

City of Salem
Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
March 14th, 2024
Hybrid Meeting
Draft Minutes

Members Present

Keith Norris, Chair
Dylan McDowell, Vice Chair
Rick Hartwig
Joan Lloyd
Debbie Miller
Alan Alexander
Woody Dukes

Members Absent

Al Holland

City Council Liaison Present

Councilor Micki Varney

Staff Present

Rob Romanek
Jennifer Kellar
Leann Moore
Becky George
Brandon Culcasi

1. **Call to Order** – Welcome and call to order by chair Keith Norris at 1:02 pm.

2. **Roll Call** – Member Holland was marked absent. All other members present.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

Vice Chair McDowell motioned approval of minutes from the meeting held February 8, 2024. Member Alexander seconded the motion. Motion passed with all members present voting in favor of the motion.

4. **Public Comment**

- **Jeff Schumacher – Resident of Ward 2 – South Central Association of Neighbors (Board Member)**
Expressed support for the current memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the City of Salem, Willamette University, and Salem Baseball Club. He would like to see the process of the MOU develop and personally would like to see this expansion and addition to the park.
- **Evan West – Resident of Ward 7 – South Central Association of Neighbors (Board Member)**
Shared concerns regarding the proposed Willamette University baseball field expansion into Bush's Pasture Park and the current MOU. Mr. West also shared concerns and questions regarding the details of the project and the potential long-term impacts that could result from this expansion.
- **Dan Simmons – Resident of Ward 2**
Specifically referencing the Bush's Pasture Park and Deepwood Estate Gardens Landscape Management Plan, Mr. Simmons expressed concerns about the current MOU and the potential over-development and over-usage of Bush's Pasture Park that could arise from the proposed baseball field expansion into the park.
- **Jim Scheppke – Resident of Ward 2 – South Central Association of Neighbors (Board Member)**
Expressed his support for the proposed Willamette University baseball field expansion into Bush's Pasture Park and the current MOU.
- **Pat Monson – Resident of Ward 2**
Wanted to share their appreciation to Brian Smith and Amy Jucutan, of the Salem Parks and Recreation Division, that maintains Bush's Pasture Park. She wanted to thank them for all the hard work and supportive leadership that they have provided for the youth who utilize the park.
- **Ellen Stevens – Resident of Ward 8 – Mission Street Parks Conservancy (Founding Member)**
Wanted to express their concerns regarding the proposed Willamette University baseball field expansion into Bush's Pasture Park and the currently accepted MOU. Ms. Stevens also shared their concerns about the

proposed project and the potential environmental impacts on the park's overall natural resources.

- **Jon Christenson - Chairman of the South Central Association of Neighbors Historic Preservation – Parks and Garden Committee**

Wanted to submit a Parks and Garden committee report that was presented to the South Central Association of Neighbors governing board. Mr. Christenson expressed his direct concerns regarding the proposed Willamette University baseball field expansion into Bush's Pasture Park and its negative impacts threatening the native Camas species (*Camassia quamash*).

5. City Council Liaison Updates – Councilor Varney

- Wanted to thank the SPRAB committee for the creation of its three new sub-committees, collectively working towards the City of Salem's climate action plan and greenhouse gas reduction goals. Councilor Varney is excited about the upcoming subcommittee updates, as well as the future reports that will be presented in the Fall.
- Budget committee update - currently developing for the 2025 fiscal year, impacts will be made to the Parks and Recreation department.
- Councilor Varney is requesting that anyone who has questions or comments, directly email her, as she would like to be the voice for the Parks and Recreation department on the City Council budget committee.

6. Board Items/Presentations

a. Riverfront Park Playground Redevelopment Grant Application to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Local Government Grant Program – Rob Romanek

Parks Planning is developed a grant application to the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation - Local Government Grant Program. The grant application is being developed to specifically improve Riverfront Park and its existing playground. Mr. Romanek has submitted a written report to SPRAB with further details and is requesting the Chair of SPRAB to write a letter of support of the application before April 1, 2024, which is the application deadline.

