

ST. HELENS PARKS COMMISSION

Minutes for Meeting of August 14, 2017

Council Chambers, City Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Howard Blumenthal, Chair
Stan Chiotti, Vice Chair
Phillip Roddy, Commissioner
Jerry Belcher, Commissioner
John Brewington, Commissioner
Jacob Woodruff, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT

Thad Houk, Parks Supervisor
Neal Sheppard, PW Director
Jenny Dimsho, Assistant Planner
Sheri Ingram, Secretary
Matt Brown, Finance Director

MEMBERS ABSENT

Elisa Mann, Commissioner

GUESTS

COUNCILOR IN ATTENDANCE

Doug Morten

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CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Blumenthal at 4:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chiotti made a **motion** to approve the minutes of the June 12, 2017 meeting. Motion was seconded by Roddy and approved unanimously.

TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR

COUNCILOR'S REPORT

Morten stated he was interested in hearing their ideas and getting a recommendation on the park area and proposed RV park they toured at the Boise Property.

He asked Sheppard for an update on the parking area at Nob Hill. Sheppard said the parking area is almost done and he has ordered signs indicating it is a parking area for the park. Nelson said a survey would cost too much so they didn't go that direction. It would have been \$1000 just for stakes and upwards of \$2500 for an in-depth survey and they don't have money budgeted for it and they don't think it's an issue now that the parking area has been moved over.

Morten thanked Blumenthal and Mann for giving the annual report to the Council and he thanked Neal, Thad, Public Works and Parks for the fenced dog park at Heinie Heumann.

NEW BUSINESS

Soda Tax and SDC Fee Increase: Matt Brown stated the current SDC is \$10,000 for a basic single family residence and the Parks Dept. share of that is \$1862. They are proposing an increase to \$13,000 which would make the Parks share \$2944. The money can be used for "capacity" improvements like adding a new park.

The City is looking at implementing a sugar-sweetened beverage tax which is an excise tax that is put on the distributors for beverages such as soda, sweetened tea, juices that are not 100% juice, sports drinks and energy drinks. We would bill the distributor for the beverages purchased by businesses in town. Places that make their own drinks from a soda machine buy boxes of sugar and the tax would be based on the volume of beverage that box could create.

The City Council can elect to do this without going out to a public vote because it is only being done in the city and not throughout the county. Some places that have this tax are Philadelphia, Boulder, Berkley, San Francisco and Seattle was the most recent one that passed it. He played a video on the results of a study on it in Berkley. He talked about the Parks Master Plan and said according to a survey, the parks are mostly used for walking/exercise and the parks are a huge contributing factor to the livability of St. Helens. He thinks this tax will contribute to the goal of a safe and healthy city and support parks, trails and recreation programs. He recommends a two cent per ounce tax because it yielded the most revenue for the City and it's the most efficient way to affect consumer behavior as far as increasing the price enough that they will substitute something else. If you increase the price too much, the demand for the product really drops off.

Chiotti says he doesn't think the City should be telling people how to live their lives. Woodruff said he is in favor if it but would be worried about people losing their jobs over these things. Morten said he went to every restaurant in town and none of them were in favor of it. Brown said the purpose of the tax is to create a healthier community and subsidize the parks budget so they can do projects. There are \$4 million in improvements they have identified in the Master Plan. They have \$100,000 in the budget right now and this could potentially give them \$400,000. That extra \$300,000 could cover an entire area of sidewalks they have identified on a map in the Master Plan. Belcher said that brings up a point that he has brought up before that at one time there was a policy that new construction would have sidewalks. He walks around town and sees a lot of new houses without sidewalks and he's unhappy that the City doesn't follow up on that. Dimsho said in the past, the rule is if there are no adjacent sidewalks, we required a waiver of remonstrance. They did that for 10-15 years and it didn't result in any more sidewalks so now they collect a fee in lieu of sidewalk construction so instead of putting in a section of sidewalk that connects to nothing, they give us money, we use that money on sidewalk construction on a larger scale that has a bigger impact by picking out higher priority areas and that is working.

Brown said there will be a public forum on the soda tax on October 4th at 6:00.

Belcher made a **motion** to recommend to Council that they adopt a one cent per ounce soda tax. Motion was seconded by Woodruff and two were in favor, one against and three abstained from voting.

Brewington made a **motion** to recommend the Council approve raising the SDC fees. Motion was seconded by Belcher and approved unanimously.

Veterans Memorial: Morten said he, Dimsho, Andrew Neimi and the VFW are meeting to see if they can get an initial design, team and fund together for the memorial expansion. Once they get some things in, it will come to the Parks Commission for a recommendation.

Garden Club Grants: Chiotti put together some information on the money and hours the garden club spends on the areas they take care of and he's thinking this information would be helpful in getting grants.

Next Parks Reports: Nob Hill - Blumenthal stated that they had 21 hours of volunteer time at their spring work party and he and Caroline have an additional 25 hours of their time doing things like mowing and weeding. He asked if there was an update on when the stairs and kiosk would be started and Sheppard said Roger Stauffer will be starting on the stairs in about a week. Blumenthal also said he'd like Paul Gerdes to come out and spray blackberries. They are going to renew the Intertwine membership this year.

In October, Woodruff will report on McCormick and Chiotti will report on Heinie Heumann.

OLD BUSINESS

Field Trip: Blumenthal said he has been back out there twice since the field trip and the ivy has been girdled on about a dozen trees now. Brewington asked Dimsho if that would have to be added to the Master Plan to do things out there and she said the Master Plan informs the Capital Improvement Plan so it could go straight to the Capital Improvement Plan to be SDC eligible. There are zoning issues that would have to be addressed first. The Parks Commission doesn't necessarily need to know all the steps. They just need to make a recommendation to Council to move forward with the idea of that becoming a park.

Brewington was impressed and thought it was a very pretty walk. Blumenthal thought it would be a great asset for connectivity in the trail system. Belcher said he has heard people say they have issues with it being called Boise Park. He thinks because of the history and how much Boise contributed to the city and employed so many people, he would hate to see it have a different name.

Brewington made a **motion** to recommend to Council that they go forward with making an RV park, day park and trails on the Boise property as soon as possible. Motion was seconded by Chiotti and approved unanimously.

Nob Hill 4th Street Entrance: Blumenthal said this was already covered during the Councilor's report and he thinks it look great in there.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Belcher said he thinks the railroad bridge over Milton Creek looks bad and he would like the City to encourage the railroad to clean it up and paint it.

Roddy said the Lions Club had been talking about planting 100 trees for their 100th anniversary. They decided they could spend \$1000 and they don't think they can get 100 trees for that much money. He asked if they could come up with ideas for other things to spend that money on to help the City. He'd like them to think about it and give him ideas at the next meeting.

OTHER MATTERS

Sheppard said he wanted to clean up the steep bank between the upper and lower part of Grey Cliffs Park. It has some scrubby cherries and firs. There are Madrone trees in there that they will leave but they want to take out the cherry trees and thin some of the firs and he just wanted to make sure they were okay with that.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 9, 2017, at 4:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sheri Ingram
Secretary

2017 ATTENDANCE RECORD

P = PRESENT / E = EXCUSED ABSENCE/U = UNEXCUSED ABSENCE

Meeting Date	John Brewington	Elisa Mann	Jacob Woodruff	Jerry Belcher	Stan Chiotti	Howard Blumenthal	Phillip Roddy
2/13	P	P	E	P	P	P	P
4/10	A	P	P	P	P	P	P
6/12	P	P	E	P	E	P	P
8/14	P	A	P	P	P	P	P