City Hall Upgrades Completed Ahead of Schedule

The first major facility upgrades to Medford City Hall since its 1966 construction were completed three months ahead of schedule, allowing dozens of city staffers to move into new-and-improved work conditions the first week of September.

The $2.3 million project refurbished the three-story building’s heating and cooling system, replaced water lines and light fixtures, and revamped the city council chambers. Unlike the old four-sided configuration, spectators at city council meetings directly face councilors in stadium-style seating, and newly created meeting rooms flank the council chambers.

A reconfiguration of the old Alba Room and adjacent rooms resulted in the creation of a “smart” classroom named the “Medford Room,” home to council study sessions and various city commission meetings.

Estimated annual City Hall energy cost savings to taxpayers is $30,000, along with one-time rebates of approximately $100,000 from the Oregon Energy Trust for reductions in combustion gas emissions.

Over 100 city employees from nine departments operated out of temporary office spaces at the Microvellum Building and the Carnegie Library for 10 months during the project.

Council Authorizes Water Park Master Plan

The Medford city council took a step closer to making a municipal water park a reality by authorizing a comprehensive master plan at its Sept. 10 study session.

Acting on the Parks and Recreation Commission recommendation to construct a super-regional outdoor water park outlined in a 2008 aquatics feasibility study prepared for the City by REMI-Northwest, the council jump-started a concept originally proposed in the early 1980s.

Due by May 1, 2010, the master plan document along with detailed cost and operations estimates are the initial steps in a three-phase approach envisioned by Parks and Recreation Director Brian Sjothun. >> continued on Page 3
Parks Staffers Celebrate Service Milestones

Dan Morley (30 years), Dennis Byrne (25) and Pete Young (25)

Parks and Recreation Department employees Dan Morley, Dennis Byrne and Pete Young each celebrated hire-date anniversary milestones in August. The longest-serving department staffer, Morley entered his 30th year of service to the City of Medford on Aug. 3. The Ventura, Calif. native came to the Rogue Valley in 1979 to serve as a park technician. He switched to his current role as locksmith for the building maintenance division in 1994.

Among Morley’s fondest experiences was his involvement in the construction of the Robert Leathers playground in Bear Creek Park, a community project that was completed over a four-day timeframe in 1985.

Dennis Byrne began his 25-year stint as a parks technician in Aug. 1, 1984 after graduating from Cal Poly-Pomona. After years of tending to various park and school fields used for youth and adult sports, the Medford native considers his current role of maintaining U.S. Cellular Community Park the highlight of his tenure.

Young has been involved in almost every civic park project, master plan and landscaping plan since joining the department on Aug. 13, 1984. The parks planner cites construction of the Medford Skate Park, landscape design of USCCP Phase III, and Prescott Park and Oregon Hills Master Plans as his favorite projects.

Department Embarks on National Accreditation

At the August Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, Director Brian Sjothun unveiled an ambitious timeline that would result in Medford becoming one of only a handful of municipal parks and recreation departments to achieve national accreditation.

Over the next 24-to-36 months, department staff and policy makers will be asked to help fulfill up to 144 standards established by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). Through compliance with requirements, the CAPRA assessment assures staff, policy makers and taxpayers that an accredited agency has been objectively evaluated against established benchmarks for quality and efficiency.

Major categories of national standards include department planning, organization and administration, financial management, programs and services management, facility and land-use management, risk management, and evaluation and research processes.

CAPRA accreditation is a three-phase process involving formulation of an agency self-assessment report, on-site visitation by an evaluation team and final commission review. If approved, the department would submit an annual report that addresses continued compliance.

Only 98 agencies have achieved the prestigious accomplishment since CAPRA was formed in 1993. In 2009, the City of Hillsboro was the first Oregon city to gain the honor, and only the third community on the West Coast.

Staf Notes

• Facility operations specialist Greg McKown joined the Parks and Recreation Department as the city’s building maintenance supervisor on Sept. 8. An expert in HVAC, electrical and steam boiler systems, McKown served as operations supervisor for student housing and food services for three years at SOU. Before that, he worked at Rogue Valley Medical Center, Ashland Community Hospital and Simi Valley Hospital.

• Dobey Elliott was named Employee of the Quarter as a result of his stewardship and professionalism in managing City Hall upgrades and relocation of employees to and from temporary locations. The 30-year veteran of facility maintenance was also recognized for his meticulous calculations and computer-savvy organization of key data.
Bartlett, Main Street Parking Spots Become Mini-Parks

The Medford Parks and Recreation Department set up eight mini-parks on a downtown street Sept. 18 to celebrate PARKing Day, an international event designed to raise awareness about the benefits of urban green spaces.

Six parking spaces on Bartlett Street and two on Main Street were converted to public parks from about 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Staff and volunteers rolled out 1,200 feet of sod on the 9-by-20-foot spaces and added benches, picnic tables, oak trees, various green plants, “Benefits of Parks” posters and large green, yellow and red felt-covered blocks.

