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689-2023

Communication

Request of Elaine Mildenberger to address Council regarding Columbia Park pools

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A brief description of Communication: Columbia Park - Pool(s)

Agenda Items

689 Communications in [August 23, 2023 Council Agenda](#)
(<https://www.portland.gov/council/agenda/2023/8/23>)

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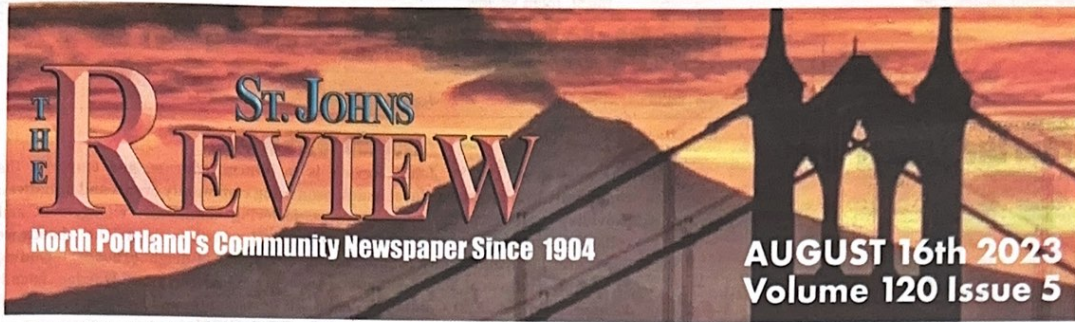
Requested Agenda Type

Communications

Date and Time Information

Requested Council Date

August 23, 2023



ST. JOHNS CATHEDRAL PARK LINNTON ARBOR LODGE BRIDGETON HAYDEN ISLAND KENTON OVERLOOK EAST COLUMBIA PIEDMONT PORTSMOUTH UNIVERSITY PARK

Swimming Lessons

By Richard Colvin

Portland, Oregon – The city of Portland is known as the River City, with its iconic waterways offering both beauty and recreational opportunities. Beneath the picturesque exterior, however, there lies an urgent need for water safety education. A childhood tragedy has driven one local woman to champion the cause of swimming lessons for all, regardless of age or background, for generations of family and friends and now brings her message to North Portland.

Elaine Mildenberger and Olivia Reader were childhood friends. In 1954, at ages 12 and 13, the young ladies were taken on an afternoon church outing, with one woman chaperon escorting the 6 children to Reader Beach. Olivia's Uncle, Paul Reader, owned the beachfront property. Olivia and her family were close neighbors, and Olivia's sister Iva was with the girls that day. The woman chaperone was nearby with the other children as the girls walked along the Columbia River shoreline. Elaine was walking in ankle-deep water. Olivia was walking in the water calf-high, perhaps laughing and talking as young ladies did at that age. Suddenly Olivia stepped into a hole under the water in the fast-moving river, and she was pulled away by the quick current. They all watched helplessly as young Olivia came up three times, first her face, then her legs, and finally the crown of her head, each time farther away, and then she was gone. The chaperone ran to the house to call for help. None present knew how to swim. Authorities would eventually drag the river, and Olivia was found caught up in pilings just downriver.

Elaine still suffers to this day from the trauma of losing her friend so quickly and tragically, each detail fresh in her mind like it was yesterday. She completely understands why people suffer from PTSD. Olivia's sister Iva never went by water again. Eliane, however, soon knew that she had to learn how to swim. She would not be deterred. Elaine rode her bike to Pier Park every day and taught herself how to swim, first by hanging on the side of the pool and learning the motions, and then by venturing in the water unaided. Her biggest challenge was putting her face under the water. As a freshman at Roosevelt, she entered high school at a time when most kids her age didn't know how to swim. Often, she spent time at the pool and around the water and encouraged others to join her. She began using Columbia Park Pool as a teenager, riding bikes with friends to the park. She is still swimming to this day. She wants everyone to learn how to swim: everyone.

Portland is called the River City. "Lots of people want to go out on a boat, and people go that can't swim," says Elaine. She went on to marry and have a son, whom she took to the Salvation Army pool, along with family and friends. The Salvation Army pool was



Long wait times around in the evening at Peninsula Park Pool. Photo by Elaine Mildenberger.

a critical resource for learning to swim. She would go on to take her granddaughter to swimming lessons. She had her family have enjoyed the water, rivers, and pools, and the recreation of being in and around the water without fear. Swimming to this day, she runs her own impromptu "EPA" inspection of the water quality of the Willamette. Whenever she swims in the river, she soaks her swimsuit in a basin afterward, as she has for decades. She is very happy to report to all that since the city built that big pipe project some years back, the water in the basin from soaking her suit is clean. Yet, levity aside, Elaine has turned a childhood tragedy into her own personal swimming lesson number one: people die; her lesson was quick, but what she learned has lasted a lifetime. "People need to know how to swim, especially children, adolescents, and young adults," she says.

She believes in the importance of having access to clean, healthy pools for everyone, of all ages, to learn swimming. She has never been one to get involved in city affairs, write letters to officials, or speak out in civic forums. Still, she will be speaking before the Portland City Commission on August 23, 2023. Elaine will spend three minutes talking

Continued on page 6

Over \$100 million for homeless support unspent

By Anisha Scanlon

Multnomah County is underspending homeless services dollars according to discussion held by the Multnomah County Commission. The county is facing scrutiny from Metro, the regional government responsible for overseeing revenue allocations from the SHS (Supportive Housing Services) tax approved in 2020.

Metro's Chief Operating Officer Marissa Madrigal, exchanged a series of emails with Multnomah County Chief Operating Officer Serena Cruz, pressing the county to create a corrective action plan. The situation became more complicated when Metro informed the county of an additional \$50.3 million collected from taxpayers when paid 2021 assessments in arrears.

