

PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 07, 2025 at 5:30 PM

Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar



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A. CALL TO ORDER

PRAC Vice-Chair Chair Josh Anderson called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Josh Anderson, Ren Scott, Kaasáank' Andrew Williams, Emma Van Nes, & Paulette Schirmer

Absent: Ryan O'Shaughnessy, Danika Swanson, & Portland Sarantopoulos

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. Schirmer to approve the agenda. *No objections were heard, and the agenda was approved.*

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Minutes from December 3, 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. January 7 Agenda Overview

G. NEW BUSINESS

3. Proposed FY2025-26 Fee Schedule – Presented by L. Verrelli

Ms. Verrelli explained that the department is proposing several changes to the fee schedule for approval by the City Manager's office. She provides a memo detailing the changes for the PRAC to review and provides feedback on, then highlights a few fee changes that will affect the public. The Homestead Cabin Cleaning Fee will be increased from \$100 to \$350 to better align with the actual cost of cleaning after each rental. The Arboretum's Commercial Use Fee will be changed from \$2 to \$3.50 per person to match that charged for other Parks & Rec managed areas. Additionally, a Commercial Filming and Photography Fee of \$30 per hour is being proposed for activities that could affect the public's use of the area. Fees associated with rentals of the Floyd Dryden and Marie Drake Gyms have been proposed in addition to merchandise sales fees for programs such as Walk Southeast. The Dimond Park Field House will be slightly increasing fees to make them consistent with camp costs at the Zach Gordon Youth Center. Finally, the Commercial Use Permit Fee is proposed to increase from \$3.50 to \$5.00 per person effective April 2026. They are proposing it increase by 50 cents per year after that until its aligned with fees charged by the U.S. Forest Service and Alaska State Parks.

Ms. Schirmer asked if there were plans to provide indoor gym space for tennis programs at the gyms in addition to the proposed pickleball program. Ms. Verrelli answered that currently there are not any plans since many tennis players use the Alaska Club's facilities. There have been many requests from pickleball players in Juneau to use the school gyms, so the department has made it a priority to get the

programming up and running. She shares that if the Tennis community shows interest the department would look into offering that as well.

Ms. Scott asks for more information about the Homestead Cabin. Ms. Verrelli answers that the cabin which is owned and managed by the department is located to the left of the viewing platform at Homestead Park. The cabin is available to rent for housing often by those working for the city seasonally such as traveling nurses or those working for the legislature.

Mr. Kaasáank' asked if the Floyd Dryden Hourly Bulk rate is similar to what user groups pay at the Dimond Park Field House. Ms. Verrelli answered that this rate is aligned more closely to pricing for rentals of the Mt. Jumbo Gym. Bulk renters are those who book 20 or more consecutive hours within half a year. He follows up asking if there are possibilities for other programming besides pickleball such as space for the baseball community. Ms. Verrelli answered that the pickleball is included on the fee schedule as plans are to offer organized programming later this winter, but that other users will be free to reserve space by the hour in the gym for practicing other sports as well. Mr. Kaasáank' concluded by asking if there is any organized sheet or area parents could sign up for shared rental time of the facility. Ms. Verrelli answered that there isn't anything of that nature hosted by Parks & Rec, but that people are welcome to organize amongst themselves or on social media and approached the department to reserve shared gym time.

Mr. Anderson asked why the cleaning fees for the Homestead Cabin have varied so much, and what services are driving the higher costs. Ms. Verrelli answers that the cleaning is contracted out, and done after guests have stayed for extended periods of time up to 6 months. These long stays can result in houseware being damaged or broken, and furniture needing to be cleaned or replaced. Mr. Anderson follows up by asking if they would consider prorating the cleaning fee or using a sliding scale based on the longevity of someone's stay at the cabin. Ms. Van Nes added to the discussion suggesting a deposit might be helpful in situations where the cabin is in disrepair following a long-term rental. Ms. Verrelli answered that there is currently a deposit for the facility, and that these are valuable suggestions which she will bring to her staff as possible solutions.

MOTION by Ms. Schirmer for the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the City Manager approve the changes to the Parks & Recreation Fee Schedule with additional consideration of a sliding scale or deposit collection for the Homestead Cabin fees. *No objections were heard, and the Motion passed.*

4. Proposed FY2026 Operating Budget – Presented by G. Schaaf

Mr. Schaaf explained that the Department is finalizing their FY2026 operating budget and that approximately 12.7 million dollars in expenditures included are for programs and services under the purview of the PRAC. Approximately 4.2 million will be offset by grants and revenue earned from fees and charges. He explains that they will see some significant changes to insurance costs due to increases in workers' compensation premiums. Additionally, the cost of operating and maintaining the facilities that CBJ Acquired from the Juneau School District this year will account for approximately \$85,000 in new costs. He highlights a proposed feasibility study to explore the possibility of adding a second sheet of ice at Treadwell Arena as one of the larger one-time expenditures accounting for \$50,000 that they will request from the Assembly. A noteworthy increase in personnel services within the Youth Services Division will be funded by a grant so no CBJ match is required. He concludes by acknowledging that there are increased overtime expenses due to position vacancies particularly within the aquatics division which they anticipate continuing somewhat into the coming year.

Ms. Schirmer asked if there was a number associated with the cost savings from consolidating, printing, and advertising. Mr. Schaaf answered that the change she is seeing doesn't reflect cost savings but that

those expenditures are being relocated out of division budgets and into Areawide Recreation where the marketing and communication staff are.

