



## Council OKs \$230K Lithia Park study

By John Darling For the Tidings

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On a 3-1 vote, the Ashland City Council Tuesday approved spending up to nearly \$230,000 for a consulting firm to research and write a master plan to guide the next 100 years of Lithia Park. The firm of Moore Iacofano Goltsman (MIG) of Portland will do the study.

The plan will look at the next 100 years and let the public know what's going to happen, Parks and Recreation Director Mike Black told the council.

"It isn't to reimagine it," he said, "but to continue its legacy and make sure it can live on in the way that people love it."

Counselor Stefani Seffinger told Black the Japanese Garden needs some work, making walkway stones more accessible to seniors and disabled people.

Counselor Rich Rosenthal called the plan "an investment in the future."

Black, in an interview, said the first project will be the beautiful but aging Perozzi Fountain, a main historic edifice which is chipping and decomposing after a century of exposure to the elements.

"We want to restore and ensure it perseveres," Black said. "The material is not as weather-resistant as you would hope. It's what we hear most about from the public."

Options could include covering it or moving it inside or replacing it with something new and weather-resistant, he said. It will be based on what the consultant recommends.

"Every year it gets this freezing and thawing."

After the fountain, P&R will focus on lesser things, such as Butler Bandshell, the neglected rose garden, the tennis court, the walkway system and the century-old Log Cabin on Winburn Way, which has seismic issues and was built to serve the car camp that used to be in the park.

Black said, "We don't use it since a lot of our people have moved to The Grove."

The mysterious and often vandalized Abe Lincoln statue may get some attention. It once stood in the north end, not far from City Hall — and the foundation and plaque are still there — however,

Abe himself is gone.

“The head is in my office and the rest of him is in the park shop. There’s been a healthy debate about bringing him back. It’s up to the commission, but they haven’t discussed it.” Many have said the head (a replacement for a vandalized head) is too big.

The upcoming Master Plan will provide guidance on these issues. Black called it “a ginormous plan” that calls on the public to work with the consultant, MIG of Portland, which specializes in historic parks.

The money pays for studies, professional involvement, travel and production of the actual plan. The firm had already produced a sketch of the master plan, with goals in seven areas:

—Infrastructure: evaluate all structures for safety, best use. Evaluate potential for new activities and amenities, improve open spaces.

—Public involvement: Input on goals, planning. Survey public. Open houses.

—Circulation, transportation: Pedestrian access, disabled, parking.

—Environment: Irrigation, water conservation, stormwater, fire, pollution, grass, energy efficiency.

—Esthetics: Preserve cultural and historic elements, public art.

—Policies: Permaculture, park “theme,” vandalism, natural disaster, deer.

—Usage: Events, public usage, impact.

Councilor Mike Morris joined Seffinger and Rosenthal in voting in favor of the allocation, while Councilor Traci Darrow, citing other city needs, including the Senior Center, voted against. Councilors Greg Lemhouse and Dennis Slattery were absent.

— *John Darling is an Ashland freelance writer. Reach him at* .....



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