

**Regular Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission
via Zoom live streaming
July 16, 2020**

COMMISSION:

- Christine Hall, Chair (1:0.5)
- Howard Hoffer, Commissioner
- Brad Owens, Commissioner (0:0)
- Troy Russell, Commissioner (1:2)
- Patrick Salandro, Commissioner (1:1)
- Estelle Womack, Commissioner

STAFF:

- Dana Nichols, Planning Manager
- Megan Lawrence, City Planner
- Tim Lakey, Public Works Supervisor

1. CALL TO ORDER

Hall could not establish a video connection through Zoom and used an alternate phone connection instead. She called the meeting to order at 5:44 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Roll Call was taken as indicated above, with Commissioners reporting their meeting time (listed first) as well as outside time. Lawrence explained that Commissioner Jon Bauer's term had expired on June 30, 2020, and he had been replaced by Howard Hoffer, who was not present.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

3.1 February 13, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes

Copies of the minutes had been provided to the Commissioners. Owens made a motion to approve the minutes; Salandro seconded the motion, which passed by a unanimous voice vote of 4:0:2 (absent: Hoffer, Womack).

4. NEW BUSINESS

Without objection, Hall adjusted the agenda to take Public Input before New Business and allow Esther Williams, who was participating online, to make her presentation earlier in the meeting. However, Williams was unable to communicate with the Commission at that time, and her presentation was delayed until after the first New Business item.

4.1 Tree Removal Request—780 Jackson Ave. SW, Bandon, OR 97411

Hall noted that Lakey had given approval for the removal of three trees at the location in question but had not approved the fourth tree for removal, and she wanted to know his reason.

Lakey clarified that he agreed with removing that tree but wanted to take the proper channels to have the Commission review the removal. He stated that the tree was not yet causing a problem but was likely to cause trouble in the future.

Owens asked if the three trees that had already been removed were in the public right of way, and Lakey responded that they were. He added that those trees stood along Jackson Avenue and had created major utility conflicts with the sewer and electrical hookups, and they interfered with the driveway as well.

Salandro wondered whether the fourth tree only intersected with the communication line, or if there were underground utilities at that location. Lakey replied that the City had a 10-inch AC (asbestos-cement) water line in that vicinity, but it was not threatened by the tree.

Hall inquired whether the owners might have been concerned about the house's proximity to the tree. Salandro told her the house was already framed up when he went by the site the day before the meeting, and he did not feel the tree presented a problem for the home construction.

Salandro went on to point out that the owners stated in their application that the tree had "matured to the extent of its useful life," but he did not see how that claim was supported. He believed the fourth tree was not an extremely mature shore pine, and he observed that shore pines are native trees that can live upwards of 200 years.

Salandro also disagreed with the statement in the application that the tree could potentially damage the aerial communication line that passes through it. He added that there were few trees on that side of the street, and although that tree could cause a problem in the future, he remarked that if every tree that could pose a future problem were taken down, there would be no trees left in the City.

Quoting the application, Salandro read, "Tree number four was planted many years ago without any plan in place to attach it to the current lot. The tree is simply out of place and needs to be removed." He said he was inclined to oppose the tree's removal, because it acted as a windbreak and did not endanger any utilities.

Owens spoke about the paradox presented by this tree that is in City right of way but borders on the applicants' property. They have the responsibility to care for it as if it were theirs, but not the right to say whether they can take it down or not. There is a balance, he said, between what the owners want to do with their property and Bandon's communal standards that say the City likes trees.

Lakey interjected that the owners had proposed to mitigate their tree removal, using a tree-for-tree replacement plan. Salandro looked over the owners' application and only found they had proposed replacing the fourth tree with "low growing plantings." The owners also stated, "Future plantings of any trees will be considered in an overall landscaping plan for the lot."

Owens noted that the application referred to a landscaping plan, but that none appeared to be part of the application.

Nichols asked Russell if the Commission had required tree removal applicants to provide a replanting or landscaping plan in the past, and he confirmed that was the norm. She suggested that the Commissioners could condition approval of the application on the planting of another tree.

Owens wondered if mandatory tree replacement was in the City's Municipal Code. Russell's best recollection was that it was, and Lakey and Lawrence nodded in agreement.

Russell felt it would help to see the owners' site plan.

