



**Ralston Park Improvement Plan  
Ad Hoc Committee Meeting  
“DRAFT” MINUTES – March 7, 2019**

- 1) **Call to Order** – Chair Bolen called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. at the Santiam Travel Station with member Bowser absent.
- 2) **Approval of Minutes:** The February 28, 2019 minutes were approved as presented.
- 3) **Ralston Park Preliminary Conceptual Design** – *by Stangeland & Associates, Inc. [Complete PowerPoint Presentation can be found in Archives]*

Consultant Brad Stangeland distributed photos depicting different lighting, bridge, splash pad and art designs and asked the committee to mark those they like, those they do not like, and those they feel fall somewhere in between. Consultant Alex Misar provided a recap of the last meeting.

**Primary Goals:**

- a. Unify the park through a holistic design
- b. Eliminate blind spots in the park by removing and/or moving buildings
- c. Create new spaces and provide elements that facilitate activities
- d. Strengthen the park's connection to its surrounding context
- e. Design a revitalized space that encourages greater use

Based on committee input, these design elements were included:

Splash Pad/Playing Fountain – The consensus was that it should be a multi-use space and that it be in-ground.

Bridge – This primary feature was discussed as being iconic. Misar asked for input on what this means as it relates to community or history. Marks stated that he would like to see a bridge with character and not one that is so utilitarian. There was discussion about preventative encampment measures. Whitlatch said that a wider bridge does not necessarily provide more opportunity for those measures. Marks pointed out that night lighting will help. Williams stated that the bridge should also discourage climbing.

Bolen stated that he likes the idea of a low-slung bridge so that different angles can be incorporated. It should not be so high that it obstructs the view or provide hiding spaces. Since wood is high maintenance, it would be best to use material that is easy to maintain. It would also be nice to allow for group photos. The iconic draw could be spring/fall colors in the backdrop and foreground.

Kennedy commented that he likes the utilitarian style because the wideness of the bridge could be an extension of the park; benches could be placed along the sides. Marks agreed that a wide low-slung truss bridge could be interesting.

Cowart stated that the design could be simple but iconic in that it would draw people to use it. The truss could be used as a design element.

Untiet shared that she likes the idea of something iconic but feels that it may be more appropriate as a welcome to the city. She also likes wider and lower bridges and agrees that it would be nice to have seating and to be able to take photos. When speaking about discouraging loitering, she wondered whether it would be better to have more law enforcement presence instead of excluding beautiful design elements. Williams disagreed; the design should not encourage inappropriate use since the police force is busy enough. Marks stated that he feels this issue can be solved by good design.

Misar pointed out that much of the bridge design is going to be predicated on the rest of the park's design but this discussion offers good ideas as to what the bridge should look.

River Outlook/Access – The consensus was to encourage people to come close to the water but discourage them to get in.

Regarding ownership/easement of the canal, Kennedy stated that his research back to the 1860's showed that this is a right-of-way easement, so we may have more rights than if it was owned by Albany. Whitlatch said that since the canal is a historic resource, any change would have to go through historic preservation. It will take time, but it should be pretty seamless as long as abutments are kept outside the right-of-way easement/real property line.

Flag Plaza or Memorial Plaza – There are many other ways to celebrate other than flags – statues, stonework, walls or engravings.

Amphitheater-Style Seating – This could be integrated into some of the existing topography and could be tied to a performance space. If just a seating area, existing grades can be looked at to see whether this could go around the fountain/splash pad.

Other design elements include: lighting, trash/recycling receptacles, ADA accessible pathways, restrooms, grassy areas, performance space and interactive artwork/activities/kinetic art.

4) **Conceptual Design Comments** – The committee provided the following feedback after Misar's description of four conceptual schemes:

Scheme 1:

Williams asked whether all schemes have sloped canal banks. Misar answered that the other schemes have a partial vertical wall along the canal.

