

Parks Commission Meeting

January 13th, 2026 at 5:30pm

645 Pine St., Front Conference Room & Zoom

Commissioners in attendance: Lantieri, Davis, Etter, Bergman, Mobley, Johnson & Boehm

Staff in attendance: Lewis, Sauve, O'Daniel

Public in attendance: n/a

1. Agenda

Lantieri opened the meeting at 5:33pm. Davis made a motion to accept the agenda, Bergmann seconded. All were in favor, none opposed.

2. Consent Agenda

Etter made a motion to accept the consent agenda. Bergmann seconded. All were in favor, none opposed.

3. Public Forum, time certain at 6pm

Public forum opened at 6pm. With no one present in person or on Zoom, it was closed at 6:01pm.

4. Deliberative Agenda

4.1 Appendix D, Sections 5 & 7

Lewis opened by sharing the document on his screen and noting that section 5 was primarily done except for the one question around how to allow for permitted use for vehicles in the park without allowing public access. This opened up more of a process of updating the language about vehicles in parks in general, not just 1 out of 39 properties, so Roach asked for more time to prepare this for next month's meeting.

Boehm asked if it would go to the City attorney after for review.

Lewis confirmed yes. He continued by touching on section 7, about dogs, sharing that he went through both documents he had received and began reviewing them with the group. He noted that there were some differences between the two in the proposed amendments for additional review and wanted to make sure everyone was on the same page about them. The first, Section A, had minor differences in the last two sentences, and Lewis assumed the version the City attorney had shared was the most up to date.

The group had no concerns and agreed.

Lewis continued by touching on a section that was originally in the policy section, but moved to the ordinance and he wanted to confirm that everyone was okay with this change. He continued that he could ask if there are any benefits to including this here as opposed to just having it in the general park portion of the ordinance.

Sauve noted that this section was in place so that the Director had the authority to close dog specific sections of parks instead of needing to close the entire park, if it was every needed for any reason.

The group felt that keeping it in this section of the ordinance made sense and were curious about what the City attorney would say.

Etter asked for clarification about the difference between policy and ordinance.

Lantieri answered that typically things that are in the ordinance are more set in stone and things in the policy are more geared towards the operations of things, so there is more flexibility.

Lewis continued by reviewing the policy, including hours of operation, which can be adjusted by this group as needed. He noted one highlighted part, the Program in the Parks participant line.

O'Daniel explained to the group what this was, sharing that it is a way for businesses/organizations to operate their programs in the parks by paying an annual fee with an application in addition to other fees depending on group size for each use. She continued that this was put here in case there are ever dog trainers etc. who are interested in doing this in fenced or unfenced areas.

After updating that line, Lewis shared that he would do an internal review with staff and the City attorney and with the goal of bringing back a final version for the group to vote on next month.

Lantieri and Boehm expressed interest in the City attorney's opinion on what is in the Ordinance vs. the policy.

4.2 Budget FY27 Process

Lewis began by noting that a lot of the information he would be sharing has been shared at the last two Board of Finance meetings. He then began explaining the budget overview process, including that the Council needs to adopt the budget before July 1st and that currently Departments are building out their budgets and going through the process of sharing information and asking for input from staff, Council and other appointed/elected bodies to make sure there is a strong document moving forward. Lewis continued by sharing that there is a 10-12 million dollar gap in the FY27 budget and that all of the Departments are working with DFA (Department of Finance & Administration) to verify the revenues and operational expenses and estimates by looking at historical data, trends and where things are at currently and what is anticipated going into next year.

Mobley asked what the entire City budget was.

Lewis answered 107 million, and the gap is specifically in the General Fund. He shared that the Mayor's office is looking into options for how to bridge this gap including increasing the police and fire property tax, a reduction of government expenses, voluntary furloughs, utilize one time

