



**CITY OF ALBANY
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Council Chambers, City Hall
Wednesday, March 5, 2008
6:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

Commission members present: Mike Graham, Sharon Edwards, Michele Brosnan, Gordy Gamet

Commission members absent: John Vandepas

Staff present: Ed Hodney, Parks & Recreation Director; Katie Nooshazar; Recreation Programs Manager; Tari Hayes, Parks and Recreation Administrative Assistant, Craig Carnagey, Parks and Facilities Maintenance Manager, Dick Connolly, Parks and Facilities Maintenance Manager

Guests present: Bessie Johnson, City Councilor; approximately 60 audience members.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Graham called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of February 6, 2008 meeting were approved.

3. BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC – none, public comment on action and discussion items held until they came up on the agenda.

4. ACTION ITEMS

Receive public comment regarding the naming of 53rd Avenue Neighborhood Park

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

• Receive public comment regarding the need for a Bike Park

Commission Chair Graham explained that the commission wanted to hear suggestions from the public on the need for a bike park. No decisions would be made tonight. He asked that speakers not repeat each other. Hodney suggested that some of the issues the public might want to speak about were: what they envision the facility to look like, those in support need to help determine design and function, how it should be used, how it affects the neighborhood, solutions to any issues or concerns that may be generated. Bessie Johnson reminded the audience of the discussions from a few years ago when planning the skate park. She encouraged the speakers to be willing to raise some money, attend meetings, work together with the City, and then thanked them for coming. Discussion followed with similar comments from the public and the commission.

Common themes:

All of the speakers were in favor of building a bike park, and/or adding on to the existing skate park.

A bike park would help keep riders off the streets, out of traffic, and off private commercial property. The sport is growing, racing is now part of the Olympics and free-style, which is what takes place in bike parks, soon will be. Sales of BMX merchandise have increased in local bike shops phenomenally in the last two years alone. Kids are bringing their siblings into the sport and would like a safe, drug-free and legal place to ride.

Many of the existing skate parks in the state do not allow bikes. Currently riders go to Corvallis, which allows both bikes and skates. They also travel to skate parks in Portland and surrounding towns, which don't necessarily allow bikes, but the atmosphere is more welcoming to bikers than in Albany. If Albany built a bike park it would draw many riders from the I-5 corridor. Instead of kids traveling out of town and spending money on food and gas, they could stay in town, put money into the local economy and bring in additional revenue with visitors to the bike park. Corvallis has held a small bike competition in the past. It was well attended and garnered local sponsorships.

Trails have been built in Bryant Park annually for many years. Bryant is not a good alternative for many reasons including: dirt is too sandy to form jumps and courses, it floods every year, there is no phone in case of injury or accident, transients, and it's illegal.

Some of the riders ride at South Albany. They get into trouble with teachers and administrators for riding on school grounds, but they feel they have no other place to ride. Teachers who attended tonight's meeting would support building a facility for the bike riders.

Combining the two parks would be a way to bring the skaters and bikers together. Bikers have discussed with skaters the possibility of building a separate bike park or adding on to the existing skate park. Skaters they've spoken to are very supportive. There is less conflict today between bikers and skaters at the skate park than when it originally opened. There is the start of a feeling of solidarity at the skate park since the idea of a bike park has been raised. Skaters would like to see the existing park added onto which would provide more space for both bikers and skaters. A large part of the conflict between bikers and skaters is congestion at the park. Many feel that the existing skate park is too small even for the existing number of skaters. If designed correctly, the combined park could flow together and accommodate both skaters and bikers. The existing park in Corvallis works well because it's large enough to fit both groups. Two separate parks may tempt either to ride where they are not permitted.

All of the speakers would participate in fundraising, helping with the design, attend planning meetings and contribute money where available. Many said they would speak to service clubs to garner support and funds. They also volunteered free labor to help in the construction and ongoing maintenance of the park once it's built.

Biking is a physical activity that parents want their kids involved in. Currently parents worry about where the kids ride, streets are unsafe, traffic is tricky, and adults are victimizing kids with drugs and alcohol in Eleanor Hackleman Park. They see a need for their kids to have a safe and healthy place to play. This is one more opportunity to show the youth that it's not an "us against them" thing; it's an opportunity for adults and the governing body to work with them, not against them. Some parents felt that as a community we need to keep stressing the message that all kids are important to us, the money spent is not just for adults and mainstream sports activities, bikers and skaters need to know that they are important in society and they are the future. All these kids want to give time and money, the more they put into the park, the more ownership they will have in the park. They are willing to give time and money in support of a bike park. They believe local businesses will come forward with money, time and/or materials.

Discussion was held on what types of material would work best and be most cost effective for a bike park. Current choices seem to be wood, resin, and concrete; more discussion and pricing information is needed.

Johnson asked about damage to the existing concrete park from bikes. A concrete mason has inspected the skate park and believes the damage at the park is minimal and could have been caused by both skates and bikes in normal day to day activity. Repairs to concrete are quick, relatively inexpensive, and should be done as part of ongoing park maintenance. Bike manufacturers are addressing the damage issue by innovating durable plastic pedals and parts that are stronger and do less damage.

Both the attendees and the commission were encouraged to keep an open mind as research progresses and designs and costs emerge. Everyone needs to be receptive to changes and other ideas. Users need to drive the ultimate choice of materials.

Hodney laid out some of the next steps. A task force or steering group will be formed and strong key people are needed to lead it. A meeting to form the task force and continue the discussion will be held shortly after Spring Break. A mailer with meeting information will be sent to all who signed in at the meeting. Everyone who showed up tonight will be involved in some, shape or form. Attendees were encourage to provide contact information to Tari Hayes or the Parks & Recreation Department front desk and to spread the word to groups that may be interested but were unable to attend tonight's meeting. The commission and the Parks & Recreation Department were very encouraged by the number of attendees to tonight's meeting and the willingness of all to move this project forward.

Graham thanked everyone for coming and closed the discussion.