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Metro | *Meeting Minutes*

Capital Grants Review Committee Meeting
April 24, 2014 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

In attendance: Councilor Harrington, Councilor Craddick, Brian Vaughn, Gayle Killam, Mike Zilis (Chair), Norman Penner, Dave Stewart, Julie DiLeone
Staff in attendance: Mary Rose Navarro, Heather Nelson Kent, Crista Gardner, Oriana Quackenbush

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Welcome

Mike Zilis welcomed committee members and went over the agenda. He noted that the staff reports and site visits will inform the day's decisions. The agenda includes an overview of the criteria. He explained that a straw poll would be used to determine the level of committee members' concerns about a project and help to organize the day's discussion.

Criteria review

Mary Rose Navarro reviewed the program's criteria.

- The criteria references language in the Resolution that defined the Natural Areas bond program, which includes the Capital Grants. It was noted that "selection criteria" and "bonus selection criteria" were listed in order to give the review committee guidance in their work.
- This is where the terms 'Re-nature' and 'Re-green' come from. They are each a separate selection criteria. It was noted that the Re-nature criteria refers to 'ecological functions'. The Re-green criteria refer to 'urban' neighborhoods and 'appearance' of nature. These are two very different outcomes.
- Previous committees noted this distinction and asked staff to separate the criteria into two categories – one for Re-nature and one for Re-green. Since the outcomes are so different, applicants are not required to meet both, although some projects do.
- Staff provided an overview of the criteria for both Re-nature and Re-green.
- In addition to the selection criteria, there are three eligibility criteria. One defines what sort of agency/organization can apply. A second requires the existence of public/private partnerships. A third refers to long-term maintenance.

Questions and reflections

- The committee found this a useful review going into the recommendation decisions.
- There were some concerns discussed about the cost-benefit balance. While the funding exists to fund all these projects, it needs to be used wisely.

Application Review

A straw poll exercise noting which projects needed the most discussion was done to determine the order of the projects to be discussed. The discussion should result in the following categories of information on the projects; strengths, concerns, conditions of approval, precedent and success indicators.
There was a question regarding the use of the success indicators. If these are indicators of what success looks like 10 years in the future, how are they reported and how will the information be used? Staff responded that the

indicators are included in each grant agreement's scope of work. The grantees report on any progress throughout the contract term, but many of these indicators will not show meaningful data until well after the grant agreement has expired. Is there a way that Metro Council could give direction and empower staff to follow up on these indicators to determine the impact of the program and ensure compliance with the intent of the award?

1. Overlook Oak Savanna

Recommendation – Award full funding with the following conditions:

- Match needs to be secure and grant agreements and IGAs executed by March 2016. A progress report will be made to Metro in July 2015 to determine project viability.

General discussion

- Staff report was thorough and captured the experience of the site visit.
- Clarified that the City of Portland has committed to taking ownership of the property once the community raises the funds.
- Considering Metro's financial responsibility to wrap up the Capital Grant program funding, is it risky to fund this if the match isn't met? Most past projects are showing success at meeting match, including close to $500,000 raised in the last year for the White Oak Savanna in West Linn. It would be important to know if this project becomes infeasible by the time the committee is scheduled to make an award decision in the 2016 cycle.
- A question was raised about a potential trail on the steep slope. The currently alignment for the North Portland Greenway Trail is along the river, but this is a very preliminary alignment. As planning for the trail proceeds, they may consider other options, including this area.
- The appraisal came in higher than expected so the award can be based on the appraised value.

Strengths

- Site is a poster child for what the Capital Grant program is for, preserving significant lands.
- These spaces within the urban areas are disappearing quickly. This land will very likely be developed in near future if not protected.
- It is a community focal point and gathering spot.
- It will continue the impressive restoration that has already occurred on the bluff where invasive plants have been removed and there are views of the oaks and madrones.
- Metro's grant award will seed the fundraising effort.

Concerns

- They need to raise match within a year due to the agreement with the property owner.
- Relatively short window to raise match.

Next steps for staff

- They plan to apply for an East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District grant. Mary Rose Navarro will touch base with staff there to see if there is an appropriate way to encourage an application ASAP.
- Get them in touch with West Linn and April Hill grantees to assist with fundraising.
- Caution Ruth to not send the Metro Council too much communication.

Success indicators

- There is a healthy oak savanna habitat established
- The site is being used for environmental education
- There is community use and access with a trail and small amenities
- The oak tree is healthy.

