

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
Meeting Held at 100 Dexter Avenue North  
January 10, 2008  
Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>

***Board of Park Commissioners:***

Present:

John Barber  
Terry Holme  
Donna Kostka  
Christine Larsen  
Jackie Ramels  
Amit Ranade, Chair

Excused:

Neal Adams

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

Christopher Williams, Deputy Superintendent  
Sandy Brooks, Park Board Coordinator

Commissioner Ranade called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and acknowledged that the Board has received a great deal of correspondence since its last regular meeting of November 8, 2007.

**Commissioner Ramels moved, and Commissioner Holme seconded, approval of the agenda. Commissioner Barber moved, and Commissioner Ramels seconded, approval of the November 8 minutes as corrected. Motions carried.**

**Superintendent's Report**

Deputy Superintendent Christopher Williams reported on several park items. Superintendent Gallagher is out of the office this week on a much-deserved vacation. For more information on Seattle Parks and Recreation, visit the web pages at <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/>.

Councilmember Rasmussen Attends Park Board Meeting: Councilmember Rasmussen attended tonight's meeting and introduced himself to the Board and the audience as the new chair of the City Council's Parks and Seattle Center Committee [replaced the Parks, Education, Libraries, and Labor (PELL) Committee.] He commented that chairing this committee is a wonderful assignment for him. He looks forward to meeting with both the full Board and Board chair on a regular basis. Deputy Superintendent and the Board gave Councilmember Rasmussen a warm welcome and stated that they look forward to working with him.

New Manager for Langston Hughes: Vivian Phillips has been hired as an interim manager for the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center for the next 8-12 months. All staff at Langston Hughes will report to Ms. Phillips, who has an extensive background in the arts community and was previously press secretary to former Mayor Paul Schell. For more information on the Performing Arts Center, see <http://cityofseattle.net/parks/centers/langston.htm>,

New Policy Manager: Parks has hired Rebecca Salinas to be the new manager of the Superintendent's Policy Unit. Her responsibilities will include developing high level policy and writing legislation, senior staff and Mayor's Office briefings, and preparing Statement of Legislative Intent responses. Rebecca previously worked in the Department of Neighborhoods' Office for Education. Most recently, she worked for a non-profit in Las Vegas.

Year-end Grant Awards: Parks is pleased to report that the Department successfully applied for and received \$2.79 million in grants in 2007.

Seattle Aquarium Society: The Society has reached its fundraising goal for the Aquarium expansion project. With the construction also finished, the Society is preparing a report to the City officially declaring successful completion of "Phase One" of the long-term Aquarium redevelopment. This \$22 million dollar project is the largest capital project ever undertaken by the Department. For more information on the Aquarium, see <http://www.seattleaquarium.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?&pid=183&srcid=-2>

Golden Gardens Bathhouse: Golden Gardens Bathhouse is a popular venue for weddings and other events and is already booked every Saturday between March and October 2008. The building was remodeled several years ago and generates a great deal of rental income. For more information on the Bathhouse, see <http://cityofseattle.net/parks/reservations/GoldenGardens.htm>.

Amy Yee Tennis Center Improvements: This Pro Parks Opportunity-funded project renovation for four existing outdoor tennis courts and schematic design for two, new outdoor tennis courts has been completed. Parks' staff are working with the Amy Yee Tennis Center Advisory Council to seek more funding for the construction of two new courts in summer 2008. So far, the Advisory Council has received \$75,000 from a Neighborhood Matching Fund, \$75,000 from King County Youth Sports Utility Fund, and \$58,755 from community cash donations. Parks is also applying for the Youth Athletic Facilities grant. For more information on the Tennis Center, see <http://cityofseattle.net/parks/Athletics/Tennisct.htm>.

Myrtle & Beacon Hill Reservoir Development: Parks signed a contract with Nakano Associates in late December 2007 for the design of open space at the reservoir site. Nakano is now developing site alternatives to include passive open space, a children's play area, walking paths, and a potential skate park site. Meanwhile, Seattle Public Utilities' construction project to lid the reservoir is still under way. Completion of finish-grading and hydro-seeding is now planned for early spring 2008. For more information, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/proparks/projects/myrtle.htm>. At the Beacon reservoir, the design is 90% complete and SPU will begin its work there next year and Parks will start its portion in summer of 2009. The reservoir is located in Beacon Hill Park, a large passive use park with wonderful views.