Bolen stated that he likes the splash pad on Maple Street, especially if it is blocked off, because of the Grove/Oak Street traffic. He and Marks agreed that it should be near the restrooms. Misar stated that the splash pad was moved to the northeast corner because of comments made at the last meeting. Untiet stated that she initially was also concerned about safety but feels better after viewing the location of the food carts in the 3D model. This diagram is her least favorite because of park division.

Scheme 2:

Bolen likes that the natural path that leads to somewhere, but he does not like the choke point.

Williams remarked that he likes this splash pad design the most because it would provide more usable park space. The sunken splash pad would also help to keep kids safe and the amphitheater would provide seating. There may be some vision triangle concerns for that intersection but he likes the idea of trees providing shade.

The Committee was not opposed to removing the fir tree and plant bed because they obstruct the view.

### Scheme 3:

Untiet stated that she likes the cohesiveness of Schemes 2 and 3 and likes the greenery across Maple Street (thumb section).

Marks commented that he does not like the restrooms in this scheme. He added that there would be more payback to moving the restrooms as compared to moving the gazebo.

### Scheme 4:

Williams stated that he likes the Christmas tree in the thumb section and the southwest corner entrances of Schemes 3 and 4.

Bolen shared that he prefers Scheme 4's thumb section because it is more open. Overall, he likes Scheme 2 with Scheme 4's thumb section and the road closure. He also likes the fanout on the southwest corner of Schemes 1, 3 and 4.

Marks remarked that he likes the idea of keeping the gazebo where it is because of the cost of the other improvements. Regarding accessibility, Misar stated that he believes it would be possible to bring a ramp around the gazebo. Stangeland thought that the Rose Garden Club could use some of the beds as part of the gazebo theme.

Williams mentioned that utility access would be more challenging with bathrooms on the southeast corner but the elevation can be looked at. He suggested the equipment facility and bathroom be housed in one building.

Cowart said that he likes the location of 4's stage area for big events. Misar confirmed that there is enough grade to make the stage ADA accessible. There was a brief discussion about the possibility of using a removable fabric canopy. Williams shared that there has not really been a problem with people sleeping in shelters without walls.

Marks said that he likes the overlook on Scheme 4 as a veterans or first responders memorial. He also likes the idea of closing Maple Street and food trucks on the southeast side. Stangeland stated that the curb is pushed back with a permanent spot for parking and temporary food trucks. There was a brief discussion about mobile vendor use. Bolen commented that he likes the idea of food trucks located near the splash pad.

The Committee agreed that a bridge is essential to make the most use of park space. They also like the openness and being able to see throughout the park.

Stangeland stated that path widths vary but are usually about eight feet. Those near the canal will likely be wider.

Misar stated that the biggest problem is the light and telephone pole. There are also a number of guyed wires that are not shown. More analysis has to be done to see exactly how they fit in; some structures may have to fit around them. They are also working on the assumption that the bus stop will be moved, but space could likely be allocated if necessary. Marks shared that Senior Services Director Oliver does not feel that it is necessary that the bus stop be located at the park, as long as it is in the general vicinity.

The consensus of the Committee was to go with elements of Schemes 2 and 4, including:

- the entry way and structure from Scheme 4 into the Scheme 2 design that shows the splash pad/amphitheater on the other side of the park
- the bridge from Scheme 2
- the thumb section of Scheme 4 with the road closure and tree
- they will look at a combined restroom/mechanical building near the splash pad

Stangeland stated that they will come back with a hybrid of the two schemes in a more accurate 3D depiction with lighting. This will not include a landscape or planting design but the model will show plantings. After comments, they will wrap up the master plan with notations of key elements, big moves, what is essential, and possibly what would happen as the first step.

Bolen asked the consultants to estimate how much of the park will remain the same. Misar stated that a number of trees will stay; all pathways will be removed and all grades will be reworked. It is safe to say that it will be a clean slate for the rest of the foliage.

In response to Kennedy's question, Stangeland stated that pricing would take place after the master plan is created but he believes they would be able to clearly depict what would need to be priced at that point.

- 5) **Next Meeting** – April 4 from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.
- 6) **Public Comments** – None
- 7) **Adjournment** – Bolen adjourned the meeting at 4:40 p.m.