

Gresham Butte Neighborhood Association

April 12, 2023

Officers present: Jim Buck, President; Sandy Davidson, Vice-President; Lynn Saint, Secretary; Theresa Tschirky, Treasurer; Stephen Estes, Land Chair

7:04 p.m. Meeting Called to Order by President Jim Buck

7:05 p.m. Mike Wallace, Naturalist–Green Space Restoration Projects in Gresham

The Natural Resources Program includes Mike Wallace, the city ecologist, Kathy Majidi, the program manager and Jeff Lesch, GIS specialist and a local botanist, who can identify plants that grow in the region. <https://greshamoregon.gov/Natural-Resources-Program/>

Mike is the point person for spills, hazard trees, questions and related issues. Sixty percent of his job involves taking responsibility for the restoration program. Water areas include Kelly Creek to Johnson Creek to seasonal streams. The drainage accumulates water, which runs downstream into the system and eventually to the Columbia River.

The department must meet state requirements. The Total Maximum Daily Load reveals what kinds of bacteria and pollutants are in the environment. Related to these factors is the temperature. Higher ground temperatures occur with no shade trees and warmer weather. The systems need to be cooler.

Approximately \$200,000 to \$240,000 per year comes from storm water fees for the funding of the Natural Resources Program, as different concerns receive varying amounts. As an example, plant purchases receive \$25,000 annually. A tree fund assigns \$30,000 for planting trees. The unit allocates \$60,000 for early detection of noxious weeds and detrimental plants. There is no funding for butte restoration. Mike's crew works within 200 to 300 feet of the creek.

Two invasive weeds, garlic mustard and holly, are currently at issue. Holly has escaped from farm systems and needs eradication. After cutting the shrubs, employees apply an herbicide onto the stumps which are left onsite. Workers stain stumps to advise of treatment. Holly will not re-sprout. Garlic mustard has a natural cyanide which prevents other plants from growing in the soil. It can be harvested for food and tastes like garlic. Garlic mustard has infected Jenne Butte. One private property holds deer trails which encourage the spread of this weed. After flowering, when touched, the garlic mustard bursts with thousands of seeds, spreading to parts beyond.

With 1100 acres of open space, 50 percent of the green space needs attention. Each acre costs \$25,000 to restore. The unit can only address two acres each year. The city has presented a target for a tree canopy at 44 percent. At present, the canopy rests at 21 percent.

A massive wetland complex in the area drains mostly to the Columbia River. Johnson Creek has about eight projects in the system. In the Johnson Creek area, the focus is to rid the land of invasive blackberries. Blackberries are cut back from spring to early summer. Herbicides are applied in early fall to treat the previously cut canes. Blackberries are tough to kill. Cutting causes the cone, or root ball, to grow. Blackberries can remain dormant for years in the soil.

New plants are sown in cleared sites two years later. Blackberry cuttings can be used as mulch materials. Normal blackberry growth prevents mulch from forming. Last year, 45,000

bare root plants were planted, the largest quantity ever incorporated in one season. The department purchases bare root stock, which it plants in the wintertime. Native species are fire deterrents; invasive blackberries encourage fires.

Because the main emphasis rests within riparian areas, volunteers remain the principal source for work and labor in the butte locations. Funding for backyard certification exists and weed management allocation. As a note, rain gardens may interfere with tree planting goals.

School districts attract grant money of \$25,000, which matches other grants for beautification landscaping projects. The Hogan Butte Nature Park allows kids to get onto the buttes. They do repotting and live staking. Youth have overseen 10 to 15 thousand live stakes per year. Another monetary source could be PGE, which also offers grant funding.

Question: Can the city fund grants for kids to come and help? Individual schools can go after grants. Clear Creek Middle School, for example, has a wetland on the property.

Question: What areas show progress? The Saddle Trail is in solid condition. Ambleside is a well maintained, east of Hogan Road. All the buttes have good sections in some locations. Kelly Creek has an excellent area with old growth trees, off Butler Road with old growth trees. Metro also has this area.

Question: Can this be a carbon reserve? The natural resources team advocates more tree growth onto the properties. The Schall property can provide pieces of wood. A large turtle population in the Fairview wetland area requires natural logs which would enhance that ecosystem.

Eight years ago, the whole stretch of the Saddle Trail was alive and well, but now the red alders are dying off with a loss of 90-95 percent. Red alder cannot adapt to the higher temperatures with an insufficient water supply. Funguses and insects have also wreaked havoc leading to the loss of between 90 to 95 percent of these trees. The red alder accumulates nitrogen in the root nodules leading to assisting second succession trees to grow from them. Instead, blackberries took over. Currently, crews are planting back maples, large leaf maples, oaks Ponderosa pine, white alder. White alder adapts to droughts better than red alder. Non-native and ornamental cherry trees are dying off. The department is looking at planting southern Willamette Valley species, transitioning to more adaptable types.

The Pacific Yew grows in a landslide area. Five-year-old trees are one and a half feet tall. They are good riparian trees. The stratification process of heat and cold for up to two years helps them adapt. There is no plan for landslide areas because of a lack of funds.

