

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

In the Matter of Accepting)
the Columbia County Parks)
Strategic Plan) Resolution No. 27-2002

WHEREAS, over the years Columbia County has acquired and developed County parks to serve the citizens of and visitors to the County; and

WHEREAS, historically, funding from a wide variety of sources was available to fund the maintenance of such parks and administration of the County Forest, Parks and Recreation Department; and

WHEREAS, the County is facing a budget crisis which has forced extreme cuts in the County Forest, Parks and Recreation budget; and

WHEREAS, it is not likely that additional funds will be available for the County Forest, Parks and Recreation budget in the near future; and

WHEREAS, the Columbia County Parks Advisory Committee has analyzed several options for continuing County Parks operations on its limited budget, and has proposed 14 strategies for Board acceptance;

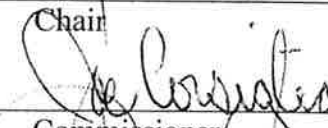
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED as follows:


1. The Board of County Commissioners accepts the Columbia County Parks System's "The Case For Change" which is attached hereto as Attachment 1, as a starting point for developing a sustainable parks system.
2. The Board of County Commissioners encourages the Columbia County Forest, Parks and Recreation Department as well as its Advisory Committee to pursue one or more of the 14 strategies which have been suggested.

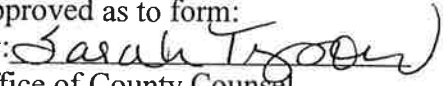
DATED this 15th day of May, 2002

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

By:  _____
Chair

By:  _____
Commissioner

By:  _____
Commissioner

Approved as to form:
By:  _____
Office of County Counsel

**COLUMBIA COUNTY PARKS SYSTEM:
THE CASE FOR CHANGE
April 10, 2002**

THE HISTORY:

Over the years, Columbia County has been able to acquire and develop parks to serve the citizens of the County and able to properly maintain them. Historically, funding from a wide variety of sources was available and the County had an adequately funded and staffed Parks Department. As a result, the County was able to create a very viable parks and recreation system.

THE CURRENT SITUATION:

Columbia County is facing a financial crisis. That crisis presents the County with an opportunity to create innovative and effective strategies to help develop, maintain and operate the County Parks System. The Parks System is currently receiving revenues from grants, donations and users. These are the only funds available for the maintenance and operation of the County Parks System. Currently there are no general fund County dollars going to the Parks System and the Parks Department does pay the County for administrative support services. And, although the County does provide some funding for the Fairgrounds, similar issues as are being faced by the Parks System, are also being experienced by the Fairgrounds.

There is a growing concern in the County for the current situation and the County's ability to properly develop and maintain the Parks System. Much time is spent dealing with small issues and there is a sense that now is the time to take bold and aggressive steps to ensure the ongoing

availability of County-wide Parks and Fairgrounds services. There is some interest now within the County to assist through a concerted effort. Citizens, special interests, cities and others have openly and willingly indicated a desire to work together with the County to help solve this problem, both with Parks and the Fairgrounds as well.

There is a need for improvements to the County Parks System, and those improvements must come from innovative approaches, including new partnerships and concepts. These new approaches must include all of the County-wide stakeholders and must build community support in order to be successful. The County Parks System, despite all of the extra effort of the County Road Department and others, is beginning to deteriorate. It is out of this concern for maintaining, and indeed improving the system, that this effort was initiated by the County Parks Advisory Commission.

Recent tax proposals to raise funds for both Parks and Fair have been failures. At this time, there is not sufficient community support for either the Parks or the Fairgrounds. Needed is the kind of committed effort that produced the new jail, while involving everyone in the County in the solution.

Since 1995, the Parks staff compliment has been reduced from 4 to 1 FTE, without a related decrease in the amount of work. During this same time period, necessary changes in the status and method of handling the park caretakers, has added to the effort and workload.

Staff is doing an outstanding job under the circumstances and looking for help and guidance. The County Parks Advisory Commission is looking for direction, and the County

Commissioners are looking for answers and recommendations to assist them in dealing with the entire issue.

The County is growing, with many more people moving into the County over the next ten years. That growth, although steady, is projected to continue. Columbia County and the cities in the county represent the style of living desired by many. As such, the County will continue to attract new residents, new employers and will be faced with many new problems to solve. The timing is perfect for a comprehensive approach to the Parks and Fairgrounds issues. It makes sense to do it now.

In the process carried out by the County Parks Advisory Commission, much education, insight, energy and commitment developed. There is now a higher level of understanding of the issues and how the County, Fair and cities all fit and can work together.

