



PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

155 S. Seward Street
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(907) 586-5226

To: Assembly Human Resources Committee

From: Christopher Mertl, Chair
Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee

Date: December 29, 2021

Subject: Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report

The City & Borough of Juneau Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) meets the first Tuesday of each month at 5:30 P.M. The PRAC is comprised of nine members appointed by the Assembly for three-year terms. PRAC held eight public meetings in 2021, with all being remote virtual meetings.

Once again this year, the community's need to recreate during COVID-19 has been extremely important for our residents' mental and physical health. The need for diverse and quality recreation facilities and programs during these challenging times are in great demand at the local, statewide, and national level. Nationally, the Park Service has had to cap visitations and develop reservations to visit many of its parks due to rising demand; in Alaska, year-round trail usage is at an all-time high; and locally, Juneau is experiencing similar demands with recreation cabins being booked 365 days a year and reservations selling out immediately when released. This recreation demand is a testament to the critical role parks and recreation plays in the lives of our residents, and a growing opportunity to diversify our local and regional economy.

With COVID-19 entering its second year, the Parks and Recreation Department (Department) continued to show their passion and dedication in providing services and also dealing with the pandemic. Again, many had to perform their expected P&R roles and responsibilities, as well as their continued addition role to deal with the pandemic. The Department was able to safely provide the appropriate level of service and also find new ways to support the community and help reduce the associated stresses related to the pandemic. The Department, at all levels, deserves a huge amount of praise for their effort and willingness to go above and beyond to meet their mission.

Despite the challenges this year, the Department offered several new, low cost, and family oriented programs to safely get people to explore our parks, improve their mental and physical health, and promote economic opportunities. These included Walk Southeast, Crack the Code, Drive-In Bingo, Movies in the Park, Pumpkin Carving, Virtual Snow Sculpture Contest, and Candy Cane Hunt, to name a few.

In 2021, PRAC said farewell to Emily Palmer, Ron Crenshaw, and Tom Rutecki. We thank them for their volunteer service and valued input as they filled their term. PRAC welcomed Makayla Chappell and Emily Haynes as new members filling a three year term. We have a seat that opened in late 2021 and hope to fill it in the New Year.

While the PRAC received updates, took public comment and provided input to the Department, several major projects and accomplishments occurred in 2021. These included:

- Shéiyi X̄aat Hít (Youth Shelter) has provided over 200 nights of shelter to youth experiencing homelessness since opening in July;
- Transfer of Management of the Dimond Park Field House to the Department;
- Improvements to Eagle Valley Center including trails, building enhancements and energy upgrades;
- Park improvements to Chicken Yard, Capital Park and others, including the transfer of a \$550,000 grant for Capital Park;
- Disposal of Gunakadeit Park to become a commercial development;
- Expansion of Zach Gordon Youth Center After School Programs including events for BIPOC teens;
- PRAC's Involvement in the FY 23 and 6-Year CIP Request with the Department;
- Continued ORV (Off-Road Vehicle Vehicle) Park Planning at 35-mile Site;
- Celebration of Zach Gordons Youth Center's 75th Anniversary; and,
- Opening of the New Amalga Meadows Public Use Cabin.

Additionally, the PRAC took public comment on a wide range of issues, providing support for several Parks & Recreation initiatives, and making recommendations to the Assembly. Planning and management highlights of 2021 include:

- Auke Bay Beach Access
- Cope Park Easement
- Juneau Capital Fund Request
- Unmanned Aircraft Systems Policy
- Thunder Mountain Bike Trails Planning
- Montana Creek Access and Master Plan
- Fish Creek Master Plan
- Transgender Anti-Discrimination Policy
- 2022 Legislative Capital Priority List
- Capital School Park Renaming
- CBJ Trail Master Plan Update
- OHV Park Planning
- Community Recreation Programs
- Riverside Rotary Park Improvements
- Amalga Cabin Updates
- Adair Kennedy Park Improvements
- Development of the Winter Pass Program
- Proposition 2 General Obligation Bond Projects
- Brigadoon Estates Land Disposal
- Memorial Bench Policy

- Mendenhall Glacier Master Plan Update
- FY2022-27 Capital Improvement Program
- Commercial Use Permit Applications
- Parks and Recreation Operations Update
- 2021 Trail Mix Projects
- Downtown Summer Shelter (Mill Campground)
- Augustus Brown Pool Renovations
- Juneau Park Foundation Partnerships
- Operations and Management of Facilities during COVID-19.

An issue we would like to bring to the attention of the Assembly is the number of requests for the disposal of parkland to be transferred to private ownership. Also of concern for PRAC, is when parkland is sold that these funds go into the General Fund rather than being dedicated to future park improvements or park acquisition. PRAC feels strongly that the proceeds from the sale of parkland should be held for the benefit of the community in the improvement of our parks and recreation. We would be pleased to work with the Assembly in the development of this new policy.

I wanted to take a minute to recognize our past Assembly liaison Wade Bryson who served as an outstanding liaison and we look forward to working with Alicia Hughes-Skandijis.

Although I stated this last year, it bears repeating again this year. I want to acknowledge and bring to light the exceptional service at all levels within the P&R Department; from the Director, his staff, the many volunteers, and all who have contributed to continuing the mission of the Department. This dedication once again proves why Juneau is the amazing community that it is. It shows our perseverance and caring for our neighbors in a time of crisis; with us all coming together. During the pandemic, the value of our recreation facilities and programs, parks, trails, and open space was front and center a critical component in the physical and mental health well-being of our citizens. I hope you continue to support these programs and facilities with the adequate funding.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve our community. If you would like more information please call me at 907-988-9000.



Christopher Mertl
PRAC, Chair

Attachment: 2021 Attendance Record

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PRAC)

ATTENDANCE 2021 – ZOOM WEBINAR

Tuesdays @ 5:30pm unless specified	1/5	2/2	3/2	4/6	5/4	6/1	7/6	8/3	9/7	10/5	11/2	12/7
Josh Anderson	P	A	P	C	P	A	P	C	P	C	C	A
Alex Beebe- Giudice	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	A	P	A	A	P
Edric Carrillo	P	P	P	N	P	P	P	N	A	N	N	P
Ron Crenshaw	P	P	P	C	P	P	P	C	P	C	C	Stepped Down
Kirk Duncan	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	E	P	E	E	P
Christopher Merli <small>Chair 2/5/19</small>	P	P	P	L	P	P	A	L	P	L	L	P
Will Muldoon	P	P	P	L	P	P	P	L	P	L	L	P
Emily Palmer/ Makayla Chappell	P	P	<small>E. Palmer Term Done</small>	E	P	A	P	E	P	E	E	P
Tom Rutecki/ Emily Haynes	P	P	<small>T. Rutecki Term Done</small>	D	P	P	P	D	P	D	D	P

LEGEND: **A** – Absent / **P** – Present / **P(t)** – Present Telephonically