

PARKS COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting Minutes

February 5, 2026

City Hall Executive Conference Room 141

Present: Alan Ewert (Chair), Erin Trimble, Peter Gassner, Eve Ponder, Brad Porterfield, Jeannie Cote-Lashonse
Council Liaison: Shannon Wedding (Absent)
Absent: Shawna Hicks
RAPRD Ex Officio: Katie Hammer
Youth Ex Officio: Alison Aguilar (Absent)
Staff Present: PW Operations Manager Josh Wedding, Special Projects and Natural Resource Manager Maria Ramirez, Avery McChristian City Arborist, Recorder Brenda Pelly.

CALL TO ORDER/ESTABLISH A QUORUM:

Chair Alan Ewert called the meeting to order at 3:35PM. A quorum was established.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- December 4, 2025, minutes. Erin motioned to approve, Brad 2nd the motion, Unanimously approved.

DISCUSSIONS/ ACTION ITEMS

Code Review:

- Maria presented the annual review of City Code Chapter 2 Parks Committee roles & responsibilities. She also referenced Chapter 3 (Tree Board) and Chapter 5 (Park violations) as FYIs.
- Purpose, Plan, develop, and provide stewardship of City parks and open spaces, preserving natural areas and maximizing public enjoyment.
- Committee makeup, chair/co-chair roles, and reporting requirements were briefly reviewed.
- While this is a routine review, members may propose changes; formal amendments must be considered and approved by City Council.

Election of Chair & Co-Chair

- Erin was nominated to be the chair, and Pete Gassner was nominated to be the Co-Chair.
- Vote was unanimously approved.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

- Parks, Maria presented Parks' portion of the city's CIP.
- 5-Year Overview:
 - Projects identified: ~\$15.1M
 - Resources available: ~\$16.4M
 - Balance after planned projects: ~\$1.3M
- Key Near-Term Projects:
 - Elkhorn Park Development: Land use, concept planning, design; major focus beginning this year.
 - Parks Master Plan: Ongoing work.
 - Dry Canyon (Plan & Projects): Plan work included; future phases to be funded beyond the 2-year highlight window.
- Discussion:
 - Request to see the full five-year CIP snapshot (not just the first two years).
 - Interest in ensuring previously discussed items (e.g., skills course) are captured—potentially as part of Elkhorn concept planning.
 - Maria will follow up with Jessica (CIP) and circulate a consolidated view and notes.
- Action:
 - Maria to share the full 5-year Parks CIP snapshot and relevant slides/documents with the entire Committee ahead of Council's discussion.

Dry Canyon Firewise Plan - Josh presented the plan

- Partners/Consultation: Fire Chief, State Fire Marshal, Deschutes County Natural Resources & Forester, OSU Extension, COCC, Soil & Water Conservation District, East Cascades Audubon Society, and Native Plant Society (local president assisting with plant ID).
 - Recommendations (consensus across agencies):

- Thin trees/seedlings < 8" diameter.
- Limb remaining trees to 6 ft to reduce ladder fuels.
- Mow fire breaks on canyon floor (Council approved ~65 ft width; agencies preferred ~100 ft).
- Execution:
 - Internal resources this season (grant funding pending).
- Schedule:
 - Fire breaks mowing to begin next week (goal: complete in ~2 days, prior to cheatgrass seeding).
 - Thinning/limbing continues through late winter; pause during hot/dry months; resume in fall.
 - Focus area: North Dry Canyon, prioritizing the west side from the treatment plant south to Maple Bridge.
 - Materials handling: Chip and haul off-site.
 - Seeding: Apply pre-emergent native seed in fire break areas (fall), seeking long-term suppression of cheat grass and promotion of native grasses.
- Homeowner Coordination:
 - Fire Department will conduct defensible space assessments and connect eligible homeowners to grant funds for mitigation.
- Discussion & Mitigation Notes:
 - Concerns about fragile slopes and increased social trails as sightlines open.
- Staff will:
 - Mark work zones clearly and maintain field presence to educate/correct issues.
 - Coordinate with Code Enforcement, Fire, and Police for consistent public messaging and support.
 - Pursue a Dry Canyon Management Plan to formalize mitigations (e.g., signage, trail guidance, habitat protection).
- Actions:
 - Maria/Joshua/Avery to provide the Firewise slide deck and supporting agency recommendations to the Committee.
 - City Communications to issue a press release, update the website, and run a social media campaign explaining scope, timing, and community role.

Operations & Maintenance Report – Josh presented on behalf of Parks Operations

- Sports Fields: Upgrades to baseball/softball fields (diamond dust on infields, chain-link replacements, dugout painting, bench & helmet cubby rebuilds) in preparation for Little League season (~1 month out).
- Irrigation: Ongoing repairs and mitigation (Highland & Glacier corridors) related to ADA project impacts.
- Floral Program: Flower baskets/pots scheduled for planting (McMinnville). Theme: Red, White, & Blue for the national anniversary year.
- Skate Park: Camera installation underway (new pole & equipment on Antler).
- Facilities: Painting of flush restrooms (interior and exterior) nearing completion.

Additional Comments:

- Interpretive Display: A previously shared cross-section went viral on social media and renewed library interest. Staff will explore a permanent interpretive display and potential traveling exhibit across county library sites.
- Oldest Tree in Dry Canyon: Still under identification; staff have candidate areas.

UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS:

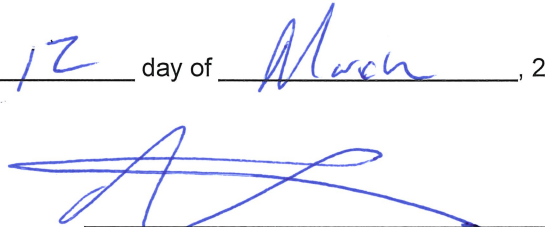
- March –TBD

ADJOURN: Meeting adjourned at 4:50PM.

APPROVED by and SIGNED by me this 12 day of March, 2025.

ATTEST: 

Alan Ewert
Parks Committee Chair



Maria Ramirez
Special Projects and Natural Resource Program Manager

*Minutes created with assistance from CoPilot AI software.