# Metro

# Hearing Minutes

**Thursday October 17, 2019 12:30 pm**

**Metro Council Chambers**

**Metro Headquarters Building**

**600 NE Grand Avenue**

**Portland, Oregon**

Metro $475 Million Bond Measure to Protect and Connect Nature and People

**Measure 26-203**

# November 5, 2019 General Election

**Present:**

TSCC:

Chair David Barringer, Vice Chair James Ofsink, Commissioner Margo Norton, Commissioner Mark Wubbold Executive Director Craig Gibons, and Budget Analyst Tunie Betschart

**Absent:**

Non (One position is waiting for Governor’s office to fill)

Metro:

Council President Lynn Peterson, Councilor Shirley Craddick, Councilor Sam Chase, Councilor Bob Stacey, Councilor Christine Lewis, Councilor Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Deputy Chief Operating Officer Andrew Scott, Deputy Chief Operating Officer Andrew Scott and Metro Attorney Nathan Sykes, Conservation Director Dan Moeller

Chair David Barringer opened the Public Hearing for Metro’s “Bond Measure to Protect and Connect Nature and People”by stating the commission is a neutral body in this matter and are holding this hearing for the public benefit. We will take no formal action today. The “action” will be taken by the voters. The purpose of this hearing is to discuss and take public testimony on Measure 26-203 which Metro has put on the November ballot. Those from the public who wish to testify can sign up on the sheet in the back of the room. He asked the TSCC Commissioners and the Metro Councilors to introduce themselves.

Following introductions, President Peterson gave an overview of the purpose for the bond measure and the hearing stating, in addition to meeting the statutory requirements of ORS 294.655 this public hearing encourages careful, diligent planning by our agency and enhances our outreach to the community at large. Thank you for doing your part in this process. Parks and Nature areas in the greater Portland area really set us apart as we grow in this region. Our mission as Metro has been for clean air and clean water. It is part of what we do. With the growth that we've seen and the growth that is yet to come, the past bond measures that we'll get to talk about today have really allowed us to not see a degradation inside the urban growth boundary and outside of the urban growth boundary. But it really allowed us to make sure that we're either staying level at some places or improving. And so this bond measure that we're talking about today, carries on the tradition of the purchase of land outright to preserve habitat, to make sure that we control runoff into our strings, and protect those streams and corridors so that we can bring down the temperatures; bring them back up to good, clear standards so that the salmon can come back. And I have some information that we've collected just recently on some of the amazing stories in our region as we have managed these corridors with all of our partners, as we're only one player in this arena. Our cities and counties, obviously are big players; the state is a big player; NOAH is a big player. So we've got, a lot of partners that actually help us manage all the conservation efforts to achieve greater goals than just ourselves. And I think that's the amazing part of all of this. We do have 17,000 acres that we are currently managing and we have purchased with the last two bond measures and 11,500 of those are outside the urban growth boundary. That is because we wanted to make sure as we've grown we have park land but also because the headwaters of the Tualatin for instance, are not exactly the urban growth boundary. So we do need to be able to preserve those headwaters and those corridors.

So the topic of today's hearing is the ballot measure that we are asking the region’s voters to approve. It alllows an additional $475 million in general obligation bonds. If approved, the proceeds will be used to fund land purchase and restoration in the Metro region, improve Metro parks that we already have. We have specific plans at each one of these parks that have been created with local partners to achieve different things. A lot of it is access, a lot of just conservation that we'll be able to do very specific park improvements. Local parks and nature projects which were all things that were part of the last bond measures. And then the two new additional programs that we added to this measure were really about access for people and its walking and biking trails and in the new program that really focuses on large scale development projects in the region where we are looking at transit oriented development, affordable housing, economic vitality, in our centers and corridors where we need to integrate parks. And we can be basically a partner in allowing for those types of developments to occur.

The only thing that we call out very specifically is $20 million to Willamette Falls. We said, well, that's really providing visual access to provide the stimulant for economic activity and development of that part of our region. Shouldn't we have a program that actually does that for all of the region, not just for one part of the region? So that's why you see the new last program.

So I guess that's really the big overview. We are going to get into way more details, but what I would say is our vision for the region as we grow is continue to improve the quality of life for everybody in this region. So that's why we have our racial equity lens and everything we're doing with this proposal and a climate change lens and that focused us on the types of programs, but also how those programs will be carried out.

Chair Barringer thanked President Peterson for the overview of the bond measure and said with that we will start the prepared questions.

**TSCC Questions:**

**Chair Barringer asked the following question:**

Metro reports annually on the progress made under it first two natural areas bonds. What do you consider the top 3 standout achievements of those bond measures? Is this bond continuing the same approach or is there a gap or specific need you are trying to address with this new bond measure?

