



Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Natural Resources Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: December 6, 2011

Time: 6:30 pm

Location: Stuhr Center

In Attendance

Committee Members:

Rod Coles, Cory Samia, Martin Mendelson, Matthew Shepherd

Staff:

Bruce Barbarasch

Guests:

Ann Mackiernan (THPRD), Eric Butler

I. Call to Order at 6:35 pm.

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve: Martin

Second: Cory

Unanimous approval

III. Financial Report

Balance sheet provided by Bruce.

The Carsonite posts for use at Hyland Forest Park have not yet been delivered, therefore the funds have not been paid from the account despite having been committed.

IV. Old Business

There was no old business to consider.

V. New Business

a. Comprehensive Plan

Ann Mackiernan gave a brief presentation on the planned update of the District's Comprehensive Plan.

Significant points:

- The plan is renewed every 10 years, with a five-year review and update. The process for the update of the current plan is just beginning.
- The 2010 US Census has been completed, so new demographic data is now available for the update.
 - Analysis of the data will be done by PSU.
- The bond was passed by voters, so there are funds to support District projects.
- The update process will have limited public input. Advisory Committees are being used as a proxy for community meetings and other public events.
- There will be a new structure for the plans.
 - Comprehensive Plan (CP) will act as an umbrella, providing vision and broad policy guidance. It will remain stable. The existing plan's goals will not be removed, although new ones might be added.
 - Functional Plans (FP) will provide detailed strategy and action plans to implement the Comprehensive Plan in the five areas of programs, parks, fields, trails, and natural resources.
- Update of the CP will be done during FY 2011-2012
- The Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) is the first one scheduled to be updated into a FP, in FY 2012-2013.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:

- The current NRMP seems to span the roles of both the CP and FP. Some of the current NRMP goals may be moved into updated CP. The planned rewrite of the NRMP needs to take this into account.
- The question was raised as to whether the RFP currently being prepared by Bruce for the NRMP rewrite needs to be revised in the light of the upcoming FP. Bruce didn't think it would because the RFP and plan would be adaptable.
- It would be great to have a searchable electronic version of the CP and FPs.
- Since the best demographic data is available for the update not the writing of it plan, would it be worth changing the cycle for the CP in the future, i.e., write the CP when the best census data is available and update it in other years?

b. Natural Resources Quality Maps

Bruce introduced the Committee to the maps. He had been asked to create a quantifiable measure of habitat quality for restoration projects. Mapping the percent of native plant cover on sites has proven to be the best method to assess habitat quality.

- Staff estimate the % native cover in three layers, canopy, shrub, and field.
- These three figures are averaged to calculate a single % native cover for the site.
- Staff is also doing a rapid assessment inventory for sites to ground truth the estimates.

Eric Butler described how the ground truth is done in the field using hand-held, GIS-enabled GPS units. The GPS unit is synced to computers in the office, and from that accurate maps of the vegetation type and % native cover are generated.

The following points were raised during the Committee's discussion:

- Is % native cover was the most appropriate measure and asked if there were any questions about its use?
 - Bruce said there were not.
- Is there a correlation between % native cover and species diversity?
 - Bruce said there wasn't.
- The question of what was the appropriate habitat or native plant community for the current environment was discussed. It was recognized that the suburban landscape was very different from the pre-European settler landscape, and that native plant communities may not always be possible. There is good research that supports the value of native plants as the foundation for a diverse fauna.
- Nonnative plants have value in disturbed environments and does the impact of restoration work reduce this?
- Would measuring water quality be a suitable measure? No: THPRD properties are a small proportion of catchments, and there are many other things that influence water quality.
- Other possible measures of NR value:
 - Shape of site.
 - Connectivity between sites.
 - Presence of rare species.
 - What visitors or neighbors think?
 - Doesn't really measure habitat quality.
 - How many people use the site?
 - Again, it's not really a natural resource measure.
 - Staff input.
 - Hours spent working on a site may not reflect the habitat quality, just effort required.
- Does % native cover work for all habitats, such as stream channels?
 - Staff note significant structural features of habitat during site visits.

VI. Other

a. Review scope/charge of the Committee

This is an item tabled at the previous Committee meeting. Rod pointed Committee members to the two-page document outlining the goal, charge, and scope of the NRAC, and Committee guidelines that had been included in the agenda packet. Most of the members read this when the Committee was formed but those members who joined more recently may not have seen the document. The intent of reviewing it now was to make sure that everyone had seen it and had a chance to remind themselves of why we gathered each month.

The only point that was raised after reading the document was the number of Committee members. The current guidelines say the Committee will have seven members, but it was felt that nine was a more appropriate number.

The following motion was proposed and voted upon:

The Natural Resources Advisory Committee guidelines should be amended to change the wording from "The Natural Resources Advisory Committee is comprised of seven appointed members who reside within the Park District boundaries selected from a review of applications by the Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District Board of Directors" to "The Natural Resources Advisory Committee is comprised of nine appointed members who reside within the Park District boundaries selected from a review of applications by the Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District Board of Directors."

Proposed: Rod

Second: Martin

Unanimous approval

During the review it was noted that the officers (chair and secretary) are appointed on a one-year cycle; the current term will end in February 2012.

Members of the Committee were appointed for two- or three-year terms. Rod and Bruce will check to see which members are approaching the end of their term and who needs reelection in February 2012.

b. Natural Resources update

Bruce directed members to the written update included in the agenda packet. He highlighted the fact that all members of the NR staff had successfully completed Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) training to strengthen communication skills. We were fortunate that Kristin Atman is a qualified CIG trainer, so could complete the training in-house.

There was also a brief discussion about the sustainable practices. Many of the "big picture" things had already addressed within THPRD, such as high-efficiency lighting and low-flush toilets, are items that don't require conscious effort by individual staff. The Sustainability Council is now addressing cultural changes within THPRD, items that will involve choices by individuals. These are often small things such as turning off lights and powering down unused computers.

VII. Next Meeting

Martin asked if the Committee would consider changing the evening on which members meet. Bruce will set up a Survey Monkey to find out which evening will be most convenient for members.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Shepherd
Committee Member