revenue, and potential for selling City property strategically. He then dove into each of those deeper. He continued that the police and fire tax would be a 5% increase and if referred to the public by the Council and approved by voters, would raise about 3 million. He continued that each Department was asked to provide a 5% (\$253,000) and 10% (\$506,000) reduced budget out of what BPRW uses from the general fund and that they are currently going through this cost savings process. He noted that the goal of this is to adjust things in a way that the Department can still provide as high of a level of service as possible. Lewis continued by touching on voluntary furloughs, which would include Departments paid out of the general fund, like BPRW. There is a survey asking employees about this and 54% of people who have responded so far (roughly 25% of all City staff) have said that they would potentially be interested in taking a voluntary furlough, which at this point would save between \$100,000 and \$190,000. Lewis then touched on one-time revenue, such as dedicated tax balances leftover from previous years and various outstanding fees owed to the City. He then discussed the selling of City properties, noting that the process of this would be complex and involve criteria such as vacant properties that do not have a strategic value for the City. Lewis closed by touching on next steps, including the Council voting on the proposed tax increase, further engagement with staff, unions and elected/appointed bodies, the Mayor's budget presentation is scheduled for April which is earlier than usual to allow for additional time for the Council and the community to look at the different options and give feedback before deadline.

Etter asked if there were things Lewis was already anticipating cutting.

Lewis answered that not being here through the last process that the BPRW team went through, he is hoping to emphasize the people and positions as much as possible, so he is going to be looking at vacancies first. He shared that the goal with this would be to adjust things structurally so that those remain open while still being able to provide expected services and support remaining staff. He continued that this Department has already been through the process of looking at cuts and making really hard decisions and unfortunately they are at the point of making really hard decisions again. With that in mind, they are looking at it equitably and holistically and strategically so that if the Department does need to lower the number of full-time staff that services can be provided at the highest level possible, so trying to minimize the negative impacts of this as much as possible.

Mobley noted that this Department was deeply impacted by the last round of cuts and she hopes that the decision makers in this process keep this in mind moving forward. She continued by offering the Commission's support and help through this.

Lewis appreciated this and shared that he was grateful that this group is established in a way that they can provide feedback and what these impacts really means for the community, which is a different lens than other bodies and staff can.

Lantieri offered the Commission's support in the way of feedback and shared that this Commission has typically been more reactive to things as they are happening, so he's not completely sure what their role could be.

Lewis noted that each Department presents on their budget and having Commissioners there for support could be helpful.

Lantieri continued by asking for more details about the potential furloughs.

Lewis answered that in theory it would be a full time employee taking unpaid time off but they would still retain health care and all benefits and that there would be policies and coordination to make sure services continued.

Boehm asked how many vacancies there are in BPRW currently.

Lewis answered 3.5 by the end of the month.

Lantieri asked if they are roles that need to be filled quickly.

Sauve answered some of them, yes.

Lewis continued that the internal conversations around this have been focused on how to re-work the service delivery in a way that makes sense given the available resources. He shared that once the impacts are known, they will assess and put together strategies for navigating that impact.

Boehm asked if there are services that can be stopped without also losing the positions that have been doing them.

Lewis answered that things like this are the discussions that are being had – are there things that we could do differently, or not do, and what would create the lowest impact from those decisions.

Sauve added that it's not really a one for one scenario and there are no easy solutions.

Davis asked about raising fees for programs and reservations.

Lewis noted that equity and participation are big factors in consideration when thinking about raising rates. He continued that capacity building for existing programs is something that is being looked at, with a focus on scaling up effectively while creating opportunity.

Etter asked about sponsorship opportunities.

Lewis answered that it's a question of how do we balance the aesthetic with revenue producing advertisements, but that all of this is being considered, such as maximizing sponsorship for events and signage at parks and facilities.

Boehm asked if there has been or will be process to engage BPRW staff.

Lewis answered yes that has started. He shared that there was an all-staff meeting last week where the budget process was discussed, the surveys are available for all City staff to fill out and working with staff to come up with ideas for cost saving.

Lantieri noted that staff feeling like they were not engaged as cuts were made last time was a big problem that emerged, so he felt that this was great to hear.

Mobley shared that she was grateful for the longer runway for engagement this time around.

Lewis responded that there is sensitivity to the individuals who might be impacted, so trying to balance the transparency with the anxiousness that can come with all of this.

The group thanked Lewis for informing them and offered to be sounding boards and advocates at any point in the process.