Member Alexander motioned to authorize Chair Norris to write a letter in support of the City's grant application for improvements to Riverfront Park on behalf of SPRAB, Member Hartwig seconded the motion. Motion passed with all members voting in favor of the motion.

b. SPRAB Subcommittee Work for 2024 – Chair Norris

Chair Norris distributed a memo to the SPRAB members outlining guidance to each of the sub-committees regarding their scope and assignments. Chair Norris will remain connected to each committee as an 'ex officio' member. The final hope is the creation of well-supported recommendations that SPRAB can consider to assist with the City of Salem's climate action plan and greenhouse gas reduction goals. Committee assignments are as follows:

Material Used in Capital Projects: Members Alexander and Dukes

Electrifying Small Equipment: Members Miller and Lloyd

Transportation: Vice Chair McDowell, Member Hartwig, and Member Holland

Chair Norris has directed that each subcommittee compose a list of inquiry points/questions regarding their project, to help guide the city staff's ability to provide background and other supporting information.

c. Review Outreach Material for Neighborhood Association Engagement – Chair Norris

Staff will update the current outreach material that has been composed for the neighborhood associations and revise it for the current year. Significant discussion was made on the layout and design for the Salem Park Improvement Fund (SPIF) grant material, and further supplemental information that will help distinguish it from the Salem Parks Foundation projects.

SPRAB also discussed the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and more transparent ways that this information could be presented alternatively – including submission of project ideas, as well as the potential Implementation of information from the '2023 Tree Report' that would be beneficial for the neighborhood associations.

d. Promoting Parks and Recreation via Social Media – Chair Norris

SPRAB discussion on how the board can successfully support the City's current social media campaigns on the promotion of the Parks and Recreation Division. City staff is looking for board members who have specific interests in an upcoming event or topic and would be interested in helping staff promote and generate ideas for social media. Recommendations from SPRAB members involved a more thorough communication channel highlighting the events that the City of Salem is promoting. Other suggestions involved specific outreach material for the SPRAB through social media channels, with a picture and biography for each member, to promote the board and the Parks and Recreation Division.

7. Board Member Updates

a. Members Lloyd and Alexander – Fisher Road Park Master Plan Liaisons

- Member Alexander wanted to share his appreciation and props to Rob Romanek for his methodologies used while developing the master plans for the park and his efforts to engage surrounding neighbors.
- Member Lloyd shared the factors that she felt were most beneficial to the process such as the surveys and in-person meetings.

b. Members Miller and Hartwig – Fairview Park Master Plan Revisit and Refinement Liaisons

- Members Hartwig and Miller shared that the original master plan for the park is currently eight years old and is beautifully conceptualized. However, upon their inspection of the site, they observed many issues with the current state of the park. They both went on to explain that the location is currently very undeveloped with varying topography.
- Rob Romanek mentioned that there will be an event on March 30 from 1-3 PM open to the public at Painter's Hall, where the City will be unveiling two new ideas for the Fairview Park Master Plan.

c. Revenue Task Force Update – Chair Norris

- Chair Norris is a member of the Revenue Task Force and has reported that the committee has started the process of looking into over 40 different revenue options to begin developing a short list.

d. SPIFF Updates – Chair Norris

- Chair Norris wanted to acknowledge the positive media coverage of SPIF thanks to the work of Vice Chair McDowell.

8. Information Reports - (Information reports provided as written reports ahead of the meeting.)

- a.** Parks and Recreation Division report
- b.** 2023 Annual Tree Report
- c.** Parks Damage Report

9. New Business – No new business

10. Next Meeting – Hybrid with the option to join in person, April 11, 2024. @ 1 p.m.

11. Adjourned at 2:50 pm.

Rob Romanek

From: LJ Anderson <ljanderson120@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 8, 2024 12:46 PM
To: salem_parks
Subject: baseball expansion

Hello Salem Parks:

I wanted to express my concern about the proposed baseball expansion in Bush Park. I live a block or so away from the park and am very familiar with it, use it daily, and value the phenomenal nature it provides to all who use it--- families having picnics, runners and walkers, birders, students listening to teacher lectures, the art gallery, volunteer gardeners, and, of course, the wildlife. This past summer I met slalom skateboarders from all over the world who were competing on the existing soapbox derby run.

