

Board of Park Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
March 24, 2005

***Board of Park Commissioners:***

Present: Kate Pflaumer, Chair  
Jack Collins  
Joanna Grist  
Terry Holme  
Debbie Jackson

Excused: Angela Belbeck

***Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff:***

Ken Bounds, Superintendent  
Sandy Brooks, Coordinator

Commission Chair Kate Pflaumer called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. **Commissioner Terry Holme moved and Commissioner Debbie Jackson seconded that the minutes, as corrected, and the agenda, as amended, be approved. The vote was taken and the motion passed. Commissioner Collins abstained.**

**Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience**

The Chair explained that this portion of the agenda is reserved for topics that have not had, or are not scheduled for, a public hearing. Speakers are limited to three minutes each and will be timed. The Board's usual process is for 15 minutes of testimony to be heard at this time, with additional testimony heard after the regular agenda and just before Board of Park Commissioner's business. Six people signed up to testify.

Joe Herrin: He is a member of the Project Advisory Team for the Laurelhurst Community Center Expansion Project. He spoke in support of the project and reported that it is going well. He described a survey that was sent out to the project service area, was e-mailed to 1200 Laurelhurst residents, and was posted on the project web page. Some residents are opposed, as they have concerns over additional traffic and parking needs caused by increased rentals and events.

Al Smith: He is a member of the Friends of Seward Park and urged Parks to revisit Seward's vegetation management plan. He has measured a number of the trees in the park and today measured seven that are 250-260 years old. He agrees that public safety must be ensured, but requested that these old trees not be removed. It is more difficult to remove all the hazards to the public in an old growth forest like Seward. Look for options, aside from removing the trees.

Paul Talbert: He is also a member of the Friends of Seward Park and spoke on the vegetation management plan. His concerns include (1) it doesn't cover the shoreline and hatchery area — add language to address this; and (2) revisit the 87 trees that have been designated as hazards and removal — many of these are habitat trees in the interior of the park where people don't walk; and (3) there has been inadequate time for the public to respond to this plan.

The Chair stated that the Board may hold a public hearing on the plan, if needed.

Joyce Moty: She testified on the Seward Park Vegetation Management Plan and is concerned with the removal of the 87 trees. She agrees with Al and Paul that Parks should preserve some of the trees in the interior that have been marked as hazards and are slated for removal. Many eagle families live in the interior. She urged that Parks keep the wild spaces in Seattle, as many citizens cannot leave the City to travel to the Olympic and Cascade Mountains to view such sights. She suggested a compromise: post signage to the effect that walking in the area could pose hazards and leave some of the trees.

Jeannie Hale: She is President of Laurelhurst Community Council, which represents 2,800 families. She reported that the Council's Board of Trustees is very pleased with the Expansion Project. She also commented that Parks staff David Goldberg and Dan Johnson have been incredibly responsive to the community during this process and have done the best job possible.

Al Hovland: He is a member of the Laurelhurst Community Center Advisory Council and believes the expanded Community Center will be a good asset to the community. Parts of the process have been contentious, but are being worked out. He also referred to the survey that was mailed to the community, in which the community center expansion was favored.

### **Briefing: Laurelhurst Community Center Expansion**

David Goldberg, Parks Planning and Development Specialist, came before the Board to give a briefing on the Laurelhurst Community Center Expansion project. The Board received both a written and verbal briefing. The written briefing included a number of drawings of the project.

#### *Written Briefing*

#### **Requested Board Action**

This briefing is for informational purposes only. No action is being requested.

#### **Project Description and Background**

The Pro Parks Levy objective is to expand and update the existing Laurelhurst Community Center for improved and added recreation spaces, with community involvement, and per Park standards by the end of 2006. The project is at the final schematic design phase. A location map and schematic design drawings are attached.

The exterior of building and the grounds within 10 feet of the building have been designated as a Seattle landmark. Since this is an expansion project to an historic structure, the history of the site and building affect the design of the expansion.

**Community Center** –The 5,200 SF community center is set into a hillside with a lower half-basement level open on the rear west elevation. The entry is at the top of a small knoll at the south end of the park. There are views to the east (Lake Washington and the Cascades) and the west (University District). The Community Center was completed in 1935 with Federal jobs program labor. The building displays some classic Tudor Revival details of gabled roof, multi-paned windows and paneled wood shutters along with a the brick façade. The building's main floor at the entry grade contains a social room with a fireplace, small adjacent kitchen, a storage room, and a small staff office. There is a pottery room and miscellaneous support spaces and restrooms on the lower level.

