



**MARION COUNTY PARKS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

November 19, 2020 @ 3:00 pm

Virtual meeting via Zoom

PRESENT Members: Wayne Rawlins, Marty Heyen, Ryan Mann, Kyleen Zimmer, Alton Hoover, Josh Faulkner
 Staff: Russ Dilley, Tom Kissinger, Brian May, Brian Nicholas, Elizabeth Parker
 Guests: Seth Kezar, Amanda Steck, Capi Lynn (Statesman Journal)

ABSENT Members/Staff: Josh Faulkner, Alton Hoover, Brian May

ADMINISTRATIVE (Information/Discussion/Action)

Call to Order: 3:06 p.m.

Member and Staff introductions

Public Input: Guest: Amanda Steck stated (text) she is attending in support of Wyatt Tofte.

Approval of September 17, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Marty moves to approve minutes, Alton seconds. A voice vote is unanimous – motion passes.

MARION COUNTY PARKS COMMISSION FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

Brian May shared some housekeeping items. Several commission members still need to complete the volunteer training. Fire damage to Marion County Parks is significant, and he thanked the commission for their input. Due to the fire damage, there will be an elevated expectation of Park Commission members as there are hard impacts coming up. Brian May also stated bylaws will need to be reviewed in January, and he read the Parks Commission mission. The Parks Commission’s purpose is to serve the public interest in an ethical and responsible manner. *(Seth Kezar joined call at 3:12pm)* The Parks Commission will need to meet more often and get experience and knowledge moving forward. It will take time to get the parks back to normal where we can enjoy them. Discussion followed regarding developing sub-committees to focus on certain issues. Consider a bylaw subcommittee that could discuss and advise if we should expand number of Parks Commission membership. Wayne asked how we should receive feedback - Brian stated that by reviewing bylaws in January, we can review and bring recommendation to the commission. Wayne asked members to review bylaws and consider increasing membership, and adding sub-committees. Wayne reiterated that difficult times are ahead, and there will be many issues to address while commission assists staff through the process. Kyleen requested a high-level synopsis that the Parks Commission members could review that will help better advise the nature of the work to be done. Marty noted that the Salem/Keizer School Board just voted for school members to learn about government, process etc. She asked if it would be beneficial to have a non-voting member for input.

REVIEW OF CURRENT PARKS COMMISSION PROCEDURES

Russ addressed the request to rename North Fork Park. Currently, Marion County does not have a “naming” procedure. He stated Parks have been named in the past based on historical findings, local figures, geographical location, and people who contributed in some way to the park, area, etc. Staff has looked at other counties for a procedure, finding none. He shared the State of Oregon procedure with the Marion County Board of Commissioners who advised the Parks Commission to establish a Marion County naming procedure. Wayne commented that these types of situations and requests are difficult because these are requests from real people dealing with heartfelt considerations relating to families affected by these fires. Wayne’s initial desire is to focus on two issues; 1. City of Salem and Oregon State Parks both have processes and procedures giving guidance on how to navigate through these types of situations. In 2019, we weren’t thinking of these kinds of issues but now here we are facing this enormous reality; 2. How do we memorialize the tragedy that took place at our park? Memorializing is a different process than a “naming” procedure. Seth Kezar, who is from Salem and close to the

Tofte family, came up with the idea and request to rename the Park or somehow memorialize the Tofte boy who perished in the fire.

Wayne read a variety of sources reporting on the Tofty boy, saying that the content is difficult to read and must be so difficult for the families involved. A memorial seems to be very appropriate in this case. Wayne asked if re-naming the park is the right thing to do. We need to consider the other four individuals who were lost in this fire - Wayne wants to recognize all who perished as he doesn't want to leave anyone out.

Marty said we should research and come up with our own procedure. Regardless if a park is re-named, we should consider a plaque for all who died. Josh reminded the group that there is so much information and considerations to process through this fire event, that whatever is decided, it will be a long and tedious process. Josh stated that we definitely need to talk to families involved, but need to set up the process first. Once the policy is in place, we will talk to families to make sure they're on the same page. Kyleen agreed with Josh saying that she was at OPRD when their procedure was made. Marion County staff will author the "naming" procedure, and the Parks Commission reviewing and approving the "naming" procedure. They'll also need to release a public comment about tragedy and "naming" policy. There will need to be focused efforts and consideration, and take the time necessary to appropriately respond.

Seth Kezar requested to make comment with Wayne allotting a few minutes for him to share. He was unable to get access to the Zoom call when Public Comment was scheduled. Seth shared story of the Tofte boy, stating he has a petition with six thousand signatures for renaming the park in memory of the Tofte boy.