I understand wanting to have recreation opportunities for young people but this seems like an inappropriate location for it. The park already deals with vandalism, some on historic trees, overflowing trash cans, and, of course, the latest violence. I've read the proposed additional impact and feel that adding even more people, trash, etc. would be an overuse of an already well-used and historic park--and one that needs to be protected from further encroachment. Please reconsider any plans to further develop this precious park that serves all of Salem and its visitors.

Thank you.

(Ms) LJ Anderson
Cottage Ave SE
Salem, OR 97302

Rob Romanek

From: Jamie 'DJ Sloan' <djjazsloan@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 8, 2024 9:29 PM
To: salemarks
Subject: No Baseball Stadium expansion

Good day,

As a resident of the Bush Park neighborhood, I have great concern about the impact that the stadium expansion would have on so many aspects of our area. Bush Park is a place of peace, respite, and enjoyment for thousands of people. The thought of the noise, litter, traffic, parking, and ecological disturbance, among a list of other burdens that residents and the environment would have to endure, is unfair and unwanted. I'm all for baseball, but the WU stadium proposal is not advantageous to anyone except those who make a profit from it. I plead for your consideration on this matter, and to stop this expansion project from happening here.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Jamie Sloan
503-999-7340
Jamie Sloan

Rob Romanek

From: Jim Scheppke <jscheppke@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 10:25 AM
To: salem_parks
Subject: Written Testimony for the April 11th SPRAB Meeting

Dear Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Members:

I am a member of the Board of the South Central Association of Neighbors (SCAN). We are still having an internal debate about supporting improvements to Keene Stadium and commencement of summer league baseball at the stadium. At your last meeting you were handed a draft of a position paper from our Historic Preservation, Parks and Gardens Committee. Because you were given that, I don't believe it is inappropriate to share a paper I drafted that is intended to be a rebuttal to that report. I gave other SCAN Board members the opportunity to sign on to the position paper and six out of sixteen Board members chose to do so (a total of seven sign ons). My motivation in sharing this is to show there is significant support for the project and for summer league baseball among SCAN Board members.

Why SCAN Should Support Improvements to Keene Field and West Coast League Baseball

Here are the top reasons why the undersigned SCAN Board members believe that the SCAN Board should support improvements to Keene Field in Bush's Pasture Park and West Coast League Baseball:

1. Two of the six elements of the **"vision"** for Bush's Pasture Park in the adopted **Cultural Landscape Management Plan** are "active play" and "family gatherings." These are both at the core of the plan to improve Keene Field and bring collegiate West Coast League baseball to Salem. The proposed improvements to Keene Field will not only be a benefit the student athletes at Willamette University, but will benefit students in the Salem Keizer-School District, which cannot afford to build synthetic turf fields at all of their high schools, and the Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA, who plan to hold summer kids camps at the ballpark. Hosting 27 home games for a West Coast League baseball team in the summertime will be a wonderful thing for the SCAN community, especially for families and children. SCAN neighbors will be able to walk and bike to the games which will provide terrific, affordable family entertainment and memories that will last a lifetime.

2. Concerns about **traffic** on Mission Street and **parking** for the games are unfounded. Keene Stadium has a capacity of 1,500. Experience with summer league baseball tells us that the average number of car passengers is three. That means that, *at most*, 500 cars would come to a sold-out game and the number would likely be much less if many SCAN neighbors walk or bike to the games and if other Salem residents utilize Cherriots. Mission Street has a capacity of 1,000 cars per hour both ways and can easily handle traffic to and from the games. Traffic on Mission has not been a problem at much larger events like the Salem Art Fair and the Awesome 3000. As for parking, there are 384 parking spaces at the park (north and south) if you exclude the spaces at Deepwood and Bush Barn. There are another 46 spaces on Church St. (Mission to Bellevue) that

are *not in front of homes*. That makes for a total of 430 parking spaces which should be ample. And Luke Emanuel has said Salem Baseball would attempt to secure more parking spaces at the Salem Health lot on the north side of Mission if needed. It is also important to note that the West Coast League mostly has teams that are very far from Salem. Here, for example, are the League home games for the Corvallis Knights in 2024 (number of games in parentheses): Port Angeles Lefties (3), Springfield Drifters (6), Cowlitz Black Bears (3), Ridgefield Raptors (3), Yakima Valley Pippins (2), Bend Elks (3), Portland Pickles (3). It is doubtful that huge number of fans will travel from hundreds of miles away to attend games in Salem. So for these reasons traffic and parking should not be serious concerns.

