



PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

December 2, 2025 at 5:30 PM

Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar

<https://juneau.zoom.us/j/94184441385> Or 1-669-444-9171 | Webinar ID: 941 8444 1385

A. CALL TO ORDER

PRAC Chair Ryan O'Shaughnessy called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Ryan O'Shaughnessy, Susan Crandall, Jennifer Gross, Emma Van Nes, Ren Scott, Danika Swanson, & Kaasáank' Andrew Williams

Absent: Josh Anderson, Paulette Schirmer

Staff Present: Lauren Verrelli, Parks & Recreation Acting Director; Dan Bleidorn, CBJ Lands and Resources Manager; & Annie Carroll, Parks & Recreation Staff Liaison

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

1. December 2 Agenda Overview

MOTION by Ms. Scott to approve the agenda and ask for unanimous consent. *Seeing no objections, the agenda was approved.*

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2. Minutes from November 4, 2025

MOTION by Ms. Scott to approve the minutes from November 4, 2025, and ask for unanimous consent. *No objections were heard, and the minutes were approved.*

E. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS - NONE

F. AGENDA TOPICS

3. Trail Mix Update – Presented by M. Tabacek

Meghan Tabacek, Director of Trail Mix, presented an overview of the organization's work during the 2025 season. She had briefed the body earlier in the year on planned projects and was returning to report on completed work. Trail Mix completed work at multiple locations, including Horse Tram Trail, Fish Creek, Tee Harbor, Switzer Creek, the 35 Mile Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Park, Jumbo Reroute, Auke Lake, and Eagle Valley Center. Work included new trail construction and reroutes; trail graveling, turnpiking, and tread repair; drainage improvements such as culverts, ditches, and water mitigation; and bridge and structure work, including crib walls, ramps, railings, and bridge stabilization or installation. Crews conducted extensive brushing to maintain trail corridors and prevent overgrowth and improved accessibility through ramps and smoother trail surfaces. She

highlighted specialized projects such as bike-specific trail construction at Under Thunder, ORV park development, climbing area access improvements, and long-term infrastructure restoration, including completion of the Treadwell Ditch.

In addition to professional crew work, Trail Mix coordinated large-scale volunteer and youth employment efforts, providing workforce development, routine maintenance, and rapid response to trail damage reports. During the 2025 season, they worked on 16 trails with volunteers, hosted 27 open-call events, and reached 5,000 volunteer hours.

Ms. Tabacek shared that Trail Mix worked on 18 trails using under \$400,000 in CBJ funding, achieving cost efficiency through local material sourcing, volunteer labor, and grant funding. Trail Mix actively partners with the city to secure grants, including Federal Lands Access Program and Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funding.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy thanked Ms. Tabacek for her work and shared a personal connection to Trail Mix as a former seasonal trail worker who remained in Juneau. He asked whether Trail Mix funding, beyond seasonal staffing, largely stays within the local economy. Ms. Tabacek explained that Trail Mix prioritized sourcing materials and services from local businesses whenever possible and worked with local consultants, such as Corvus Designs. She noted that Trail Mix supported four year-round employees, which improved public communication, trail education, and long-term planning, resulting in higher-quality trails being built more efficiently and at lower cost. Year-round trail coordinators allowed Trail Mix to respond quickly to damage reports, such as downed trees, and to maintain trails consistently in partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department.

Ms. Van Nes asked how Trail Mix determined which trails to prioritize each summer. Ms. Tabacek described a collaborative prioritization process that began with contractual obligations. Trail Mix also gathered community input, damage reports, and feedback throughout the year. Beginning in late fall and winter, Trail Mix met with agency partners to review concerns, reported issues, and proposed projects. Final priorities were determined collaboratively, focusing on projects that could have the greatest impact within available time and resources while addressing community needs.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy asked how the Christopher Trail and its bridge at Cope Park fit into Trail Mix's priorities. Ms. Tabacek stated that Trail Mix is very interested in repairing Christopher Trail, but cannot proceed until the bridge is installed. The bridge design and abutments exceed Trail Mix's construction capacity and require additional engineering. They are awaiting finalized designs and hope that bridge installation can occur in the upcoming season, after which Trail Mix will be able to complete trail work using equipment access across the bridge.

Ms. Gross asked how recent federal funding reductions affected Trail Mix's season and how the DuPont Bridge project fit into overall priorities. Ms. Tabacek explained that federal cuts required Trail Mix to re-plan the entire season after initial plans were completed. The loss of two Forest Service crews could have been disruptive; however, CBJ provided sufficient city trail work to keep all hired staff employed. As a result, they completed more city trail work than in a typical season. She noted that Forest Service agreements are expected to resume next season, which might shift the balance of work. She also emphasized Trail Mix's role in securing grant funding in partnership with the city. Many projects were supported not only through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) but also through external grants, including the Mount Jumbo project and the 35 Mile ORV Park.