Hall added that the fourth tree was a mature tree and it would be a shame to lose it.

Salandro moved to deny the application for removing the fourth tree. Owens seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote, 3:1:2 (Russell opposed; Hoffer and Womack were not present.)

Salandro commented that the owners could reapply to remove the fourth tree with a plan for replacing it. He disapproved of the application as it read, especially if the Code required a plan.

Lawrence said Staff would let the owners know that the Commission would reconsider their application if they included a tree replacement plan.

7. PUBLIC INPUT

This portion of the Agenda was conducted earlier than scheduled to accommodate former Commissioner Esther Williams, who had joined the Zoom meeting by phone. She requested that the Commission consider recommending the establishment of a memorial tree grove in Bandon City Park. She had submitted a written request to the Commission, including information she had found online that showed how several other cities across the country were conducting successful memorial tree planting programs.

Williams told the Commissioners she had not realized there were many people in the community who had wanted for a long time to be able to plant trees in memory of loved ones. She was aware of a program for memorial benches but did not think the Commission had ever considered the issue of memorial trees. Williams felt a memorial tree program could make money that could be used for Bandon City Park. She said other cities charge from \$250 to \$500 to plant a tree, tag it in honor of someone who has passed, and give it care for a couple of years. Williams thought the area behind the Veterans Memorial would be a good location for memorial trees.

Hall commented that she had been looking at the same area for a different reason. She said some trees at that location had blown over in a windstorm and had to be cut down. Hall described the resulting area as open and empty, and as a place where people liked to picnic because it was secluded and out of the wind. She also favored that spot as a place where younger trees could succeed and grow because of less exposure to the wind, and she liked the idea of a memorial tree grove in the park.

Russell wondered if the discussion about a memorial tree grove was intended as an agenda item or was Public Comment. Lawrence clarified that it was Public Comment. Russell noted that the Commission would therefore only be able to listen to Williams' presentation, thank her for it, and bring up the topic as an actual agenda item at a future meeting.

Owens said he had read Williams' material and she had made a good case. Salandro suggested that those who had organized the Veterans Memorial should be consulted before anyone proceeded to put other memorials nearby.

Lawrence told Williams that the memorial tree grove would be placed on the Commission's next agenda for further discussion. She hoped Staff would be able to compile some data about the maintenance of trees and the program's feasibility given the City's limited resources. She invited Williams to participate in the next meeting, since she had brought the proposal before the Commission.

4.2 Future Role of the Parks and Recreation Commission

Nichols provided background for this discussion. She stated that although she had been away from Bandon for a year and a half, she had worked with the Parks and Recreation Commission prior to that and participated in some of the Commission's accomplishments, such as applying for grants and organizing cleanup days at the park. Nichols admitted that the Parks and Recreation Commission has struggled with its purpose and its lack of funding. That struggle prompted Staff to bring the role of the Commission up for discussion.

Hall volunteered that she had been frustrated with the lack of money, with meetings being cancelled due to Commissioners' non-attendance, and with the lack of participation outside of meetings. She had considered whether there should even be a Parks and Recreation Commission, and she thought it might be best to suspend the Commission until money is available. Hall noted that applying for grants is time consuming, and she did not see Staff having time to devote to writing and administering grants.

Hall stated that she remained dedicated to parks and was specifically committed to establishing a park at Johnson Creek. As a citizen volunteer, she said she would assist with planning that park, but she had

become disillusioned with Commission meetings. She did not feel much had been produced in the last year and a half, and she wanted the Commission to discuss its future.

Owens commented that the Commission had some momentum prior to the last year and a half, despite the lack of a budget for Parks and Recreation. He said he had been happy with the Commission's performance and that the Commission had plans and agendas and was getting things done. Staff changed a year and a half ago, and Owens felt the Staff that took over had little interest in what the old Staff had been doing. He acknowledged that Staff has always been overworked and has not had enough time to devote to Parks and Recreation.

Russell observed that he has seen ebbs and flows in Parks and Recreation accomplishments over time, with plenty of progress in the park. He suggested that the key has been having someone who championed a pet project and pulled everyone together to make it happen. Russell cited the disc golf course as a good example. It was championed by former Commissioner Donny Goddard, who saw the project through to fruition. Russell concluded that if the City can find Commissioners and Staff who want to support these kinds of projects, they will find a way to get things done.