**Laurelhurst Elementary School Gymnasium** - The City and school district have a joint-use facility at the Laurelhurst Elementary School located across from the playfield. The 6,000 square foot gym was constructed in 1950. Parks uses the gym after 3:00 P. M. and contributes to the maintenance of this facility. There is support in the community for improving gym facilities however the intent of the Levy and the available budget precludes working on

the gym. The joint use agreement will continue. The Laurelhurst Community Center Advisory Council has expressed a desire to upgrade that facility and will develop a short and long-term improvement plan.

**Playfield Features** – The playfield entrance is at the south end of the park at the community center and on a knoll. Mature deciduous and fir trees cloak the westerly slopes of the park, flanking the north and south ends of the community center building as well as the park edges and the forested northwest corner hillside. Features include: children’s play area; tennis courts, ballfields; and a soccer field. A pedestrian path circles the playfield. Parking consists of curbside spaces around the entry loop.

### **Public Involvement Process**

**Public Meetings:** Parks and the Project Advisory Team (PAT) have hosted three public meetings during the past fall and early winter. The meetings were advertised via postcard mailings, press releases, e-mail notification and mention in the Laurelhurst Community Club newsletters. Approximately 25 – 35 individuals attended each meeting.

**PAT Meetings:** Parks has also held six project PAT meetings. The PAT has advised project staff and consultants, and helped to shape the final design and function of the community center expansion.

### **Issues**

The following describes the process to develop the schematic design and some of the issues raised along the way by community members.

**Design Goals and Concept Planning** - The Pro Parks Levy and CIP language is broad and allowed consideration of elements that would exceed the available budget. The design consultant developed project alternatives of feasible siting and program options. The options considered costs, Building Code and other considerations to ensure they can be achieved within the budget. Based on feedback received from the Project Advisory Team (PAT), community review and the results of a questionnaire, the consultant, VIA Suzuki, narrowed the options to those that:

- Attached new space to the existing building;
- Provided activity space rather than a new gym space; and
- Included a multi-purpose room on the main (second) floor.

A number of community members expressed support for construction of a new gym or renovation of the existing gym. Other community members desire either no expansion or a limited expansion. Parks and the PAT considered this input and determined that there has been strong and consistent community support for the expansion and specifically, activity space. The Community Center Advisory Community will be working with the Laurelhurst Community Club and Seattle School District to consider options for future improvements to the existing gym. In responding to concerns about the scale of the addition, VIA Suzuki worked with the PAT to develop design goals that addressed the context as well as other design considerations:

- Creating an addition that complements the existing community center in terms of scale, massing, traditional form, and relationship to the landscape;
- Siting the addition so as to preserve existing significant trees and green space on the site;
- Creating a logical sequence of entry and transition spaces from outdoors to indoors;
- Improving the internal organization of the building to provide informal gathering spaces, to allow internal access to a variety of activity rooms, and to enable staff supervision of the entire facility;
- Organizing the primary functions to maximize excellent views available from the building; and
- Improving accessibility throughout the facility.

**Schematic Site Design** - The schematic design consists of a two-story addition on the west side of the existing field house. It is designed in a way that respects the existing historic structure and learns from traditional building precedents, while simultaneously expressing modern building practices and approaches. The addition is compact in floor area and is sited to minimize impacts on the highly valued and well-used park landscape that surrounds the

building. The main feature will be a new multipurpose room (“great room”) on the second floor that enjoys expansive views to the west and has a small balcony to provide associated outdoor space.

The addition’s massing is designed as a “sibling building” to the existing community center, separated by a glazed atrium circulation element that facilitates daylight penetration into the building’s heart. The glazed connector also separates the two structures and permits the west face of the existing building, including brick finish and windows, to be preserved as an internal wall within the new floor plan. The roof forms of the addition are designed to complement the asymmetrical forms on the north and south faces of the existing building. Eave lines are kept as low as possible so as to reduce the overall mass of the building as the grade slopes away to the west. Two large gables face the west that reduces the overall scale of this façade, while opening views for the large second story multipurpose space. A small outdoor balcony is provided on the southwest corner of the multipurpose room.

The lower level consists of activity rooms, and covered outdoor space that will provide a sheltered play area, parks maintenance storage, and space for an outdoor kiln. These spaces will be separated by grilles or screens that will provide visual continuity to the building’s exterior walls as the larger upper floor plate extends down to the ground plane. The schematic design includes the following features spaces:

- Multi-purpose room and food preparation kitchen;
- “Fireplace Room;”
- Lobby and reception area;
- Staff offices;
- Accessible restrooms; and
- 3 activity rooms including a pottery room

**Budget**

The project budget is \$2,907,427.

