

Metro

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Metro

Minutes - Draft

Thursday, February 22, 2024

11:00 AM

**Hidden Creek Community Center, Kalapuya Room. 5100 NE
Hidden Creek Dr, Hillsboro, OR 97124,
<https://zoom.us/j/615079992>**

Council meeting

This meeting will be held electronically and in person at the Hidden Creek Community Center. You can join the meeting on your computer or other device by using this link: <https://zoom.us/j/615079992>

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Present: 5 - Council President Lynn Peterson, Councilor Christine Lewis, Councilor Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Councilor Mary Nolan, and Councilor Duncan Hwang

Excused: 2 - Councilor Gerritt Rosenthal, and Councilor Ashton Simpson

2. Public Communication

3. Consent Agenda

A motion was made by Councilor Lewis, seconded by Councilor Gonzalez, to adopt items on the consent agenda. The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Council President Peterson, Councilor Lewis, Councilor Gonzalez, Councilor Nolan, and Councilor Hwang

Excused: 2 - Councilor Rosenthal, and Councilor Simpson

3.1 Consideration of the January 4, 2024 Council Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [Minutes](#)

3.2 Consideration of the January 18, 2024 Council Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [Minutes](#)

4. Resolutions

4.1 Resolution No. 24-5373 For the Purpose of Approving Funding for the Nature in Neighborhoods Community Choice Grants

Presenter(s): Jon Blasher, he/him, Metro
Crista Gardner, she/her, Metro
Gabrielle Brown, she/her, Metro

Attachments: [Resolution No. 24-5373](#)
[Exhibit A](#)
[Staff Report](#)

Presentation Summary:

Jon Blasher (he/him) introduced the presentation and expressed enthusiasm about the meeting held at Hillsborough's newest park. Blasher highlighted the park's connection to the regional parks and nature system, emphasizing Metro's 25-year investment in nature and public service. While the park wasn't funded by bond dollars, it is part of the collaborative effort to build a regional system that includes protection of natural areas, regional trails, system planning, grant making, community investments, and operating historic cemeteries and regional nature parks. The regional system aims to provide neighborhood recreation, connection with nature, and diverse recreational opportunities just minutes away from home, striking a balance between meeting nature's needs and offering people in greater Portland access to various outdoor experiences. acknowledges the unique community involvement in designing Chahalam Ridge and introduces the Nature Neighborhoods Community Choice grants, emphasizing the importance of lessons learned in improving future rounds of community choice grants. A shout-out is given to the team, led by Krista Gardner and Gabrielle Brown, for their efforts in the process.

Blasher furthered by discussing the agenda and the approaches to shift decision-making power in grant-making through community engagement, featuring the Program Design and Review Committee. The community-driven process for grant idea collection, project development, and community vote is outlined. The speaker previews the upcoming discussion on projects recommended by the committee and voted on by the community. Additionally, an invitation to tour the facility and have lunch in person is

extended.

Jon Blasher concluded by thanking the Program Design and Review Committee, highlighting their diverse backgrounds and commitment to Metro's parks and nature mission. The committee's work in creating the Choice Grants guidebook and implementing the participatory process for grant idea collection and development is acknowledged. Committee members Kevin Hughes and Isaiah Jackman are welcomed to share their experiences.

Jon Blasher passed the presentation to Kevin Hughes (he/him) from the Hillsboro Park and recreation department planning and development division. Hughes identified himself as both a member and an employee of Hillsborough Park and Recreation Department's planning and development division. He highlighted his personal decision to join the committee due to the rare community engagement opportunity and the chance to collaboratively build a grant program from scratch with other community members. He acknowledged the distinct nature of the effort, especially in the realm of participatory budgeting. He appreciated the positive experience on the committee, noting Metro's efforts to include skilled facilitators and ensure equity for members with different backgrounds and skill sets. The collaborative development of a grant guidebook serves as the foundation for the community choice grants, offering community members a direct voice in their democracy. Reflecting on the meaningful aspects of the work, Hughes emphasized the uniqueness of witnessing a grant program's entire development and implementation process. The collaboration with a diverse committee, noting the value of direct community interactions and the opportunity to reconnect with the people they serve. Expressing gratitude to Metro, the speaker acknowledges the program's impact in pushing the boundaries of

engagement processes and elevating voices traditionally left behind. Hughes concluded and extended thanks to Metro from both the community member and practitioner perspectives, recognizing the program's contribution to learning in the field of engagement practices.