President Peterson answered saying this continues the creation of a regional open space and parks system with the needs of our partners at the local level as well as the large regional needs.

* Acquisition of more than 12,000 acres of parks, trails and natural areas through the 1995 Open Spaces Bond and the 2006 Natural Areas Bond would be one of the successes. We actually were able to achieve more land acquisition than we had originally thought, preserving more acres.
* Investment of $69 million to local governments to improve local parks systems across the region so that no child would have to walk too far to a park. I think that's one of our inherent goals in all of this. That's really a local park system, whether it's a pocket park or a swing set that's at the pocket park.
* Development of the Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grant program has got to be one of the most popular grant programs in the region because just about anybody can apply for anything from an idea of way-finding to educational material.

She went on to say when I was chair of the Clackamas County, we were able to work with the Nature in the Neighborhood grant program and Metro at the Park and Ride at the end of the Orange Line where the neighborhood was worried about whether the Park and Ride would degrade their stream corridor that they were very worried about. That grant really helped bring the entire community together around a really important focus on how to bring the quality of that stream corridor back so that someday they can actually see salmon come back to it.

We also have really good things that we can point to that those are three very general things.

She continued, saying in western Multnomah County, our work to restore the Multnomah County Marsh has resulted in a dramatic increase in breeding activity of the native red legged frogs, a sensitive species targeted for connection over the Oregon conservation strategy. We've collected data for the site since 2002. So we're clearly tracking and looking at our performance metrics of what we wanted to achieve and whether we were doing that. I can name a bluff natural area Oregon City and Graham Oaks Natural Park and the natural nature park in Wilsonville. Metro has worked to restore Oak Woodlands by thinning the forest controlling invasive species and planting native species. Between 2007 and 2019 our bird monitoring data shows increases in migratory birds and species that depend on the Oak habitat was 12 new species coming back to that area.

In Clackamas County our work on the Clackamas and Sandy Rivers has supportive positive trends in salmon recovery, which the salmon, a major species listing was actually after the first bond measure. This is something that is just coming out of trying to make sure we have clean air and clean water.

The Sandy river Spring Chinook counts have tripled from prior to the launch of the Metro Natural Areas by one of the upwards trends document in the State of the Sandy River Report produced by the Sandy River Base and Waters System. So I think those are pretty significant outcomes for the region.

She then distributed a paper showing how this actually moves the region forward.

The Metro Council identified six proposed program areas in the measure referred to the ballot:

* Land purchase and restoration, $155 million
* Metro park improvements, $98 million
* Nature in Neighborhood grants, $40 million
* Local parks and nature projects, $92 million
* Walking and biking trails, $40 million

Some of those program areas would continue work started in 1995 and 2006, but other program areas were identified by the Council through an extensive community engagement process.

**Commissioner Wubbold asked the following questions:**

So one of the metrics that you're tracking, you're making great progress is the quality of the salmon environment. It sounds like they're increasing in numbers in certain areas. I'm just curious as a person who's interested in salmon, have you've actually seen the return of salmon at any of these tributaries?

Metro Conservation Director Dan Moeller answered saying one the key examples that I like to cite is Johnson Creek. Johnson Creek was highly impacted the last hundred years; being channelize and having the banks armored in different ways to attempt to control flooding and so on. Through the bond measures we’ve been able to make amazing investments to both reconnect that stream to its flood plain and protect areas along the Creek to improve water quality. We’ve added complexity to the stream to create the kind of habitat necessarily.

So we are seeing the return of salmon to that stream, which is pretty amazing when we think back a few decades to what some of that looked like. And then today to see salmon returning. It is impressive. The numbers are small. It isn’t what we need to see just yet. But we are seeing indications that the work we're doing is making an impact.

President Peterson added that's a good example of the partnerships that are necessary to be able to get that to happen. Restoration needed to happen. Clackamas County actually had to do an urban renewal area to take those folks, along Johnson Creek in Clackamas County off of septic and put them on sewer systems because those folks did not have the capabilities financially to move into a sewer systems. So there's a lot of partnerships that go into these things. That's an important one.

Mr. Moeller said I'm sorry I should've covered that earlier too. We know the Johnson Creek Watershed Council has done amazing work in that stretch. We have worked with East Multnomah Soil and Water District. There are so many different services such as Clear Water Environmental Services. So it isn't just us. It is nice to see that the investments that all of us have made and are really seeing results.

President Peterson provided us with a wonderful summary and overview touching on a lot of the things that I'm going to be asking you about. So this is your third natural areas bond measure. What have you learned from the prior bond measures? What new challenges are you dealing with in this particular bond measurer?