Polar Bear Swim: Meadowbrook Pool hosted the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Polar Bear Plunge! Crisp, cold weather and water greeted over 1,000 participants in the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Polar Bear Plunge held at Matthews Beach at noon on New Years Day. Many television crews and newspapers were on hand, and Starbucks Coffee handed out warm and free drinks to the many swimmers. Deputy Superintendent Williams noted that the Board's Coordinator was one of the participants.

Oil Spill at Green Lake: North Central Park Resource staff received multiple calls on January 3, reporting evidence of an oil spill along the path at Green Lake. Staff discovered that a leaf blower had lost a plug and approximately 2-1/2 to 4 quarts of oil leaked along the west trail of the lake. Parks grounds staff joined the Harbor Patrol and Parks' environmental unit at the lake in response. A bio-enzyme was applied by Parks HazMat certified responders to inert the oil. Neither the oil nor the cleanup application affected the lake or patrons on the path.

Parks is looking at alternative ways to reduce the use of small maintenance equipment and is also considering how to condition the public to the appearance of less-maintained park land.

Vulcan Supports Parks: Superintendent Gallagher and Deputy Superintendent Williams met with Phil Fuji from Vulcan recently to discuss plans to convert Parks' Headquarters at 100 Dexter Avenue North into a community center for Belltown and South Lake Union, and inquired about Vulcan's interest in supporting that effort. Mr. Fuji said that Vulcan would be interested in supporting Seattle Parks. Parks also asked for Vulcan's help in supporting the Seattle Conservation Corps by getting them work as subcontractors on construction projects in the South Lake Union neighborhood and assisting graduates of the program with job placement. For more information on this Seattle Parks and Recreation job training and community service organization, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/scc/>.

Strategic Action Plan: Christopher Williams and Mickey Fearn briefed the Seattle Parks Foundation on progress with the SAP thus far. Staff have concluded the final three meetings for the first phase outreach. Phase-one public meetings were re-scheduled at South Park Community Center, International District/Chinatown Community Center and Van Asselt Community Center – as no community members attended the first scheduled meetings at these three locations. At the re-scheduled meetings, more than 50 people attended the South Park meeting, about 13 attended the International District/Chinatown meeting, and there were no attendees at the Van Asselt meeting.

Madison Park Neighborhood Matching Fund Project: Both Parks and the Mayor's Office received calls this week from a Madison Park citizen distraught over the removal of several large shrubs and one medium-sized tree at Madison Park. The current project is being done by the Friends of Madison Parks with a Neighborhood Matching Fund grant. The Friends group held several meetings and design charettes in 2006 to develop the plan, with over 120 people attending. In addition, the plan implements a Vegetation Management Plan that was vetted through a public process. The shrubs and tree have been removed to improve sight lines into the park for greater safety and to allow sunlight on the children's play equipment. The tree will be replaced per the Mayor's two-for-one tree replacement policy.

Commissioners asked for a briefing on Neighborhood Matching Fund projects and Commissioner Holme noted that it is on the Board's future agenda.

NRPA/NIKE and LaBron James: The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) has invited Parks to participate in a basketball giveaway sponsored by Nike and Cleveland Cavaliers player LaBron James. The event is being characterized as an "orchestrated, spontaneous event," meaning the event will be a surprise to the youth, with each one who participates receiving a basketball. The youth will also have an opportunity to have their picture taken with LaBron James. Parks has not yet determined which neighborhood this event will take place, but anticipate it will be in the southeast sector. The event is scheduled for Thursday, January 31, when the Seattle Supersonics are scheduled to play Cleveland. Staff will send final details of the event to the Board.

## **Director's Report: Project and Development Division**

At the Board's December 13 retreat, Commissioners asked for regular updates on the Department's capital projects. Kevin Stoops, Director of the Department's Project and Development Division, will now attend all Park Board meetings and give a brief report, following the Superintendent's report, and answer any questions from the Commissioners. Prior to this meeting, the Board received a written briefing on the Project and Development Division. Mr. Stoops gave a brief summary of the information in the briefing paper and answered the Board's questions. Commissioners received a written summary prior to the meeting. Both the written briefing and verbal overview are included in these minutes.