The correspondence highlighted the county's difficulties in spending the funds effectively and its resistance to increased oversight from Metro. Multnomah County officials cited various reasons for underspending, including the pandemic, capacity issues among service providers, and their procurement system.

The need to address homelessness, addiction rates, and behavioral health issues in our community is monumental. The county's board is expected to vote on the final allocation of the one-time funds in late August, with discussions focused on capital investments to address homelessness.

The St. Johns Neighborhood Association Update: Enhancing Connectivity and Community Spirit

By Anisha Scanlon

In a bid to improve accessibility and foster a stronger sense of community, the St. Johns Neighborhood Association (SJNA) has been actively engaged in a series of initiatives. They aim to tackle the challenge of steep hills obstructing easy transit between downtown St. Johns and Cathedral Park, an area devoid of public transportation. SJNA is working on obtaining a grant to get a shuttle that runs to and from Cathedral Park neighborhood and St. Johns neighborhood.

SJNA has had 10 successful block parties, with 17 more eagerly anticipated. These lively events have garnered widespread appreciation and will now extend into October due to surplus funds. The block parties will have food the neighbors bring fun activities for adults and kids, and music. They will also feature a short presentation on safety and resilience, where we will invite folks in the neighborhood to create a phone list and a neighborhood map. Above all, SJNA will encourage neighbors to get to know one another. Knowing neighbors has been shown to be one of the keys to getting through catastrophes like the threats we face of earthquake, fire, flood, and gas farm leakage. We are working closely with the St. Johns NET (Neighborhood Emergency Team).

Education meets activism as St. Johns public schools undertake a back-to-school cleaning and landscaping endeavor on August 19th. Residents are encouraged to contribute, highlighting the community's dedication to both education and aesthetics.

Furthering their community engagement, SJNA is set to host Frog Ferry representatives at a Green Anchors block party on August 27th. The time has yet to be announced. Watch for updates on their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/StJohnsPDX>

Volunteerism remains at the core of SJNA's ethos, and they're actively seeking individuals, particularly Spanish speakers, to bolster outreach efforts. To join this vibrant force for positive change, contact SJNA at info@stjohnspdx.org.

with community input. 2) Insight into An assessment of PP&R's impact on ities. 4) Portlanders expressed their spaces, healthy ecosystems, learning n, and job opportunities within their

marginalized groups like Black, BT2SQIA+ individuals, people with

and other assets beyond their projected services.

Commissioner Ryan aims to explore a sustainable funding source for the city's parks and recreation facilities. PP&R estimates that without new funding, one in five park assets may need to be closed or removed within 15 years. To address community needs, PP&R developed the Sustainable Future Initiative, complementing the Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland framework in working towards an equitable and sustainable vision for the future. You can access the full Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland report online at portland.gov/parks/documents/healthy-parks-healthy-portland-2023-report/download.

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Swimming Lessons Continued from page 1

about swimming lessons and the importance of maintaining access to pools as a matter of public safety. She will ask the City Commission to find solutions to keep Columbia Pool open while North Portland waits for a new aquatic center to be built. She understands that if the bottleneck at the other area pools is not relieved soon, some people, perhaps a generation, may not learn how to swim. Elaine says this is not acceptable.

In 2008, the city began regular structural inspections of Columbia Park Pool. By 2021, hazards to persons were sufficient cause to determine that the facility was unsafe for use, and it was permanently closed. She and others are not convinced that the proposed North Portland Aquatic Center will be built with any speed or for the \$50 Million price tag. She is predicting \$75 million. She is a businesswoman after all. Elaine questions, "What did they do with that money raised from Measure 26-213 passed in 2020 and renewed in 2022 that was supposed to keep pools open in Portland?" She further describes how access to pools has been reduced, noting long lines at Peninsula Park pool. She is quick to point out that even with these delays and lines, she can still hear all the people inside. "They are just gleeful!" she says. She wants that glee and joy to continue at Columbia Park Pool. Elaine wants the pool to be reopened.

Elaine does not want the citizens of North Portland to have to wait years for a new facility to be built. She questions why the problem at Columbia Park Pool is so complex that Portland Parks and Recreation cannot find an interim solution: a solution that keeps the swimming lessons going at Columbia Park Pool. She closed by stating, "The more I think about the fact that they were okay with closing Columbia Park Pool while knowing that the Salvation Army pool was also closed: that infuriates me. What a huge gap that is with only Peninsula Pool in the middle!" One solution she may propose at the August 23 meeting: Just Rip the Roof Off!

We covered this story in the June 2022 issue and will take a closer look at PP&R budgets in our next issue. You can read the many public responses regarding Columbia Park Pool to refresh your memory. See June 2022 in our Archive at www.stjohnsreview.com.

All American Menu
Craft Beers * NW Wines * Cocktails



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North Portland's

boathouse had only radio but no television information often vague. Dick had been in the something to be admired no way of knowing Dick rape three years prior, for a variety of minor seemed jealous; they much more to offer than Dick who would wait in the woods near the river area to birds sing their songs on a summer evening. An Dick who always seemed more of a help to Betty than her older brother never looked at Dick or a potential date or he offered her a reprieve from the poverty that was his. He provided her with an interval of respite from life on the slough. A guy who didn't care for her economic class friend. Dick was just much younger Betty more...something significant none of his living situation for the future.

Betty felt real luck with her friend's kids. It was nothing to do. She picked her up and bring her mom and waited for him. He was on time, but where he'd got the later, she was surprised was babysitting; it disappointed, feeling expecting, as the evening she'd be paid in full.