Kevin Hughes passed the presentation to Isaiah Jackman (he/him) a Washington County community member representative and a Master student at Portland State University. From the moment Isiah joined, he noticed the efforts made to ensure his voice was acknowledged and his presence mattered within the committee. He expresses gratitude for the warm welcome during the kickoff event in spring of 2023, appreciating the considerate details like providing food and holding the gathering on the metro building's rooftop instead of a conventional conference room. Despite initial reservations about representing the black community, he found that his feedback was valued and encouraged during subsequent committee meetings. The project's commitment to improving racial equity and climate resilience was consistently emphasized and held accountable at each stage of the process. While the project timeline was meticulously organized, there was flexibility granted to ensure adequate time for community engagement and committee member involvement. Throughout the process, his feedback was incorporated in various ways, including adjustments to survey formatting, updates to the mapping tool for community votes, and brainstorming inclusive aspects of engagement materials. The project's adaptability extended to visuals and the distribution of materials, reflecting a commitment to incorporating community input into the project's original process and deliverables. He expressed gratitude by giving a special thanks and shout-out to Crista, Gabrielle, and Amberto (no longer working for Metro) for their inclusive

facilitation in the successful pilot project. He also acknowledged the hard work of his fellow committee members, commending their authentic contributions to the process. Proud to be part of a community that values equity, inclusion, and cultural preservation in parks and nature areas.

Isiah Jackman passed the presentation to Crista Gardner (she/her) Krista Gardner(she/her), the program manager for Metro's Nature and Neighborhoods Capital Grant. She provided an overview of the two components of the Capital grant-Nature Neighborhoods Capital Grant program and Nature Neighborhoods Community Choice grant, with respective awards of \$5 million and \$2.3 million in capital investment.

Krista highlighted the committee's role in producing a guidebook and request for proposals during the program design phase. Metro leadership's commitment to flexible funding engagement and project development led to the hiring of a consultant team, including Design Co-locate, JLA, and Multicultural Collaborative, aligning with the committee's intent. The pilot's location in Washington County prompted the formation of a coordination team with partners from Beaverton, Hillsborough, Cornelius Forest Grove, Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation District, Dwellett Soil and Water Conservation District, and Clean Water Services.

The participatory process, developed collaboratively by the committee and Metro staff, aligns with the purpose and criteria of the parks bonds, legal and financial constraints, and project development best practices. It also respects the autonomy and capacity of local jurisdictions in Washington County. Krista emphasized the incorporation of participatory budgeting principles, highlighting community-led program design, idea generation,

collaborative project development, and community voting as key steps in the process. She encourages further engagement with the Washington County partners during the lunch and tour after the meeting.

Participatory grantmaking, deeply rooted in community organizing and public participation, sought to elevate community engagement from mere information dissemination to active involvement and collaboration. This intentional approach was meticulously planned over a year, involving scoping, pre-planning, research, interviews, workshops, and joining an international community of practice. With input from Washington county partners and a consultant team, the process applied a racial equity framework, engagement goals, and audience mapping to align with guiding principles for meaningful public engagement. The strategy included diverse outreach methods, such as tabling events at Dia de los Muertos, Eid Alpha Tier, farmers' markets, and sporting events. With an emphasis on racial equity, bilingual materials, Spanish and ASL interpretation, and native speaker involvement were incorporated. The engagement effort prioritized accessibility, incorporating interactive, tactile, and audio components, as well as creating an accessible website. The Community Design Advocates program, led by consultant co-locate, involved community leaders like Brandon, who provided valuable insights and expertise, enriching the engagement process.