Wayne commended Seth's efforts, noting he was volunteering his time for the family and we greatly appreciate his efforts. Seth is Polk county resident, not a Marion County resident - Wayne asked for a commitment of time from Seth to assist in helping the Parks Commission come to a resolution. Seth agreed. Wayne would like to have Seth and other people help the Parks Commission. We do not want Tofte family to think we're mired in process or dragging feet in this process. The Parks Commission is resolute in seeing something happen - we just don't know how or when. Seth will stay in contact with Parks Commission members and/or staff to work towards an acceptable resolution for all.

STAFF UPDATES

Russ shared a slide show on the Beachie Creek Fire and impacts to our parks with the group.

North Fork – has an 80% tree loss with damage to the parking lot and restroom. The concrete picnic tables survived, though the tables by beach have holes in the top. This park is shared with BLM and the heavy damage was located more on the BLM side.

Bear Creek – there is 100% tree loss, restroom damage, a destroyed vehicle, and damage to all garbage cans. The stairs to river are gone and the safe knobs were melted off.

Salmon Falls – 100% tree loss. The fee collections stations were burned and there is significant tree damage to restrooms. Regarding the salmon statues, one was destroyed, but the other is still there. The wood fencing was burned in some areas and in other areas, it survived.

Minto – an 80% tree loss and the access bridges and stairs are gone. The restrooms are in decent shape. The lower park needs more damage assessment and evaluation. ODOT has cut, decked, and stacked all the damaged trees. Marion County will sell these trees in the future.

Packsaddle – an 80% tree loss here also. Russ was at Packsaddle yesterday, noting they were clearing areas. Serious consideration should be made to updating the parking lot and make the boat ramp safer.

Niagara – there is a 100% tree loss. Most trees were blown down and burned. The well house is gone and the Niagara sign needs to be brought to Public Works for restoration. The restroom sustained damage and the chain-link fence is crushed. ODOT has removed approximately 75% of the trees, with remaining trees to be removed in phases.

Ryan stated his father did drone work in the canyon, assessing the fire damage. Marion County Parks submitted their initial damage estimates to FEMA. Identified as Category G, discussions with FEMA are ongoing. These estimates will be changed upon further review and assessments. Marty inquired as to how we recover money. Russ stated funding provided by FEMA is 75% of total, with Marion County carrying the remaining 25%. As Marion County does not have the funds, we will negotiate with FEMA to do modifications/changes with FEMA funds.

Ryan acknowledged how difficult it is to see the damage and commented on how much it will take to bring the parks back to recreational use. Wayne stated that with so much work needed in these six parks, staff will need the input throughout this lengthy process from the Parks Commission. Consider a sub-committee to serve on the issue of reforestation and bringing our parks back to better than they were before. Wayne asked if any members would consider serving on this sub-committee. Many members would like to know a definite amount of time they'd need to commit to before volunteering. Staff suggested we expand the membership to give more members the opportunity to participate on sub-committees. Kyleen asked for clarification on what this sub-committee would be doing. Brian said staff will come back with a project list and assessing different specialties needed on specific items. Staff will prepare list and will bring to commission meeting in January 2021.

Russ introduced Tom Kissinger as the new Marion County Parks Program Supervisor. Tom will be involved and working closely with Russ moving forward. Russ and Tom will be proceeding with Auburn Park Conversion. Marion County has sold Auburn Park to SKSD, and we are required to find a replacement park. They also visited Macleay; was starting to get public input when COVID happened. They are getting the project started again, as we need to be in compliance with Land Development to get grants, etc. Marty requested to visit McClay – as the gate is locked, staff will need to schedule time with Marty to the park.

COMMISSIONERS ROUNDTABLE

Marty – has nothing to share this meeting, but hopes to see McClay before next meeting.

Josh – nothing

Ryan – would be interested in re-building/planning sub-committee. Wants to be cautious of time and will wait for clarity.

Alton- none

Kyleen- shared her appreciation for the park update Russ shared.

Wayne - would like to schedule a tour for commission members to see the park damage with their own eyes, stating this will add to our understanding of what lies ahead for the group. All COVID measures and precautions will be taken. Staff will send out poll to schedule a date and time that works well for everyone.

FUTURE TOPICS / EMERGING ISSUES / OTHER BUSINESS

Other Business: None

Adjourn: 4:08 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: January 21, 2021, at 3:00 p.m.