Councilor Chase answered saying I will answer this as I do have some perspective as somebody who has been engaged in every measure that we have put before the voters: knocking on doors on the first one, as a volunteer on phone banks, and that kind of effort. Then 2006 working as an advocate in the nonprofit sector to help put the language and program together for Nature in Neighborhoods Capital grants. Then, of course, as a Metro Councilor on the two levies that we passed to help support ongoing operations.

There's a number of reflections. One is people's understanding and belief that we need to continue to protect our water, our air, our natural areas, and our ability to engage in nature here day to day; not just places that you can go to on the weekends. But it has to be a natural part of our lives. I think people have really grown to understand that in a much deeper way. How the natural areas work to fit into a natural part of their growth plan. It's not just on its own. The environmental and the climate change, the protecting and preserving our natural areas, which is in itself enough of a reason. But I think people have really begun to understand how important it is to the entire growth strategy that we are putting in place in our region. I've been really delightfully surprised at how over and over people feel like this is something you really need to move forward and continue to do. As the growth has continued to increase dramatically in our region, we need it more than ever. One saving grace in terms of how much density we've seen in some areas of our city and how that population increase has been able to happen is due in part because we have that “big backyard.”

Of course we don't have and don't use the power of eminent domain in this work. That is important. We have to be patient. We've learned that we have to be patient and wait it out. There are cases where we have waited a long, long time and finally things happen and that final piece, that final connection happens. So patience has been something that we all have to practice.

We've learned that the partnerships component is one that we really need to be more deliberate around. How do we grow our natural area work? Also those other growth areas. And how do we have partnerships with the work that we're doing in places like Paulina Falls or elsewhere where we need natural areas, all working together? So how can we be deliberate about approaching that? I think that's an area that we have done a lot of learning about.

Some of the areas that really are underserved: people's ability to experience and engage in nature and what keeps that from happening as a whole in our region with culturally specific communities. How are we really engaging and empowering those communities to be part of driving our agendas? I think that's maybe one of our biggest learning areas and I think we have a long way to go. But we've done a lot right. This has really been a year for Metro to look at this department-the parks and nature area of our work- and to say, look, if we want to really be serving all communities, including underserved communities and we want to have a culturally responsive strategy, we have to really give those communities the tools to be able to engage in this process.

He went on to say we can't just send emails and invite them to a meeting where we're speaking in all this jargon that we know because it's part of our profession. We do it every day. We have to give those organizations capacity. We have to give them support so that they can have people in their communities that are dedicated to this work; dedicated to learning and understanding and committing to organizing; getting the voices of their community at the table; not just having one person who may or may not represent the voices of their community at the table. But how do we help foster that collaboration with people? I think that's been a pretty powerful and important part of this work and developing strategies. I'm saying, what is it that you need to see happen? How can we keep you at the table as we're implementing and doing this work as well? So I'm sure there's more. We all could probably reflect. I think those are some of the important areas.

**Commissioner Norton asked the following question:**

Let's start with the bonds that are currently out there. The last issue as I understand was at the tail end the 2018 year sold the last $28 million. And according to your budget, you've got about $22 million that you expected to start this year with. So you've got money. With unexpended bond proceeds-how come now for this measure?

Councilor Lewis answered saying while there are still unexpended proceeds from the 2006 measure, those proceeds have been fully allocated. Funds are designated for acquisition of a few key parcels and some of the funds are reserved for capital projects identified by the Metro Council, like construction of the first phase of Chehalem Ridge Nature Park. The rest of the funds are reserved for Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants that have been awarded, but are not yet spent.

If the bond measure does not pass, the property tax rate for Metro’s parks and nature bond program would drop to $0 per $1,000 of assessed value by 2026 and no new projects would be completed. Staff will work with the Metro Council to determine next steps. Staff estimates that the spend-down of the 2006 proceeds will continue through 2021 as planned capital projects are completed and the final grant projects wrap up.

Since you mentioned the tax rates, the second part of this is, so you have debt service that's going to last till about 2026 and your ballot materials and your explanatory statements have said that you expect to maintain the current rate. Metro is famous for promises made, promises kept. So I want to ask what measures are you going to take to manage that? Will it be in the nature of your issues? Does that increase your costs? If you have to make more issues to maintain the tax rate, how are you going to manage that expectation?

