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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON PARKS**

**January 21, 1997 Hearing Room 137**

**3:00 PM Tapes 3A - 4B**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

**Sen. Gary George, Chair**

**Sen. Bill Dwyer, Vice-Chair**

**Sen. Joan Dukes**

**Sen. Veral Tarno**

**MEMBER EXCUSED:**

**STAFF PRESENT:**

**Jim Stembridge, Administrator**

**Brad Harper, Administrative Support**

**MEASURE/ISSUES HEARD:**

**Informational Meeting - Presentation by Oregon Parks Department**

**These minutes are in compliance with Senate and House Rules. Only text enclosed in quotation marks reports a speaker's exact words. For complete contents, please refer to the tapes.**

Tape/#	Speaker	Comments
<b>TAPE 3A</b>		
001	Sen. George	Chair convenes meeting at 3:05 PM. Introduces representatives from Good Sam RV club and Chemeketa Community College.
018	Bob Possum	President of Good Sam chapter. 80 Chapters throughout state. Strong supporters and volunteers for Oregon state parks. Fees paid under RV usage - RV licenses and Camper use fees - support park funding.
047	Susan Davenport	Chemeketa Community College administrator. Chemeketa provides RV classes and has experienced big demand from public for these classes. Nearly 1 out of 8 Oregon families own an RV. Significant RV use in Oregon from both within and without the state. Interested in both safety issues and fostering greater RV usage.
084	Sen. George	Committee focused on Oregon Parks' future. For example, have addressed concerns by OPEU labor unions regarding park volunteerism.
105	Sen. Tarno	Discussion of RV fee increases last session.
114	Possum	Response to Sen. Tarno and discussion of state residency requirements and RV purchases. Must consider equitability of RV fees to support state parks. Good Sam does not favor further increases.
139	Sen. Dwyer	Comment regarding RV ownership. Discussion of financial crisis facing parks. Fees must be related to use and funding source. Questions whether transportation funding could be used for parks, as was the practice in the past.
167	Possum	Response to Sen. Dwyer
179	Sen. Dwyer	Discussion of AAA Club as vehicle for legislative reform.
190	Sen. Dukes	Explanation of past funding measures and financial crisis facing Transportation Department.
209	Sen. George	Discussion of committee's public forum and desire to involve citizenry and groups such as Good Sam in volunteer programs. Introduction of Bob Meinen, Director of Oregon Parks Department.
243	Bob Meinen	Director of Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Introduces Brian Booth and Stubb Stuart.
263	Brian Booth	Director of Parks Commission. Expresses gratitude for committee's efforts and importance of issues being addressed. Discusses Oregon parks and departmental staff.
314	Stubb Stuart	Former legislator and member State Advisory Committee. Pleased that Senate has formed a committee to address parks.
339	Sen. George	Thanks speakers for their time and past efforts.
		Discussion of Legislative Briefing handout ( <b>Exhibit A</b> ). Summarization of

350	Meinen	department's mission. List of park sites and access areas. Discussion of park infrastructure.
412	Meinen	Discussion of legislative programs administered by Parks Department.
<b>TAPE 4A</b>		
025	Sen. Tarno	Question regarding park attendance statistics.
030	Meinen	Slight decrease in park usage - approx. 2% - since last round of fee increases. No increases anticipated this year. Discussion of current budget allocation.
060	Sen. Tarno	Question regarding budget and administrative spending.
065	Meinen	Response. Department has relatively small staff in Salem and tries to direct majority of funds to "ground."  Discussion of Governor's budget submission - approximately \$62 million is inadequate to keep parks open.
094	Sen. George	Question regarding current budget shortfall.
100	Meinen	Shortfall of about \$6.2 million.
107	Meinen	Without additional funding park system will deteriorate and closures may be necessary due to health and safety requirements. Discussion of volume of park users. Only 5% of park system is fully developed and experience disproportionate usage. Backlog of repairs is approximately \$100-120 million. Increasing utility costs are also a factor in financial situation.
150	Meinen	Discussion of 2010 plan.
157	Possum	Comments regarding history of 2010 plan.
162	Meinen	Discussion of Governor's plan and necessary funding, including \$10 million for repairs in next biennium. Summary of funding requirements based on 2010 plan goals.
189	Sen. Dukes	Question regarding compatibility of Governor's plan and current requirements.
194	Possum	Current fees are at a maximum and many parks cannot generate appreciable revenue.
205	Meinen	Further discussion.
212	Sen. George	Question regarding bond issues.
220	Meinen	Explanation of bonds.
228	Sen. Tarno	Question regarding bond types.
232	Meinen	Answer.
238	Sen. Tarno	Question regarding building preservation.
243	Sen. George	Question regarding viability of bonds and self-funding potential.
250	Meinen	Discussion of trust funds and current loans.
270	Sen. Dukes	Question regarding park attendance.
278	Meinen	Discussion of alternative user plans.
287	Sen. Dukes	Question regarding Governor's budget.