Ms. Gross asked what would happen to the former Mount Jumbo trailhead and whether materials from that area would be reused, noting speculation about future development near 6th Street. Ms. Tabacek stated that the official Mount Jumbo access is now from Savikko Park or St. Ann's, following the Glory Hole route. Several informal social trails from 5th and 6th Streets connect to the new trail, and Trail Mix is working with nearby residents to clarify land ownership, community comfort levels, and future management. The former access route between two residences will no longer be maintained. However, the trail will not be formally closed, and users will not be prohibited from accessing it.

With no further questions, Mr. O'Shaughnessy thanked Ms. Tabacek and Trail Mix for their work and emphasized the importance of trails and outdoor access to the Juneau community. Ms. Tabacek thanked the group for the opportunity to present.

4. Holm Driveway and Utility Easement Application – Presented by D. Bleidorn

Dan Bleidorn, City and Borough of Juneau Lands and Resources Manager, introduced himself and explained that the committee had received information in their packet regarding a citizen request to extend an existing driveway and utility easement across City property to provide access to a private lot. Mr. Bleidorn stated that he was available to answer any questions from the PRAC.

Ms. Scott asked about fire apparatus access requirements. She noted that the original easement drawing showed a hammerhead turnaround, which did not appear in the new proposal, and asked whether the proposal met fire access codes or would do so once constructed. Mr. Bleidorn responded that for the applicant to complete their proposed development, they will be required to go through the building permit process. As part of that process, Capital City Fire and Rescue and the Fire Marshal will be involved, and fire access requirements will be reviewed and addressed.

Ms. Scott followed up, asking whether approval of the easement would provide sufficient space if a turnaround were ultimately required, or whether it would be possible for the Fire Department to review the proposal earlier in the process. Mr. Bleidorn replied that final parameters, including square footage and layout, would be determined during the permitting process, and the Fire Marshal will be involved at that stage. He explained that the next likely step for the applicant would be to meet with the Planning Department for a pre-application meeting to ensure that the proposal is workable. He added that there was also an opportunity for the property owner to use portions of their private property to create a fire apparatus turnaround if needed, and emphasized that ensuring adequate access is a priority for the Fire Marshal.

Ms. Gross asked for clarification regarding the fair market value provision referenced in the easement materials. She stated that while she was familiar with easements generally, she was unclear on how payment worked if the easement granted use rather than ownership. Mr. Bleidorn responded that the applicant will not be purchasing the property outright from the City. Instead, the City will be granting a non-exclusive easement, meaning the City retains ownership and the right to access the property. He explained that if the City were to develop the property in the future, the easement could remain in place. However, if the property were later developed to provide road frontage to the applicant's lot, the easement language allowed for the easement to be vacated once access was provided via a city right-of-way. He also noted that while the City requests that vehicular access be restricted to prevent illegal dumping, pedestrian access to City property can not be prohibited.

Ms. Scott asked why the easement was proposed across City property rather than private property, and whether topography constraints were a factor. Mr. Bleidorn responded that topography was the primary issue. He explained that a significant rock outcropping located on City property prevented the applicant from using the existing easement stub that connected to their lot. He added that the affected lots historically lacked road frontage before the mid-2000s and were originally accessible only by boat due to the absence of land access rights across City property. He added that he had spoken with the Engineering Department regarding the rock outcropping, and Engineering staff confirmed that current access conditions are impractical and the existing configuration does not provide reasonable access. He noted that this consultation with Engineering was one of his first steps after receiving the application.

Motion by Ms. Van Nes for the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the Assembly approve granting the proposed easement extension as requested and ask for unanimous consent. *Seeing no objections, the motion passed.*

Mr. Bleidorn thanked the committee for their time and said he is available to answer any future questions regarding land issues. He also thanked Ms. Tabacek for her earlier presentation and stated his appreciation for hearing about Trail Mix's work.

5. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) – FY2027-32 – Presented by M. Wheeler & L. Verrelli

Mr. Wheeler explained that the Parks and Recreation Department submits an annual list of capital improvement requests as part of the City's budget process. He stated that CIP requests must be submitted to Engineering and Public Works by December 15, after which they undergo interdepartmental review before final approval by the Assembly. The packet provided proposed requests for FY27, as well as projects that were approved for FY26. He explained that departments typically request more funding than is awarded and that total available CIP funding remains uncertain at this stage, particularly due to the potential impact of ballot propositions. He emphasized that the list presented is an early step in the process and that detailed project descriptions were also included in the packet.