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2. Donald L Robertson Park

Recommendation – Award full funding

Strengths

- The park gets a lot of use. There were at least 1000 people there for the Easter egg hunt last weekend.
- It is a small request but has initiated interest in a larger trail connection between Fairview and Troutdale
- The committee was impressed with the existing improvements and plantings at the site.

Success indicators

- Wood Village participates in making the larger trail connection between Fairview and Troutdale. (Councilor Craddick is convening partners to explore this.)
- The trail is in good condition, welcoming and safe.

Encouragements (but not conditions)

- Encourage Wood Village to work with SOLVe to address illegal dumping and trash. SOLVe does work with Troutdale on Beaver Creek and Arata Creek.

Next steps for staff

- Explore funding to help with Intertwine signage (here and at all appropriate sites). This could come from the Capital Grant funds or maybe from the Council Opportunity Funds.
- Help get this project and site on the Intertwine website
- Introduce SOLVe and Steve Kennett to Wood Village staff
- Coordinate with East Metro Connections staff to recognize this opportunity in future plans.

3. Beaver Creek Fish Passage and Restoration

Recommendation –funding reduced by $20,000 with the following conditions:

- Reduce funding request by $20,000. Pre-agreement expenses are not eligible for funding but can be used as match.
- Construction easement funds from Metro cannot be used to pay for construction easement to Metro. Confirm that this is not being funded in the request.
- Encourage applicant and partners to make a presentation about the project and larger partnership to Troutdale City Council.

General Discussion

- The site visit was well attended and informative. It included in-depth information about how this project will address various fish species and their individual needs. The application's weak points were addressed and the benefits clearly defined. Attendees appreciated all the partners that showed up to the site visit.
- These three cities (Troutdale, Wood Village and Fairview) don't own or maintain their own roads. It's done by Multnomah County. But city involvement in the effort is important. It was helpful to know that the City of Troutdale did have a representative at the site visit. While the Beaver Creek Partnership works with a City representative, they do not have participation from their Council members. It would be good to establish this support.

Strengths

- Existing, ongoing monitoring by Portland's Water Bureau makes this a unique opportunity to report and evaluate the impact of the habitat improvements.
- Roads and water agencies (or departments) don't generally work together. This coordinated effort is very positive.

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Concerns

- Permitting could be complicated and could even derail the project. Response to the question at the site visit was not entirely clear, but the committee doesn't have a major concern. Staff is directed to track the permitting effort as the project proceeds.
- A construction easement will likely be needed on Metro property. The budget includes $32,000 to be covered by Metro funding for construction easements. If these easements are on property other than Metro land, this is an allowable expense. It is not eligible for Metro funding if the easement is on Metro land. Staff needs to follow up on this.

Success indicators

- Restore fish passage to upper Beaver Creek. Monitoring of juvenile fish demonstrates their increase over time in the basin
- Monitor for potential head cut and address issue if it arises.

Next steps for staff

- Personal invitation to Troutdale City Council to the July 10th award presentation
- Check-in with applicants about the permitting process.
- Finalize the budget being recommended to Council.

4. Old Town Loop Trail and Restoration

Recommendation – Award funding up to one-third of total project cost based on revised budget that addresses questions and conditions noted below.

Precedent

This is the first time the Grant Review Committee is funding a project located on Metro-owned land.

General discussion

- Applicant is applying for an Oregon State Parks grant as part of the match. The application was due in April and recommendations are generally referred to the State Parks Commission in June.
- The site is a combination of City owned and Metro owned properties. The City is seeing an increase in use since the original trail was installed, along with day-to-day management issues that are emerging. Metro and the City need to continue to define roles and responsibilities and build an effective working relationship for the ongoing management of this site.
- The off-road bike area that has been created by users is impacting the habitat of the creek and is a problem. Since it is on Metro's land, and falls under their area of responsibility, is restoration of this area an appropriate use of grant funding? Clean Water Services is partnering with Metro on an OWEB grant for Gales Creek but that is for work on the other side of the trail (to be confirmed). The restoration of the off-road bike area would complement the other restoration work.

Strengths

- Gales Creek is the highest priority tributary in the Tualatin River Basin.
- This is a true nature experience within an urban neighborhood.
- Restoring the area with the illegal off-road bike impacts complements the restoration being done by CWS and offers an opportunity for improved stewardship of the site.
- This could be an opportunity for Forest Grove's Park Department to gain more experience in natural area management.
- The area off of 14th Street that was recently purchased offers a very nature-based experience (no houses around).
- The proposed trail is located outside of the wet area (typically), so it should not have the same flooding challenges as the existing paved trail.

