

Note: This program was presented before restrictions on public activity were announced for Oregonians.

Willamalane Park and Recreation District, the oldest park and recreation district in the state, covers an area slightly larger than the City of Springfield, including most areas inside the City's urban growth boundary, and some small areas beyond.

Michael Wargo, the District's Superintendent, and Kenney Weigandt, Program Manager, Community Engagement, discussed the District's programs and services at the March 5 Springfield City Club meeting.



Michael Wargo

When the district was formed in 1944, the City had 3800 residents, Mr. Wargo said. Now its 46 parks and open spaces serve over 62,000 residents of the area. The district still has its goal of having a park within a 10-minute walk of every resident of the district.

The Bob Keefer Sports Center and adjacent Les Schwab soccer fields are the largest of the District's four facilities, which include both the Splash! center and a pool in the Mohawk area, as well as the Senior Center located near Island Park. The District also manages the Camp Putt miniature golf course in collaboration with Roaring Rapids Pizza. The Keefer Center, in addition to offering a variety of sports activities, also hosts large scale events – recently a home show and in the past few days a three-day gymnastic event. In response to a question, Mr. Wargo said that the need to balance public access with sponsorship of large-scale events means that there is no more room to sponsor additional large-scale events. That is one of the factors the District is weighing in connection with a request from the Springfield Development Corporation to consider involvement in the proposed indoor track facility to be located somewhere in Springfield.



Kenny Weigandt

The Board of Directors is considering that request, he said, but has not made a decision.

He pointed to extensive collaboration with the community in providing recreational programs. One highlight is the OnePass program, which offers youth the opportunity to purchase a pass which includes unlimited free travel on the LTD system as well as admissions on a daily basis to recreational opportunities at 18 sites in Eugene and Springfield, and was planned to include admission to selected events at the 2020 Olympic trials. OnePasses are available at the LTD downtown station as well as at all Willamalane facilities. In addition, a partnership with PeaceHealth allows every 4th grader in the Springfield School District a free swimming lesson, and every child that participates in the Springfield Library readers club gets passes to use Splash! in Thurston.



Mr. Wargo reported that the District has completed the projects that were proposed to be funded by a bond approved by the voters in 2012. In addition, he said, the District has managed its resources so that it can reinvest in existing facilities without seeking additional bonding approval at this time. The district continues to rely on a large number of volunteer hours, as well as 74 full time employees and over 500 part-time staff during the busy season.