



MINUTES

Richland Parks and Recreation Commission Special Meeting

Thursday, July 22, 2021 ~ 6:00 p.m.

Remote Meeting via Zoom

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Gutierrez called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE:

Chair Gutierrez, Vice Chair Buelt and Commissioners Aldous, Arnquist, Mason, Sloughter, and Henry were present.

Commissioners Andrews and Brooks were absent.

Also, in attendance were Parks and Public Facilities Director Schiessl and Parks and Recreation Manager Jackson.

APPROVAL OF THE JULY 22, 2021 AGENDA:

Commissioner Sloughter moved to approve the July 22, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission Special Meeting agenda. Commissioner Mason seconded the motion. Motion carried 7-0.

APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 10, 2021 MEETING MINUTES:

Vice Chair Buelt moved to approve the June 10, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting minutes. Chair Gutierrez seconded the motion. Motion carried 7-0.

RECREATION REPORT:

Parks and Recreation Manager Jackson presented the Recreation Report.

Subjects included: Aloha Series grass volleyball tournament, Workout Wednesdays, limited business hours at the community center, George Prout pool swim sessions, NFL Flag football registration and shelter reservations are now being scheduled. Jackson also informed commissioners of the following events in the park: Art in the Park and Live @ 5.

PARKS AND FACILITIES REPORT:

Parks and Public Facilities Director Schiessl presented the Parks and Facilities Report. Subjects included: Budget development for 2022 Capital Improvement programs.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None, Public Comment closed at 6:09 p.m.

PRESENTATIONS:

1. Manhattan Project National Historical Park
Becky Burghart, Hanford location Site Manager

Burghart presented an overview of the Hanford Unit National Park Service, which is focused on community partnerships, education outreach, and digital engagement.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Trail Speeds and E-Bikes
Parks and Public Facilities Director, Schiessl

Over the past year the City of Richland Parks and Recreation Commission has been considering the growing use of electric bicycles and scooters on Richland's streets, sidewalks, paved and unpaved pathways. The Commission discussed a recommendation for maximum speed limits (15 mph) on all paved, shared-use pathways (such as Keene Road Pathway, Riverfront Trail, Bypass Shelterbelt Trail, Urban Greenbelt Trail, Sacagawea Trail, and the Vantage Highway Trail) in addition to additional reduced speed limits (5 mph) along congested portions of paved, shared-use pathways such as in Howard Amon and Leslie Groves Parks. The Commission also discussed the use of electric assist bicycles on unpaved, soft-surface trails in the parks system including WE Johnson Park, Bateman Island, Amon Natural Preserve, Columbia Point South, Yakima Delta, and other locations.

The State of Washington currently prohibits electric assist bicycles on unpaved "natural tread surfaces" (in Richland's case meaning dirt or sand trails in various locations) and allows electric assist bicycles on other unpaved soft surface trails improved with improved "tread surfaces" (in Richland's case meaning trails improved with gravel or wood chips in various locations). The State permits local governments to allow for electric assist bicycles on all unpaved trails, and without such an affirmative action, the RCW prohibits electric assist bicycles on "natural tread surfaces." The Parks and Recreation Commission discussed considering a recommendation to prohibit electric assist bicycles on unpaved soft surface trails.

There are three defined categories of electric assist bicycles and the State of Washington currently prohibits the most powerful Class 3 electric assist bicycles on "shared use paths." The Parks and Recreation Commission considered allowing all classes of electric assist bicycles, including Class 3, on shared use paths subject to speed limits. The Parks and Recreation Commission did not make a formal recommendation on the subject at the meeting and engaged in dialogue and conversation on the issue.

The State Legislature recently took up this matter and directed the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Natural Resources to undertake studies and to receive public input for lands managed by these State departments. Benton County has also begun a process to hear from area stakeholders on this issue related to County park land. While not necessary, it could be beneficial to develop a consistent approach on this subject throughout the Tri-Cities.

At the May 13, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) meeting, members of the public were given an opportunity to comment on the pros and cons of trail speed limits, and the appropriateness of electric assist bicycles on natural surface trails and other soft surface trails in Richland. Staff provided an overview the various issues and shared images, aerial photography, and maps as an introduction to the subject.

And on June 24, 2021, Parks and Recreation Commission discussed the matter at the workshop and considered all the feedback received.

Vice Chair Buelt moved the Parks and Recreation Commission recommends to Council that conditional speed limits be in place on paved shared use pathways throughout the City when conditions such as congestion and limited visibility warrant a slower, cautious pace. This would apply to vehicles such as e-bikes, e-scooters, and all other allowable vehicles. Commissioner Aldous seconded the motion. Motion carried 7-0.

2. Return to In-Person Meetings – Discussion Only
Parks and Public Facilities Director, Schiessl

Schiessl updated Parks and Recreation commissioners with the status on the Open Public Meetings Act in Washington after Governor Inslee's announcement was made on June 30, 2021 state-wide reopening. Proclamation 20-28 is still in effect, and a hybrid model for public meetings is now possible with no capacity restrictions or social distancing requirements. Schiessl explained councils' interest in maintaining the hybrid meeting model for Richland's boards, commissions, and committees, including City Council. It was recommended that there would be a hybrid trial period for all public meetings, and a discussion at the fall Council retreat on whether the hybrid approach is working well or should be discontinued when Proclamation 20-28 is rescinded.

Schiessl also announced that the August 12, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting would be a hybrid meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Reviewed by: Joe Schiessl, Parks and Public Facilities Director

Approved by: Maria Gutierrez
Chair Maria Gutierrez, Richland Parks and Recreation Commission