Owens pointed out that Russell had championed the project that resulted in an amphitheater in the park, which he believed will make a big difference in that part of the park for a long time to come. He restated that the Commission had been going in a good direction until Nichols and former Planning Director John McLaughlin departed. After that, Owens said Parks and Recreation projects were just dropped.

Hall observed that the City was not likely to have much money, if any, for Parks and Recreation projects—partly due to the drop in Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) due to partially filled lodging during peak season caused by COVID-19 restrictions. She commented that the City was hurting for money, even if the water and sewer rate increases were okayed by voters in the fall. Hall was frustrated with being unable to do things like make improvements at the ball fields for the youth leagues, and she thought the City would be challenged to make the mortgage payments on the Johnson Creek property for the next few years. She remarked that it would be a “tough sell” to keep going to businesses in the community that are not making money and asking them to contribute a few thousand dollars for parks.

Owens said he shared Hall's frustration over the lack of money, adding that he thought it was a problem that started decades ago and has gradually worsened.

Nichols offered some suggestions on how the Commission could move forward:

- Keep meeting the same way.
- Suspend meetings until it is possible to meet in person again.
- Completely dissolve the Commission.
- Move to meeting on a quarterly basis.

She said Staff's recommendation would be for the Commission to meet in October to consider its future again. Meanwhile, Nichols, Lawrence, and the Commissioners would have time to think critically about the best role for the Commission.

Salandro asked what the Municipal Code said about how often the Parks and Recreation Commission should meet. Lawrence replied that the standing committee and advisory board requirements were recently amended by the City Council, and all those groups now meet at the will of the Council. In response to COVID-19, the Council had evaluated how the City's committees and boards functioned, to determine what changes would contribute to efficiency and community engagement. Lawrence offered that it would be a good time for the Commission to consider changes to its schedule and to work with Staff to arrive at something that could be presented to the City Manager and City Council.

Salandro stated he would hate to dissolve the Commission and not meet at all, because there are people who might “have the fire” to obtain a grant and see a project to completion. He would hate for the City to miss out on opportunities. As an example, Salandro said he still has not given up on the idea of a skate park, and he hoped to accomplish it with grant funding rather than through the City budget.

Russell asked Nichols and Lawrence if they thought the City would ever allow the Commission to consider a Parks and Recreation District. He said every time the idea had been brought up, it had been shot down, because the City has had other fiscal priorities. Russell contended City Park has a lot of users, but everyone gets to use it for free. So, he proposed establishing a Parks and Recreation District as large as Bandon School District, with a low taxation rate, to generate money for parks and recreation. He lamented that the Commission was not allowed to bring this before the voters.

Salandro liked Russell’s idea, and he remarked that citizens who favor a Parks and Recreation District could put the issue on the ballot, without the City or the Commission being involved.

Lawrence pointed out that COVID-19 had caused the City to evaluate what it does and how it does it. In addition, the Planning Department is in the midst of transition with Nichols’ return, and there is a new City Manager who is highly experienced in land use issues, has a background in city administration from larger metropolitan areas, and is very active. As a result, Staff believes the City is in a good position for projects and proposals such as what Russell put forward. Lawrence added that the City Manager is focused on transparency and the betterment of the community, and Staff is willing to work with the Commission to bring proposals before the City Council, to accomplish meaningful change for the Commission, and perhaps bring about a Parks District that can develop recreational opportunities for the community.

Hall related that she had also been thinking about a Parks District and how it would tap into wealthier neighborhoods outside the City of Bandon where people live who use City parks but do not contribute to the City’s budget.

Lawrence summarized that those present seemed interested in continuing the Parks and Recreation Commission and perhaps moving forward on a quarterly basis or at least scheduling an October meeting and then reassessing the Commission’s future at that time. She hoped the global health situation would be clearer then, enabling a better picture of what kind of public meetings and events would be possible. She proposed an October 8 meeting date.

Salandro said quarterly meetings made sense at that time and Owens agreed. About the frequency of meetings, Hall stated, “No more than that.”

Salandro added if someone were to find money for a pet project, the Commission would be able to move that forward.

Owens mentioned that one of the important tasks assigned to the Commission had been to evaluate issues such as tree removal requests, where people need an answer and the Commission is the body that provides the answer. He expressed sympathy with Hall’s feeling of resignation but allowed for the possibility of accomplishing something given the changes in the City’s leadership and Staff.

