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Memorandum

TO: Parks Commission and Land Bank Commission

FROM: Ethan Hipple, Deputy Director, Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

SUBJECT: Parks Division Update

DATE: February 2018

Park Manager Search

Continuing national search for Park Manager for Portland's Park Division (Parks, Athletic Facilities, Playgrounds, Cemeteries, Forestry, Horticulture). Aiming to have someone in place by April. Position description at: <http://www.portlandmaine.gov/1107/Current-Job-Opportunities>

Open Positions in Parks

Recently filled Horticulture position that attracted over 60 applications. Currently hiring for an Arborist to join our Forestry division.

Winter Parks Operations and Plowing

Parks Division Staff are responsible for clearing of 120 miles of sidewalks, as well as school parking lots, fire stations, and city buildings. Crews have been kept very busy with a cold and snowy start to winter.

Winter Recreation Map

Created google map to provide real-time updates for skating and sledding conditions.

<https://www.portlandmaine.gov/1906/Winter-Recreation>

Stormwater Projects in Parks

Working with Stormwater Division concerning impacts to parks from multiple projects: Bedford Stormwater project will require multiple crossings of Back Cove Trail. Trail access will remain open with detours. Project starts Spring 2018.

Multi-million gallon stormwater detention tank will likely be installed under Preble St athletic field. Field will be unusable for up to two seasons, but the project will make it possible to raise the elevation of the field which will reduce or eliminate saltwater intrusion from storm surges. This will result in a greatly improved field with much better turf conditions. Project starts late Fall 2018.

Budget Season

Developing Parks, Recreation and Facilities budget to submit to City Manager and City Council.

Congress Square Park Redesign



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The private fundraising committee has a solid timeline for private fundraising, and is actively recruiting distinguished board members to donate and solicit large gifts for this project. City staff are meeting with the group regularly to monitor progress and coordinate.

Portland Landing

Planning continues with CIP request for 30% construction drawings and permitting. View the current plan here: <http://www.portlandmaine.gov/2011/Portland-Landing>

Loring Memorial Damage

Loring Memorial damaged in third vehicle accident in 2 years, 2 of them OUI. Working with Traffic Division to install safeguards to reduce damage to memorial.

Cemetery GIS Project

Cemetery staff working with with IT , GIS mapping sub-contractor to create cemetery mapping / online web site project. Will be ready for spring launch.

Parks Conservancy

Inaugural meeting of Parks Conservancy Board. Provided overview of Parks system, negotiating details of draft MOU. The Board's first order of business will be to hire an Executive Director and to finalize MOU with City.

Pollinator Habitat

Presented at annual meeting of Portland Pollinators, shared Department efforts at reducing pesticide use, increasing pollinator habitat, Golf Course innovation, and switch from annual display beds to perennial beds in many locations throughout the city.

Audubon Partnership

Working with Eric Topper of Audubon concerning partnerships for 2018 projects: Western Prom meadow, Eastern Prom meadow, school collaborations.

Trail Projects

Working with Student Conservation Association on securing a high school crew to do trail projects in Portland Parks summer 2018. Also have funding lined up to once again hire a Maine Conservation Corps crew to do projects in Portland. Met with Portland Trails to discuss 2018 trail priority projects on city property.

Fox Field Food Forest



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Met with East Bayside Neighborhood Association and City Legal Counsel concerning Fox Field Food Forest. Existing permit from Planning (2015) will allow installation of garden beds and Parks Division supports that. City will take this on as a city project, and EBNO will sign a 5 year maintenance MOU to maintain beds and small fruit trees.

Shipping Containers in Parks

Met with Friends of Congress Sq Park and Architect to discuss guidelines for placing container to be used as storage and programming space in Congress Sq Park. This could be an innovative model for other parks as well for programming storage, small scale food/beverage for events, etc...

Park Projects Update

Staff are working on the following funded CIP/Park Improvement projects:

- Cousins Memorial Reconstruction: out to bid
- Deering Oaks Playground Improvements: Zip line and net climber
- Evergreen Cemetery Stevens Ave Wall: 60% complete
- Fort Gorges Hazard Mitigation--Army Corps funded: 100% complete
- Fort Gorges Preservation Plan: Design complete.
- Futsal Court, Fox Field: Funded by CDBG, planning for Spring construction
- Hall School Playground: Design complete, staff will be managing construction
- Island Playground Improvements: funding secured, spring installation.
- Libbytown Community Garden: 100% complete
- Lincoln Park Fence Restoration: funding secure, design and specs 90%
- Lyman Moore Athletic Facility Drainage and Reconstruction: funding and design complete, out to bid, summer install.
- Park Signs: funding secured, spring install.
- Payson Playground improvements, summer install.
- Payson Softball Title IX restroom and locker room improvements: funding secured, spring installation

"A Walk In the Park" Series

Our monthly series of Park walks and lectures continued with "Portland Parks, Past and Present" slideshow on December 6th at Ocean Gateway.

- Upcoming events: XC Ski through Evergreen, February 10
- More info at: <http://www.portlandmaine.gov/1990/A-Walk-In-The-Park-Tours-and-Talks>

Baxter Trail

Site visit to fine-tune route, crossings, and interpretive signage for Baxter Trail honoring Mayor Baxter. The trail will run east to west from Baxter Boulevard, through Baxter Woods, to Evergreen Cemetery.

Portland, Maine



Yes. Life's good here.

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