3. The Historic Preservation, Parks and Gardens committee has also voiced concerns about **“nighttime noise, light pollution and vandalism.”** These concerns are unfounded. Games will start at 6:30 pm and will be done between 9:00 pm and 9:30 pm — right around sunset (in the first week of July, 2023, sunset ranged from 9:00 pm to 9:02 pm). So lighting at the games will be minimized. And new advanced LED lights are being installed that are designed to eliminate light pollution. If SCAN is concerned about light pollution there are many other sources of light pollution in the vicinity of the park that should concern us (e.g., SSHS football and the City of Salem tennis courts). The same goes for noise. Why is SCAN not concerned about noise from football games and the Art Fair that go much later into the night? As for vandalism, greater use of the park drives away negative activity, not the reverse.

4. The Historic Preservation, Parks and Gardens Committee also makes the vague claim that **“adverse effects** [to the park] have been identified.” This claim is unfounded. The project involves a ballpark that has existed in the park since 1989. From 1989 until 2019 it hosted 30 games of American Legion baseball every summer (why was SCAN not concerned about that?). The only extension of the existing site will involve amending an existing easement to allow for a security fence around the south end of the ballpark and a paved pathway to allow for required ADA accessibility. There will be no impact to existing park usage or any damage to vegetation outside of a few patches of grass. Installing synthetic turf will provide significant benefit to Oregon White Oaks in the area with the elimination of the need for excessive irrigation, fertilizer, and the use of gas-powered equipment. Dr. David Craig, a Willamette biology professor and neighbor, stated at the February neighborhood meeting that the project presents no threat to the camas or oaks during the dry summer months.

5. Unfortunately, neighborhood associations have had a bad reputation in the past for NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) behavior that is parochial and self-serving. Objections by SCAN members that have now been aired in Salem newspapers have no doubt already harmed the reputation of SCAN in this regard. Adding a new venue for wholesome family entertainment in Salem in the summertime is something we should be lauding and wholeheartedly supporting. And to have it in our own neighborhood — where we can walk and bike there — makes it that much better. Bush’s Pasture Park is not *our park*, as we sometimes hear. It is there to benefit the entire city. SCAN members’ objections to ballpark improvements and summer league baseball will be viewed by many in Salem as the actions of an affluent, white, elite neighborhood attempting to keep the

riffraff out. We need to end the damage already done and publicly embrace this terrific opportunity that is being handed to us, without further division and rancor.

Jim Scheppke
Lorrie Walker
Jeff Schumacher
John Prohodsky
Mark Wigg
Brian Hart
Brian Sund

Jim Scheppke
jscheppke@comcast.net
503-269-1559

Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

c/o City of Salem

Sent via email to Leann Moore, Staff Assistant at: lmoore@cityofsalem.net.

cc: salemparks@cityofsalem.net.

RE: Proposed expansion of Willamette University baseball stadium into Bush's Pasture Park

Chair Norris and Members of SPRAB:

I am a citizen of Ward 7. As a planning and preservation professional I am profoundly disturbed by the idea that the City of Salem, with the blessing of this advisory board, would consider violating not only the Cultural Landscape Management plan for Bush's Pasture Park, but also the terms of the public park transfer deeds. To violate terms of a deed leaves our community vulnerable to claims of private ownership of the crown jewel of our parks system. At your meeting tomorrow, April 11, I will provide spoken testimony that addresses many of these same items. This submission is provided for your reference, and for additional clarification.