### *Written Briefing*

**DIVISION FUNCTION:** The Planning and Development Division is responsible for all planning, capital improvement project implementation, and real estate management for Seattle Parks and Recreation. While much of the Division's workload is focused on the delivery of capital improvement projects, the Division also provides technical support for the Department in terms of engineering and design, survey, and property management.

**KEY STAFF:** Director: Kevin Stoops (Out of class)  
Executive Assistant: Angela Harewood-Potter  
Park Engineer: Becky Rufin

Construction Manager: Chris Jewell  
Project Management Manager: Colleen Browne  
Planning Manager: David Graves (Out of class)  
Property Manager (acquisitions): Donald Harris  
Property Manager: Terry Dunning

## **RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

### **Planning:**

- Citywide Skatepark Plan
- Alaskan Landing Waterfront Park Plan
- Ongoing State Route reviews
- Fort Lawton Application
- Rainer Beach Community Center and Pool Study
- Community Center Asset Management Study
- Seward Park Beach Renourishment (with Army Corp of Engineers)
- Dahl Playfield play area and ballfield (Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF))
- Ravenna Park play area (NMF)
- Bayview Kinnear play area (NMF)

### **Community Center Levy Projects:**

- Northgate Community Center
- Van Asselt Community Center expansion
- International District ChinaTown Community Center weight room

### **Pro Parks Levy Projects:**

- Capitol Hill Park acquisitions
- International District park acquisition
- 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue park acquisition
- Laurelhurst Community Center
- Montlake Community Center
- Colman School (Jimi Hendrix Park)
- Seward Park Audubon Center
- Magnolia School (Ella Bailey Park)
- Brighton Science Park
- Marra Farms (Marra Desimone Park)
- Cesar Chavez Park
- Loyal Heights Playfield synthetic surface and lighting replacement
- Georgetown Playfield synthetic Surface
- Amy Yee Tennis Center Outdoor Court renovation
- Lake Union Park Phase 1

### **Major Maintenance Projects:**

- Aquarium Pier 59 Piling Replacement and Aquarium Redevelopment
- Lower Woodland Playfield Field #2 lighting replacement
- Freeway Park Renovation (various phases)
- Queen Anne Pool boiler and HVAC replacement
- Westlake Park electrical and lighting upgrade
- Community Center lighting upgrades for energy conservation
- Stan Sayres Park parking lot redevelopment

## **CURRENT/UPCOMING PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS**

- Volunteer Park Roadway
- Magnuson Park Boat Ramp renovation
- Madison Park play area (NMF)
- Freeway Park Fountains and Piggott Corridor
- Magnuson Park Wetlands and Ballfields
- Leschi Moorage Renovation
- Southwest Pool Boiler, HVAC and Roof Replacements
- EC Hughes and Volunteer Park Irrigation Replacements
- Hiawatha Playfield synthetic surface and lighting replacement
- Discovery Park Nike and 653 Demolitions
- QA Boulevard Sidewalks and Landscaping
- Seattle Asian Art Museum Value Engineering
- Dexter Pit (Tom Wales Park)
- Jefferson Park-Beacon Reservoir (2009)

## **UPCOMING ISSUES FOR POSSIBLE BOARD REVIEW/CONSIDERATION**

### **School-Park Property Issue Review and Recommendation**

- Ingraham HS/Madison Pool
- Southshore School and Rainier Beach Community Center and Pool
- School Property Dispositions

### **Park Plan Review and Recommendation**

- Capitol Hill Parks
- Morgan Junction Park
- Myrtle Reservoir Park
- Northgate Park
- Lake Union Trail Master Plan

### **Policy Review and Recommendation**

- Non Park Use and Park Encroachment Abatement

### **Status Reports/Briefings**

- Alaskan Landing Master Plan
- 2009-2014 Asset Management Plan
- SR 520 Issues at Montlake, McCurdy and Washington Parks
- Freeway Park Renovations
- Arboretum Pacific Connection
- Arboretum Japanese Garden Entry

### ***Verbal Briefing***

Mr. Stoops has been the Division's interim director since last June. The Division has 60 staff, including the Department's landscapers, engineers, project managers, and planners. It includes the property management section that oversees 6,000 acres with a number of property line encroachments issues it deals with.

He next reviewed what the Division has worked on for the past 1-1/2 years, the projects it is now working on, and gave a brief summary of some of the projects in the above written briefing. For more information on a particular project, see

<http://cityofseattle.net/parks/projects/default.htm>.

### *Board Discussion*

Commissioner Ramels noted that there are several community centers that have not yet been replaced/improved and asked what the plans are for those. Mr. Stoops answered that there are seven centers that were not improved and there are no plans at this time to replace them. In the short-term, staff have assessed each and will keep them in usable condition. Deputy Superintendent Williams noted that the new Legacy Levy may include some funding these centers.

Commissioner Ramels referred to “International Dark Sky Association, [www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org) [*To preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through quality outdoor lighting.*] Mr. Stoops stated that the work of this group has influenced Seattle Parks’ ball field lighting choices. Parks now installs new-era lights that shine the light directly towards the ground, with much less spillover and glare. Commissioner Holme asked if it is now Parks’ standard practice to install steel poles and Mr. Stoops answered yes.

Commissioner Ramels asked what is happening with the Cascade Peoples Center. Mr. Stoops answered that the Department has a small amount of funds to work on the building. The organization has used Neighborhood Matching Funds to do other work. Commissioner Holme referred to the Pro Parks Levy Opportunity Fund and this project and asked Mr. Stoops to send the Board additional information on this. Mr. Stoops agreed to do so.

Commissioner Ramels asked for an update on the Neighborhood Matching Fund project at Madison Park. Deputy Superintendent Williams answered that the citizen who wrote both the Department and the Mayor this week was unaware of the amount of vegetation to be removed from the site, although they had supported the project. Mr. Stoops noted that 120 or so people attended the community meeting.

Commissioner Ramels asked about the staff change at Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center. Deputy Superintendent Williams answered that Ms. Phillips will help stabilize the staff and that both the Artistic and Managing Directors will report to her.

Commissioner Ramels also welcomed Councilmember Rasmussen and commented that this is a good beginning to a good relationship. She noted that Councilmember Rasmussen is very responsive to community concerns. Councilmember Rasmussen then introduced his staff assistant, Brian Hawksford, and Norm Schwab of the Council’s Central staff, who were both in the audience.

Commissioner Barber asked if the bunkers at Discovery Park are included in the demolition and Mr. Stoops answered that the “Nike” building is being demolished. The underground building was formerly used as a records storage area and “catch all” for the Department and has now been cleaned out. Commissioner Barber hoped that the City archivist had an opportunity to review any of the records and Mr. Stoops answered in the affirmative.

Commissioner Larsen asked if the Department has a list of the properties that Seattle Public Schools is considering to surplus. Mr. Stoops referred to several of the properties and will send the list to the Board. Commissioner Holme commented that he understood a task force was working on this. Deputy Superintendent Williams agreed and stated that staff would schedule a briefing to the Park Board on this.

Commissioners thanked Mr. Stoops for the updates.

### **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. Two people signed up to testify.

Sharon Levine: Ms. Levine lives on Queen Anne Hill and brought two concerns before the Board:

(1) *Bigelow/Queen Anne Boulevard*: She reported that a recent Parks major maintenance project in this area is slated to demolish or destroy a large laurel hedge. She urged the Department to be cautious when doing this and urged them to hold a full public process.

(2) *Trolley Hill Park*: She stated that a small group of 15-20 residents applied for and were awarded a \$100,000 grant from the Neighborhood Matching Fund. Their plans were a big surprise to many in the nearby neighborhood. The group was invited to attend the Queen Anne Community Council last night, as the Council hadn't been notified of this project. Parks recently acquired more property (a house) in the area, which adds to the complexity. She asked that this project also have a full public process and that staff keep her informed on what is happening. Deputy Superintendent Williams agreed that staff would do so.

Gary Gaffner: Mr. Gaffner is a regular attendee of Park Board meetings and noted that Donna Kostka is the Board's newest member. He has known Commissioner Kostka for some time and praised her as a person who is honest, forthright, defends her position, and has a very high ethical standard. The Board thanked Mr. Gaffner for his comments.

### **Briefing: Seattle Parks' Strategic Action Plan**

Brenda Kramer and Susan Golub, Seattle Parks' Strategic Analysts, presented a briefing on the Department's Strategic Action Plan. Commissioners received a written briefing prior to the meeting, as well as a timeline, community meeting agenda and schedule, copy of the comment form, and information about the plan and schedule. Both the written and verbal briefing are included in the minutes. For more information on the Plan, see

<http://cityofseattle.net/parks/Publications/ParksActionPlan.htm>.

#### *Written Briefing*

#### **Requested Board Action**

- Are you asking for a vote by the board?  
**No.**
- Will they vote on the night of your briefing, or will it be at a subsequent meeting (after a public hearing)?  
**Parks staff will present a draft strategic business plan to the Board at a later date.**
- Is the briefing for informational purposes only?  
**Yes.**
- Why is this issue coming before the Board; what is the overall policy context in which the issue is coming to the Board?  
**Parks is developing a strategic action plan that will guide our actions for the next five years.**

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

- What is being proposed?  
**A strategic action plan for the next five years.**
- What is the project background?  
**The project began as an effort to identify new direction in light of the December 2008 end of the Pro Parks Levy, which has funded not only 140-plus capital projects and park property acquisitions, but has also funded operating programs that increase the cleanliness of facilities and parks, add grounds maintenance crews to make parks cleaner, establish an environmental stewardship unit to steer our culture in a green direction, increase low income kids' access to fee-based programs through scholarships and transportation, enhance landscape work, increase preventive tree maintenance, teach an eight-year "generation" of 3rd and 4th graders to swim, do some cleanup and restoration work in natural areas, increase environmental programming, and increase programming for teens, people 55 and better, and increase hours at our wading pools in the summer.**

The objective evolved because General Fund dollars have been included in Parks' operating budget to compensate for the upcoming loss of Levy dollars for these programs. The focus changed to creating a document that will address recent expansion of the park system, changing demographics, and emerging recreation trends.

To date, Parks and Recreation has scheduled, publicized, and staffed 35 public meetings and four all-staff meetings to get input on the plan, which will serve as a roadmap for Parks for the next five years. Our purpose tonight is to brief the Park Board on what we have learned to date, to review the schedule, and to get their input on the plan work to this point.

- What is the goal of the project?  
**The goal is to take a fresh look at what Parks and Recreation is and what we do: to redefine our identity and to emphasize Parks' role in enhancing the quality of life for Seattle residents and visitors. The plan will guide our actions in all we do over the next five years.**
- Where did the project originate (Levy, CIP, policy review)?  
**It originated in a City Council statement of legislative intent.**
- Color maps and photos are helpful. If available, include a photo of the site in its current condition.  
**Not applicable.**
- Please include detailed policy background in order to clarify the reason the issue is coming to the Board, and what future approvals are required (Superintendent decision, Mayor/Council approval, etc.)  
**Over the past decade, Seattle's park and recreation system has grown substantially through new acquisitions and newly developed parks funded by the Pro Parks Levy. In the face of continued growth, changing demographics, and emerging parks and recreation trends, Parks must strategically evaluate its facilities, services, and operations so it can continue to meet its commitments to Seattle citizens to create community through people, parks, and programs.**

The Strategic Business Plan will identify emerging issues and policy questions that relate to Parks' current strengths, challenges and opportunities. The purpose of the Plan is to focus Parks' activities to ensure the most efficient and effective use of public tax dollars. It is not a laundry list of services but rather a roadmap that will express Parks' vision and mission. It will also guide budget, capital development and investment decisions, and provide a planning framework for partnerships with other departments, organizations and businesses.

### Public Involvement Process

- What public meetings were held?  
**35 public meetings at Community Centers, and an online survey**
- How were the meetings advertised?  
**For the first of two rounds of public meetings to gather input on a three-to-five year strategic action plan for Seattle Parks and Recreation, staff made these outreach efforts:**
  - **Oct. 18 news release to daily newspapers, community newspapers, ethnic newspapers, and a number of blogs and community e-newsletters.**
  - **Nov. 5 news release to daily newspapers, community newspapers, ethnic newspapers, and a number of blogs and community e-newsletters.**
  - **Nov. 17 half-page display ad in Sunday Seattle Times/PI (circulation 457,010, per Times web site)**
  - **Direct e-mail to a new list of almost 500 organizations: community, environmental, ethnic, interest (skateparks, ballfields, etc.) with request that they distribute to their members**
  - **Direct e-mail to a list of 13,000 people who have participated in public processes relating to Pro Parks Levy and other projects**



- What was the nature of public comment at the meetings?  
**The nature of the comment at the public meetings, and the first draft of the strategic business plan, is the subject of our briefing tonight.**
- How many people attended the meetings?  
**574, and more than 1,500 responded to the online survey or sent e-mails.**
- Are more public meetings planned?  
**Yes, we will hold another round of meetings after the 2<sup>nd</sup> draft plan is completed in April.**
- Identify stakeholders associated with the project, and what has been their involvement?  
**Stakeholders associated with the project are every person in Seattle who uses or intends to use a park or Parks and Recreation facility. Interests include casual park use, passive use of parks for contemplation, before and after school programs for children, both informal and organized sports of all kinds, indoor and outdoor children’s activities, classes for adults in a wide range of recreation and self-improvement activities, picnicking, use of parks for events such as family reunions and weddings, swimming, boating, learning about and preserving the environment, special indoor and outdoor activities for teens, people 55 and better, and people with disabilities, volunteering, and more.**
- Identify outreach to non-traditional users.  
**Parks staff reached out to non-traditional users by placing the public meeting information on our web site in English, Amharic, Chinese, Oromo, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tigrina, and Vietnamese; the Department of Neighborhoods’ 13 Neighborhood Service Center Coordinators sent the meeting information to their e-mail lists;  
Parks facility coordinators sent meeting information to their e-mail lists, hung posters, and some put the info about specific meetings on outdoor reader boards; put out drop boxes for surveys, and put information on their bulletin boards. Based on responses from facility coordinators, staff identified languages for which translators are needed at certain sites.**

## Issues

Use this section (which should be the focus of your oral presentation) to discuss issues related to the project/proposal.

- Strategic Action Plan Format: Vision, Mission, Focus Areas
- What issues came up at the public meetings?
  - **A perceived need for balance between athletic fields and open space**
  - **A desire for more swimming pools.**
  - **A request that Parks evaluate the potential to co-locate community centers and senior center programs.**
  - **A need for better data systems to track and report on activities and to measure performance.**
  - **A desire for more family oriented programs at community centers and more imaginative play for kids.**
  - **A need to enhance our outreach strategy, public processes, and web site.**
  - **A recommendation to increase our resources for marketing**
  - **A recommendation that we inventory our many types of partnerships (with nonprofits, concessionaires, “friends of” groups, other agencies, etc.) and target specific partnerships to enhance service delivery.**
  - **A suggestion that we step up our efforts to coordinate volunteer activities.**
  - **A need to define/categorize parks**
  - **A need to model “green” behavior**
  - **Build on our asset management system, keep it up to date, and build relationships with other departments to ensure information and data systems can be shared.**
  - **A recommendation that we use life-cycle costing in managing our assets.**

➤ **A suggestion that we examine our fee structure.**

• **Citizen Concerns/Opposition.**

**The input into what the plan should contain came across as a series of concerns noted above, and there was no opposition.**

**Schedule**

- What is the project schedule?  
**Please see the attached.**

- Where are you in the overall development schedule of the project?  
**On time.**

**Additional Information**

Brenda Kramer, 386-9094, [Brenda.kramer@seattle.gov](mailto:Brenda.kramer@seattle.gov)

Information about the project is on the web at <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/Publications/ParksActionPlan.htm>

***Verbal Briefing/Board Discussion***

Deputy Superintendent Williams stated that it is an exciting time at Parks, with a new Superintendent and the five-year Strategic Action Plan being developed. Over the past few years, Parks has been very busy implementing Pro Parks Levy projects. Now it is looking thoughtfully at how it operates and how it uses its \$140 million budget that provides park, recreation, and some human service needs to develop a five-year plan. The Strategic Action Plan provides a voice to the Department's employees and to the public to help determine how Parks operates. Mickey Fearn, who has 30 years experience working with the community, was recently hired by the Department to head up a new Community Connection group.

Ms. Kramer is a strategic advisor in the Partnership Division and has been selected as project manager for the Strategic Action Plan. Tonight's briefing is a snapshot of where the Department is in the plan. The last of the first round of public meetings was held this past weekend, with good attendance at South Park Community Center.

An internal oversight group for the Strategic Action Plan has been appointed to include Superintendent Gallagher, Community Connections Director Mickey Fearn, Strategic Analyst Susan Golub, and Project Planner Susanne Friedman. The City also hired Berk & Associates to help develop the plan.