There is great potential, although a very focused and energetic effort will be needed for us all to solve this problem. We can all be successful if we work together, open ourselves to new and different ways of providing Parks services and if we engage the entire community in the process. And, because we all recognize that the Parks System will never be self-supporting, we have all committed ourselves to finding new and different ways to deliver Parks services.

**SOME STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND OPTIONS:
(NOT IN ANY RANKED ORDER)**

In completing this strategic planning effort, the County Parks Advisory Commission and its sub-committee put everything on the table. Every possible idea, all the way from getting out of the parks business to full funding was

discussed. It is the feeling of all involved in this process, that the County Parks System and the Fairgrounds are resources to be retained and enhanced and they are important to the well-being of all citizens and our own sense of community and livability.

THE STRATEGIES:

Here are the various strategies that have been discussed and deemed to be most viable. These strategies are not listed in any priority order and they may stand alone or be linked with other strategies to be most effective.

- 1. Develop partners to take on some of the opportunities. Look within cities, school districts, community groups, state and federal agencies for help. Seek the help of the County Fair, horse enthusiasts, special interests, Port, youth and adult sport groups and others.**

HOW: Meet with prospective partners, discuss needs and opportunities and create a common understanding about working together for the benefit of all involved. Use Inter-Governmental Agreements (IGA's) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU's) to document relationships and responsibilities.

- 2. Create a positive and effective partnership/relationship with the County Fair.**

HOW: Encourage the County Commissioners to call a meeting of the two Boards.

- 3. Associate the County Parks System in with other economic development partners and make Parks one of**

those local amenities that will enhance the local economy. Generate additional funding for Fair and Park facilities.

HOW: Have the County Parks Advisory Commission meet with the Economic Development group, Chambers of Commerce, business interests and others to see what aspects of the parks system are best related to the economic development efforts, then look at how they might be funded from economic development funds as is done in other areas.

- 4. Secure funding and other resources for the development of a new Parks and Fair Strategic Plan that will get the County through the next ten years. Local donations work best, but grants can also assist.**

HOW: Local donations work best, but grants can also help with this effort. Meet with potential donors and negotiate a donation that would achieve the plan. Might do this in cooperation with State University's. The U of O, OSU and PSU have programs that can assist while providing practical experience for college students.

- 5. Conduct a series of county-wide community meetings (or other meetings as determined by the Parks Advisory Commission and the County Commissioners) to educate the public about the County Parks System and find out what the citizens want. Engage everyone in the county and make sure that a cross section of both interests and geographical locations are involved.**

HOW: For the Parks Advisory Commission to work with all partners and schedule and hold open discussion forums in all areas of the county seeking public input on

how to solve the problem or what ideas are acceptable to the citizens or both.

- 6. Explore the potential of shared responsibility for maintenance and operation responsibility with appropriate community groups such as soccer, senior citizens, sports groups, other entities, non-profit groups and others.**

- 7. Focus the County's efforts on 3 key major parks and explore the potential for making Camp Wilkerson, Big Eddy and Scaponia, the "Jewels" of the system.**

HOW: Utilize a forest management professional to assess timber value and develop a forest management plan to assist financially in supporting the key park areas.

Let the citizen engagement process help to identify areas to be considered "jewels".

- 8. Market the County Parks throughout the Northwest and other places, as well as within the County to bring in people who will pay for and use the parks. Include the County Fair in all marketing efforts.**

HOW: Work with the Fair to develop a common brochure, solicit donations from local businesses, cities, hotels, motels, tourism grants and others to pay for the marketing.

- 9. Implement a county-wide Systems Development Charge to develop Parks and the Fairgrounds.**

HOW: Study the concept in the Transportation Growth Management (TGM) study process. Focus on areas most impacted by new growth.

- 10. Work with hotel/motel and B&B interests and research the potential for a lodging tax to assist with facilities and marketing.**

HOW: Establish a county-wide motel or transient room tax with funds to be shared with County Parks, Fair and local cities. Partner this effort with the cities to determine the opportunity.

- 11. Work with user groups and stakeholders to research ways to increase revenues to help pay for County park operations.**

HOW: Meet with user groups to determine the opportunity for increasing user fees. Share budget issues with them.

- 12. Develop an adequate level of funding for the County Parks System.**

HOW: Create energy and enthusiasm to pass a county-wide levy. Work through the grass roots to build support much as was done with the jail issue.

- 13. Create site specific management plans for each park the County retains and continues to maintain.**

HOW: Work with the community and professionals to develop plans for each area that would specifically detail cost, funding, level of care, etc.

- 14. Recognize the potential for Prescott Beach and public access to the riverfront property. The Parks Advisory Commission proposes promoting an interest in the transfer to State or County ownership.**