Luke Emmanuel of Salem Baseball LLC. has proposed to bring a summer collegiate league franchise to the Willamette University Athletic facilities at Bush's Pasture Park. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board should recommend the rejection of this proposal outright. To do otherwise would violate the terms of the deed that transferred select amount of land to the ownership of Willamette University. Violating the terms of deed is incredibly dangerous. There is nationwide precedent for the reversion of public land to private ownership. We cannot risk this dangerous prospect for the regional park that our community treasures.

The terms of the transfer deeds and other guiding principles are found within the Cultural Landscape Management (CLMP) for Bush's Pasture Park that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board approved and adopted in 2021. This board is imbued with authority and obligation to uphold the principles and recommendations of the CLMP and must view itself as bound to no other stakeholder or special interest. The cultural landscape that exists currently within Bush's Pasture Park is diverse, representing history and culture of many different eras and peoples, and serving a variety of parks and recreational needs of our present-day community. The landscape is already threatened by overuse even without introducing the concept of transforming the park into a regional baseball facility for the benefit of commercial enterprise.

It is completely offensive that Mr. Emmanuel has set his sights on the park. In walking tours, Mr. Emmanuel has stated that Bush Park is ideal for business purposes. It is not in a flood plain, and as such it does not require additional insurance. Mr. Emmanuel does not need to pay the city for use of the Willamette facilities, and Bush Park is centrally located and maintained in pristine condition by the work of volunteers. The appeal of the land to commercial interests is understandable, perhaps, but the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board must set precedent by sending a clear message today: Public Park land is not available to rent for profit.

The Volcanoes Stadium and Chemeketa Community College have expressed that they would happily have summer collegiate baseball at their facilities. Mr. Emmanuel has refused to publicly

state why those venues would not meet his needs and purposes, as he has refused to submit *any* plans or proposals in writing, to date. Mr. Emmanuel has made repeated attempts to sell the idea that he is acting only and exclusively in the interest of Salem youth sports. That idea represents both a false flag and a false constituency, and this can be demonstrated through basic reasoning.

Willamette University occupies the baseball field space four out of five playing days during baseball season. For just one day per week would four Salem area high schools be able to vie for field time and be left dealing with the logistical nightmare of bussing students away from their schools to this location. This is surely why the Salem Keizer athletic director has stated that they have no plans to use the Willamette facilities. Other community organizations such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club don't have existing youth sports teams. If they did, Willamette University could have welcomed them to their facilities years ago.

Willamette University Athletic Director Rob Passage has stated that all of Willamette's facility upgrades are made possible only by the presence of the Mr. Emmanuel's summer collegiate team. Mr. Emmanuel has further shared the vision that his franchise will become the third largest in the league. This clearly demonstrates the private commercial nature of the operation. Mr. Emmanuel is a businessman who will profit at the expense of the people of Salem if the Advisory Board allows him to do so.

In the latest spoken proposal for expansion of the baseball stadium in Bush Park, Mr. Emmanuel and Willamette University stated that they are seeking an eight-foot encroachment into park land, accompanied by the construction of a new paved pathway bisecting the oak savannah regrowth area of the lower pasture. Even if the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board were to ignore the dangers inherent to violating the terms of the transfer deed and allow Willamette University to take any action within its existing footprint, the advisory board cannot allow for this catastrophic plan for expansion to move forward.

The advisory board has standing, and legal imperative to object to expansion of the baseball stadium footprint. The Cultural Landscape Management Plan refers to the existing Willamette University facilities as "a major intrusion into the park," and goes further to recommend that the best course of long-term action would be for the University to relocate its facilities to allow for natural area restoration. I do not expect that this advisory board will take that extreme position, but I do expect that this board will uphold its duty as called for in the CLMP that, "management activities and decisions should protect and preserve the contributing resources of the park and be compatible with the adjacent historic portions of the Gaiety Hill Neighborhood and respect the deed restrictions." To allow commercial baseball to make use of Bush Park would be a failure of this advisory board to uphold its obligations. I thank you for ensuring that Bush Park is made available for the benefit and enjoyment of the people, in accordance with its landscape management plan.

Sincerely,

Evan West