



**Ralston Park Improvement Plan  
Ad Hoc Committee Meeting  
MINUTES - January 31, 2019**

- 1) **Committee/Staff Introductions** – Before turning the meeting over to Chair Bolen, City Manager Marks introduced himself, Brad Stangeland and Alex Misa of Stangeland and Associates (professional landscape architects) who have been contracted to help facilitate a process to put together an improvement plan for Ralston Park.
- 2) **Ad Hoc Committee Resolution** – Marks reviewed the mission and duties of the committee as well as calling attention to Section 4 that states the Committee shall submit a draft improvement plan to the Council no later than June 2019 as stated in Resolution 2018-31.
- 3) **Call to Order** – Chair Bolen thanked everyone for their valuable time and for being a part of this committee and asked that everyone introduce themselves. All members were present.

**Nomination of Vice Chair** – Bolen asked for nominations of Vice Chair. Hearing none, Bolen appointed Ron Whittlatch.

- 4) **Ralston Park Presentation** – *by Stangeland & Associates, Inc. (Landscape Architecture & Design) (Complete PowerPoint Presentation can be found in Archives)*

Principal Brad Stangeland asked the committee to fill out and return the Ralston Park Site Analysis. He explained the role of his firm and the process to help the committee assess the existing park and come up with an overall improvement plan for the park.

*Alex Misar (Project Lead) outlined the process beginning with visioning, analysis, and development of the park. From the committee analysis, they will bring back a preliminary design for the committee to discuss and refine, followed by design revisions before reaching a committee consensus. With the pending deadline, they would like to meet weekly or every two weeks.*

*Marks added that while the project plan is due by June, there is a benefit to the proposed schedule in that if we identify potential projects for next year's budget we would have time to add them as our budget process begins in March.*

*Misar noted that in looking at the overall park system and amenities at each park, the Google ratings for each park indicates Ralston Park rated the lowest at 4.1 (114 reviews). Christmas was the main feature that this park is known for. They were surprised that the canal was not even mentioned as a feature of the park.*

*A brief discussion ensued of the Historical Context of the Park and canal, how the park fits into the community, and how people are using the park. Staff noted that this section of the canal is owned by the City of Albany.*

## 5) Project Discussion – Committee Comments

### Undesirable Aspects of Ralston Park:

- *Bad reputation for unsavory people hanging around*
- *Drug deals*
- *Blind spots for people to hangout in (gazebo, canal, gas station)*
- *Poor lighting throughout the park*
- *Low use as people don't feel safe*
- *The old Gas Station Building is an eyesore*
- *Bus stop location draws people to hangout around the gas station*

### Suggestions for Improvement:

- *Eliminate blind spots. People hide/camp behind the gas station and along the timbered side towards Maple Street.*
- *Additional lighting throughout – especially Tax Lot 1400, and along Grove and Oak Street next to the canal to help eliminate blind spots. [Staff cautioned that too much lighting may cause complaints from the neighboring residents]*
- *Create a more family-friendly environment and hold more family-friendly events.*
- *Incorporate safety into the design.*
- *Incorporate the canal into the design. An ADA assessable bridge or walking path over the canal to connect the two sides of the park. [Due to the historical context, Whitlatch noted that there are a lot of agencies that would need to be involved, and an archeologic study before a bridge could be constructed]*
- *Play Christmas and classical music throughout the park. Studies have shown this to be calming and can reduce bad behavior in urban settings.*
- *Add a splashpad or water feature. Items of movement (art pieces that are designed to inspire movement).*
- *Remove the old Gas Station Building.*
- *Relocate the Gazebo.*
- *A place to honor our veterans to gain more stakeholders (possibly a bronze statue).*
- *Consideration for replacing the current Christmas tree (it has some health issues). Should there be a new tree or a facility where annually a tree is brought in.*
- *Coliseum-style seating for events so the staff doesn't need to bring in bleachers. [Staff stated that elevation would have to be considered when drawing the plans.]*
- *Relocate the bus stop (possibly part of the space to the north could be cut out with a glass shelter).*
- *Provide bike rack amenities.*
- *Provide spots for food trucks for events with amenities so they don't have to use generators for power and water. Possibly a permanent place for them.*

- *Garbage cans and dog waste containers. [Staff stated that they all end up in the canal]*
- *Tie Lot 1400 into the park. Possibly dead-end a portion of Maple Street with a piece of the street becoming a walkway with pavers. Emergency bollards with improvements to Maple Street is another way to merge the northern parcel and open it up for Food Carts.*
- *Address ADA access for Gazebo, sidewalks and parking.*
- *Lighting Master Plan and location of our new Christmas Tree.*

Misar asked the committee members to define the end-product – define success.

Bolen stated that his goal is a community driven plan. He doesn't expect it to be wrapped up by June and developed by September, rather a multi-phase approach due to staffing and funding constraints. The end-product would be increased public use, beautification and additional civic recognition. Success would be to drive out the bad element and see families using the park.

Kennedy stated that most projects start out with a utopian vision until we look at the cost. Then we evaluate and see what we can afford, which will drive what we are going to do. Whitlatch agreed, however in a master plan setting you build the plan, cost it out and phase it based on those costs. Marks explained that it is important to capture a vision which supports our case when we seek grant funding. If it is not in the plan it can be a disadvantage.

Williams added that it is important to have the framework from the committee so that staff knows what is to be constructed. Due to the elevation issues, the initial phase would be to construct the bones and then use a phased approach for adding some of the elements. Defining success would be to have people feel safe and see the park being utilized.

Untiet defined success by improved accessibility and use. She'd like to lean strongly on community engagement and not just based on what the committee would like to see. Personally, she wants to improve health and wellness and movement for everyone – a place that people want to go.

To sum up, Stangeland stated that the goal is that you want a master plan and an action plan which is what we intend to do.

6) **Next Meeting** – February 28 (Thursday), from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

7) **Public Comments**

Alysia Rodgers, Economic Development Catalyst, noted that when she was the Downtown Association Manager her office was in the old gas station building at Ralston Park. She suggested the following improvements:

- An improved sound system for the community events and concerts.
- A community bulletin board posting upcoming events with a historic nod.
- Moving Art
- Agrees that the bus stop should not be there but with the frequent usage another option would be necessary.

8) **Adjournment** – Bolen Adjourned the meeting at 4:45 p.m.