One man spent more than an hour reading, sipping coffee and smoking his pipe at a picnic table in one of the itty-bitty parks. People throughout the day stopped to play a sidewalk piano, sometimes drawing their own audience.

PARKing Day was established in 2005 by Rebar, a San Francisco art and design collective, and has since bloomed into an international event in which cities exchange parking spaces for urban parks for one day. This year marked Medford’s first year participating.

Alba Park Patrons Pleased By Piano-Playing

The upright piano that enticed passers-by at Parking Day on Sept. 17 was moved to the Alba Park gazebo for a month, and it made quite an impression on park visitors.

The Medford Arts Commission partnered with piano donor and former Rogue Gallery and Art Center director Judy Barnes on the social experiment.

Comments gathered in the guest book included:

• “I am a musician from Dallas, Texas and honestly have not seen anything like this.”
• “Thank you for this wonderful gift. It really brightened my day...”
• “I don’t play, but it is very pleasant to walk through the park while others are.”
• “In a turbulent and cacophonious world how beautiful to find something so simple and peaceful.”
• “Wow, I’ve never seen this thing anywhere before. Thanks for the inspiration...San Francisco, CA”
• “Because of you I got to live my dream of playing piano in the rain.”
• “This piano brings people together.

Water Park Master Plan

Phase 2 requires 2010 council approval of a revenue-bond sale, the funding mechanism for facility construction. The third phase culminates with a proposed May 2012 grand-opening.

Pending various land-use approvals, the water park would be built on what is presently the dog park and BMX track in Bear Creek Park. Both amenities would be relocated as a part of the overall project.

Bear Creek Park site was identified in a council-approved master plan for an outdoor/indoor aquatics park in 1984.

The REMI-Northwest report estimated a super-regional water park would generate enough revenue to cover operational costs on an annual basis, and create $2.2 million in economic impact and 61 jobs in its first year of operation.
Successful Summer for RecDiv

The Recreation Division’s frenetic summer slate resulted in happier, healthier lives for record numbers of Medford residents of all ages.

The division finished the biennium with record-setting revenue totals in athletics and enrichment programs and extended its streak to 24 consecutive months of overall revenue growth.

The momentum was fueled by record numbers of spring/summer (165) and fall (149) adult softball teams – solidifying Medford’s status as the state’s second-largest city-league softball program.

The division forged a partnership with Medford United, an adult outdoor soccer league, to offer men’s, women’s and co-ed programming at U.S. Cellular Community Park. The department also assisted the efforts of Kids Unlimited and longtime area coach Dave Kaufman to introduce a high-quality, low-cost soccer development program to children at Medford’s seven Title I schools.

For the fifth consecutive year, more kids participated in the Junior Giants t-ball/baseball program than the previous season. Over 450 boys and girls between ages five and 13 played on 28 teams, making Medford the eighth-largest program among 75 in the San Francisco Giants Community Fund’s outreach service.

The fourth year of the city’s summer day camp was easily its best. Under the supervision of first-year coordinator Jesse Nyberg, the program received 780 total registrations over 13 weeks for an average daily attendance of 60, with a high of 78.

Sports Park Garners State Kudos

Medford Lands Youth Soccer Championships

U.S. Cellular Community Park received a pair of prestigious honors from statewide organizations in September and landed another prestigious youth soccer event.

The state-of-the-art sports complex received the 2009 Oregon Recreation and Park Association (ORPA) Design Award and was recognized for excellence by the League of Oregon Cities.

The ORPA kudo hailed the $25 million facility’s design and development processes, including overall aesthetics, innovation, energy efficiency and cost effectiveness.

The $25 million, 11-field, 132-acre park features over 1 million square feet of FieldTurf synthetic grass that helps save an estimated 50 million gallons of water each year and allows for year-round play.

Recreation Division staffers Brandon Meyer and Quin nan Kirkland and the Medford Visitors and Convention Bureau enticed the Oregon Youth Soccer Association to host its November state championships at USCCP.

Medford will host 32 boys and girls teams in four age groups from across Oregon for the semifinal and championship rounds of the Fred Meyer President’s Cup tournament on Nov. 21-22.

The annual state tournament determines qualifiers in the U13 and U14 age groups for the June 2010 Region IV Presidents Cup that was awarded to U.S. Cellular Community Park last May.

The event is expected to have an economic impact of over $500,000.

Department Mourns Guinn, Caffey

The department mourned the loss of two beloved Parks Division employees.

Larry Guinn, a resourceful building technician well-known to City Hall employees for his excellent customer service, died in his sleep of natural causes in July. He retired on Sept. 1, 2008 after 23 years of service to the City of Medford. He is survived by his son, Cody.

Parks technician Leo Caffey passed away on Sept. 25 due to liver failure. The 23-year city employee and Oklahoma native is remembered for his lively sense of humor, including a longtime insistence that Parks employees should wear “Groucho Marx” glasses for positive public relations. He is survived by his wife, Sandra.