**Schedule**

Final Design	Now – September 2005
Construction Bid	Fall 2005
Construction	Winter 2006 – Early Fall 2006
Completion	November 2006

**Additional Information**

Maureen A. O’Neill, North East Operation Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation, maureenao’neill@seattle.gov  
Dan Johnson, Project Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation, (206) 684-7149, dan.johnson2@seattle.gov  
David Goldberg, Project Planner, Seattle Parks and Recreation, (206) 684-8414, davidw.goldberg@seattle.gov

**Web Address:** <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/proparks/projects/laurelhurst.htm>

***Verbal Briefing/Board Questions & Answers***

Mr. Goldberg displayed three large drawings of the project and reviewed the information in the written briefing. The Board asked several questions to clarify the size of the future lobby, which looked fairly large on the drawings. Mr. Goldberg explained that the lobby would be used not only for guests to enter, but also as a social and transition area. He will talk to the architect as to whether the size can be reduced. The Board asked about the fireplace room and whether there are fireplaces in other park facilities. Mr. Goldberg answered that it is currently a wood fireplace, but will be converted to gas. There is also a fireplace at Camp Long. Commissioner Holme asked about the programming in the fireplace room and Mr. Goldberg answered that the Association Recreation Council will program the rooms’ activities. The Board asked a couple more questions on the design.

The discussion next turned to parking. Mr. Goldberg explained that 20 additional spaces are needed to accommodate the expanded events. He pointed out on the map some possibilities and discussed the logistics. Some community members would prefer that no additional parking be added, as they are concerned with the loss of 18 feet of grass in

the park. The Superintendent commented that there is also on-street parking nearby. Commissioner Collins observed that 20 parking spaces will not be adequate. It is true in most parks that no one wants the park to turn into a giant parking lot to accommodate the visitors; neither do they want to inundate the neighborhood with vehicles. He asked if Parks would have access to the nearby City Light property to use as parking. The Superintendent answered that if City Light surplused the property, Parks would have to purchase it. Mr. Goldberg commented that it would be an unsafe distance to walk from the City Light property to the Community Center.

Commissioner Holme asked about the gymnasium and whether there would be lost capacity. The Superintendent answered that this is not foreseen to happen. The gym is funded jointly with Seattle School District.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. Goldberg for the briefing.

### **Briefing: Montlake Community Center Expansion**

David Goldberg, Parks Planning and Development Specialist, next gave a briefing on the Montlake Community Center Expansion project. The Board received both a written and verbal briefing. The written briefing included a number of drawings of the project.

#### *Written Briefing*

#### **Requested Board Action**

No action is being requested.

#### **Project Description and Background**

This project will expand the existing Montlake Community Center located at 1618 E. Calhoun Street to add recreation spaces such as a multipurpose room, kitchen, showers and offices, by the end of 2006. The project is at the schematic design phase. A site plan and schematic design illustrations are attached. The existing community center exterior, the grounds within ten feet of the exterior and the hall have been designated as a Seattle landmark, however the focus of improvements will be around the existing gym.

**Site** - The playfield began development in the late 1920's. The site was then an undeveloped, thirty-acre dahlia flower nursery along the marshy south shoreline edge of Portage Bay. Montlake community raised funds via LID assessments and obtained local materials and Federal work relief agency labor to build a playfield and a small field house dedicated in 1935.

**Tudor Building** - This is a Tudor-style, gabled-roof brick building built in 1934 and 2,800 SF in size. It contains a 37' x 27' social room with a fireplace, a pottery craft room, and two small office/storage spaces together with men and women's toilets. The restrooms are old, with dark brick interior and out of date fixtures and are not ADA accessible. The main social room cannot serve as a multi-purpose room due to its small size and the lack of a food preparation area. The building has undergone several minor remodels, with the most recent work in 1987 to remove the old boiler and replace it with a heat pump.

**Gym** - The 7,015 square foot gym building was built in 1977. This building includes a foyer, office, storage and a combined restrooms/showers/locker room each for men and women. There is no main entry to the community center, only a small foyer that leads directly into the gym and small staff office area. The basketball court is smaller than a current Park Standard whose larger sideline provides space for spectators. The existing relatively narrow court sideline offers scant room for teams and spectators to stand or sit and watch games and play on side courts.

**Modular** - The 1,792 square foot Modular is a portable building donated by the Community Center Advisory Council in 1998. The Modular has no restrooms. The one office located in the Modular enables staff to visually monitor program activities in the adjacent space. The modular will be removed as part of this project.

**Annex** - An old 800 SF metal structure provides space for pre-Camp (3 – 5 yrs.) and backup meeting space. The annex will be removed.

### **Public Involvement Process**

**Public Meetings** - Parks and the Project Advisory Team (PAT) have hosted three public meetings during the past fall and early winter. The meetings were advertised via postcard mailings, press releases, e-mail notification and mention in the Montlake Community Club newsletters. Approximately 25 individuals attended each meeting.

**PAT Meetings** - Parks has also held six project PAT meetings. The PAT has advised project staff and consultants, and helped to shape the final design and function of the community center expansion.