Councilor Craddick answered saying of course you helped us with this when you were our Chief Financial Officer, sold the 2006 bonds. Well, it's really been an honor being on Metro council and to be an agency that the region really can depend on and that we are one of value. I think of why we've been able to get these bond measures passed and it is just like you said, we have made promises and kept those promises. With this bond measure, we could have raised the tax because we recognize that GO Bonds don't come under the Oregon constitutional property tax limitations. But we chose not to. We are conservative. We choose a higher interest rate than we traditionally experience. And then on top of that we expect that property values will climb to the degree that they have. And so that gives us that cushion there too on assessed value.

Mr. Kennedy added that, in large part due to Metro's long track record of conservative financial planning and forward thinking, when we refinanced a portion of the 2006 bonds, we were able to build in a rate drop. So a portion of the bonds will be repaid as of June 30th of 2020; the refunding bonds. We expect to maintain that same rate by taking advantage of that step in fiscal year 20. There's another small step in fiscal year 21 and then the bonds will be fully repaid as of June 30th, 2026.

So the 2006 bonds had three separate issues and you will probably manage this in multiple issues particularly until the debt services paid, correct?

Mr. Kennedy said we'd expect with a future bond measure, unlike the housing bond where it made sense to issue all at once due to the taxable nature, we'd be again looking at multiple issuances. So we'd expect that we'll be able to maintain that rate by structuring the debt similarly as we did that 2006.

**Chair Barringer asked the following questions:**

So you're expecting to issue these in pieces over time? Do you know about roughly how long?

Mr. Kennedy answered saying we would expect generally a similar program length with the 2006 bond. It was expected to be eight to 10 years. The recession in the middle slowed down the land acquisition of the Portsmouth program. So it stretched out. I think we just wrapped up year 13. So again, we target 8 to 10 years and with the tax exempt bonds you have to have a reasonable expectation of spending 85% within three years. So given that, we've looked at issuances every three to four years.

**Commissioner Ofsink asked the following questions:**

I’m personally very interested in public engagement, and deep democracy with the community. Metro has definitely always been a leader in that as far as the governments that we work with regionally. So we're are wondering about how public input influenced this bond measures and if there were any specific things that you'd like to call out in the measure that are there because of public input?

Councilor Gonzalez answered saying I just want to start off by mentioning that my peers have done a great job answering the questions and I'm really excited to be here to talk about this measure. I credit a lot of my connections with Metro and my journey to Metro to the 2016 strategy to enhance regional equity and the parks work specifically around Western Washington County, which is what gave me the opportunity to first engage. And then essentially it was a love story that lead me to this office.

During a nine-month period between summer 2018 and spring 2019, Metro reached out to community members and partners to learn what they wanted to see in a potential parks and nature bond measure. Engagement highlights included two rounds of community forums co-created by community leaders; specialized forums for the urban Indigenous community, conservation leaders and trails advocates; small-group interviews with 30 conservation representatives, 25 working lands stakeholders and 47 representatives from local park agencies; and an online survey completed by more than 700 people.

Metro also convened a stakeholder table that advised on topics such as values, racial equity, decision-making and oversight, investment levels in six funding areas and criteria for prioritizing investments. Across all types of engagement, Metro emphasized hearing from people of color, Indigenous people, people with disabilities and others who have not been well represented in past funding initiatives. To go back to something that Councilor Chase mentioned, something that we've learned, recognized, and acknowledge is that not every family in this region gets to engaged with open spaces or with parks in the same way. And that's something that we heard throughout our engagement process and has continued to radically shift and improve the way we do our work with parks and nature.

Feedback from partners and community members shaped the proposed bond measure in a number of ways, from the size of the measure to the details. Examples include: requiring all program areas to address racial equity and climate resiliency, including plants and animals that are important to Indigenous people, in the criteria for buying and restoring land; prioritizing improvements at existing parks over building new parks; and expanding the amount of money available for community grants. In addition, partners and community members emphasized their desire for continued engagement if the bond is approved – a commitment that was included in the resolution.

So I'd say that Metro has worked really hard to continue to redefine what community engagement is. This bond measure is the shining example of that and that the Parks and Nature department did a stellar job working on this and working of course, on the community side, the campaign side, making sure that this bottom measure is a reality. We continue hearing from folks over and over again just how this measure can help make a greater Portland a leader around this. Specifically for how we incorporate environmental justice in conservation and how we built this throughout the region.

Would you mind adding a little bit more detail. You said that you thought that this was going to be a great example of a new path forward on community engagement in the decision making. Can you give some examples of that?