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Concerns

- The new trail will likely go through Clean Water Services' 'vegetative corridor' (a regulated area). Does the budget include enough funding for any requirements that Clean Water Services might impose as a result of their regulatory requirements or is this missing from this grant?
- Can the restoration be capitalized (along with the trail construction)?

Success indicators

- The trail is built, use is increased.
- The restoration is successful.
- Participation in regional trail counts at this location is continued.
- Forest Grove staff is more connected with the rest of the natural area management.

Next steps for staff

- Work with the City of Forest Grove on the budget for restoration. Separate the budget for restoration of the off-road bike use area and the restoration associated with the trail.
- Confirm they have had a conversation with Clean Water Services regarding the vegetative corridor and determined the needs and costs associated with it.
    - Ensure there are adequate funds in the budget for any impacts trail construction will have on the vegetative corridor.
    - Increase budget for this item if necessary.
- Resolve Metro involvement and provide support for Forest Grove's effort.

5. Dirksen Nature Park

Recommendation – Award full funding with following conditions:

- Update the management plan for the site to include monitoring the impact of the proposed soccer field on the emergent wetland and address impacts accordingly.

General discussion

- Based on other nature play projects, the budget for the nature-play area is potentially low. Nature play is an emerging effort and that there are ways to scale the experiences to fit the budget. Consider cautioning Tigard to not over-promise an experience that they might not be able to cover with $100,000. Share lessons learned from nature play efforts Metro has been engaged in.
- Intertwine signs exist along the Fanno Creek Trail. Confirm if there are other appropriate locations/opportunities for additional Intertwine signage.
- Irrigation was noted in the budget as a match. The committee assumed this was for the developed sections of the park and not to establish restoration plantings. Such use of irrigation should be discouraged.

Strengths

- Amazing experience of several Northwest habitats in a single location.
- Strong, established partners including the Northwest Ecology Corps and Tualatin Riverkeepers. Tualatin Riverkeepers has a track record working with Adelante Mujeres, Title I Schools, affordable housing providers and the Good Neighborhood Center (a nearby homeless shelter).
- It was noted that there are strong and effective community advocates in this area that include preservationists. They will pay attention to the health and use of the space.

Concern

- It's great that they removed the baseball field, but hard to get excited about the change of use to the proposed soccer field. Soccer, even recreational soccer, is going to attract year-round use. There was discussion about potential conditions to discourage use of the soccer field by team sports. Staff noted that the original acquisition intentionally left the sport field area out of the conservation easement in response to Tigard's limited access to sport fields and the committee decided not to make it a condition of approval.

Success Indicators

- Successfully reduce demand trails.
- Restoration planting is established and in a "free-to-grow" state.
- Environmental education is successfully occurring on the site.

Encouragements (but not conditions)

- Work with other regional trail providers such as THPRD and Metro to share learning about how to reduce the impact of trails in sensitive habitat.
- Discuss nature play lessons learned from other efforts Metro has been involved in with Metro staff and caution against over-promising for that project.

6. Whitaker Ponds

Recommendation – Full funding with following conditions:

- The half- street improvements need to include green street features using low-impact development techniques.
- The parking lot needs to be a model for low-impact development techniques.
- Metro staff should review and approve design documents at 30% and 90% phases to ensure the intent of the committee's recommendations are integrated into the final design.
- The design of the project must start in July 2015.
- Include a project milestone for December 2015 for staff to review design documents and ensure that project is on track. If not, this allows the committee to reallocate these grant funds to other projects being reviewed in the 2016 cycle.

General discussion

- Clarified that Portland Parks & Recreation has full management responsibility for this site through an IGA with Metro. Metro plays no management role whatsoever in this site.
- Nature play area will be similar to the Spring Park play area, which cost about $30,000.
- Half street improvements are required but are not required (or designed) to be a 'green street'.
- The proposed swales are located within the parking lot. A green street along 47th Avenue would offer the park a greener "front door" and demonstrate low impact development techniques for storm water management. This would be more consistent with the program criteria and would be similar to the recommendation for the Cully Park grant.
- Portland Parks won't have a project manager available to start on the project until June 2015.