MOTION by Ms. Scott for the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the Assembly approve the Parks & Recreation FY26 Operating Budget as presented. *No objections were heard, and the motion passed.*

5. Proposed FY2026 Commercial Use Fee Revenue Allocation – Presented by G. Schaaf & L. Verrelli

Ms. Verrelli began with a general overview of the department's Commercial Use history. She explains that any commercial operator who wants to operate on CBJ parkland must be permitted. The fee structure changed in 2019 to \$3.50 per person, and after that the summer of 2024 was the first season operators who took the same guest to several permitted locations paid only once for that individual. As previously discussed, the department proposes an increase to \$5.00 per person beginning in 2026. Finally, she presented the Commercial Use revenue over the last 7 years which reflected lower revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, and a significant increase in revenue afterwards especially for the 2024 season when fees for certain parks were no longer waved.

Mr. Schaaf begins by explaining that the significant increase in Commercial Use revenue offers a unique opportunity to improve programs and services which mitigate and offset the costs and impacts of managing tourism on CBJ parks and trails. The department plans to fund their Recreation Manager position, who administers Commercial Use permits and manages data relating to the program. This increase will also account for 50% of the funding for a Park Ranger position responsible for conducting Commercial Use permit compliance monitoring and enforcement in the field. Support will also be increased for Trail Mix, Inc., who perform trail maintenance for the department. He emphasizes that money generated by Commercial Use Fees is not required to be spent on Commercial Use activities in the way Marine Passenger Fees are. He highlights sections of the department's proposal including an increase in funding for the Youth Activities Grant, doubling the annual Youth scholarship amounts, and establishing a dedicated project manager to oversee Parks & Recreation initiatives including the capital improvement program.

Mr. Anderson asked is the revenue would go into the general fund or go straight towards Parks & Recreation. Mr. Schaaf answered that if the increment is approved by the Manager's Office, and Assembly, the department's expenditure will increase by that amount and be offset 100% by commercial fee revenue having zero impact on the amount of general fund support the department is receiving.

MOTION by Ms. Van Nes for the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the Assembly approve proposed increments to be funded with Commercial Use Fee revenues. *No objections were heard, and the motion passed.*

6. Proposed 2025 General Obligation Bond for Parks & Recreation – Presented by G. Schaaf

Mr. Schaaf introduces the department's plan to propose that there be a 15-million-dollar general obligation bond included on the 2025 municipal election ballot to fund 2 large projects. The first project would be making major construction repairs to the Diamond Park Aquatic Center. He explains that the air handler which provides ventilation to the natatorium at the pool is experiencing extreme condensation issues that have caused corrosion due to the presence of chlorine and salt. This repair work must be done urgently because if the system fails the project will be significantly more expensive and the pool closure will be longer. He notes the project will require a wall to be removed from the building. During the pool closure they will begin a number of projects including fixing the floor of the leisure pool, replacing spray features, replacing metal doors in the facility, and finally replacing domestic hot water heaters.

Ms. Scott asked if the replastering in the leisure pool would be a permanent fix or something that requires continued maintenance. Mr. Schaaf answered that it's intended to be permanent as they will be removing damaged concrete and rebar which is causing rust spots.

Mr. Anderson asked if they had considered a liner to cover the pipes underground. Mr. Schaaf answers that he's familiar with that product as it was used in a project at Centennial Hall, but that the results were mixed. He thanks him for the suggestion and says it's something they should look into. Mr. Anderson follows up by asking what wall will need to be removed to which Mr. Schaaf answers the exterior wall facing the staff parking lot.

Mr. Schaaf introduces the second project covered under the proposed general obligation bond as the construction of Jackie Renninger Park. He explains that 3 years ago the Assembly appropriated initial funding to engage the community in the designing process for a large community park on the 4-acre parcel where the skate park is located. The feedback received in this process suggested the public wants to keep the skatepark, and make room for pickleball, playground elements, fitness areas, picnic shelters, and bathrooms. He concludes sharing that the funding the Assembly appropriated in addition to funding from the Capital Improvement Program and this general obligation bond will be sufficient to build out this park to the specifications in the final conceptual design provided to the PRAC.

Ms. Scott asks what the total cost for the project is projected to be. Mr. Schaaf answers that right now there is no formal construction estimate, but that they expect it to be 8.5 million dollars with the construction cost making up 5-6 million dollars of that total.

Mr. Anderson asked where the RV dump/refill station at the park will be relocated to. Mr. Schaaf answers that it will likely be moved to the Mendenhall Wastewater Treatment Plant nearby. Mr. Anderson expressed concern about maneuvering large RVs on the road to the plant. Mr. Schaaf notes that most of the dumping activity they see in the park is commercial, such as cleaning companies dumping gray water and even septic pumping services occasionally.

MOTION by Ms. Scott for the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the Assembly propose a general obligation bond in the amount of \$15 million for the 2025 municipal election, to complete major repairs at Dimond Ark Aquatic Center and develop Jackie Renninger Memorial Park. *No objections were heard, and the motion passed.*

7. PRAC Facility Tour

Mr. Schaaf explains that the facility tour has been scheduled for January 18 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and will begin at the Dimond Park Field House.

I. STAFF REPORTS - None

J. COMMITTEE MEMBER / LIAISON COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Anderson shares that the Youth Activities Board will be meeting on January 13, and he looks forward to providing an update at the next PRAC meeting.

Mr. Kaasáank' shares a Tlingit phrase for the month with the Committee. He chose to share the phrase "**yex yatee**" meaning "it's like it" which is used to describe the color of something by comparing it to the color of something else. He explains that there aren't direct expressions for colors, and they are instead expressed as metaphors. For example, describing something as white you say "**Dleit yex yatee**" meaning "it's like snow".

K. NEXT MEETING DATE - February 4, 2025

L. ADJOURNMENT – With no further business to discuss the committee meeting adjourned at 6:37pm

Respectfully submitted by Annie Carroll on 1/31/2025, approved at the 2/4/2025 PRAC meeting