Councilor Gonzalez said you can see different examples of parks that have been built over the last few years. Like Cully Park, the dog park in Multnomah County. And I think those are models that we'd love to replicate. For example, Chehalem Ridge Nature Park, which would have the future of the basics funded by the bond if it were to pass. When Metro originally came to present the strategy of what wanted to be achieved, it went through a bit of transformation given the feedback and the engagement. And I think that's really powerful because a lot of the time people feel like, yeah, sure we'll go to an engagement time, okay. And all of these things on our board and the government will take it and we don't necessarily know what happens with it. I've seen very concrete ways in which Metro is again, okay, we're going to incorporate this. We'll update our plan, and we’ll update the strategy to make sure that we can include that. And I think that a lot of the parks that we're proposing for the measure you can see that in the master plan phase.

Mr. Kennedy added it applies to the Nature in Neighborhoods capital grant program. Council direction language is included to do a pilot of a participatory grant making. Staff will work on developing it as soon as the bond is passed.

**Commissioner Wubbold made this comment:**

I just want to testify about Cully Park and whatever feedback you got from community that you incorporated in the design. The use of that park is really working. I live in Concordia, not far from Cully, but I go by there all the time and that place is hopping in a way that it never was before. I mean it's really impacted that whole surrounding neighborhoods. So I really commend you on that particular model.

Councilor Stacey said there's a strong base of ownership and a part of my mission throughout my time on the council is that our investment shouldn't only build facilities and create capital projects, which are amazing, but they should also create a place. We heard from our communities all of over the region that is what they want.

**Commissioner Ofsink asked the following question:**

Shifting focus a little bit. We've seen the kind of a pattern with the Metro bond measures of the measure generating funding and then distributing it to local governments and NGOs to carry out the specific purpose funding. We we're wondering if you could tell us a little bit more about the role that Metro has in selecting the projects from other organizations and then what controls Metro has over the funds once they're distributed?

Councilor Stacey answered saying we didn't ask them in advance to list a specific projects that they would use local share for. Instead, we developed a set of criteria that will be applied to proposals and that we expect them to apply in their proposal process, that engage those of color, focus on racial equity, and focus on climate, and all the other aspects of this measure. So that we will have influence over the project selection process because we will enter into IGAs to deliver resources to approve projects. We're not going to try to withhold money from qualifying governments. We want to be involved in the development of those proposals. We expect to work with local parks providers, post successful passage of the measure and stakeholders from the scientific community, people of color or historically marginalized groups to develop a work program that will spell out how all that happens and substantively approve specific projects forwarded by Portland parks, other major parks providers that will be entitled to a share of these resources. They know what the number is, but we need to see the work they're doing to justify the expenditures that we have allocated based on population and other factors.

**Commissioner Norton asked this follow up question:**

Can I interrupt to just make sure I understood what you said. So this is new. This is different from bond one and bond two?

Councilor Stacey said that's my understanding. I wasn't here in 2006, but I'm getting a nod from Mr. Kennedy.

These legally binding agreements with local governments that will be receiving those funds will specify the scope of work for each funded project, how the funds will be used by partner organizations like NGOs and nonprofits and how Metro staff will closely monitor the funded projects to ensure compliance with the letter of the spirit of the agreement. We'll get periodic reports. I think we're having an oversight committee for implementation. But the council will also be engaged. That's the distinction from 2006 that we're going to get those proposals and I think that's a more humane process given the stress that would have been imposed upon local government planners as well as our own staff to be ready for this election date with all that work in advance of the measure. We still maintain fiscal control and oversight.

Councilor Gonzalez said I would like to add to Councilor Stacey’s comments. I want to continue to build on that and just add anecdotes of what I've noticed, especially in Washington County and the conversations that local jurisdictions are having. Our work around racial equity has really began to catalyze conversations, to put it lightly around what it means for local governments outside of the urban hub to really think about what is a racial equity strategy. How do we even begin to think about having that conversation in order for us to maximize these Metro parks dollars? You're right in a way. There is an opportunity for us to lead that conversation. I think it's a great practice.

**Chair Barringer asked the following question:**

Metro is also pioneering the renewal concept of bond measures: staggering issues and measures to maintain a steady tax rate and a steady source of capital or operating income. How will you explain this to the voters and do you ever see an end to the need for this particular bond purpose?

President Peterson answered saying we continue to look to the future. A lot of this question goes back to our renewal of our Metro 2040 and what Councilor Chase started this whole conversation off with is that we will be looking at updating the 2040 vision to a 2070 vision. We're going to be looking at how we incorporate parks into that vision because it wasn't included now.

**Commissioner Ofsink asked this follow up question:**

When was this last updated?

President Peterson said when I was last here 20 years ago. I did the regional transportation plan opposite the new Metro 2040. I would say, look, let's put this in context. We know that there are more needs out there than any of these bond measures or our operating levies can cover. And I think prioritization is going to be a key in the conversation. But how this morphs into a regional system in the future I think is still yet to be developed. There's no crystal ball and there's no determinant factor here. When the salmon are an “X” percentage return maybe but it's going to take a long way to get back because we allowed a lot of habitat degradation.