Crista Gardner invited community member Brandon Culbertson, a member of the Northern Arapaho and Cinnabon City Fort Peck tribes. Culbertson shared his excitement and gratitude for being present to speak about his experience and convey a message from the cloak eight team. He acknowledges Daria Martin Bham of Northwest Indigenous Connections for their crucial role in community connection and respect. He expressed gratitude to Sal

Brennis for providing space at Rock Creek and accommodating community needs, Brandon highlights the significance of the community engagement event as the largest gathering of Native people in Washington County's lived memory. He outlined the importance of representing the Native community on their terms, building connections, and appreciates the support from the team. Brandon reflected on the historical lack of native representation in the region and the impact on identity development, especially for youth. He shares personal experiences, including the removal of a totem in Shoot Park, and looks forward to creating spaces where his children can feel seen and valued. He discussed the colonial history in Oregon and the overshadowing of Native communities, Brandon stressed the importance of tribal communities having access to spaces for connection and healing. He expresses gratitude to Councilor Gonzalez for championing indigenous and tribal community resources. Lastly, Brandon thanked everyone for the opportunity and highlighted the significance of community engagement, hoping other districts can experience similar inclusive efforts. He appreciates the collaborative approach and concludes with a message of building representation and engagement to foster a stronger community.

Crista Gardner concluded and passed the presentation to Gabrielle Brown (she/her), the program manager for the Nature Neighborhoods Community Choice Grants. She conveyed her excitement as she presented the recommended projects for funding. Acknowledging the technical issues, she shared details about the 15 projects proposed by community members through a collaborative effort with partners and design consultants. Gabrielle explained the process undertaken by the Nature Neighborhoods Program Designer Review Committee in

selecting the projects. She outlined the criteria, including community votes, grant guidelines, geographic distribution, and committee judgments. The total funding recommended for the 15 projects is \$2.3 million out of the \$3.9 million requested. She introduced each project, providing information on proposed improvements, ecological enhancements, and community benefits. The projects range from enhancing parks, creating nature play areas, restoring wetlands, promoting cultural significance, to introducing pollinator pathways and public art installations. In addition to the 15 projects, Gabrielle highlighted two more projects to be presented by partners. She invites attendees to explore posters and the website for detailed information. Gabrielle emphasizes the community-driven nature of the projects, expressing gratitude for the collaboration that has led to the successful implementation of the Nature Neighborhoods Community Choice Grants.

Gabrielle concluded and passed the presentation to Peter Swinton (he/him), an urban planner with the Hillsboro Parks and Recreation Department (THPRD). He presented the "Connecting People and Habitat in Aloha" project. He discussed the proposal to expand the gleaning garden along the north side of the park, incorporating culturally significant plants with feedback from the Latinx community. Peter emphasized the educational aspect, introducing signage to inform visitors about the plants and their significance. The project aimed to deepen THPRD's relationship with the community, particularly the Latinx community, and explores a potential partnership with Adelante Mujeres. The intention was to invite patrons into the park, connecting them with nature through existing natural areas, viewpoints, trails, bridges, and shelters. Peter provided details on the project's location in the Aloha neighborhood, its focus area for engagement according to

the Community Vulnerability Index. The estimated cost for the project was \$249,600, covering the expansion of the gleaned garden, interpretive signage, permitting, and project development. Expressing gratitude to Metro for their leadership and partnership, Peter acknowledged the collaborative efforts with Gabrielle and Krista. He also highlighted the rich conversations observed during the process, citing Brandon, Kevin, and Isaiah's impactful contributions. Later, another project presented by Peter Swinton is discussed, focusing on Steva Park in Cornelius. The project aimed to provide river access, including a fishing pier and watercraft launch, and features community gardens with first foods. The award for this project is just over \$150,000, with plans to work on securing a match for the funds. Peter expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share and thanks the team for their work on the program. Presentation concluded. President Peterson called for motion and second.

Council Discussion:

Councilor Gonzales thanked the presenters and highlighted the efforts of community members who presented their side of community input experience.

Councilor Gonzales invited Michael Young (he/him) to talk about the use of AI in the design process and the curation of the visuals. Young highlighted the challenges of scaling up the works for hundreds submitted ideas. Young explained the team's decision to explore novel methods, including the use of ethical AI. The team engaged in productive conversations and opted for Adobe Firefly; an image generator trained solely on Adobe stock imagery. This choice addressed ethical concerns and aimed to provide equitable visualizations for each project idea. The rationale behind using Adobe Firefly ensured the

consistency and prevent biases based on graphic quality, allowing community members to make informed decisions without being influenced by rendering skills. Michael hopes that Metro continues to evaluate and incorporate such approaches in the future.