292	Meinen	Based on current budget, closures may need to be addressed as early as July. Further discussion of funding crisis. Diminishing returns from current fee schedules. Decrease in federal funding.
330	Sen. Dukes	Question regarding anticipated revenue from blanket day use fees in all parks.
343	Meinen	Explanation of volume necessary to justify overhead from further fee imposition. Cost of \$1.5 million and revenue projected to be \$2.5 million. Further revenue lost in 1/3 turnaround and 50% noncompliance with fee imposition.
377	Possum	Political nature of fees.
385	Meinen	Changes in fees and revenue sources. Budget projections.
411	Sen. George	Question regarding RV trip permits.
420	Meinen	ODOT trip permits do not go into park funding.
425	Sen. Dukes	Comments regarding trip permitting procedures.
<b>TAPE 3B</b>		
019	Sen. Tarno	Question regarding departmental funding overlap.
025	Meinen	Discussion of past efforts and volunteerism from public and other governmental agencies. Currently, 11,000 volunteers.
059	Possum	Discussion of land gifts.
065	Meinen	Two parks being operated by non-profit organizations. Park management has been pared down to essential personnel. Competitive rate system and day-use fees imposed. Reserves spent and maintenance deferred. Inmate crews have been used in some parks - 83,000 hours last year. Long term stable funding source is necessary. Completion of agency overview - questions requested.
118	Sen. George	Question whether Mr. Meinen wishes to return on Thursday, 1/23/97.
127	Meinen	Will return.
135	Sen. Tarno	Question regarding 5% usage of existing park space and long range goals.
152	Meinen	5% is "built space." Majority of 92,000 acres involve other uses. Discussion of long range options.
170	Sen. Tarno	Statement regarding land swap.
176	Possum	Oregon parks not as large as some, but very high quality.
181	Stuart	Discussion of recreation facilities.
188	Sen. George	Question regarding West Linn water transfer project.
195	Meinen	Project currently on hold pending funding decisions.
211	Sen. George	How much will it cost to keep everything open?
218	Meinen	Basic services cost - as of today - \$17.6 million. Bare minimum operating package is \$6.2 million.
240	Sen. George	Cost of closures?
248	Meinen	One year closure cost of one park was \$400,000.
264	Possum	Committee facing pivotal time to address park solutions.

277	Sen. George	Requesting audience to come forward with suggestions.
284	Gordon Belsen	Salem resident. Camping fee discussion overlooks reservation fee of \$6 and \$28 for deluxe accommodations.
311	Sen. George	Discussion of diminishing returns and prior parks practice and security.
331	Consuela Long	Ready Rovers. Question regarding \$4.1 million computer. Made over 100 calls to make reservation. Will system improve?
350	Sen. Tarno	Improvements are being made.
357	Gordon Ledenbetter	Ready Rovers. Took weeks to secure reservations. Discussion of license registration fees.
389	Sen. Dukes	Question regarding fees.
396	Sen. George	Statement regarding committee's desire to have communication with audience.
414	Ledenbetter	Discussion of PERS.
<b>TAPE 4B</b>		
018	Sam High	Member of Ready Rovers. Question directed to Meinen
024	Meinen	Discussion of proposed park closures. Primarily free day use parks scheduled for closure. Discussion of disproportionate fees already faced by RV users.
056	Meinen	Addresses past and current reservation and fee systems. Past reservation system cost twice as much to administer as was collected in fees. Last year, 105,000 reservations made for Oregonians. System has been reevaluated based on user feedback. This year, "express check in" has been implemented to address some concerns. Significant improvement since last year in waiting time and turn around. Customer satisfaction has improved. Explanation of premium site fees.
140	Nancy Rockwell	Administrator, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Discussion of current efforts and "11-month window." Goal is to educate park users of ability to reserve sites 30 days after last use, not just in January. Broke the "queue" in 2.5 days, as opposed to 11.5 days last year.
188	Sen. Dukes	Question regarding room taxes.
192	Meinen	Range of 4% to 9.6% approximately. \$300,000 annually.
205	Sen. Dukes	Room tax issue should be revisited.
212	Sen. George	Private industry is addressing some park operation issues. Computer technology may also provide answers. Volunteerism. <b>(Exhibit B)</b> .
297	Meinen	Within one year technology will be updated to increase efficiency of system and create safety nets to provide expanded service.
251	Sen. George	Meeting adjourned at 4:45 PM.

Submitted By, Reviewed By,

**Brad Harper, Jim Stenbridge**

**Administrative Assistant Administrator**

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**EXHIBIT SUMMARY**

**A - Oregon Parks and Recreation Department - Legislative Briefing, Bob Meinen, Director (15 pages).**

**B - State Volunteer Service Act - Senator George (6 pages).**

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