Hall stated she would like to feel that her efforts were going toward something, because she could be directing her energy elsewhere.

Nichols asked Hall for guidance on the tree removal application rejected by the Commission earlier in the meeting, in case the owners submitted a revised application sooner than the next Commission meeting. She offered the options of delaying a decision until the October meeting or deferring the decision to the City Manager.

Owens had no objection to the City Manager or Staff making the decision, based on the conditions the Commissioners had placed on the tree removal. Russell noted that the Commission used to have a three-member tree subcommittee that would address this type of issue between regular Commission meetings. Hall was not interested in re-forming such a committee. Lawrence clarified that in the past the subcommittee would meet with the City Planner to review the request, and the Planner would write a staff report for the Parks and Recreation Commission to review, based on the subcommittee's recommendation. The full Commission would make the decision on whether to approve or deny a request.

Salandro commented that applicants would have to wait for the Commission's quarterly meetings to have their tree removal requests reviewed, unless a tree presented a danger. In that case, he thought it would be Lakey's judgment as to whether the tree should be removed. Lakey agreed that Public Works would alleviate a hazard without going before the Parks and Recreation Commission. Owens added that three of the four tree removals on the property discussed earlier had been approved by Lakey.

Salandro wondered how many tree removal requests were submitted each year, and Lawrence replied, "maybe a dozen."

Hall suggested the Commission would not necessarily have to meet to deal with a tree request. She thought Staff could provide the Commissioners with an information packet, and the Commissioners could respond with their viewpoints. However, Lawrence told her a public meeting would be required for the Commissioners to make a decision. She added that the interval before the October meeting could provide an opportunity to consider how issues such as tree removals could be handled in the future.

Salandro observed that the Jackson Avenue house involved in the removal request was far from complete, and the construction would not be held up waiting for the Commission's decision.

5. OLD BUSINESS

Salandro stated he was still trying to figure out how to get money for a skate park. He said he hated to put work into arranging funding, then get pushback from the City Council about putting a skate park in City Park. He disagreed with a suggestion that a better location for a skate park would be next to the baseball fields in Bandon Heights. Salandro contended City Park was where all the kids and families went, and it made more sense to him that kids would want to both play and skate in the park. He wanted to know how to find out if the Council was willing to entertain his skate park idea.

Nichols recalled that when Parks and Recreation brought a proposal to construct a swimming pool in the park to the Council to gauge its interest, it received some negative public reaction. In the case of the skate park, she thought Staff could elevate the issue to the City Manager, who could ask for guidance from the City Council and perhaps bring it up for public discussion.

Hall told Salandro she had prepared a PowerPoint presentation for the City Council about some potential uses for the City's Johnson Creek property, hoping to get their feedback. She suggested he might use that approach.

Russell pointed out that a skate park was in the City's Master Plan. Owens added that it had been a topic since he was in high school. Salandro asked Staff to gauge the City Manager's feeling on the skate park and get back to the Commission in October, and Staff agreed to do so.

Hall noted that most grants require matching funds contributed by the City, and she felt the Commission would be wasting its time garnering a grant if the City were unable to provide matching funds.

Salandro asserted the funds could come from a generous third party.

Lawrence acknowledged Salandro's passion for the skate park and she encouraged him to explore the funding possibilities and bring his findings to Staff, who in turn could sit down with the City Manager and determine his feelings about taking the skate park concept to the City Council. She also confirmed Hall's assessment that the City was resource-limited and unable to contribute matching funds, but she said that did not preclude the Commission from doing preparatory work and being ready to apply for grants if money did become available.

Salandro indicated he would supply Staff with some material within the next few weeks.

Hall asked Staff about the status of the October Arbor Week Booster Grant, a topic of discussion at the Commission's February 2020 meeting. Lawrence told her that she had applied for that grant through the Tree City USA program, but Bandon was not selected as a recipient. Additionally, the Tree City USA and Arbor Day Foundation annual events had been suspended due to COVID-19, and the City was not required to do its annual Tree City USA outreach.

Hall informed the Commissioners and Staff that Womack was unable to participate in the meeting but wanted everyone to know she shared Hall's passion for the Johnson Creek park and was interested in pursuing the possibility of finding an intern to assist with developing a landscape design for the park.