### **Issues**

**Design Goals and Concept Planning** - The Pro Parks Levy and CIP language is broad and allowed consideration of elements that would exceed the available budget. The design consultant, Carlson Architects, developed project alternatives of feasible siting and program options. The options considered costs, Building Code and other considerations to ensure they can be achieved within the budget. Carlson Architects developed conceptual alternatives that met the program requirements and their site design intentions to:

- Respect and enhance the linkage to the Tudor building;
- Effectively utilize outdoor space not currently well used;
- Capitalize on the exposure to the water/shoreline;
- Capture space between the Tudor and the Gym buildings, creating a central gathering space;
- Emphasize entry points, and enhance the entry sequence; and
- Consolidate the functions of existing temporary structures into new spaces.

Carlson established the following design goals to assist with developing and considering schematic design alternatives:

- Design an addition to enhance the existing building in a seamless way and avoid contrasting the new and the old;
- Create a wonderful big room (multi-purpose room): enclosing, grand, and focused toward the natural landscape;
- Visually “open” the gym – turning the inside out, and vice versa;
- Create inside circulation spaces that are open, light filled, and with vistas outward at each end of the corridors to park greenery and the lake; and
- Make the circulation areas usable for social interaction, waiting and relaxing.

**Schematic Design** - Based on feedback received from the PAT, community review and the results of a questionnaire, Carlson narrowed the options that attached the new space to the west and south of the gym rather than either linking the gym and Tudor building or adding on to the Tudor building. The resulting final schematic design includes the following spaces:

- Multi-purpose room and food preparation kitchen – This “great room” looks out to the open field and shoreline of Portage Bay. It is separated from the gym by a corridor to allow openings in the existing gym wall;
- Lobby and reception area – The lobby and reception area greet visitors that arrive by car or by foot from E. Calhoun St. The reception desk provides visual surveillance of the two corridors, courtyard and Tudor building;
- Staff offices - The offices also look out the courtyard and Tudor building;
- Accessible restrooms; and
- 1 new activity room – The activity room looks out on the children’s play are and courtyard and provides opportunities for connections to the adjacent outside areas.

Carlson will continue to develop variations of building rooflines and materials to create a unified design that is congruent with the existing building and meet the community's expectations. The existing courtyard is to be enlarged by removing the metal annex building and opening up views eastward. The designers propose using a "light hand" in making landscape improvements to the courtyard to improve the linkages between buildings and create a pleasant "outdoor room" that will have a sense of place. Lastly, the designers will explore ways to make the water-saturated lawn to the west more usable in order to enhance the relationship between the Multi-purpose room and the landscape.

### **Budget**

The budget for this project is \$3,385,670.

### **Schedule**

<i>Final Design</i>	<i>Now – September 2005</i>
<i>Construction Bid</i>	<i>Fall 2005</i>
<i>Construction</i>	<i>Winter 2006 – Early Fall 2006</i>
<i>Completion</i>	<i>November 2006</i>

### **Additional Information**

Maureen A. O'Neill, North East Operation Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation, maureenao'neill@seattle.gov  
Dan Johnson, Project Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation, (206) 684-7149, dan.johnson2@seattle.gov  
David Goldberg, Project Planner, Seattle Parks and Recreation, (206) 684-8414, davidw.goldberg@seattle.gov  
**Web Address:** <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/proparks/projects/laurelhurst.htm>

### ***Verbal Briefing/Questions & Answers***

Mr. Goldberg displayed several large drawings of the project and reviewed information in the written briefing. He pointed out the west elevations and stated that the roofline is still in design. Several questions were asked on the Community Center's proximity to the shoreline and how this affects the project. The expansion goes right to the 200' from the shoreline that is allowed. The Chair asked if any of the playfield will be lost to the expansion and Mr. Goldberg answered that a small bit on the west side — that stays wet much of the time — will be lost. Commissioner Collins asked if the Board should hold a hearing on the controversy over the portable buildings. The Superintendent and Mr. Goldberg answered that both locating the portables, and providing staffing in them, is very difficult. The expansion is being done so that Montlake Community Center will not need portables. Commissioner Holme stated that he appreciated hearing from Laurelhurst community members of their support of that expansion project and wondered why no one came to testify for Montlake. He asked that the community support be relayed to the Board. Mr. Goldberg stated that both the recommendation to expand and the expansion design came from the Project Advisory Team.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. Goldberg for the briefing.

### **Briefing: Volunteer Park Vegetation Management Plan**

Eliza Davis, Parks Urban Forester, came before the Board to give a briefing on the Volunteer Park Vegetation Management Plan. The Board received both a written and verbal briefing.

### ***Written Briefing***

#### **Requested Board Action**

This briefing is for informational purposes only; no vote by the Board of Park Commissioners is requested.

This project is being brought to the Board because Volunteer Park's vegetation is significant for both its Olmsted design heritage and its outstanding collection of mature ornamental trees. As the centerpiece of the Seattle Park system, Volunteer Park also is located in a densely urban neighborhood where vegetation is the subject of intermittent

concern regarding user safety. Volunteer Park's trees have never been the subject of a comprehensive evaluation for their long-range management.

### **Project Description and Background**

The intent of this Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) is to set direction for the care and regeneration of Volunteer Park's highly-valued trees and related, historic landscape, consistent with established design and use. Development of the plan is a major maintenance CIP, funded from the Cumulative Reserve Fund and managed by Parks Urban Forestry staff (Eliza Davidson). The plan incorporates research by staff as well as arboricultural consultants, with additional content from interested individuals and organizations (Audubon, Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks and others).

As an urban forestry project, this VMP focuses on the current and future needs of Volunteer Park's trees, in the interest of perpetuating a healthy, safe and species-rich canopy for future generations. As part of plan development, the park's canopy was evaluated for:

- Hazardous trees
- Outstanding, rare and Olmsted design specimens, rows and groups
- Trees stressed from disease, pests, suppression, crowding, compaction, drought, and physical damage.
- Invasive species and self-sown plants
- Contribution or threat to intended landscape character, notably view
- Security impediments
- Appropriateness in relation to established park uses.

Management recommendations address specific ways to improve canopy quality, longevity, diversity and safety, through tree pruning, removal and strategic replanting over the next 20 years. Because deferred maintenance has been significant in both Volunteer Park's trees and understory, the process of landscape change will be gradual but highly visible.

The full draft VMP and December 2003 public meeting Powerpoint presentation will be available for review or download on 3/21/05 at: <http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/Horticulture/vmp.htm#VMP>. The presentation includes images of the park's vegetation and historic landscape evolution, as well as an overview of the draft plan.

### **Public Involvement Process**

VMP development has followed an approved Public Involvement Process (PIP) that includes two public meetings (on October 16, 2003, and November 19, 2003) and a three-week period for public draft review. Notification methods have included: press, Parks website calendar, carrier route and interest list mass mailings, email, and project signage posted in the park. Draft document copies are available for review at nearby libraries.

Public meeting attendance was very light, only eight attendees at each meeting, plus staff. At the first meeting, the VMP was introduced and ideas regarding scope solicited. At the second meeting, the main purpose was for staff to present preliminary vegetation management recommendations prior to public document review. Those who came expressed strong interest in the plan and devotion to Volunteer Park.

### **Issues**

This project has aroused minimal controversy, although implementation may be expected to inspire both supportive and critical comment depending on how people view visible landscape changes. Citizens and Dept. staff have raised the following issues:

- Neglect has created a seriously overgrown landscape with multiple related consequences:
  - Tree and understory crowding and decline
  - Invasive ornamental plant spread
  - Loss of light and views
  - Deterioration of landscape aesthetic quality



- Increased harborage for illicit activities
- Invasive, self-sown plants have eliminated the ornamental understory tree layer, reducing diversity and beauty and making vegetation too dense and dangerous.
- Off-leash area use damaged trees and should never be reinstated; many dogs still run free and trample plants and disturb birds.
- Numbers of trees that need to be removed for overall canopy health is very high (however most are small and declining, and will come out over many years)
- Community stewardship needs to be cultivated – a huge untapped resource
- Lack of consensus on degree to which Olmsted plan should govern future management of park landscape, which has evolved over time.
- Constant citizen pressure to donate trees needs to be channeled appropriately.
- Long-term health and viability of Volunteer Park vegetation would clearly benefit from increased maintenance resources, however provided.

The VMP attempts to address the above concerns in a balanced manner; for the most part, management strategies will solve multiple problems simultaneously.

### **Budget**

This \$50,000 2003 CIP project creates a long-range management plan without funds for implementation. Full VMP implementation over 20 years is estimated at over \$2.8 million. Of this amount, less than 15% is for tree management, due to large SPR staff contributions. The remainder funds extensive understory invasive removal, pruning and replanting, turf restoration, mulching, irrigation system replacement and Water Tower toxic soil remediation. The implementation budget summary is attached.

Volunteers will provide an important resource for implementation, to the extent that the nature of the needs at Volunteer Park allows; in this developed landscape with major horticultural and arboricultural work to be done, Parks staff contributions and contracted services will play a more significant role than in natural area parks.

### **Schedule**

This current project funds plan development only. The VMP draft is now undergoing public review. Revisions based on comments received will be incorporated in early- to mid-April 2005 and the Final VMP will then be sent to the Superintendent for adoption. After the plan is adopted, implementation work will occur gradually, using Parks tree crews, District and Urban Forestry staff as available. Additional implementation will be through funded landscape improvement projects in the park in 2005 and beyond. Expressions of strong private funding interest may add significant implementation support through Seattle Parks Foundation.

### **Additional Information**

For further information contact:

Eliza Davidson, Urban Forester – Project Manager

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(206) 233-5019

### ***Verbal Briefing/Questions & Answers***

Ms. Davidson reviewed the information from the written briefing. She displayed four drawings that included the Olmsted Planting Plan Overlay, Hazardous Tree Management, Vegetation Management Plan, and the Recommended Planting.

The Commissioners asked about the purpose of the plan. Ms. Davidson answered that the intent is to remove small and spindly trees. Some of these are older trees, but have been undernourished, partially due to invasive species and to over planting in some area. Invasive species have self-seeded themselves, especially holly. 80% of the recommended

tree removal is of holly trees. The removal will give better visibility and safety and improve the designated viewpoints in the park. Ms. Davidson gave this example: until the 1960's, the view on the far west side of the reservoir faced downtown. Most of that view has now been lost to the trees.

The Commissioners asked about the native species and the historic Olmsted design of this park. Ms. Davidson answered that the Olmsteds interwove some native species they considered "worthy". The Olmsteds did not design the plantings near the tennis court.

Citizens who attended the public meetings were generally supportive of the plan. Letting additional light into the park and opening up vistas helps offset any tree loss. If work is done gradually, the public is more accepting of the vegetation removal.

Commissioner Collins recommended that Parks staff post signage at the Volunteer Park Asian Art Museum explaining the project. Ms. Davidson agreed with this. Commissioner Collins also asked if the Friends of Volunteer Park is active and Ms. Davidson answered that the president of the group recently moved to another area. Mr. Mead commented that the two vegetation plans presented tonight to the Board are very different. Seward Park has many volunteers who assist with vegetation removal. Volunteer Park has few. The public may assume that Volunteer is doing well without assistance from the public.

Commissioner Holme asked for documentation on the effects of an off-leash area in parks so the Board would have this information for future reference. (An off-leash area was installed at Volunteer Park and subsequently removed.) Ms. Davidson stated that this is in Appendix B of the vegetation management plan. A metal tag will be installed on each tree slated to be removed one month prior to the removal.

The Commissioners thanked Ms. Davis for the briefing.

## **Briefing: Seward Park Vegetation Management Plan**

Eliza Davis, Parks Urban Forester, next briefed the Board on the Seward Park Vegetation Management Plan. The Board received both a written and verbal briefing.

### *Written Briefing*

#### **Requested Board Action**

This briefing is for informational purposes only; no Park Board vote is requested.

This project is being brought to the Board because of Seward Park's importance to Seattle's urban forest and as an anchor of the park system. This Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) will set direction for the care and restoration of Seward Park's high-value conifer forest and landscapes for a generation or longer.

#### **Project Description and Background**

This project creates a long-term plan for managing Seward Park's vegetation, focusing primarily on forested uplands rather than shoreline and developed landscape areas. Seward Park is the last major park in our system possessing significant forest resources for which a VMP has not already been developed by Seattle Parks and Recreation's Urban Forest Restoration Program. This park is widely known for its extensive pre-settlement forest (sometimes loosely called "old growth"), the ecological value of which has grown exponentially as urbanization spreads and intensifies. Seward Park is also a key element in Seattle's Olmsted Park and Boulevard System, although park improvements do not reflect the firm's design.

The March 2005 Draft VMP introduction and executive summary are attached, as well as key VMP maps illustrating:

- Existing vegetation areas and identified significant and hazardous trees;
- Proposed management areas and special reclamation sites; and

- Priority locations for invasive plant control.

The full draft document and January 12, 2005 public meeting Powerpoint presentation will be available for review or download on 3/21/05 at: <http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/Horticulture/vmp.htm#VMP>. The presentation includes relevant images of the park's vegetation, as well as information about the preliminary draft plan.

Development of the Seward Park VMP is a major maintenance CIP, funded from Cumulative Reserve Fund and managed by Parks Urban Forestry staff (Eliza Davidson). The plan incorporates research and content generated by staff as well as botanical and forestry consultants (Seattle Urban Nature Project and International Forestry Consultants, respectively), with additional contributions from interested individuals and organizations.

### **Public Involvement Process**

VMP development has followed an approved Public Involvement Process (PIP) that includes two public meetings and a three week period for public draft review, with notification via press, Parks website calendar, carrier route and interest list mass mailings, email, and project signage posted throughout the park.

Public meetings were attended by modest but very engaged groups (11-16 attendees plus staff and consultant), on December 16, 2004, and January 12, 2005. At the first meeting the VMP was introduced and ideas regarding scope solicited. At the second meeting, the purpose was primarily for the staff urban forester and consultant to present preliminary vegetation management recommendations prior to public document review. Attendees also interjected several comments at this meeting.

