



Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District Nature & Trails Advisory Committee Minutes

Date: 5/26/2021
Time: 6:30 PM
Location: Zoom

In Attendance

Committee Members: Grace Heassler, Margaret Hite, Laura Porter, Sam Scheerens, Alison Rhea, Sheri Wantland (chair), James Wright,

Board Liaison: Heidi Edwards

Staff: Bruce Barbarasch, Scott Wagner

Guests: None.

I. Call to Order 6:31pm

II. Approval of Minutes: Alison moved to approve the minutes and Marty seconded. There was no opposition, and they were approved at 6:32

III. Chair Updates:

Sheri shared the link to the Tualatin Valley Trail project encourage committee members to use the link for comments (due 5pm June 7th).

IV. Check-in

Marty and her husband went to the newly reopened section of the Fanno Creek Trail; she loves the flat sections for runs. Her husband asked about the big fallen logs near the beginning of the trail; Bruce explained the logs are a feature of stream projects to slow the water during high flows. Allison's continuing education class was working in Greenway Park, and had positive feedback on THPRD's approach to beaver and wildlife centered improvements. Heidi also praised Greenway Park. Grace went to a park to see some geese, her first time seeing friends in person in over a year. Laura was happy to see neighbors at the park. She mentioned a rumor about THPRD issuing tickets for dogs off leash at non-permitted areas. Bruce explained THPRD has authority to give exclusion notices but not fines, and is focusing more on service than security and has renamed Security to Safety Services. Laura asked about a temporary dog park at Ridgewood View Park. Bruce will follow up on whether it will become permanent. James described seeing an Anna's hummingbird in a riparian area near Recuerdo Park. Sheri made it to Greenway Park to see the murals and expressed her appreciation for the project.

V. New Business

A. Trail Shoulder Maintenance - Scott Wagner (Nature & Trails Specialist at THPRD)

Scott's presentation centered on the life cycle of maintenance in the park system. His team has focused on species-specific pruning for a more natural approach to reduce the long-term cost and need for maintenance as well as making the trails look more natural. Scott described some of the principles of vegetative management zones and trail maintenance planning. THPRD is in the process of converting some of their trail shoulders from gravel to grass which reduces the need for herbicides. The district is also introducing clover into some of the large grassy areas along open trail corridors (e.g., powerline trails) to mitigate the need for mowing and enhance bee habitat.

James was excited about the clover planting and asked how weeds are managed. Scott said mechanical management and early introduction of native vegetation is the primary means. Laura asked about battery powered maintenance equipment to reduce emissions. Scott noted THPRD is transitioning to some professional quality battery maintenance equipment, and explained innovations in the battery market. Sam noted that when Scott addressed the committee three years ago, reduction of herbicide use was a major concern; he asked if they had made progress. Scott noted they once used 30 gallons per year of herbicide to manage trail shoulders and now use five gallons per year, and have also reduced the frequency of spraying by adjusting their efficiency. Alison asked if they plan tree trimming to be mindful of animal life. Scott discussed the importance of planning around season and animal habitat (not disturbing nests, for example), as well as building relationships with contract arborists.

B. Trail Atmosphere

Bruce asked for the committee's thoughts on what makes a trail feel safe and inviting, specifically about the presence of staff in the parks.

Marty and Alison enjoy seeing staff on the trails. Marty noted that as a white woman who is comfortable around authority her experience might differ from others. Laura appreciates the solitude of nature and prefers not to interact with staff. James said staff visibility leads to the public valuing the district staff, but he does not like seeing the THPRD security vehicle because it resembles a police presence. Conversely, Sheri's community of predominantly older neighbors appreciate the visibility of security vehicles as a deterrent to people who they perceive misuse the parks. Marty and James noted that a significant portion of the population have negative associations with law enforcement, and they feel we are better served by a welcoming and inclusive staff. Grace concurred in the zoom chat adding, "Seeing law enforcement does make me anxious and I've had friends tell me stories of negative experiences they have had with law enforcement." Laura praised THPRD's work to prevent "campers" and juxtaposed that with Portland's houseless issues. Bruce discussed differences between Portland Parks and THPRD, noting they are more proactive than Portland Parks and also have fewer campers due to the location of services for houseless community members. THPRD staff handles the removal of campers, which happens weekly from THPRD properties. Sheri and Sam both feel that good sight lines and clear paths are important for feeling safe.

Bruce asked for input on signs and maps. James asked that the district release maps for Avenza. Laura and Grace like directional signs that clarify location and distances. Alison loves paper maps, preferably water resistant.; Sam concurred, noting their batteries never die. James suggested cloth maps for promotional items, and others liked that idea.

C. Field trip

The group decided to visit a recent district purchase of conservation land in June, and a field trip in July to look at trail design standards.

D. Habitat inventory

Bruce asked the committee what observable qualities ensure us THPRD is a good land steward. Laura discussed an experience with a colleague who saw deer at the park; she and Alison said the presence of wildlife and clean water are important for the sense of good stewardship. Heidi appreciates interpretive signs. James followed on by suggesting signs that explain conservation efforts to spread awareness of THPRD's unseen efforts. Marty felt that native plants and a lack of invasives are a good sign of stewardship. Sam mentioned the importance of highlighting connectivity. The group discussed the importance of signage during work.

VI. Closing

Alison asked about meeting new board members. Heidi will invite them to the July joint meeting and our field trips.

Next Meeting will be held on 6/23/2021 at 6:30 PM

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM

Respectfully submitted,
James Wright

Recording Secretary