

*Friends of Mildred Kanipe Memorial Park Association, Inc.
P. O. Box 105, Umpqua, OR 97486*

June 16, 2014

Commissioners Robertson, Morgan and Laurance
Douglas County Board of Commissioners
Roseburg, Oregon

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of the entire board of Friends of Mildred Kanipe Memorial Park Association, Inc., thank you for your continued leadership and collaboration with Friends on the private funding and construction of an equestrian and non-equestrian campground in Douglas County's largest park, Mildred Kanipe Memorial Park (Park). As you know many Douglas County businesses, individuals, organizations and the Whipple Foundation Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation gave enthusiastically and generously. Friends is convinced the business community in Douglas County is fully supportive of the economic diversification and high potential for further businesses growth from development and preservation of the Park.

Friends remains active in supporting the Park financially and are working to secure grants to eradicate noxious weeds and other maintenance, as well as funds for the Park's master plan. Friends remains enthusiastic in assisting the county in reducing the Park's costs and welcomes the opportunity to be involved early in the planning process for future budgets.

Friends has endeavored to collaborate with the Parks Department Director, Gary Groth to ensure the finished project is one all residents can be proud of, and will attract tourism dollars to our local economy. As the Parks Advisory Board members realized while reviewing the benefit of camping reservations in Douglas County parks, "[f]or every tourist dollar spent in a campground seven more are spent in the local economy." (Douglas County Parks Advisory Board minutes, May 21, 2009, page 2.)

Friends is also concerned about the maintenance of the Park, and recently asked Mr. Groth for a meeting. In response, Mr. Groth arranged a meeting on June 9, 2014 with all members of the Parks Advisory Board members, members of the former Mildred Kanipe Park Planning Committee, and members of Friends. At that meeting, Parks Department representatives indicated that there are changes coming to the Park, and made the following statement: "If it's not in the budget, we can't spend it."

In a little over two years, the Park's budget increased from \$24,498 in FY 2012-13 to \$55,494 in 2013-14. It is worthwhile noting that in the Mildred Kanipe Planning Committee process which finished their work six months ago, the Park's estimated expenses totaled \$36,600 (see "Mildred

Kanipe Memorial Park Proposed Annual Budget Revised 9/11/2013,” copy attached). You are now being asked to approve a maintenance budget for Mildred Kanipe Memorial Park for FY 2014-15 in the amount of \$37,380 in personnel services and \$13,025 for materials and other costs for a total cost of \$50,405.

The proposed FY 2014-15 Parks Department budget for maintenance at the Park appears to ask for more than necessary, especially after review of a document entitled “Kanipe Tasks” which the Parks Department provided at the June 9, 2014 meeting, (copy attached). Friends has requested clarification of what the task codes mean, and once received, Friends will spend more time in the collaborative process to assist the Parks Department to further reduce maintenance costs.

As you may be aware, the caretaker position for Mildred Kanipe Memorial Park has been, over the years, an unpaid position. See Parks Advisory Board meeting minutes of 9/17/09; 10/15/09; 4/15/10 and 4/21/11. In the May 21, 2011 PAB meeting minutes, (with six members present who are current members of the PAB), there is the additional comment that “[t]his volunteer position should be fairly easy to fill.”

Volunteer caretakers are the norm for federal, state and county parks. Unpaid volunteer caretakers reduce park system costs by more efficiently providing costly services free of charge, with a reduced tax burden on the tax payers. In the “Kanipe Tasks” for example, there is a weekly record of one person who spent 52 hours in travel and traveled 2,496 miles to haul garbage from the park, once per week. In other notations on the “Kanipe Tasks” document, on at least one occasion, several workers traveled to the park, apparently in different vehicles as each worker claims one hour of travel time and 48 miles, and each report different amounts of time spent at the park (lines 27, 28 and 29).

What is valuable about the provided “Kanipe Tasks” document is the fact that from June 2013 to May 2014, the wages to maintain the Park totals \$14,019 with employees performing much of the work that a caretaker can perform at no cost to the county.

Other Oregon counties, for example Coos County Parks, expect their caretakers to perform many duties including garbage hauling, toilet cleaning and grounds maintenance, along with other light maintenance duties, (copy of Coos County Parks caretaker duties is attached).

Friends therefore makes the following suggestions to you as you endeavor to create a budget for Douglas County residents to meet legitimate government provided services:

1. Reduce the proposed budget for personnel services by \$14,019, the actual costs in the “Kanipe Tasks” to a total of \$7,341 for personnel services with significantly less associated PERS, medical and other benefit costs.
2. Recruit for two unpaid volunteer caretakers for the Park, one for the day use area and one for the campground area.
3. Require those two caretakers to perform duties including garbage hauling, toilet cleaning, grounds maintenance duties and other light maintenance duties in exchange for recreational vehicle parking space.

4. Continue to monitor the actual costs of the Park using the reduced amount in personnel services and monitor costs at all Douglas County parks with “Task Lists” for each park.
5. Reduce the proposed line item costs of \$3,500 for building and grounds maintenance and the additional \$500 for building and grounds maintenance to the anticipated actual contract prices, for example the contract prices for Hawthorne spraying. With an unpaid caretaker doing the mowing, the total \$4,000 can be significantly reduced.
6. Provide signage for the donation boxes. The donation boxes have recently been installed, but there are no signs telling people what the donation boxes are or what the donations will be used for. The donations are a potentially significant source of maintenance revenue for the Park.
7. Include Friends early in the FY 2015-16 Park budget planning process.

Friends appreciates the time and leadership you continue to provide to make Mildred Kanipe Memorial Park a destination in Douglas County, and one that supports existing businesses, helps to develop additional businesses and helps to diversify our economy. We hope our suggestions are helpful to you as you make difficult budget decisions for the next fiscal year.

Very truly yours,

Landa Baily, Board Member
On Behalf of the Board of The
Friends of Mildred Kanipe Memorial
Park Association, Inc.