**Chair Barringer made the following observation:**

It does help to have a long-term plan though as it helps people understand what they're voting for.

President Peterson added I also think that the conversation that we started with this council about the importance of conservation itself needs to be linked up with how people actually access and are part of that so that there's not just an educational component, but an actual health benefit and making those linkages more clear to people as we move forward.

Councilor Gonzalez said one of my favorite things about my term on the council is obviously having the opportunity to connect with people that have invested their lifetimes into this regional vision and planning for the future and all of those battles that we've had to have to get to where we are now to maintain quality of life. My understanding is that, the 1995 and 2006 natural areas bonds were put to the voters that target the most vulnerable sites in the region because we recognize that we have limited resources and we can't do everything that we want to do. We built the 24 different target areas across the region that identify habitat, water, et cetera. I know that we will continue to build on that and we do have that long-term vision and long-term plans. If there's one thing that Metro does well it is the plans.

Councilor Lewis added I have not heard anybody explicitly say, our regional investment strategy is itself a strategy and that we are not only investigating ways that this bond and other bond measures can dovetail with what local jurisdictions are doing or the state or the feds, but how they interplay with each other and explicitly make the connections; parks to transportation, transportation to housing, housing to parks. And we're explicit in that and packaging them as a strategy. So it's not only just planning to plan, but it's across the different silos that governments are creating.

**Commissioner Wubbold asked the following question:**

These bond proceeds will be used for capital projects and to advance Metro’s Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. How do you make a park like Oxbow more accessible and welcoming to low income families and communities of color?

Councilor Chase fielded this question saying you know, again, I go back to the things that we learned from places like Cully Park or an experience we have with the equity initiative where we went to communities and we didn't provide really even much of a framework of criteria. We just said, Hey, what can we do to support your efforts? So the Native American community in Cully Park was asked what would be meaningful here in this park that would be something that we can partner on. And there was a part of the park, built out to a place that is really dedicated to the Native American community for them to go. And it's designed in a way that works for that community.

We went to {a neighborhood group?} and said, how can we engage in your program? They offered up an idea about getting engaged in some of the working in our natural areas and getting folks to spend a week out working with Rangers. They came and testified and half of us were crying because it was so moving, how much it impacted their lives. I think strategies like that where we are bringing the community in and saying, we don't know what is really the most important thing for us to do here. We need you to be involved in helping determine what that is. So I think that's very important.

There's also our work around jobs and creating access to jobs with our bond dollars. And so State of Oregon's Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID) strategies working with our COBID-certified firms and construction pathway project work and really building and creating the apprenticeships and contract work that helps support underserved communities, communities that typically don't have the access to those really great jobs. How do we help perpetrate those strategies with what you find out?

So those are couple of examples specifically if I could specifically mention Oxbow I'm going to look at Dan, but I remember hearing about the salmon because Mike Houck at Urban Greenspaces would send out an email to all this conservation friends and say, you can't believe this. You've got to come out to Oxbow. Well, now we're having a salmon festival because indigenous peoples who were guiding the design of that. It's just a remarkable transformation of how we celebrate this annual natural event.

President Peterson added to this saying it is important to feel safe and be safe as well as feel welcome. There are different ways different people feel welcome and how they feel safe. I think that's a really important aspect of this because there are a lot of parks around this region where people don't feel safe for different reasons.

And acknowledging that and figuring out how do you redesign it so that you do feel safe. With our Native American partners, the other piece that we took away was they're not so much interested in pointing to a map about which lands weren't protected. But how we manage those lands is more important to them. So how we work with them in partnership to manage those lands. So I think that's the kind of thing we're taking away is not what do you think “could you please provide a one comment on this predetermined concepts”? , but then you can just tell us what's important to you and why and what you need to see as an outcome when we start thinking about these things.

Councilor Craddick said the Salmon Festival event is this week end. I find it just fascinating and it almost makes you tearful. You see the salmon spawning. So I don't know if you want to talk about some of the details of the event.

Mr. Moeller said just one comment since it's been well covered, but we can ask specifically how do you can make a difference at any place? It's about listening to the community out there and opening a dialog; genuinely saying, let us hear what's important to you. And we really had to pivot with that Salmon Homecoming Festival, really reengage and meaningfully engage the indigenous community about what it was that's important to them. And what are the outcomes that they wanted to see as part of that festival. What would success like to them, not to Metro, but what truly was important to them?