### **Issues**

Issues raised at the public meetings and via citizen phone and email comment have focused on the following major concerns:

- Mountain beaver control (opposing proposed live trapping to reduce areas of deforestation and lost tree regeneration)
- Hazard tree numbers, types and locations (concern about loss of major forest trees and highly-valued habitat, based on perceived excess emphasis on liability)
- Shoreline (unresolved conflicts among functions of historic character with views to lake, recreational access to water, and salmon habitat enhancement)
- Implementation (sense that insufficient funding and inability to sustain staff commitment will make it challenging to achieve plan objectives, particularly for invasive plant control)
- Spread of non-native grasses (continued introduction, as in recent Hatchery project's hydro-seeding, further threatening indigenous plants)
- Garry oak habitat (preservation and restoration of this rare plant community)
- Environmental stewardship and education (need to broaden awareness and deepen community commitment to native ecosystem)

The draft VMP addresses these issues to the extent feasible without endangering park users or committing to unrealistic levels of Parks Department-funded implementation.

### **Budget**

This \$70,000 2004-05 CIP project creates a long-range plan and funds limited near-term implementation. Up to \$10,000 will be directed toward implementation work in 2005. VMP implementation over 20 years, in 2005 dollars is estimated at \$1,543,000. VMP implementation costs depend on how and by whom tasks are accomplished. As with other park VMP's, volunteers will be the primary resource for implementation, together with Parks staff contributions, private donations, grant funding, and Parks and other agency project tie-ins. Top priority implementation initiatives are shown on the following table with estimated costs and timeframe.

Action	Location	Cost Estimate	Timeframe
High Hazard Tree Mitigation	Park-wide	\$90,000	2005-2007
Ivy Off Trees	Hatchery area	\$25,000	2005
Ivy Off Trees	North point	\$28,000	2005-2006
Ivy Off Trees	South portion, North Forest	\$40,000	2006
Ivy Off Trees	South of Loop Drive	\$25,000	2006-2007
Holly Eradication	North Forest	\$50,000	2006-2007
Holly Eradication	South of Loop Drive	\$ 6,500	2007
Garry Oak/Madrone Regeneration and Protection	Zone 39	\$15,000	2008-2009
Forest Regeneration	Zone 9, Deciduous Forest	\$200,000	2008-2009
Manage Significant Trees	Park-wide	\$10,000	2005
Block Social trails	North Forest	\$10,000	2005-2006
Meadow Conversion	South of Loop Drive	\$60,000	2009
Develop Shoreline VMP	Shoreline	\$25,000	2005-2006
Develop Hatchery VMP	Hatchery	\$6,000	2005-2006
Total		\$555,000	

### **Schedule**

The VMP draft is now undergoing public review. Revisions based on comments received will be incorporated in early- to mid-April 2005 and the Final VMP then forwarded to the Superintendent for adoption. Implementation work will begin this spring with EarthCorps-managed volunteer work parties to remove invasive plants and encourage forest regeneration. Any associated planting will be deferred until late this year because of current drought conditions.

### **Additional Information**

For further information contact:

Eliza Davidson, Urban Forester – Project Manager

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### ***Verbal Briefing/Questions & Answers***

Ms. Davidson reviewed the information in the written briefing, including a brief history of the park. 85 hazard trees have been designated, with 26 requiring urgent removal. Staff members have been judicious about selecting trees for hazard removal and looked at those trees near the playground, pathways, etc., that pose a safety hazard. The Chair asked Ms. Davis to define hazard tree and she answered that Parks staff used the standard industry and looked at what a large tree might hit if it came down. Commissioner Collins asked if, along with objectively looking at the trees using this standard, does personal judgment come into the mix. Ms. Davidson answered yes and that the Department's Senior Forester makes the final assessment of any trees marked as hazard. Some citizens also hired an independent arborist to assess the trees. The Department's assessment is preliminary and is standard protocol for urban forests. She recommends that a walk-through be performed yearly to assess the condition of the trees.

Commissioner Jackson asked if all the trees that are marked are slated to be removed. Ms. Davidson answered no. Some will have pruning, while others will be monitored and observed. 26 are slated for priority removal and, where possible, these will be left for habitat trees. Of these 26, none are old growth, according to Mark Mead, Senior Forester. Four trees were recently removed near the parking lot and much of the trunks were already decayed. Two trees of significant size near picnic shelters 3 and 4 are over 100' tall and have extensive root rot.

