



May 27, 2020

Dear Council Members Rollins, Gilman, and Madrone,

On behalf of Olympia's Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC), I respectfully submit our revised 2020-2021 Work Plan.

Olympia's parks are vital to the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of our community. During this unprecedented time of heightened stress and anxiety related to COVID-19 pandemic, our parks are also vital to the recovery of our community.

At our May 21 meeting, PRAC members discussed our Work Plan with Park staff and made revisions according to City Council's recommended three-tier approach to help address the COVID-19 emergency.

#### **TIER 1: NEW WORK PLAN ITEMS**

We have added an October 2020 "OPARD COVID-19 Update" from OPARD staff to better understand the outcomes of plans and actions during the Summer 2020 park season under COVID-19-related restrictions.

At this time (late May 2020), without a clear view of how the use of our parks and recreational activities will be modified and synchronized with the state's re-opening plan this summer, PRAC members did not generate new (Tier 1) actions during our May 21 meeting. We anticipate adding Tier-1 items to our June and August agenda as this rapidly evolving COVID-19 science and response unfolds.

PRAC supports Olympia Parks, Arts, and Recreation Department's (OPARD's) response to date and also supports its careful, four-phase plan for the re-opening of parks and recreational activities between May 5 and July 13. This plan is conditional and is based on Governor Inslee's guidelines and timelines for a phased re-opening of business and activities in Washington state. When parks and recreational activities do more resume, many will do so with appropriate restrictions and/or modifications to protect our community from further spread of the COVID-19 virus.

PRAC also supports any creative ideas generated by OPARD to enhance the public's sense of safety (from COVID-19 exposure) in our parks. To support recovery efforts, we believe restrictions and modifications can and should be balanced with creative ways to allow more people, especially those who are not currently park users or who are infrequent park users, take advantage our parks in ways that not only make them feel safe (i.e. protected by social distancing practices) but also enhance their sense of well-being.

## TIER 2: CURRENT WORK PLAN ITEMS

- **“Stewardship Program Update”** will remain scheduled for June 2020 but will focus on if/how this program can be enhanced to aid in the response to the COVID-19 emergency. Stewardship activities typically take the form of volunteer work parties, but current social-distancing guidelines prohibit such events from taking place. With Park Stewardship staff, PRAC will explore potential opportunities for members of the public to engage in activities that encourage more members of the community to safely engage in activities—such as habitat restoration—that may help with restoration of the participant’s personal health and well-being as well as sense of connection to community members.
- **“Outdoor Adult Fitness Equipment & Fitness in Parks”** discussion will remain schedule for August 2020 but will focus on if/how this program can be enhanced to aid in the response to the COVID-19 emergency. As adults and seniors are excluded from OPARD’s priority recreation activities (such as Summer Camps, Sports Leagues, and Child Care) during the COVID-19 response, it is important to consider our park amenities to provide COVID-19-safe opportunities for these older constituents.
- **“Arts Program”** will remain on the schedule for September 2020 but will focus on how this program enhances the park experience for users especially during the COVID-19 emergency.

## TIER 3: CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- **“Parks Plan”** update is on our June 2020 agenda.
- **“Yelm Highway Master Plan”** An update of this plan was received at PRAC’s May 2020 meeting (due to cancellation of both March and April 2020 meetings).
- **“Aquatic Feasibility Study”** In advance of our approved revised Work Plan, PRAC received an update on this study at our May 2020 meeting (instead of June 2020). Two members of PRAC volunteered to serve in the group of stakeholders, local jurisdictions, and interested citizens that meets with Park staff and the project design team throughout the process of developing this study. The two PRAC members will share information from their meetings regularly at PRAC meetings during the standing “Reports” agenda item.

For all but a few weeks this spring, our parks have served as essential and socially equitable places essential for exercise, and for respite, refuge, and recharge. Under the duress of the stay-at-home restrictions, our parks have already helped aid the recovery of our city by providing everyone in our community—especially those without yards, garden, outdoor space of their own—opportunities to enjoy the balm of the nature and the outdoors.

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Page 3

We hope the General Government Committee will approve this revised Work Plan and feel confident that PRAC will remain conscientious and agile in refining our agenda to better serve the City's recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maria M. Ruth".

Maria Ruth, Chair  
Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC)