



City of Portland Historic Landmarks Commission

Briefing

SUMMARY MEMO

Date: March 27, 2023
To: Brett Horner, Portland Parks & Recreation
From: Hillary Adam, Design / Historic Review
hillary.adam@portlandoregon.gov, 503-823-8953
Re: Briefing on Lighting in Historic Parks
Summary of March 13, 2023 Landmarks Commission Briefing

Thank you for taking advantage of the opportunity to hold a preliminary briefing with the Landmarks Commission regarding your project. I hope you find it informative and valuable as you continue with your project development. Attached is a brief summary of the comments provided by the Landmarks Commission at the March 13, 2023 hearing. This summary was generated from notes taken at the public meeting and a subsequent review of the public meeting recordings. To review those recordings, please visit: <https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/Record/15910294/>.

These Landmarks Commission comments are intended to guide you in further design exploration of your project. These comments may also inform City staff when giving guidance over the course of future related land use reviews. It should be understood that these comments address the project as presented on March 13, 2023. As the project design evolves, the comments, too, may evolve or may no longer be pertinent.

Preliminary briefings are not intended to substitute for other Code-required land use or legislative procedures.

Please continue to coordinate with me, Hillary Adam, as necessary as you prepare your formal land use application.

Encl:
Summary Memo

Cc: Landmarks Commission

This memo summarizes **Landmarks Commission** design direction provided on March 13, 2023.

Commissioners in attendance on March 13, 2023 include: Smith, Minor, Roman, Foty, Moretti

Executive Summary:

- Commissioners suggested that repair is preferable to replacement. Commissioners noted a desire to better understand the structural issues and expressed a desire to see the engineer's report when it is released, adding that this information should be in the public record. Commissioners noted that the issue seems to primarily be the anchoring system rather than the concrete poles and noted that this should be further explored so that repair could be further explored as an option. Commissioners expressed a desire for coherency within each park with regard to each park's lighting scheme.

Comments include:

- Commissioners asked for clarification if the flaw in the light poles is with the anchors at the base of the poles or with the poles themselves. The Commission asked for more explanation on what the systemic issue is across all the light poles.
- Following some explanation on how the historic poles were installed and connected at the bases, the Commission noted that the issue appears to be primarily at the anchors.
- One Commissioner asked if there had been any thought to try to replicate the original acorn glass globes.
- One Commissioner noted that, during a prior land use review for the Maintenance Yard, the Commission recommended that Parks look at the existing lighting in the Park and develop a consistent lighting scheme for the park. He also asked if foundation work would also be needed if the lights are replaced. Another Commissioner noted that each park's lighting scheme should be coherent within each park.
- One Commissioner suggested sensitively decommissioning the lights rather than throwing them away.
- Commissioners noted that while the light poles are utilitarian concrete and have been modified over time, they are significant character-defining features of the parks. One Commissioner noted that Mt. Tabor Park has seen an erosion of character-defining features over the years. It was suggested that any poles that need to be replaced should be replaced in-kind to match the historic light poles rather than installing something with a similar aesthetic.
- A couple Commissioners noted that it didn't seem like there has been much exploration into whether or not the bases could be reinforced. One Commissioner noted there should be a conditions assessment of each pole to identify which ones truly need to be replaced and which may be able to be reinforced. For those that need to be replaced, the characteristics should be analyzed and closely matched in the replacements.
- In response to Parks representatives noting an engineer's report about the poles, one Commissioner suggested that reinforcement was probably insufficient when the poles were first installed. He noted that this documentation is important for the record.
- One Commissioner suggested that Parks should identify which poles are higher risk with more vehicular and pedestrian activity nearby and those that are less likely to be impacted by neighboring activities.
- One Commissioner noted that hooded fixture options may be a good choice toward meeting Dark Skies goals even if they are not replicating the original.

- One Commissioner noted an acceptance of the need to replace the concrete poles, but suggested that the poles and fixtures should be decoupled with the existing fixtures installed on new poles. The intent would be to minimize loss of existing materials, whether historic or not.
- A couple Commissioners noted that it was strange that the poles in Laurelhurst Park are structurally sound when they appear to be of the same vintage as other light poles in other parks. One Commissioner noted that if the lights at Laurelhurst are fine because they have a good anchoring system, then it's likely that some of the poles in other parks that seem to be okay except for their base connections could potentially be saved with better base connections.
- One Commissioner suggested all repair options should be exhausted before replacement is proposed. He noted that the one pole that was shown to have a crack running along the length of it appeared to be a separate issue than the base – likely water intruded into the concrete and eroded the rebar and cracked the column, which is a separate issue than faulty anchors.
- One Commissioner strongly disagreed with the assertion that 100-year old concrete is inherently in need of replacement, noting that her firm specifically is in the business of analyzing and preserving historic masonry and concrete structures. She noted that there are many reasons why concrete could fail, including rust jacking as evidenced in the photo of the cracked light pole. But she noted there are ways to better understand the true condition of the concrete poles (if that is desired) through a more thorough investigation. She also noted there are ways to protect concrete from water intrusion as well. She noted that if there is a funding issue then repair should definitely be considered with only the most damaged (cracked) to be replaced.

Files related to this Briefing can be found here: <https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/record/15884446>.

Please contact me with any questions.