Councilor Lewis expressed her delight at the community turnout at the Hidden Creek Community Center. She suggested that larger spaces might be necessary for future events. Emphasizing the council's investment in community engagement, she noted that participatory budgeting was initially integrated into the measure without a fully developed plan. Despite legal constraints associated with bond frameworks, the community actively contributed to shaping and implementing the participatory budgeting process. She anticipated not only celebrating the 15 projects but also extracting valuable lessons from the experience. Looking ahead, she envisions replicating this model in every district, allowing communities to actively contribute to park and nature projects across the territory. Acknowledging the leadership from the COO's office, she remained optimistic about the future of community engagement in parks and nature initiatives.

Councilor Nolan highlighted that the effort goes beyond merely doing favors for the dominant culture but involves acknowledging shortcomings and valuing the wealth of insight brought by participants. Expressing gratitude, they specifically thanked Brandon and Isaiah for their invaluable insights and acknowledged the commendable work of Clean Water Services. Additionally, they extended thanks to the voters of the region, noting the significant 67% approval for the council.

Councilor Hwang expressed appreciation for the stakeholders involved in the process and highlighted key themes such as innovation, power-sharing with the community, and the willingness to try new approaches.

Acknowledging the legacy left by predecessors, he thanked them for envisioning the initiative. Addressing a specific question, they pondered the significance of the 1650 votes received and whether there were established goals or metrics for the community voting process. They questioned if the number of votes aligned with expectations, considering each metro district's population of 280,000 residents, and whether the goal was to achieve more significant participation. Their inquiry delved into the aspects of both small "d" and big "D" democracy and the desired level of engagement.

Seeing no further discussion on the topic, Council President Peterson moved on to the next agenda item.

A motion was made by Councilor Gonzalez, seconded by Councilor Lewis, that this item be adopted. The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Council President Peterson, Councilor Lewis, Councilor Gonzalez, Councilor Nolan, and Councilor Hwang

Excused: 2 - Councilor Rosenthal, and Councilor Simpson

5. Chief Operating Officer Communication

Andrew Scott (he/him), Deputy COO provided an update on the following events or items:

- Thanked the team and staff on their work and efforts on the community choice grants presentation.
- Acknowledged the importance of community input in decision making especially for a big organization of Metro.

6. Councilor Communication

Councilors provided updates on the following meetings and events:

Councilor Hwang expressed gratitude to the Madam President and reported on Metro's recent small business

open house at the convention center. The event aimed to promote diverse contracting with Montema county and Metro, attracting 450 attendees from small businesses, which was double the previous year's attendance. He acknowledged Gabby Schuster and colleagues for organizing the successful event. Additionally, he shared insights from the recent committee on racial equity meeting, where discussions focused on the urban growth boundary and decision-making processes. Presentations from staff members were well-received, and there was enthusiasm about incorporating a racial equity lens into future discussions on the urban growth boundary.

Councilor Lewis Expressed gratitude to President Peterson and reported on Metro's recent small business open house at the convention center. The event aimed to promote diverse contracting with Multnomah county and Metro, attracting 450 attendees from small businesses, which was double the previous year's attendance. He acknowledged Gabby Schuster and colleagues for organizing the successful event. Additionally, he shared insights from the recent committee on racial equity meeting, where discussions focused on the urban growth boundary and decision-making processes. Presentations from staff members were well-received, and there was enthusiasm about incorporating a racial equity lens into future discussions on the urban growth boundary.

Councilor Gonzalez summarized the recent JPAC meeting held last Thursday. The meeting covered two significant agenda items. Firstly, they discussed the 2027-2030 MTIP program direction, which involved discretionary allocations, bond repayment schedules for major transportation projects, and an overview of policy considerations for various cycles. Additionally, there was a thorough conversation about the 2023 RTP implementation, MPIP amendment, and the adoption process for twelve projects.

Notably, these larger projects were identified during the 2023 RTP process, aligning with the region's overarching visions and goals.

7. Adjourn

There being no further business, Council President Peterson adjourned the Metro Council Meeting at 12:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anushka Kargathara

Anushka Kargathara, Legislative Assistant