And so like Councilor Craddick added, there are opportunities to really experience the movement of the salmon through their eyes and not necessarily through the way that we've learned it or understood it. And that's what I think's really important about that festival.

**Chair Barringer asked th**[**is**](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/65wG-l35SXBDampRLUvCCnNPTxK6hbqrHLJgvj9xEpWOiaBfRk1hcUengjqjnkkONuupx7NOFGTbd0er6HI53TInKm4?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=3250.63) **follow up question:**

Is there are way for urban families to get out to Oxbow? That park is quite a ways away from most of the people in Portland.

Councilor Craddick said they have about 10,000 people attend. It's pretty significant. So it's really a busy place.

**Commissioner Norton made the following observation:**

You mentioned Oxbow in your explanatory materials or thinking like, okay, there is an issue for low income people and Oxbow was probably your furthest large public park.

President Peterson said that is a really good point. Transit access is a problem everywhere for a lot more people these days. So it's not just about our park system. It's about the marrying the vision up and being explicit about it, but also that is outside of the transit system.

Councilor chase said Metro has tried different pilots around shuttles to get communities to different areas. We're continuing to learn and explore.

Councilor Gonzalez said I can speak to Chehalem Ridge because that was how I first got engaged with our parks system and it just continues to get better. And I think that obviously with the good governance, in which we continuously try and figure out what's the best, most cost effective way to remove barriers to accessing parks inside and outside the urban growth boundary. I think that's a really important issue and I want to just bring it back home and tie it back into how we can make parks like Oxbow welcoming and accessible.

So an anecdote from the Chehalem Ridge process. One of the really big pieces of learning that I think that Metro walked away with was kind of hitting the reset button in terms of expectations and not necessarily the kind of cookie cutter parks, or trails, or anything like that. But more so of when you ask those questions, how do you act? How do you want to access, how do you want to see yourself represented? It's about creating different trail types. For example, the Chehalem Ridge has multiple grades; a loop that is accessible via wheelchair for people with disabilities; equestrian trails; bike trails etc. that are meant for different purpose.

Community engagement is about more than just putting it up in their language. It's about specifically what you build. It's wider trails, so your family walk on it; because what we learned from the communities of color in West Washington County is that people want to go up in groups of eight to 10 or six to 10 instead of one to two. So it's a different kind of experience that you're asking for in a natural area. And at the same time, people want facilities to come to congregate with family, whether it's picnic, an outing, a time of an opportunity to learn about nature, rather than just one or two people walking on a trail, which has been more of the traditional experience. I think you see a lot of examples of that being changed drastically. Those are some more concrete examples of how we've updated a lot of our plans to incorporate that and I think that's amazing.

**Chair Barringer asked the following questions:**

Natural Area bond proceeds are limited to capital expense. At some point the capital expense stops and ongoing maintenance begins. How does Metro maintain a bright line between when capital ends and operations begins? How much land can Metro continue to acquire and still fund the ongoing operations and maintenance?

Councilor Lewis answered saying Metro has a clear internal process for determining when project expenditures can be considered capital expenses versus operations and maintenance expenditures. In the context of the 2006 Natural Areas Bond, capital expenditures include land acquisition costs, stabilization and major restoration. Staff develop project management plans for capital projects that identify when those projects are complete and they move to an operations and maintenance phase.

It is difficult to answer the question of how much land Metro can acquire and continue to fund ongoing operations and maintenance because those costs are not static. Different types of landscapes have different operations and maintenance costs. Additionally, Metro has invested significantly since 2013 in habitat restoration projects with the funding from the local option levy. A major goal of those restoration projects is to reduce long-term operations and maintenance costs for natural areas by aggressively managing invasive species and restoring native plant communities. It is expected that this strategy will enable Metro to continue maintaining property that is added to the portfolio of parks, trails and natural areas.

**Commissioner Norton asked following questions:**

So follow up to that. I think that that of the reason that we asked this question is that we had bond one and bond two for the natural areas and then we had the local option levy to operate and we still put money for acquisition in this bond measure. And, as president Peterson pointed out, we used to use capital bonds to build a fire station or build a school: one and done like it used to be. But this has this rolling feel to it and acquisition remains a part of it. So at some point your local option levy is going to get tapped out as you add more property. So how do you find the balance point between continuing to acquire and how are you going to take care of it?

Councilor Craddick said this discussion prompted us to go the direction that we've been going for the last nine years. But there was discussion when Tom Hughes was President that we create a special district and we'd have to go to the state legislature to get legislative support to be able to have a permanent tax rate to support maintenance. That took a left turn as those discussions started and it actually helped us develop the local option levy program that we have now. We recognize that if we're going to do anything like that, it's going to have to have the region's support to do it. And we obviously didn't have it at that point. So that was a discussion at one time. It hasn't been discussed since, but I'll just leave it for you guys. Is that something that we would ever even consider again-to go back to the legislature asking that the Metro Region be declared a special district and have a permanent tax rate?