Lawrence said Staff would inform the City Manager of Womack's suggestion and report his response at the Commission's next meeting. She was uncertain of the status of that property and only was aware that the City Council was considering selling it, depending on the outcome of the November election.

Hall felt it would be a shame for the City to part with the property, and she planned to be in touch with the City to express her viewpoint.

6. STAFF UPDATE

Hall and Owens welcomed Nichols back, and Nichols said she was glad to be working with the Commissioners again. Owens told her nobody probably appreciated her more than Lawrence, who responded with a double thumbs-up signal. Lawrence commented that it had been a long 18 months.

Lawrence shared that Jon Bauer's term on the Commission had expired June 30, 2020, and that the Council had filled his position with Howard Hoffer, who could not attend this meeting. There was still a vacancy on the Commission due to the departure of Bob Eck, and Lawrence said the City was actively recruiting volunteers from within the City Limits to take his place.

Hall wondered if the Parks and Recreation Commission could have fewer members, because it had been hard to get people to come to the meetings.

Lawrence explained that the structure of the Commission was determined by the City ordinance on standing committees and commissions, which called for seven members—five from within City Limits and two from outside the City. She said if the Commission were to recommend a change in the number of members, Staff would take the proposal to the City Manager, and it would have to be approved as a City Council resolution.

Salandro found the idea of a smaller, more compact Commission to be logical. Owens thought reducing the size of the Commission was reasonable. Russell agreed that five would be easier than seven.

Hall stated she would like to propose changing the Commission to five members and Lawrence said Staff would present the idea to the City Manager and bring the issue back to the Commission in October.

8. OPEN DISCUSSION

Russell voiced his strong opposition to the memorial tree program proposed earlier in the meeting. He maintained there were significant unintended consequences to planting memorial trees. Russell warned the Commissioners that the charge for a tree would not amount to a source of revenue for the City, because each tree would cost the City much more over time—as it grew, became diseased, and started to fall apart. “That money is long gone, and you have a problematic tree,” he commented.

Russell also predicted people who do not want to pay would just go to the grove and plant their own trees and the City would lose control over what was planted there. He added that the biggest problem would arise when the City wanted to remove a memorial tree—for whatever reason. There would be opposition from the community because that tree stood for someone who had passed on. Based on his familiarity with the golf industry, Russell said memorial trees had been common at country clubs for a while but had gone out of favor because of the negative outcomes he described.

Salandro jested that the City could charge something like \$10,000 for a memorial tree and make it cost-prohibitive. He had noticed when he read the materials Williams had provided that one of the cities conducting a memorial tree program only guaranteed it would maintain a tree for three years.

Lawrence added that the City has had a longstanding memorial bench program. For example, she mentioned that a pair of benches at the end of 8th Street overlooking the ocean had been donated to the City last year, and they bear memorial plaques. That is an option the City offers for those who would like a place of remembrance for a loved one.

Hall noted that memorial benches were listed as an option in the packet from Williams, and she favored having more benches along trails in Bandon, especially for the benefit of seniors. She added that benches would be cleaner than trees in many ways.

Lawrence indicated Staff would make the memorial tree grove proposal a formal agenda item for the Commission’s October meeting, and any new materials Williams submitted to Staff would be shared with the Commissioners to help them make a decision.

Lawrence reminded the Commissioners that because the meeting was held at the beginning of a new fiscal year, they needed to select a Chair and a Vice-Chair.

Owens said Hall had been doing an excellent job as Chair. Salandro moved to retain Hall as Chair and make Owens the Vice-Chair. Owens declined the position and recommended Salandro, who responded that he had other plans that could interfere with his role on the Commission. Owens suggested Womack, who was absent. Russell said he would prefer not to serve as Vice-Chair.

Owens moved for Hall to be Chair, with Womack as Vice-Chair. Salandro seconded the motion. Hall was uncertain Womack could be elected without her permission, but she commented that a Vice-Chair might not even be needed if the Commission were reduced to five members. The motion carried, 3:0:1:2 (Hall abstained; Womack and Hoffer were not present).

9. ADJOURN

Hall adjourned the Meeting at 6:52 p.m.

Parks and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting Minutes
Submitted by Richard Taylor, Minutes Clerk