The Strategic Action Plan is being developed as a result of a City Council Statement of Legislative Intent in response to the end of the eight-year Pro Parks Levy. It will set the Parks Departments' strategic road map direction for the next five years. Ms. Kramer next reviewed the schedule to date:

**October:**

- outreach planning
- staff retreat
- City Council staff briefed

**November and December:**

- held 32 public meetings with Parks staff as facilitators and scribes, attended by a total of 600 people (
- developed an online survey that garnered 1800 responses
- handed out comment cards that were submitted by U.S. mail.
- held four staff meetings with 850 employees attending. At each one, attendees broke into smaller discussion groups. Comment cards were distributed, with quite a few returned.

**Lessons learned from this first round of input:** knowledge of parks with current users is good; knowledge of non-users needs improving. Many more would benefit from the Department's services if they knew what the services are and how to

access them. The team also learned from staff that they like to be asked their opinion and are interested in staff development.

Staff are now working on a second round of public meetings to gather more input. These will include a focus on getting youth input as they are the next generation of park users.

Ms. Kramer received two documents just today from Berk & Associates.

- One lists the major focus areas that emerged from the four staff meetings: facilities and asset management; management models and systems; partnership; program and service delivery; public engagement and communication; and staff development, engagement, and communication.
- The second listed the major focus areas that emerged from the public meetings: communication and outreach; health and environment; facilities; programming; and funding

The data from these meetings has been given to Berk & Associates and they are compiling it to prepare the first draft of the Action Plan, expected to be released the last week of January. The team will review it on February 3, and then it goes back to the focus groups, Mayor's senior staff, City Council's Parks and Seattle Center Committee, and the Park Board for review. The final plan is scheduled for June, making this an ambitious schedule.

Previously the Park Board asked if Seattle Parks would do comparative research to other cities as the Strategic Action Plan is being developed. Since then, the Department had a University of Washington intern do an intense comparative study to discern what good other cities are doing and what are their best practices. This study has been forwarded to Berk & Associates and Ms. Kramer will send it to the Park Board.

### *Board Discussion*

Commissioner Ramels has the impression that Seattle Parks' Strategic Action Plan is very important to City Council. Councilmember Rasmussen answered yes, it is. The Statement of Legislative intent was passed in 2005 and Council has been waiting two years for this information. Commissioner Ramels commented that new Superintendent Gallagher began working on the Strategic Action Plan even before he was confirmed. She also noted that on the paper survey under ethnicity there is no category for Hispanic and Ms. Kramer made a note of this.

Commissioner Ramels referred to the written briefing paper and asked if some of the suggestions on the last page that are all inclusive came from staff. Ms. Kramer answered yes, that it includes both staff and public comments. Commissioner Ramels commented that park maintenance dominated the conversation at the public meeting she attended. Those present at the meeting thought the Department's website was great. Deputy Superintendent Williams stated that there is some feedback that the website doesn't entice people to seek more information about Parks' services. Ms. Kramer gave an example of someone who runs around Green Lake Park every day, but didn't realize there was a community center and its many programs located in the same park.

Commissioner Ramels asked if some people truly feel they don't have access to parks. Ms. Kramer answered that for some people who don't speak English or who use English as their second language, most bureaucracy is daunting. Deputy Superintendent Williams added that generally folks who are involved with parks or community centers come to the meetings, give their input, and help shape the system. Parks must ask itself "are we serving the diverse population in Seattle?" "Are we serving everyone?" "Are we serving mostly historical users or are we reaching out to new users?" He quoted Mickey Fearn, "we heard a lot, but what didn't we hear because the people weren't there?" And how does this influence Parks' programs and users?

Commissioner Kostka attended the public meeting at Discovery Park and there were many environmentalists there. She stated that Parks also serves the fish, wildlife, and nature of the city and suggested this be added to the Strategic Action Plan. Ms. Kramer agreed.

Commissioner Larsen asked if the oversight team consists of all City staff and Ms. Kramer answered yes. Commissioner Larsen suggested that a community member-at-large be added and Ms. Kramer will take this suggestion back to the Executive Team for consideration.

Commissioner Larsen referred to information being shared at public meetings, in flyers, and on the internet and suggested that staff also “piggybacking” on other events like basketball tournaments, parents picking up their kids at events, etc. Commissioner Larsen asked if anyone in wheelchairs has shown up to the public meetings and suggested staff reach out to facilities other than those in the park system. Deputy Superintendent Williams commented that the Department is creating a Community Connections unit which will be proactive in reaching out to other facilities and connecting more with the community.