Strengths

- The site visit confirmed the need for better public access to the Natural Area.
- The site visit demonstrated how the plan will address various uses on the site like the need for kids to have a space to explore (a nature-play area) while waiting to load the busses.
- The parking lot will showcase a variety of stormwater management practices.

Success indicators

- Sustainable site development practices are used along the green street and within the parking area.
- Increased use of the site.
- Add a sidewalk constructed along 47th from Columbia Boulevard to address pedestrian safety?

Encouragements (but not conditions)

- Encourage using the Verde model of local employment or contracting with Verde or a similar program to utilize workers from their job program.

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- Explore creative funding sources to complete the sidewalk connection to Columbia Blvd. This might include a discussion with City Commissioner Novick about safe routes to schools and parks.
- Metro staff will check in with the Living Cully EcoDistrict about their involvement.

7. Lilly K Johnson Park

Recommendation – award full funding with the following conditions:

- Implementation of the restoration plan on existing purchases by the end of 2015.
- For new acquisitions, map and treat invasive weeds within two years of purchase.
- Adjust the funding request to one-third of total project cost.
- Tie the release of funds to implementation of the restoration plan.

General discussion

- The committee concerned about the lack of follow through on the restoration requirements of the first grant award. They questioned whether the acquisitions would occur if committee chose not to recommend funding. They decided to support and encourage them to reach the original vision that Metro has already invested in. The committee wants Metro to see some sort of progress and commitment to the site prior to releasing funds.
- The committee that recommended the first grant made it clear that restoration was a priority and gave Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation Department an extra $10,000 to help.
- Why wasn't the restoration completed? The department board and bond oversight committee make decisions on resource allocation. At the site visit the committee was told that natural resource priorities are set based on a formula and Lilly K Johnson was ranked low. With the new properties acquired this site will now rank higher for restoration. The management plan is beginning to get implemented this year. SOLVe was out there this month.
- Lack of community use and involvement in the park was discussed. The committee noted that the department is cautious about informing or engaging the community prior to a property being secured. This is often typical for land acquisition projects conducted by government agencies.

Success indicators

- Connection to the Westside Trail completed.
- Restoration projects completed on schedule.
- The natural area is being used by the community.

Encouragement (but not conditions)

- Councilor Harrington offered to communicate why the restoration is important to Metro directly to Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation Department. The committee agreed this was a good approach.

8. Siskiyou Pathway

Recommendation – award full funding with the following conditions:

- Ensure design standards are sufficient to ensure trail will last and can be maintained.
- Ensure design standards are met in trail construction.
- Include wayfinding signage formalizing public access to the trail.
- Include the trail on bike and pedestrian maps so people can find it, know they can use it.
- Confirm the access easement, or similar, from the Bureau of Environmental Services.

Precedent

- Grant program has not funded trails before (except the boardwalk at Happy Valley School).
- Guidance to future applicants about trails: What makes this one compelling?
    - Fits into context – part of bike/pedestrian network
    - Appropriate design standard for type of trail use planned

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Strengths

- The committee was impressed that this organization has taken this project on, particularly at a former landfill site. There is a tremendous community benefit to this development project.
- Community support and involvement in the planning of the trail is strong and well established.
- Potential connections (now or in the future) to other regional and local parks, trails and natural areas (Rocky Butte, I-205 Multi-Use Path, Gateway Green, etc.)
- This is an area that needs more access to nature.
- The location near Madison High School is a benefit.

Concerns

- Will the public really feel welcome since the trail goes right past the temple?
- The trail is not ADA accessible
- Current installed path down to BES property was built by volunteers – what are the design standards for the soft surface trail segment?
- Make sure that anything funded by the grants is built to an appropriate standard to ensure it will last and can be maintained over time.
- Questions about the BES easement and the connection from the BES property to other destinations need to be clarified.
- Questions arose about funding lighting. The committee felt it was necessary to the trail installation for safety at this location.

Success indicators

- Public is using the trail
- Trail is built and maintained to appropriate public standards
- Potential for Intertwine signage

9. One North Community Courtyard

Recommendation: To be determined at June 4th meeting. Potential conditions that were discussed but not decided upon:

- Landscape maintenance contractor must have knowledge of pollinator habitat.
- Board structure (bylaws, etc.)
- Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) will consult with Metro (COO, Metro Council) before vacating right of way easement.
- Possible condition that report on activities in plaza for a certain amount of time to ensure it is community driven and being used.