4.3 Penny for Parks – Community Requests

Sauve opened by sharing that this is being brought to the Commission later than usual because they have been trying to get more community requests. She continued that there is \$35,000 - \$40,000 allocated annually for these and the goal is to support requests from across the City of all different project sizes. She asked Commissioners to help get the word out about this opportunity and any ideas about how to increase awareness of the program in the hopes of having more requests for them to review next month. Sauve continued that people and organizations who know about this opportunity come put requests in regularly, but the hope is to start reaching people who do not know about it to increase equity and accessibility. Sauve continued that Calahan requested seating and benches in the park and they helped build them, which is a great example of a request that can also get community members involved in “their” park.

Boehm asked where they haven’t really seen any applications.

Sauve answered the Old North End and not too many in the New North End.

4.4 Comprehensive Plan Update

Sauve shared that they are working towards the end of finalizing scope with the consultant team and internally the larger plan BTV has been working on public outreach strategies by thinking about who are the harder groups to reach out to and coming up with creative ways to involve them. She shared that she has been meeting BPRW managers to let them know this is happening and to discuss what would be helpful to direct their and their team’s work moving forward.

4.5 Visioning: Parks & Recreation Commission 2026

Lantieri opened by sharing that this is the best time to take a step back and think about priorities that Commissioners would like to focus on. He continued that he is thinking about volunteering and what the scope of that in the Parks & Rec world is and how Commissioners can support that.

Davis had the list from last year, which Lantieri read aloud: vendors in parks, clarifying the permitting process, reviewing meeting laws, creating a volunteer structure for active engagement, reviewing code of conduct during meetings, having a board retreat and building a stronger relationship with the Conservation Board. He noted that some of those were accomplished and some can continue to be worked on.

Davis asked how they can support BPRW staff and if that could be added to this year’s list.

Boehm felt that this could be combined with the idea of increasing volunteering. She offered the example of bringing seltzers to staff on a busy day in the summer.

Lewis answered that anyone who is recognized in any form is appreciated. He continued that the thoughtfulness for how they can do this is also appreciated.

The group then discussed ways that they could interact with staff more to increase morale.

Mobley and Davis agreed that they would stop by February vacation camp at the Miller Center!

Sauve suggested that offering opportunities for Commissioners to interact with staff could be presented at the meetings.

The group felt that this was a great idea.

Mobley shared that she felt like communication and outreach have been a theme and was curious if this could be incorporated into the Commission's goals for 2026.

Boehm noted that this could be a nice tie-in to the Comprehensive Plan.

Lantieri offered that it could be framed as what is the Commission's role in communicating information out to the community. He continued that he would like to re-visit the idea of a retreat for the group in the Spring to work on these goals.

Boehm offered the idea that maybe the group could also visit some of BPRW's locations and meet staff that day as well.

5. Standing Items

5.1 Parks Foundation Update

Lantieri shared that there was a meeting in December and that they have put out their annual report so encouraged everyone to check out their website to see that.

Sauve shared that they are looking to have an event at Pomeroy Park to celebrate breaking ground on the new playground, which could be a nice opportunity for Commissioners to interface with them.

5.2 Director's Report

Lewis wanted to highlight the monthly report and that he and the leadership team are looking at the organizational structure of the Department and how they can appropriately structure things to provide the highest level of service. He closed by sharing that he's continuing to onboard and if there are any community connections that Commissioners would like to make, he would be happy to receive them.

Lantieri asked if it seemed like there would be a Recreation manager.

Lewis answered that they are working on a strategy for that now and they recognize that group has been disproportionately impacted, so how to provide support for them is being discussed.

5.3 Commissioners Items & Volunteer Hours

Johnson began that he didn't have any hours to report, but shared that there was circulation on his Front Porch Forum about the cat licensing, which people seemed to be unaware of.

Bergmann didn't have any hours to report.

Mobley shared that she participated in the process of reviewing and awarding Conservation Legacy Fund Grants and that she really appreciated the opportunity to participate. She estimated 10 hours of volunteering throughout that process.

Davis also participated in that and estimated 9 hours of volunteering throughout that process.

Boehm reported 1 hour of volunteering for planning the agenda for this meeting.

Lanteri didn't have any hours to report.

Etter left before this portion of the meeting.

6. Adjournment

Davis made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Boehm seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. The meeting was adjourned at 7:07pm.