Ms. Gross expressed concern that the Jackie Renninger Park project had shifted from FY27 to FY28 and asked whether the project could be phased rather than requesting a large allocation in a single year. Mr. Wheeler responded that Jackie Renninger Park is a large, complex project. He explained that some funds were already set aside and that the department had recently received the 35% design with updated cost estimates. He stated that staff would like to return to a future PRAC meeting with engineers and consultants to provide a more detailed update. Ms. Verrelli clarified that the project was originally intended to be placed on the ballot in 2025, but it has been pushed to 2026, and they intend for it to be funded through a combination of CIP and bond funding. She emphasized that Jackie Renninger Park remains a high priority and that its placement early in the CIP forecast reflects that priority. She also clarified that the Adair Kennedy courts line item reflects plans to resurface those courts after Jackie Renninger Park improvements are completed, following the upcoming pickleball and tennis resurfacing.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy asked about the increase in funding for security cameras at the Zach Gordon Youth Center compared to the Diamond Park Aquatic Center. Ms. Verrelli explained that updated cost estimates were developed in coordination with Engineering and based on recent experience

installing cameras at City facilities such as Zach Gordon, which required more cameras, resulting in higher costs.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy asked about the anticipated timeline for the 35 Mile ORV Park and when the project might transition from construction to maintenance. Ms. Verrelli responded that the ORV Park is a long-term project progressing incrementally, supported by volunteer labor, Trail Mix assistance, and RTP grant funding. A recent contract had been signed to harden portions of trail constructed during the previous summer, with work expected to begin in early spring. Ms. Tabacek added that the ORV Park encompasses approximately 500 acres and that current efforts are focused on completing a beginner loop within the next two years, by the end of FY28. She explained that the site requires greater investment than standard trails due to muddy conditions, wider trail design, and heavier use. She mentioned that while the park is not fully open, volunteers with the Juneau Off-Road Association (JORA) are testing trail sections.

Ms. Gross asked what types of vehicles would be permitted and how emergency responses would be addressed. Ms. Tabacek stated that the park is intended for off-road vehicles such as Jeeps, trucks, ATVs, and dirt bikes, and that standard passenger vehicles would not be appropriate. Regarding safety, she shared that some trails will be one-way to reduce conflicts and explained that the park will eventually be managed similarly to the Hank Harmon Rifle Range, including an on-site host during the summer season, though emergency response planning is still under development.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy asked whether the department had sufficient capacity to complete all FY26 CIP projects. Ms. Verrelli responded that many FY26 projects involve routine maintenance, such as playground, trail, and field improvements. Larger projects, such as the Diamond Park Sports Field, would require engineering design, and are included in the FY27 forecast to begin that process. She specified that once CIP funds are appropriated, they remain available over time, and projects move through the engineering and construction pipeline as capacity allows.

Ms. Crandall asked about the increase in paving and pavement repair requests from 1.3 million in FY26 to \$2 million requested for FY27. Ms. Verrelli noted that the department requested 1.3 million in FY26 and received 200,000, and that covered only a small portion of paving needs. She continues explaining that major work is required at Melvin Park, Savikko Park, Twin Lakes, and Cope Park. She stated that paving costs are substantial, necessitating the larger request.

Ms. Van Nes asked how public requests, such as lighting at Cope Park, are incorporated into the CIP process. Ms. Verrelli responded that public requests are evaluated and may be added to future CIP lists. He noted that lighting projects can be costly, citing the recent quote received for lighting at Adair Kennedy totaling 1.2 million dollars. She explained that such requests are balanced against other infrastructure priorities. She added that similar requests in the past have resulted in completed projects over time.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy emphasized the importance of the CIP process as a way to incorporate public input and advocate for Parks & Rec priorities during Assembly review. He pointed out challenges with timing and suggested that the committee consider reviewing CIP priorities earlier in the year to better prepare for the December submission deadline.

Motion by Ms. Van Nes for the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the Assembly approve \$4,670,000 for the FY2027 Parks & Recreation Capital Improvement Program, as presented, and ask for unanimous consent. *Seeing no objections, the motion passed.*

G. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Wheeler noted that a written staff report outlining recent departmental activities was included in the meeting packet. He addressed Mr. O’Shaughnessy’s earlier question regarding the Cope Park bridge project, explaining that staff are currently working with the Engineering Department on the design of the bridge abutments. He stated that he had visited the site with Parks & Landscape Supervisor Colby Shibler and Alan Steffert from Engineering, and that the next steps include continued coordination with Engineering and consultation with a contractor to develop a construction plan. He mentioned that while the bridge structure exists, it will need to be deconstructed and reconstructed for installation, which staff believe is feasible. He expressed hope that the project could move forward next summer.

H. COMMITTEE MEMBER / LIAISON COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. **Ƙaasáank’** shared Lingít words related to weather and the season. He explained that **“dleit”** means snow and that **“daak wusitán”** refers to precipitation falling from the sky. He shared the phrase **“Dleit daak wusitán”** meaning *“it is snowing,”* noting that the phrase was timely given the current weather conditions.

Mr. **O’Shaughnessy** announced that the next PRAC meeting will be held on January 6, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. and noted that future meetings will begin with a land acknowledgment, following the Assembly’s meeting format.

I. NEXT MEETING DATE - JANUARY 6, 2026

J. ADJOURNMENT With no further business to discuss, the committee adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Annie Carroll on 01/30/2026, approved at the 2/3/26 meeting.