Ms. Davidson spoke briefly about the shoreline and hatchery area vegetation, which was not a focus of this plan. The habitat needs of the shoreline are very different from that of the interior forest. The Superintendent commented that Parks staff member Kevin Stoops came before the Board several months ago to give a briefing on shoreline projects. These areas, including the Environmental Learning Center, will need a separate vegetation management plan.

Commissioner Collins asked when the Friends of Seward Park were able to access this plan and Ms. Davidson answered that it became available to them last week. One citizen testified earlier in the evening that there hadn't been adequate time for the public to read and comment on the plan.

There was a brief discussion on the extent of the native poison oak in the park and its removal. Ms. Davidson stated that any removal would primarily be around the picnic shelters and play area; the rest would be left to nature. Signage is posted warning of the risk of poison oak. Commissioner Holme asked if there are any encampments in the park and Ms. Davidson answered that there are hardly any due to the park being located on a peninsula and its isolated location. The mountain beavers are very active in this park and have no predators. They are decimating the under story and young trees. Currently, Parks is holding off on trapping and removing the beaver.

Ms. Davidson stated that the big concern now is how will Parks get all the needed work accomplished. A number of agencies will assist, including the Green Seattle Partnership.

The Commissioners thanked Ms. Davidson for the briefing.

## **Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Bounds reported on the following:

\$10 Million for South Lake Union Park: Mayor Greg Nickels and the Seattle Parks Foundation announced a \$10 million contribution from Vulcan, Inc. to help build the new South Lake Union Park. This is the largest private contribution to a public park in Seattle's history. Vulcan's contribution will be delivered in two parts over five years: \$5 million immediately to fund the first phase of construction and \$5 million as a challenge grant after the foundation has raised the remaining \$10 million. This will be legislated in the next few months.

Magnuson Park Appeal Rejected: The Superior Court judge has rejected the appeal, stating that Parks' Environmental Impact Statement and seven years of planning is adequate. The appellants could still appeal to the Court of Appeals.

Aquarium Project Approved: The Landmark Preservation Board recently gave unanimous approval for this project.

Northgate Groundbreaking: Ceremonies were held to celebrate the groundbreaking of the Northgate Library/Community Center/Playfield project. Several of the Park Commissioners attended.

Olympic Sculpture Park: Local newspapers have reported on the Port of Seattle's offer of property to house the Waterfront Trolley maintenance facility. This proposal would involve extending the trolley line through Myrtle Edwards Park. Although this option sounds like it could address the competing needs of the Seattle Art Museum and the communities and businesses that depend on the streetcar service, Parks will be working closely with other City departments to take a hard look at the costs and other factors involved with this option.

Ruckelshaus Joins Aquarium Capital Campaign: Bill Ruckelshaus, former head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, has agreed to be honorary chairman of the Seattle Aquarium Society’s capital campaign. He will certainly add luster and credibility to the fundraising efforts.

Good Weather Increases Park Usage: The unseasonably good weather has brought on an increased use of parks in February and March and huge demands for maintenance. Staff has initiated peak season activities early this year without peak season staffing. The Pro Parks comfort station crew is cleaning and pressure washing all comfort stations that had been closed.

Othello Park Community Meeting: On March 18, Parks staff, along with representatives from Seattle Police Department and Department of Neighborhoods attended a meeting with citizens who live near Othello Park to discuss their concerns regarding the shooting fatality that occurred the weekend of March 12/13. Approximately 60 neighbors and concerned citizens participated in discussions and expressed extreme concern with their safety in and around the Othello Park and neighborhood.

Steinbrueck Park Community Meeting: Parks staff held a community meeting with 35 business representatives and residents who work and live near Victor Steinbrueck Park. Community members have started a Friends of Steinbrueck Park group and developed an action plan. Many of the concerns focus on safety issues and appropriate behavior in the park. City Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck attended.

**Upcoming Events**

Saturday, April 2: Dedication and ribbon cutting for Arboretum Trail Restoration, Noon-1:00 pm

Thursday, April 7: Luna Park ribbon cutting and dedication, 6:30-8:00 pm

Saturday, April 16: Kubota Garden completion celebration and dedication

**Board of Park Commissioners’ Business**

None

**New/Old Business**

- ❖ Commissioner Holme requested a future discussion as to when issues should come before the Board and also requested a “trigger point” list be developed to help make this determination. (This was in reference to the recent briefing on a project at Colman Playground.)
- ❖ Commissioner Holme commented that the Board is invited to many events and a number of these also request donations. How do Board members stay engaged and support these various groups without feeling compelled to give to each? After a brief discussion, it was determined that there is no Board policy on this — members are to decide for themselves to what cause, and in what amounts, they are comfortable giving.
- ❖ Commissioner Collins asked for an update briefing on Washington Park Arboretum. Commissioners also requested an update briefing from the Association Recreation Council.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kate Pflaumer, Chair  
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE \_\_\_\_\_