

PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

March 04, 2025 at 5:30 PM

Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar



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A. CALL TO ORDER

PRAC Chair Ryan O'Shaughnessy called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Ryan O'Shaughnessy, Danika Swanson, Emma Van Nes, Jennifer Gross, Kaasáank' Andrew Williams, Paulette Schirmer, & Ren Scott

Absent: Josh Anderson

Staff Present: George Schaaf, Parks & Recreation Director; Neil Steininger, Assembly Liaison; & Annie Carroll, Parks & Recreation Staff Liaison

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Ms. Scott to approve the agenda. *No objections were heard, and the agenda was approved.*

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Minutes from February 4, 2025

MOTION by Ms. Swanson to approve the minutes. *No objections were heard, and the minutes were approved.*

E. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS - *None*

F. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2. March 4 Agenda Overview

G. NEW BUSINESS

3. Adair-Kennedy Memorial Park – Presented by G. Schaaf

Mr. Schaaf began by sharing an overview of the Adair-Kennedy Park project and its funding sources. During the October 2022 municipal election voters approved, by an overwhelming 69% margin, a general obligation bond for parks and recreation projects which included installing an artificial turf, baseball, and softball diamond at the Adair-Kennedy Memorial Park. The turf installation has been completed, and after coming in under budget the department was able to expand the scope of the project to include adding new LED field lights, improved fencing, and a new dugout in the park.

While investigating the 50-year-old track surrounding the football field staff found that the surface is longer reparable as the asphalt below is compromised. The track is a safety hazard in its current state as it collects water and ice and poses many tripping hazards where it is bubbling and cracking. The cost of replacing the track is likely to be near 2-4 million dollars which the current budget will not cover even with the remaining funds. Given that Floyd Dryden school is no longer open, and Juneau only has one high school, whose athletes are better off using the track at Dimond Park, the department is interested in engaging with the community on a solution for the Adair-Kennedy Park. He highlighted a few more features of the park that staff recommend improving including replacing the press box and lighting at the football field, and renovations to the central plaza, storage areas, and the restrooms.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy shares that it is important for improvements to be central to the intent of the bond that passed, and thanks Mr. Schaaf for including recommendations that are in keeping with what Juneau voted for. He recommends that the PRAC take some time to research and consider options and put forth a motion at the next meeting.

Ms. Schirmer shares that she thinks moving forward with the track replacement would be advantageous and she agrees that they need to take a bigger look at the situation before making a motion.

Ms. Swanson asks what other options there may be other than a full replacement of the track to which Mr. Schaaf answers that they are uncertain, which is why hiring a consultant to assess the situation and provide potential solutions would be valuable. She also asks if modular storage sheds available purchase in town might help meet storage needs at the park. Mr. Schaaf answers that they need something more robust because of building permits and they have found that the condition of shelters such as those tend to diminish quickly.

Ms. Van Nes asked who the primary user groups are for the park currently. Mr. Schaaf answers that soccer, football, and disc golf groups use the facilities at the park. The department has been in touch with coaches at the high school as they developed their plans, but he agrees that it would be valuable to reach out to other groups as well.

H. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

I. STAFF REPORTS

4. Trail Mix Update – Presented by Meghan Tabacek

Ms. Tabacek introduces herself as the Executive Director of Trail Mix, and shares that she will be presenting a wrap-up of the 2024 season and plans for 2025 trail projects. She began by introducing the organization sharing that their mission is to be the steward of a safe and enjoyable Juneau Trail System by bringing people and resources together to coordinate and execute improvements and maintenance of our trail systems. Their 2024 partners included CBJ, The US Forest Service, and Alaska State Parks as well as community partners like The Juneau Off-Road Association, Juneau Community Foundation, and the University of Alaska Southeast. She shared that they had worked on 16 trail projects in 2024 doing work including construction, tread improvements, brushing, rerouting and drainage.

Ms. Tabacek shares that the organization prioritizes workforce development, and stresses that you can become a crew member with no trail experience. Part of their 2025 goals are to prioritize developing strong leaders and communicators in their crews and give them experience and instruction on trail construction and first-aid. Their 2025 Trail projects are set to include work on Perseverance, Black bear Trail, Christopher Trail, 35 Mile ORV Park, Fish Creek Bridge, Mt. Jumbo Reroute, Horse Tram Trail, Spaulding Meadows, and Outer Point along with several CBJ Bike trails. Their Youth Employment in Parks Program will also have teams working on projects at the Eagle valley Center, the SAIL Ropes Course, Mt. Jumbo Reroute and Switzer Creek. She shares that Trail Mix has made the decision to pull their 2 crews from the Forest Service funded projects they were hoping to do this season as there has been instability and uncertainty around their agreements this year. They are hoping to reassign these crews to more CBJ trail maintenance projects this year and avoid laying off any of their crew members. She explains that CBJ provides a General Brushing and Trail Maintenance Grant to Trail Mix annually which was previously \$75,000 and she would like to request an increase to \$100,000 to support brushing, trail repairs, workforce development, operational expense, and equipment repair.

Ms. Swanson expresses that the first couple of miles of Peterson Lake are amazing and asks if there are any plans to work on the rest of the trail. Ms. Tabacek answers that they were hoping to continue working on the trail but will be unable to this year due to uncertainty with federal funding. She shares that they do however have a fundraiser going on to raise money to allow crew members to do work on federal trails.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy asks if Ms. Tabacek can elaborate on why Trail mix is unable to work on Federal Projects this year. She explains that Trail Mix is paid on reimbursement, so they don't receive funds up front, and they had already struggled to receive payment from federal projects they worked on in 2024. With federal funds and grants being frozen and unfrozen it has created a lot of liability for the organization, and they cannot operate under that level of uncertainty.