Seedlings are available to the public. Mike works out of Hogan Butte Nature Park; he is onsite five days a week and can set plants out for those interested in purchasing them for their own home and green space area. Before planting new plants, the gardener needs to prepare a patch first to eradicate the invasive plants.

Question: Do deer eat seedlings of the Pacific yew? Although they don't eat it directly, they use the yew plant as a natural antiseptic for bedding material. To inhibit deer, there's a 7-foot fence around the plant nursery area. Rabbits and chipmunks eat seedlings.

All forests comprise potential damage due to fire. Currently, the land is not managed. The county manages pipes and roads, but not the buttes. Mike has offered to provide a field trip for those who are interested in further understanding of the plight of our area forests.

7:54 p.m. Minutes

February minutes were adopted as presented.

7:55 p.m. Land Use and Treasurer Reports

Land Use Chair Stephen Estes discussed a portion of land on Blaine Court. The current owners want to create a .58-acre lot. In the past, residents went through considerable effort to preserve the green space. This would break the currently accepted lot size. Under consideration are the narrowness of the road, private ownership and easements. Further comments follow within the New Business section of the minutes.

Jim Buck mentioned the **recent development along Regner**. Has the developer implemented all the agreed upon design elements? There is an uncertainty as far as how the City is ensuring the builder accommodates regulations. GBNA could implement a field trip to assess the site.

Theresa Tschirky reported a **balance of \$1,547.32** in the treasury. An umbrella insurance policy will no longer cover board members, alleviating another outlay.

8:00 p.m. Old Business

Community Enhancement Grant—Statue Model from Rick Caswell

Jim Buck submitted a grant request for \$8900. Thirty-three applications have instituted the most monetary requests so far. Acceptance notification will take place in May.

Gresham Butte Neighborhood Association Web Site

The impact and awareness of GBNA would expand by using the website and the city newsletter. <https://www.greshambutte.org/>

Stephen Estes presented his current and most recent work on the **GBNA website**. Although the website is still in its initial stages, it is functioning and available for viewers. Funding from the GBNA treasury could assist with the cost outlay.

A **map page** gives residents and viewers an idea of the Butte area. More photos and maps will appear as time and resources allow. Posts explain current events. People can **create content** by signing onto the website. The **subscribe button** will operate soon. **Email transmissions can originate** at the site.

8:07 p.m. New Business

We are reviewing grant funding for next year. In the past four years, we have had planting and restoration on the Butte plus beautification projects in Ebetsu Plaza and the Peace Plaza in Main City Park. The website lists activities in the past years.

Question: Do we want to engage in a beautification project this year?

Eradicating blackberries would be one way to help restore the area. Workers could cut back blackberries. These invasive blackberries thrive in open areas but do not flourish under shade trees. Volunteers need to sign up for the project. Area residents can lend a hand in ridding the area of blackberries and ivy. Neighborhood youth could take part in eradicating invasive plant species and planting new trees.

Jim Buck has agreed to **write the grant request again**. Of note: the city will not provide a water vehicle for new trees. It is very costly to rent a water truck for a day. If we live next to a green space, we could adopt a tree or trees to mark as our own and water it during the summer. August and September are the toughest months. Trees may also need netting. However, this may be unnecessary as deer prefer young cedars; they don't usually like other conifers.

Tree Cutter: Within the realm of old business and current events, the man who has been slicing trees has returned. He is using a bow saw and cuts two-thirds of the way into the trees. He indiscriminately cuts and recently has been cutting in the Gresham Woods area.

Variance asked for .58-acre property on Walters Hill

The GBNA website has posted a map of the property of interest. The lot configuration is unusual. The property is on a slope which could force building a structure close to the road. The city had initially told the owners the land was not developable because of exorbitant expenses for street, sewer and water connections and other concerns.

When the city regards the plot as a lot of record, the next step would be to consider assessing whether it is buildable. As it stands, the expenses for improving the lot regarding the street, sewer and water would be exorbitant.

Question: What is our recommendation? Can we cure a legal problem? The homeowners next to the property in question have surveyed their own land to determine boundaries. The zoning ordinance explains there is an average of one acre. Walters Hill is a scenic butte. The LDR of Gresham Butte zoning does not allow duplexes. A land survey would determine the buildability of the lot. This would only be buildable if an investor produced funds.

Question: Should we oppose the variance request prior to the meeting on Friday? The first step in their process is to establish a lot of record. An LDR will designate the property as a variance. When Stephen speaks on behalf of GBNA, he will additionally address the need to maintain a scenic area and block a structurally dense area to preserve the integrity of the Butte. After additional discussion and polling of attendees, GBNA decided to go on record against allowing a variance for that parcel of land.

8:55 p.m. Next Meetings

There is a possibility of a study on landslides and planting new trees. Kathy Majidi would be a resource person. Stephen Estes wants to look at the bylaws for a future meeting.

We do not meet in the summer. If there is no landslide study, GBNA could review the climate survey presented to the Neighborhood Coalition.

9:06 p.m. Meeting adjourned