

PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

December 03, 2024 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 5:30 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Ryan O'Shaughnessy, Josh Anderson, Ren Scott, Kaasáank' Andrew Williams, Danika Swanson, Emma Van Nes, Portland Sarantopoulos, & Paulette Schirmer

Absent: None

Staff Present: George Schaaf, Parks & Recreation Director; Lauren Verrelli, Parks & Recreation Deputy 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 November 5, 2024

MOTION by Ms. Scott 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. December 3 Agenda Overview

G. NEW BUSINESS

3. Lands, Housing, & Economic Development Committee PRAC Liaison Election

Mr. O'Shaughnessy informs the PRAC that this committee has previously provided a liaison to the Lands, Housing, & Economic Development (LHED) Committee, and asks if anyone would be interested in fulfilling that duty. Ms. Schirmer asks when the LHED committee meets, to which Mr. O'Shaughnessy and Mr. Steininger answer that it is usually the first Monday of the month at 5:00 p.m. She shares that she would be interested in serving as liaison.

MOTION by Ms. Van Nes to nominate Ms. Schirmer as the LHED committee PRAC liaison. *No objections were heard, and the motion passed.*

4. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) - FY2026-31 - Presented by G. Schaaf

Mr. Schaaf explains that the memo included with the agenda packet shares an overview of the department's 6-year CIP. Parks & Rec will be requesting appropriation from the Assembly in FY26, and the 5 years presented past that telegraph to the public where the department would like to make their capital investments. He asks for the PRAC's feedback and recommendations on the plan so that it can be provided to the Engineering and Public Works Department by December 16.

Ms. Scott asks if the removal of the Lemon Creek Community Center from the FY26 CIP is because of the department's acquisition of several school buildings. Mr. Schaaf answers that she is correct, as the Floyd Dryden and Marie Drake gyms are now managed by Parks & Rec there will be enough existing gym space to fit the requirements of their master plan for indoor programs and programming. Ms. Scott thanks him for the explanation and notes that there is a lack of recreational opportunities in Lemon Creek and hopes that they will see something in that area in the future.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy comments that he is happy to see so many projects with grant funding and is happy the department is making efforts to secure that funding to maximize the value of facilities.

Ms. Swanson asks about the funding sources for the 35 Mile ORV Park, and if they can explain the RTP grant in further detail. Mr. Schaaf explains that the project had some initial funding through temporary 1% sales tax as well as some appropriations through general sales tax from the Assembly over the years that were broadly dedicated to identifying an ORV park and beginning construction. Last summer permitting and the conditional use permit allowed them to begin construction by building a new parking lot and driveway, installing fencing and park furnishings, and starting initial construction of about 3,000 feet of trail. Work is going to continue going into next summer as well, with a goal of completing the initial lower loop trail, which will be about 5,000 feet. The grant funding is a second Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Grant that was submitted on October 31, meaning it will be several more months before it is known if it was successful. He shares that there is very little competition for motorized recreation in the State so he feels confident this project will compete as it's been popular with the Outdoor Recreation Transportation Advisory Board. He acknowledges that this will be a multi-million-dollar project and the funding and the ability to complete that much trail construction very quickly is not possible, so they're taking a gradual approach and planning to construct \$350,000 to \$400,000 worth of work each year. Ms. Swanson asks when the project is projected to be complete. Mr. Schaaf answers that the lower loop trail will likely be completed next year, and they will be partnering with the Juneau Off-road Association to begin construction on the second loop. He estimates it will be available for use in 1-2 years, with the project entirely completed in 5-10 years.

MOTION by Mr. Kaasáank' for the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the Assembly approve \$7,050,000 for the FY2026 Parks & Recreation Capital Improvement Program. *No objections were heard, and the motion passed.*

5. Commercial Recreation Use Analysis - Presented by G. Schaaf & L. Pringle

Mr. Schaaf began by expressing his thanks to Corvus Design and the hundreds of members of the public who attended public meetings held over the last few months to provide thoughtful comments throughout this process. He hopes that the analysis they have pulled together reflects the comments received, and is something that the community can support. He then introduces Linda Pringle from Corvus Design to share information about the draft analysis presented to PRAC.

Ms. Pringle discusses the process of developing this draft and provides a summary of the proposed guidelines. They began by reviewing the existing policies, plans, and regulations that are in place relating to commercial use for Parks & Rec including the 2004 Trails Working Group recommendations, and the Juneau Tourism Best Management Practices to provide a foundation for what to develop in their guidelines. The draft then maps the history of commercial use with the Parks & Rec Department, as well as the steps that have been taken by the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) over the years to manage tourism and commercial use in Juneau. They then held 5 public meetings to collect feedback from the community in several different areas of town, and opened an online comment collector for those who couldn't attend. Once collecting this feedback, the first draft was created and once again presented to the public at an open house on October 30, with an additional comment collection period. Recommendations were refined after reviewing feedback and the final draft was created and

subsequently provided to PRAC to review at this meeting. She concludes by summarizing the recommendations and sharing that a major component of this plan is a recommendation that it be updated every 3 years, and that CBJ should conduct more frequent monitoring controls.

Ms. Scott asked what new locations would be open to commercial use to which Ms. Pringle answered Telephone Hill Park, Under Thunder Trail, and Evergreen Cemetery.

