

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Faye Stewart, Public Works & Development Director

SUBJECT: SOUTH LANE PARKS & RECREATION DISTRICT
FORMATION STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: December 6, 2023

Background

A group of local residents led by Samantha Duncan, has established a steering committee to explore the formation of the South Lane Park & Recreation District. Members of the steering committee include representatives from South Lane School District, South Valley Athletics, City Councilors Ervin and Merryday, Senior Center, and other recreational minded residents in South Lane County. Darby Valley and Tiffanie Williams (Chamber of Commerce President) are here this evening to present the work the steering committee has completed to date and possible next steps to create a South Lane Parks and Recreation District.

The steering committee received a grant to employ Bob Keefer, Senior Consultant with Special Districts Association of Oregon, to guide the feasibility process and determine the viability of creating a recreation district.

Recommendation

This agenda item is intended to be informational only with a possible request to City Council at a future meeting in January 2024.

Cost

No cost

Mr. Roberts for:
David Clyne, Interim City Manager

Faye Stewart
Faye Stewart, Public Works &
Development Director

PROPOSAL

TO: Cottage Grove City Council
FROM: South Lane Parks & Recreation District Formation Steering Committee
RE: Forming a Parks & Recreation District
DATE: 12/1/2023

To improve the health and well-being of our South Lane community, we seek the Cottage Grove City Council's partnership and approval to place a proposal on the Nov. 5, 2024 general election ballot asking voters to form a South Lane County Parks & Recreation District.

The South Lane Parks & Recreation District — if approved by voters — will be our community's go-to hub for recreation, enrichment, and social programs. The District will consolidate and grow South Lane's patchwork of recreational offerings and provide a range of safe, affordable, and accessible fitness and wellness programs, after-school activities, sports leagues, and enrichment classes for area residents of all ages and abilities.

The City of Cottage Grove does not have a dedicated parks and recreation department. Responsibility for current parks-and-rec activities and facilities are scattered among staff in various city, county, and school district departments, as well as in other local public or not-for-profit agencies which rely on volunteer support and inconsistent funding. This fragmentation of programs and services is inadequate to meet community needs and ensure the resources required to maintain and manage facilities.

Parks and recreation districts offer communities many economic, health, and other benefits. These include:

- Improving people's physical, mental, and social well-being
- Reducing crime and juvenile delinquency
- Generating employment opportunities (including a first job for many youth)
- Attracting local and out-of-area visitors
- Increasing property values

Nearby, Willamalane Park & Recreation District in Springfield, North Douglas County in Drain, and River Road Park and Recreation District in Eugene are examples of successful voter-approved special purpose districts that offer safe, affordable, and accessible programs and services that benefit hundreds of thousands of residents every year.

Parks and recreation districts are a win-win for communities and local governments. In South Lane's case, in addition to the health and wellness and other benefits for residents, the proposed District will free up City staff and budget to focus on other priorities. A few examples include:

- The City of Cottage Grove's annual allocation of \$75,000 in support of South Lane School District's Daugherty Aquatic Center operations would be assumed by the new District.
- The City currently provides office space and \$15,000 annually to South Valley Athletics to support youth programming. The City would be relieved of this commitment by the new District.

- The new District would have the capacity to manage and provide programming in existing City-run spaces including the Community Center, Armory, and Senior Center as well as oversee and coordinate park reservations for special events, concerts, picnics/parties, and vendors.
- Because the new District will have dedicated personnel for parks and facility maintenance, there is opportunity to improve the condition of parks and trails throughout the area.
- The City and District will be able to enhance parks and recreation services and help meet several priorities in the 2037 Community Vision and the 2003 Water to Woods Master Parks Plan, as well as to possibly update the City's parks master plan that was approved 20 years ago.

The proposed South Lane Parks & Recreation District will use the South Lane School District's geographical boundaries. It seeks to raise an annual operating budget of about \$2 million, the bulk of which will provide competitive wages and benefits for about 25 full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees. The newly created jobs will be sustainable and will help our local economy long-term. The estimated property tax to support a local parks and recreation district ranges from 60 cents to 90 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. The average cost for a typical homeowner in Cottage Grove would range from \$102 to \$153 annually.

Our parks and recreation steering committee — comprised of representatives from the City of Cottage Grove, Lane County, and South Lane School District as well as Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce, South Valley Athletics, Be Your Best, and other community organizations — is asking the City Council at this time to:

1. Approve a resolution in support of forming a special purpose Parks & Recreation District within the boundary of the City as required under ORS 198, and to be placed on the Nov. 5, 2024 ballot.
2. Provide legal assistance over the next year to assure that the proposed District is legally formed under Oregon State Law.
3. Work with all stakeholders and the broader community to develop detailed operational plans for the District and address questions from the community and taxpayers regarding specifics of how the District would function and the benefits it would bring.

Our beautiful setting in the temperate Southern Willamette Valley is a perfect location for a new South Lane Parks & Recreation District. Thank you for your consideration of this ground-breaking opportunity to support individual health and wellness and community vibrancy.
