the table used the new park classifications developed by the committee
- the number and total acreage for each type of park were shown
- existing level of service was determined by calculating an acre per 1,000 population based on total acres for each park type
- the table also provided average service levels for comparable cities that could be used as benchmarks for developing standards

Table 2. Recreation Amenity and Facility Standards and Anticipated Need – Draft

- the table illustrated the current distribution of outdoor recreation amenities, trails, and indoor recreation facilities
- distribution was categorized as neighborhood, community, or metropolitan
- the existing level of service was expressed as a unit per 10,000 to 50,000 population, depending on the type of amenity or facility
- information was included on facilities provided by other public agencies, with additional space to identify facilities that were provided privately if the committee wished
- Oregon average standards and NRPA guidelines were included as an informational too, not necessarily as a guideline to develop local standards

Table __ Comparable Cities and District – Draft

- provided source information on Table 1 service levels in other communities and districts for comparison purposes

Ms. Nathanson asked if information was available on acquisition of land or facilities through donations and transfers and how recreation facilities were paid for, both for Eugene and the other cities and districts used for comparison purposes. Ms. Riner said that information might be appropriate when looking at a specific recommendation. She noted that Forest Park in Portland skewed the service level

figure for natural area parks and open space. Mr. Duckett observed that Forest Park was located on steep, unstable land that was unsuitable for building. Ms. Riner said she could research how a park like Forest Park was created if the committee was interested.

Ms. Nathanson invited questions from the committee on the three tables presented.

Ms. Swisher asked how much weight should be given to the national and Oregon standards. Ms. Riner replied the committee could give as much weight as it wished to those standards. Ms. Girling observed that the NRPA standards were very dated. Ms. McIntyre stated that most communities developed their own standards.

Ms. Cuellar remarked that she found it confusing when service levels were expressed at different levels of population and asked that they be based on a standard measure, such as per 10,000 population. Several committee members agreed. Ms. Riner replied that she could recalculate the service levels, but cautioned the committee to look at each facility independently and not compare levels among types of facilities.

Mr. Johnson commented that it was more important to consider what facilities were accessible at the neighborhood level.

Ms. Nathanson referred to a map she had seen previously that showed parks with a half-mile accessibility radius which illustrated where there were gaps in service and asked if that could be provided to the committee along with information that linked community social and demographic trends with the location of facilities and the demographics of users. Ms. Riner said that much of that information was currently available and staff could provide whatever additional information the committee needed to develop the plan.

Ms. McIntyre said that the committee should be considering other factors as well as demographic trends and gave as an example the fluctuating number of children in a neighborhood, but the ongoing need for a neighborhood park regardless of number of children present at any given point. Mr. Johnson noted that most of the demographic trends being discussed were on a fairly short horizon, but the parks would outlive those trends.

Mr. Arkin expressed an interest in seeing data on the number and ages of people using facilities and where they were located in order to correlate with demographic projections and determine future needs. Ms. Riner said there was some usage data from a recent survey and the City was considering conducting intercept surveys at different types of parks to expand that data.

Table 3. Park Acreage Distribution by Planning Area – Draft

- the table provided park distribution data for the Bethel, Willow Creek, River Road/Santa Clara, Willakenzie, South Eugene, and City Central planning areas
- distribution was indicated by the number of acres of each park type in each planning area and what percentage that represented of the total acres by type

Ms. Kalakay reported that the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) provided data collection and reporting and mapping services to local jurisdictions. She said that available data on recreational

facilities had been entered into a database, using the new park classifications, and could be merged with geographic information system (GIS) data to provide comprehensive planning information. She illustrated some of the features of the database by displaying the types of information that were available at the facility level, including:

- name and location of facility
- developed or open space and classification
- planning district and parent park system, if applicable
- GIS identification number that allowed the facility to be related to open waterways, tax lots, vacant lands, etc.
- total acres, developed acres, natural acres
- athletic facilities within a park, equipment, and furnishings, and the conditions of each
- features and rentals
- landscaping and more

Ms. Kalakay said the information could be displayed in several formats, such as maps, charts, and graphs. She referred to committee to the maps that had been provided in their agenda packets. She said the maps provided a context for the information in the tables.

Mr. Schermerhorn asked for the definition of a linear park. Ms. Kalakay replied that a linear park was one which followed a linear feature, such as a waterway or bike path.

Ms. Kalakay pointed out several features of the maps:

- the expanded park classifications were used and special use facilities specifically identified
- the service area for a facility was based on a safe walking distance to the facility – typically a half-mile unless there was a barrier, such as a major street
- the maps displayed park planning areas and residential areas not served

Ms. Riner said that the committee could recommend development of a neighborhood park in an area that was not served.

In response to a question from Mr. Berg about a project at the intersection of 18th Avenue and Bertelsen Road, Mr. Duckett said the Willow Corner project, in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Nature Conservancy, was doing restoration, maintenance, and monitoring of 14 acres. He said that use of the site would be limited and while there were some informal trails, heavy use was not encouraged.