Ms. Van Nes asked what the fundraising goal is for their 4th crew and where people can find that donation page. Ms. Tabacek answered that their goal is \$170,000 which is calculated based on the cost to employ 5 new employees at trail mix and hopefully help those who have been impacted by federal layoffs and create more employment of trails in Juneau. The fundraiser can be found at trailmixinc.org.

Ms. Gross asked which federal trails their crews were set to work on before the decision not to was made because she has noticed the Dupont bridge is not safe. Ms. Tabacek answers that they were originally going to work on the Peterson Lake Trail and the Amalga trail out to Eagle Glacier Cabin. She also shares that they are aware of the status of Dupont Bridge and are in contact with several agencies who are involved in work there. She is hopeful that they can get it replaced in the next year or 2.

Mr. Kaasáank' asks if Trail Mix has reached out to tribes and ANCSA organizations for support sponsoring their work and further asks how tribal members who would like to support them can form a group to have a stronger voice in the effort to receive federal funds. Ms. Tabacek shares that they have arranged for upcoming meetings with Goldbelt and Tlingit and Haida to address trail concerns and unite on common messaging moving forward. She encourages individuals to make their voices heard and contact their representatives to tell them how much we value trails and funding for the Forest Service.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy asks Mr. Schaaf for guidance on how the PRAC can advocate for an increase to CBJ's grant funding to Trail Mix if they so choose. Mr. Schaaf answers that the opportunity for the PRAC and for Trail Mix to request additional funding is going to be during the Assembly's budget process as the department has submitted their budget to the City Manager and Finance Director already.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy thanks Ms. Tabacek for providing her presentation to the PRAC, and for Trail Mix's fantastic work maintaining our trails.

5. Jackie Renninger Park Update – Presented by G. Schaaf

Mr. Schaaf begins by sharing that the Jackie Renninger Park Project has arrived at its final design plan. The parcel where the park is located is the largest undeveloped Recreation Service Park in town which serves a part of town that does not have access to other nearby parks. The park has suffered from issues with vandalism and crime due to its lack of use. A series of public meetings have been held with Corvus Design to engage with the public on what they want to see offered at the park. The final plan includes a skate plaza, and covered skate area as well as pickleball courts, a playground, a dog park, and day use shelter. The department has issued a new contract to PND Engineering to do the full design for the new park. The next steps for this project will be to collect final community feedback from the user groups for the park and eventually get a general obligation bond on the ballot in 2026 so that they can hopefully begin construction in 2027.

Ms. Gross asked if the plans are to move the skate park to a different area to which MR. Schaaf answered that they do intend to move the Skatepark to the other side of the park and place the pickleball courts where the structure is now at the park. The existing structure will have to be removed as it doesn't work well for the plans moving forward.

Mr. Kaasáank' asks how the Tlingit & Haida Community Council can support the efforts for this project. Mr. Schaaf answers that advocating for the passage of the general obligation bond to fund this park would be a great help, and that staff would be happy to make a presentation to the council if they would be interested.

Ms. Van Nes shares that she was pleased to see the letter written to PRAC from Ms. Thorington inquiring about accessibility at the park, and she asks if community meetings will be held to discuss the playground design. Additionally, she expressed her hopes that the dog park will be surfaced since the dirt ground often becomes a mud pit with the conditions in Juneau. Mr. Schaaf answers that the department is committed to accessibility and universal design at playgrounds, especially with the surface that they select. They will engage with the community further as the project advances and be in contact with SAIL for feedback as well.

6. Dimond Park Field House Injury – Presented by G. Schaaf

Mr. Schaaf presented his memo detailing the injury that occurred at the Dimond Park Field House and the department's solution to hopefully prevent any further occurrences. With no questions the PRAC moved on to the next agenda item.

J. PUBLIC LETTERS TO PRAC

- 7. Letter from Lillian Thorington
- 8. Letter from Susan Schrader

K. COMMITTEE MEMBER / LIAISON COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Schirmer shared that the Lands Housing and Economic Development Committee met on February 24, where they heard plans for the Huna Totem Dock and public comments.

Mr. Steininger shares that the Assembly met on March 3 and discussed changes to the election code. He also shares that the next Finance Committee meeting will be held March 5 and they will be discussing their draft schedule for what topics will be discussed in April, and offers to share this schedule with the PRAC.

Mr. Kaasáank' shares the Tlingit word **Háatl'**, meaning poop, at his grandson's request. He shares that they don't feel it's vulgar, but simply direct. He also shares that in Tlingit a cut bank is called **L'ewshaa** which is a fitting word for spring as snow melt and rain result in cut banks when the rivers swell.

Mr. Schaaf shares that the next PRAC meeting will be his last as he will be leaving CBJ on April 4th and has accepted a position as the Parks and Recreation Director for Parks Tacoma in Tacoma, Washington. He expresses that it has been an honor to spend the last 7 years working with this committee and with CBJ.

L. NEXT MEETING DATE - April 1, 2025

M. ADJOURNMENT– With no further business to discuss the committee meeting adjourned at 6:56pm

Respectfully submitted by Annie Carroll on 3/28/2025, approved at 4/1/2025 PRAC meeting.