Ms. Kramer added that in the second round of public meetings, the focus will be reaching out to engage new people in the process. In the first round, citizens were asked to come to Parks’ facilities. In the second round, staff will go to other facilities and organizations. There will be a broader outreach to youth, the non-aware users, and additional geographic areas. Staff will use the Department’s teen development leaders, the public libraries, and the Department of Neighborhood’s Neighborhood Service Center Coordinators to assist in this effort. Cultural tribes will be engaged and the Department’s website will be utilized more to gather input on the Plan.

Commissioner Larsen attended this weeks’ Seattle Park Foundation meeting where the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent reviewed the status of the Strategic Action Plan. There was some discussion of how the plan will help the Department determine what projects/initiatives it will agree to or will say no to. At the same time, Seattle Parks Foundation will be coming up with its own ideas for new park proposals. Will the Plan include language to accommodate this type of new proposals that previously weren’t in the plans? Deputy Superintendent Williams responded that the Department’s saying no means that it will adhere to the core values of the Strategic Action Plan while allowing some flexibility for new projects [such as those proposed by Seattle Parks Foundation.]

Commissioner Barber commented that it is important to involve staff in this Plan, as it helps create a cultural change in the Department. He hopes an outcome of the Plan is a fresh face for the Department. Deputy Superintendent Williams agreed that the personality of Parks is changing and the Strategic Action Plan will help with this.

Commissioner Barber stated that at the public meeting he attended there were many staff there and he felt this created a bias. Commissioner Ramels noted that at the meeting she attended that many of the public were also members of the community center’s advisory council. Commissioner Holme stated that when he attended the public meeting and noted staff there, he didn’t realize that staff had their own internal process. It should be clear to staff that the public meetings should focus on public sentiment. He is uneasy with staff playing a dual role in the input process.

Commissioner Holme noted that this Plan is a major development for the Department and is moving along quickly. Other major developments have had much more time devoted. He was surprised to learn tonight that City Council has been waiting for two years for the plan, but cautioned the Department not to move too quickly. He asked that the Board receive any future Strategic Action Plan materials well in advance to the meeting. There is too much information in the handouts that were given to the Board at the beginning of tonight’s meeting to digest properly. Ms. Kramer explained that the information was just received today from Berk & Associates. Commissioner Holme recommended that the Department not rush the process so that all steps have adequate review.

Commissioner Holme reflected that condensing all the information from the meetings, surveys, etc., is a big job and asked if Berk & Associates can process it in a timely manner to meet the various review deadlines. Ms. Kramer answered that Parks staff entered all the data and then gave it to Berk & Associates for formatting and incorporating into the first draft. Last week the oversight team spent six hours reviewing the draft with Berk and gave lots of feedback. Berk is now using that feedback to revise the draft.

Commissioner Kostka noted that at the meeting she attended participants asked how the comments will be weighted. Ms. Kramer and Deputy Superintendent Williams answered that some things will emerge as priorities up front and have more weight. Emerging trends in the city will also be identified.

Commissioner Ranade reviewed the schedule and asked that the Park Board have a final briefing on the plan in June and Deputy Superintendent Williams agreed.

Commissioner Ramels asked if the Strategic Action Plan includes internal management review. Ms. Kramer answered yes and described the review process. Both management teams and Parks staff will review. Commissioner Ramels asked if Parks current management structure will be analyzed and whether any positions may be determined to be obsolete. Ms. Kramer answered yes, that this will be done in the budget process.

Commissioners thanked Ms. Kramer for the briefing.

### **Old/New Business**

Dakota Place: Commissioner Ramels asked about this West Seattle project. Mr. Stoops answered that this Neighborhood Matching Fund project has had several problems, including high abatement costs, and the work has been done in fits and starts. Seattle Parks is still committed to the project. In response to controversy that has arisen from several Neighborhood Matching Fund projects, the Board asked staff to schedule a briefing on the Fund.

Urban Tree Management: Commissioner Barber asked that an urban tree management plan be added to the Board's agenda for discussion. Deputy Superintendent Williams responded that staff are working with the Board's chair and vice-chair to prepare a Work Plan of agenda items for the Board to review and select what will come before it. This will be a discussion topic under New/Old Business at the January 24 meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

Amit Ranade, Chair  
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE \_\_\_\_\_