



## **Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District Regular Board Meeting Wednesday, February 17, 2021 6:00 pm**

Via Zoom  
Minutes

### **In Attendance:**

**Board:** Nan Noteboom, Glenna Mahurin, Anna Cavaleri, Suzanne Cross, Mike McCarthy

**Staff:** Marcie Wily

**Public:** Heather Staten, Mike Zilis, Aaron Maples, Yesenia Sanchez Oates, Dan Spatz, Brian Shortt, Susan Crowley, Monica Morris.

### **Regular District Board Meeting**

#### **Call Regular Meeting to Order**

Noteboom called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

**Comments from the General Public** (3 minutes per person, per subject, Maximum 30 minutes public comment taken)

**Heather Staten made a public comment.** She is the Executive Director on Thrive Hood River. She wanted to comment on the Agriculture Technology Presentation. She encourages the Agriculture Technology group to pursue its plan at the OSU Experiment Station, and she does not think that the Parks District should pursue the project. She doesn't feel that it meets the District's mission.

#### **Review Minutes**

1. **January 20, 2021 – Regular Board Meeting Minutes**  
**February 11, 2021 – Special Board Meeting Minutes**

**Action:** Consider a motion to approve the January 20, 2021 and Feb 11, 2021 meeting minutes

Mahurin moved to approve the meeting minutes from January 20, 2021. Cavaleri seconded. All approved.

Cross made a motion to approve the special meeting minutes from February 11, 2021. Mahurin seconded. All approved.

#### **Presentation**

2. **Westside Park Planning Consultant Introduction**

**Action:** Informational

Hickok introduced the Consultant Michael Zilis and Aaron Maples from Walker Macy. Zilis introduced the team and the role each group would have during the project.

3. **Hood River Education, Agriculture, and Technology Alliance**

**Action:** Informational

Hickok introduced Brian Shortt, Dan Spatz, and Yesenia Sanchez who were in attendance to present on the Hood River Education Agriculture and Technology Alliance. Shortt gave a background on the project and his background in the community and as a Port Commissioner. He wants to continue to work in the community and is drawn to bridging the elements that are core to the community: agriculture and technology. Sanchez talked about how important it was to educate others on the value of the food chain and its value and relevance in Hood River, especially the way technological advances can strengthen and complement the agricultural community. She touched on farming challenges: rising cost of farming, market challenges, costs of farmland and modernizing farming. Long term challenges include climate challenges, labor and rising costs, global competition. The project could directly help farmers in the near term by bridging the rural and urban bridge, create opportunities for immediate value for small farms.

The hope would be some ag tech project wish lists include UAV and UGV with sensor and AI equipment. In

the long term, it can create a pipeline of students focused on agricultures and tech careers with the skills that will be needed for the future and that will drive innovation that is focused on agriculture. Dan Spatz from Columbia Gorge Community College spoke about the goal of exploring an Agricultural Program of Study, offering high school students an opportunity to earn early college credit through a learning lab at Barrett Park. The hope would be to create a pipeline of students focused on agriculture and technology to drive innovation and keep local talent in our community.

Spatz pointed out that one of the benefits of the Barrett site is the Indian Creek Trail. Spatz said that part of the vision would be to connect the unfinished Indian Creek trail segment by the community college, so that student could easily travel from either the high school or the community college to the learning lab. Shortt brought up the land use questions and stated that he is working with people in the field to help guide the process to see if the Barrett property would be feasible. Lastly, he provided letters of support in the community and talked about potential cost and invited feedback from the board.

The board discussed. McCarthy suggested selling the Barrett property to the ag. tech group and allow them to pursue it as a possibility. Cross spoke about being impressed with the presentation and that what she heard was that we should express support the program and if the site was feasible. Noteboom talked about the education program fitting a niche for smaller farmers in the community to make advances and hire people out of the program. Cavaleri questioned whether the project fit the Parks District mission. Mahurin expressed support for the program but questioned the land use issue. The question is whether high value can support this idea, then the next step would be to make sure that we have community support. The board agreed that they do not want to invest funds into researching the land use issues. The Ag, Tech group assured the board that they are not asking for any funds or a definitive answer right now and that they would just like to have some time so they can research the land use questions before the board of directors decides to do something else with the land.