Ms. Van Nes notes that commercial use of Brotherhood Bridge is limited to the parking lot and asks how CBJ will enforce that rule. Mr. Schaaf answers that if individuals encounter commercially guided tour groups on the trail, the department would like to hear about it. He adds that there have been occurrences where tour bus passengers who stop for photos are reported to be walking down the trail. The department has provided explicit directions to the permitted operators in that area that as a condition of their permit they are to discourage guests from doing so. However, there is no way to legally prevent an unguided individual from walking the trail of their own volition.

Mr. Anderson asked if there were any CBJ ordinances, or anything that would mitigate the presence of those loitering in the parks since companies are paying to operate their commercial enterprises there, and tourists are paying to come here. Mr. Schaaf answered that the department relies on the JPD to enforce the criminal code as they would anywhere else, but that a commercial permit does not grant exclusive use of the area, and the permit conditions focus mainly on what the permit holder is allowed and not allowed to do. He adds that activating a space through different types of use is a great way to make it a more welcoming space for everybody, for example in the summer when food vendors, visitors, and those enjoying the complementary Wi-Fi all congregate the park.

The PRAC members began discussing their position on the issue and how to best communicate their concerns before returning to the topic of commercial use with more questions, and an opportunity for public comments.

Ms. Scott asks if the commercial use of Telephone Hill will be affected by the proposed development. Mr. Schaaf answered that if the park was to be absorbed by potential development it would have to be removed from the parks and the open space system by the Assembly before it could be used for something else.

Public Comment

James McCants, a Douglas resident, shares that his main concern with the draft is the cell phone data collection proposed on page 44. He says that as a member of the public it makes him uneasy, and even though it is legal, the idea of CBJ tracking citizens on public lands in any capacity using cell phone data does not sit well with him. He says one thing to mitigate this if it's not going to change is to make people aware of it. Tell them what day CBJ is tracking your cell phone, and how and when CBJ will disclose information about where people went. He feels it is ridiculous to use taxpayer money to track people's cell phones on public land.

Kathy Coghill, a North Douglas resident, thanks everyone for the update and the progress being made to keep people informed, but she has concerns as a trail runner here in Juneau for the last 40 years. She notes that the Rainforest Trail is getting into quite a state of disrepair, and she is concerned about the adaptive management plan not being adequate. She feels the Assembly should allocate some resources to assess trail status. She is disappointed with the draft not giving an inventory of the status of the trails, and which are in disrepair with the current levels of use, and which might be vulnerable to increased use because of the environment with high rain and water content. She believes we should assess the status and make sure trails are healthy before thinking about increasing the volume of visitors.

Dan Kirkwood, a downtown resident, states that he appreciates the comments from Mr. McCants about the role of anonymous cell phone data. He asks if the PRAC can explain how the data is used and where it comes from because he thinks it might be much less sinister than it sounds. Mr. Schaaf explains that cell phone data is commercially available through several different companies, and CBJ is not going to be collecting any of this data itself. These companies aggregate anonymized cell phone data across millions of users around the country with no personally identifiable data points associated. They can tell you that an individual from Wyoming came to Juneau on June 25th and went from the downtown dock to perseverance trail for example. It provides information about how many thousands of people are using parks and trails independently. He explains that this is important information to know because they received comments during this public process saying that the trails feel busy, and it didn't mesh with the data that we had from our commercial permittees. It is important for them to understand what the impact of independent travelers is when deciding whether to allow commercial use in an area, and if so, how much.

MOTION by Ms. Van Nes for the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the Assembly approve the Commercial Use Analysis. *No objections were heard, and the motion passed.*

H. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

I. STAFF REPORTS - Presented by G. Schaaf

Mr. Schaaf updated the PRAC on current programs at the Dimond Park Field house, and progress towards preparing the recently acquired gyms for indoor recreation programs and partnerships.

Ms. Scott asked if there was an update on scheduling a tour for PRAC members. Ms. Verrelli answered that there have been discussions and due to limited time, something would be scheduled for January and presented at the next meeting.

J. PUBLIC LETTERS TO PRAC

6. Letter from Christina Choquette

Mr. Schaaf explained that this letter was received by the department, and he felt it was important to pass it along to the Committee, so they remain aware of the public's requests.

K. COMMITTEE MEMBER / LIAISON COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Steininger shared that the Assembly will be having their annual retreat soon with one of the objectives being to discuss the budget for the upcoming year.

Ms. Swanson shared that the Trail Mix Dinner was a great success, and she was happy and appreciative to see many familiar faces there.

Mr. Kaasáank' shared a Tlingit word for the month with the committee. "**Ayawditee**" meaning it's stormy, or it was stormy outside. He then asks if his grandson can present a word for the committee each month to which Mr. O'Shaughnessy asked that staff reach out to the City Clerks office to see if this would be allowed, and when best to include it in the meeting.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy noted that he will be out of town for the upcoming meeting and that Mr. Anderson will fill in as chair his absence.

L. NEXT MEETING DATE - January 7, 2025

M. ADJOURNMENT With no further business to discuss the committee meeting adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Annie Carroll on 1/03/2025, approved at the 01/07/2025 PRAC meeting.