Chair Barringer said that concludes TSCC’s question but there is one member of the audience who has signed up to speak.

Mr. Eric Fruits from Cascade Policy introduced himself and said I'll try to be brief, but I've got a couple of issues to address. I'm an economist and work a lot in the financial and security markets. Just a couple of things. I've heard the word a few times in this meeting, I've seen it in some of the announcements for this meeting characterizing this bond measure as a renewal. I think we need to make it really clear that it is not a renewal. If the voters approved this new bond issue it is different from the 2006 measure, which was different from the 1995 measure. So to characterize it as a renewal I think is a gross mischaracterization. I think a prejudicial to the voters in the region they should be very clear that it is not a renewable.

Another issue, kind of more technical is if you look in the ballot title, there are really three numbers in there. There's the $475 million, there's the 19 cents per thousand of assessed value, and then there's the $48 a year for the average property owner. And I've had a records request asking for the decoder ring that connects the dots between those three numbers. I got a five or six line Excel spreadsheet where it pretty much just said, Oh, we took the 19 cents per thousand, multiply by a $250,000, and that gave us $48 per year. That wasn't what I was looking for. There is an implicit promise to the voters that it won't go higher than 19 cents per thousand. I knew that legally that promise doesn't have to be kept, but in some ways it does because ORS 250.357 mandates that if it is a tax increase, and this is a tax increase, that there has to be a statement on the outside of the envelope of the ballot, that says “Contains vote on proposed tax increase.”

I just got notice from Multnomah County that my ballot is on the way yesterday. So I haven't seen my ballot. I don't know if it says that, but if it doesn't, I'm really concerned about it and we could be violating, ORS 250.357 because this is a tax increase. Because if you think about it versus the status quo, the status quo is not right. If you vote no, the existing bonds expire, taxes go down. So by definition, this is a tax increase. And I hope that the ballot envelopes do indicate that. Also, I'd love to have that decoder ring I'm sure you had somewhere. I don't know why it's so hard to provide.

Another thing that I think is important to flag, is if you look not just through the ballot title and explanatory statement, but also Metro's resolution referring this to the voters, is that every promise in there, other than $475 million about what they will do with the money is vague and speculative. The only project that has a dollar amount attached to it is $20 million for the Willamette Falls Legacy project. Everything else is vague, speculative and uncertain. Although I'm not saying that our councilors are dishonest or giving you a false story. The bottom line is that there really are no firm promises to voters with how this money will be spent. And it's written in a vague way that they can do pretty much anything with it, which gets to my other point raising questions regarding capital expenditures.

I don't know if it's your obligation or the auditor's obligation but there is a lot of vagueness regarding what is the capital expense and what is maintenance because of the ballot title itself indicates that especially if, with respect to parks, that the money will be used for maintenance and maintaining parks. And I think we need to be careful how that maintenance in the maintaining is done. That it needs to be restricted to capital expenditures.

Another issue relates to the purchases of land outside of the urban growth boundary, which on the one hand, I think politically it's problematic. But to me even more problematic is Metro substantial purchases of land outside of its jurisdiction. For example, Chehalem Ridge is outside of Metro’s jurisdiction; there is no counselor that represents Chehalem Ridge because that is outside of Metro's jurisdiction. I think there needs to be greater scrutiny about extra jurisdictional purchases of land because it also raises issue of representation and potential spillovers.

Another thing I think we need to be careful of is that Chair Peterson is cautious to say that she cannot commit future Metro councilors. And that is true as far as it goes. But remember, one of the best ways to commit a future council is by issuing bonds. Because what that is, is then it becomes a commitment for up to 30 years to spend and use that money. It's a way of making a spending decision today that future councils are going to have to stick with. And I think we need to be careful about that because it gives future councils kind of a false sense of agency when they may not have that agency.

You've seen this with the City of Portland where a lot of money was committed via bonds and, and that caused some huge spending on transportation and various other things. I don't want Metro to be put in that same situation. So those are kind of the broad brush issues to your role as the Tax Supervising and Conservation. So thank you for agreeing allow me to speak to you and for your service.

Chair Barringer thanked everyone for answering our questions and thanked Mr. Fruits for his comments. He said with that our hearing will close since the commission will take no action on the measure but rather leave that to the voters.

**Reviewed and Approved by Commission, November 26, 2019**