#### **4. Fiscal Year 2021/2022 Budget Strategy and Goal Setting**

##### **Action:** Provide direction for crafting FY 2021/2022 Budget

Hickok gave a goal setting presentation, beginning with the Olmsted Brothers, landscape architect, who designed Spokane, City of Portland. Hickok pointed out that many of their ideals and goals mirror goals of today. Hickok reviewed the goals from the recently adopted master plan: A Parks Plan for All, Hood River Area Multi-Jurisdictional Master Plan. The goals are divided into various themes: acquisition, trails, development, administration, open space. He talked about how important it was to use the master plan as a guide towards implementation. He reviewed our tax rate (\$.34/1000) and where we compare to other districts (one of the lowest). Hickok said that our SDCs fund is in pretty good shape, and one funding strategy might be to borrow against the compacity. He talked about other options for raising revenue: a local option levy, a general obligation bond, or reforming the District. Other ideas to help offset some costs include grants and a parks foundation. Hickok gave an overview of the Election Cycle in Hood River County. May elections typically have strong focus on local elections, with some primaries. Odd years coincide with Special District Elections. It takes about seven months to get on the ballot. Hickok asked the board to reflect on the following questions. What should we allocate our time and resources for in FY 21/22? How long term should we be thinking, and what actions can we take now that address the needs in 2025, 2040, and 2060? We have a lot of projects that we have talked about: acquisition, building partnerships, rebuilding the pool, establishing trail connections, seizing new opportunities like rails to trails or a parks foundation. What do we want to prioritize?

Board discussion ensued. Noteboom expressed the desire to prioritize getting on the ballot for redistricting we need to get redistricting on the ballot when it's possible. Cavaleri and Cross agreed. The group expressed the importance of the pool and figure the best timing to put redistricting on the ballot. Hickok will research ballot and associated fees, and he will communicate with other agencies on whether they will have items on

upcoming ballots. Hickok asked for feedback on bonding or borrowing to purchase land. Cross brought up that interest rates are so low and wondered if it would be beneficial to borrow. Morris joined the conversation saying that interest rates are low and it could be a big benefit that might allow the parks district to be nimble if an opportunity arises. The group weighed the pros and cons of loans, how to achieve goals, and how to implement the master plan. Cross stated support for borrowing. Noteboom wants to know about funding opportunities but would consider loans. Cavaleri thinks that the focus should be longer term funding strategy, like redistricting. Cross pointed out that loans present a viable option that don't burden the taxpayers.

**Reports** (*informational, no action needed*)

**5. Finance Report**

Hickok (5 mins)

Morris said that SDCs are still coming in with the city seeing a generous SDC bump. Tax revenue in the general fund is doing well with some new commercial taxes coming in.

**6. Directors Report**

COVID-19 Response: Hood River has been downgraded from Extreme Risk to High Risk, which allows the pool to open.

Cares Act Funding and FEMA: The CARES Act allocation for Special Districts is still exhausted. The Special District Association of Oregon is lobbying to get funds passed for in the "New American Rescue Plan."

Budget Committee: Gary Reed has resigned from the Budget Committee, so we have advertised asking for interested people to send a letter of interest by March 11, 2021.

Arrowhead Drive: Hickok reported that he met with 14 neighbors from Arrowhead Drive, who are concerned about the influx of cars parking, blocking driveways, etc. The group feels like the signs create an invitation to users to park and want the signs removed or moved. Hickok stated that he would like to work with the neighbors. The board expressed support of moving the signs.

**7. Aquatics Report**

Wily gave the Aquatics Report, reporting on the plan to reopen the pool. County numbers are trending in the right direction moving to the "High" Category, and the pool plans to reopen on February 22. Updated guidance requires contact tracing, which staff was already doing through the Mindbody System. People will have to make a reservation in order to swim, but times will be made available for lap swimming, water aerobics, adult therapy, family swim, and user groups like swim team and water polo.

**Executive Session**

8. *Executive Session, if necessary per ORS 192.660 (The District Board will now meet in executive session. All members of the audience are asked to leave the room. No decision may be made in executive session. At the end of the executive session, we will return to open session and welcome the audience back into the room.)*

Cavaleri made a motion to move into executive session. Noteboom seconded. All approved.

Cavaleri moved to leave executive session. Cross seconded. All approved.

*No decisions were made.*

**Adjourn**

Mahurin made the motion to adjourn. Cross seconded. All approved.

**Upcoming events:**

3-17-21 Regular Board Meeting

DocuSigned by:

Nancy Noteboom



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DocuSigned by:

Anna Cavaleri

Attest

3/18/2021

Date

3/18/2021

Date