General Discussion

Meganne Steele from Metro's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) program helped provide background and answer the committee's questions about this application.

- TOD granted $300,000 to the Radiator building and has been working with developers on the application to the capital grants program.
- TOD and Nature in Neighborhoods worked together to successfully bring one other project to the capital grant program in the past, the Park Avenue Station.
- At the site visit the committee members tried to understand the public access to the space. The applicants weren't well prepared for that question so they provided illustrations after the visit. The illustration that shows access from N Freemont was helpful to some committee members.
- The point was also made that the buildings provide a sound barrier for the open space within the plaza.

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- The applicants also provided more information after the site visit about programming and activating the space by hiring Karen Whitman. They envision community-driven programming via the Community Advisory Board. Karen used to be the director at Pioneer Square.
- Nature in Neighborhoods and TOD programs are both working towards a livable region but approach it from different directions. TOD's goal is to incentivize private investment to build differently. They funded the Radiator because of the job creation aspects of the project. TOD doesn't have tools to fund the livability or 'green' elements; they can't finance public spaces.
- The committee asked what would happen if this project was not awarded a capital grant. It would remain a private courtyard, although the developers have not stated their intent to make it private only. They want it to be community-oriented.
- The committee wanted to know if there was the potential to nullify the easement and/or vacate the alley in the future. While it is unlikely, staff did look into the potential. A PBOT representative said that the property owner can request it all be vacated in the future, but it's unlikely that it would be approved.
- A clarification on the easement, there is no money passing hands from property owners to PBOT. The property owners are donating the value of the land. The grant request will fund the plaza improvements.
- The committee is concerned about whether a public access easement that gives the public the full rights of a sidewalk is the right tool. It could create issue associated with sit/lie issues the City struggles with at other locations.

Strengths

- This project can serve as a model for other developers in creating public space in urban areas.
- It's important to come up with new ways to re-green urban spaces in areas that are becoming denser. This area is rapidly changing and will lose of many of the informal green spaces that it has today.
- This area does not have a lot of parks or public open space.
- The recently submitted programming and activation proposal will engage the community.
- The entrance from NE Fremont is welcoming.

Concerns

- The committee is concerned that the project does not meet the Re-green criteria strongly enough. One committee member calculated that only 17% of the space is actually green. The design is good for community gathering, but does not go far enough for Re-green.
- Criteria – "Innovative project for which there is no funding". A committee member noted they don't see anything innovative. Response was that the approach of putting a public plaza in the middle of the buildings instead of a parking lot was the innovative approach. The re-green elements are not necessarily innovative on their own.
- There is only one good access point off of NE Fremont. The access points off of N. Vancouver and N. Williams are through parking lots and under buildings.
- What is funded versus what is capitalized - PBOT is only capitalizing the easement not the improvements? Easement value is match so how can grant funds be used to pay for the improvements if no money is changing hands?
- If the design was improved to increase the amount of vegetation, does the committee feel it a good use of public money? While a few members feel comfortable with the project, several committee members are still uncertain. How much more green would make a difference to the committee members. Discussed 50% vegetation in the easement area beyond the Right of Way. Committee decided not to specify a percentage. Explore grass pavers in the Right of Way?
- Planting plan includes varietal native plants instead of native species, which offer higher value habitat for pollinators.
- The committee doesn't see how the design is supporting an educational experience. It's just a very nice plaza.

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Next Steps
Many committee members are not comfortable supporting the project as proposed. Staff will request that the applicant and design team respond to the following:

- Is more greening possible?
    - Increased percentage of planters in the easement area.
    - Consider a grass paver option for the alley.
- Work with Metro staff and PBOT to address capitalization concern.
- Plant more native species - 'true natives, not varietals'
- More information on how they are treating stormwater from buildings and the plaza. The plan has underground stormwater galleries. Why is permeable pavement needed if water is going into galleries?
- Sidewalk sit/lie issue - are property owners and tenants aware of this issue?
- Consider reducing the amount of funding requested
- Be honest with them that some on committee having difficulty approving even with improvements to the design.

Committee members willing to meet with applicant and design team include Julie DiLeone and Mike Zilis and maybe Gayle Killam and Councilor Harrington.

Next Meeting Tuesday April 29th , 9 to 11 am
Due to the volume of projects to discuss, this meeting's agenda will be continued at the next meeting covering the following projects:

- Gateway Green
- John Inskeep Environmental Learning Center
- Zenger Farm

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