Ms. Bottge commented that in some cases, children might live close to a facility but be separated from it by a major street that restricted access. Ms. Kalakay replied that sometimes the barrier could be overcome with an access easement, such as between two houses.

The committee discussed various ways to address access issues. Ms. McIntyre commented that pedestrian overpasses were a very expensive approach.

Ms. Cuellar asked if open spaces that were part of planned unit developments (PUD) were included in

the inventory. Ms. Riner responded that only publicly owned facilities were included. She said that privately owned play areas or open spaces could not be counted on the same level as publicly owned facilities because of access and equipment, and the fact that the privately owned facilities were not mandated and could be removed.

Ms. Kalakay illustrated the service areas for metropolitan and community parks noted that most of Eugene was covered, with the exception of the River Road/Santa Clara area. In response to a comment from Mr. Johnson, she agreed that the River Road Park District did serve most of that area.

Mr. Arkin asked how shuttling kids on sports team across town to facilities was factored in to determining service areas. Ms. Riner said management of facilities and scheduling activities could be a factor. Ms. Grube remarked that parents wanted practices to be held in their neighborhood, but were willing to travel elsewhere in the community for games. Ms. Riner said the question was whether facilities were adequate and well-distributed in the community.

Staff agreed to bring the maps to future meetings and make sets available at the Parks and Open Space office.

Ms. Riner asked if the committee preferred to have a discussion of the information presented thus far, or finish the presentations and reserve discussion for the next meeting. The consensus was to continue the presentation of information.

Ms. McIntyre presented community involvement findings, which were derived from information collected through community surveys, drop-ins or intercepts at community events, focus groups, and questionnaires to specific populations, such as teenagers. She said the information would be provided in binders for new members and was available on the City's website.

Ms. Nathanson noted that much of the information was gathered intentionally as part of the update of the Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan from people who wanted to provide input. She said other information came from the annual community satisfaction survey conducted annually by the City and that data was statistically valid based on random sampling. She said that both types of information were useful to the committee.

Ms. McIntyre presented the following community involvement findings:

- residents felt strongly that parks and open space were important to the quality of life in the community and provided key benefits
- enjoying the outdoors was the top-rated benefit
- neighborhood parks were the most frequently used by both adults and youth
- in the open-ended questions, residents requested improvements to major facilities such as community and metropolitan parks
- the economic focus group identified urban plazas as important to the downtown area
- natural areas were highly valued and purchasing additional natural areas, including habitat and recreation, was a high priority
- residents were interested in an equal distribution of natural areas and developed parks – a characteristic unique to Eugene

- many of the two top-rated recreational activities out of a list of 50 could be supported by natural areas
- natural areas were not used as frequently as other park types
- habitat protection was highly valued

Mr. Berg suggested that a map of walking trails could be published to provide better access and encourage more use. He noted that similar maps of running trails and bike paths were extremely popular.

Ms. McIntyre presented information on special use facilities needs that were highlighted in the public involvement process:

- the greatest need was for a multi-use sports complex
- additional aquatic facilities
- additional community centers
- additional facilities that supported special events such as concerts in the park
- residents identified improvement of existing parks as the top priority, although that did not preclude moving forward with acquisitions

Ms. McIntyre said that a detailed analysis of information on outdoor recreation amenities listed in Table 2 would be provided to the committee and provided some of the highlights from the public involvement process:

- basketball was the number one preferred activity for youth and the highest ranked sports activity for adults
- botanical gardens were identified as an important community asset
- gardening was the 7th most popular activity in Eugene and community gardens provided a way for many individuals to participate and interact
- developing neighborhood or regional playgrounds was a high priority, with playground use showing a significant increase of 113.9 percent since 1987
- dog parks were popular, with dog walking ranked the 8th most popular activity
- residents also expressed a desire for more performance areas for concerts and more reservable picnic areas
- skate boarding and soccer were growing activities and more facilities were needed
- developing spray parks in response to the decommissioning of wading pools because of State regulations regarding water filtration
- promote stewardship by providing better public information and outdoor education activities
- the natural resources focus group identified the need for more interpretive signs on trails
- additional multi-use trails (there was some discussion among committee members regarding trail use conflicts)

Ms. McIntyre said that the committee should also consider the changing demographics of the community and the ways in which parks were used by various populations. She described a recent study that examined the differences in park use between the white and Latino populations that prompted improvements in park amenities to meet those different needs and interests in another community. She said other populations with specific needs were youth and seniors.

IV. NEXT STEPS/CLOSE

Ms. Nathanson said the committee would begin to focus on directions for future recommendations at its next meeting. She suggested that committee members should debrief with each other on the information that was presented and forward any questions on the presentations to Ms. Riner by email. She invited members to use the email list to share their questions with others on the committee.

In response to requests from members, staff agreed to provide an outline of the plan so that the committee could begin to focus on the specific tasks to be accomplished in order to complete its vision and recommendations.

Ms. Nathanson announced that the next meeting was scheduled for December 3, 2003, at the downtown library.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

(Minutes recorded by Lynn Taylor)
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