

Department of Parks and Recreation

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
May 13, 2010

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>
(Includes agendas and minutes from 2001-present)

Also, view Seattle Channel tapes of meetings, June 12, 2008-most current, at
<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/watchVideos.asp?program=Parks>

Board of Park Commissioners:

Present:

Neal Adams, Vice-chair
John Barber
Terry Holme
Jourdan Kincaid
Diana Kincaid
Donna Kostka
Jackie Ramels, Chair

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff:

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent
Eric Friedli, Acting Deputy Superintendent
Sandy Brooks, Coordinator

Announcement: *The Board of Park Commissioners meetings are taped for viewing by Seattle Channel and posted to the Board's web page. Beginning with these minutes, the briefing paper for all non-public hearing topics will be included in the written minutes. The minutes will not include the verbal staff presentation and the Board's question and answer segment. To listen to the briefing and hear the Board's discussion, please see the tape at:*
<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/watchVideos.asp?program=Parks>

For public hearings (where the Board is asked to vote on a recommendation to the Superintendent), the minutes will include the written briefing paper and any updates, a summary of the verbal public testimony, a summary of the Board's discussion and recommendation, and a link to the Seattle Channel tape.

The minutes will continue to include a summary of the Superintendent's Report, Oral Communications, and Old/New Business.

Commissioner Ramels called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and reviewed the meeting agenda topics.
Commissioner Holme moved approval of the agenda as revised, and Commissioner Adams seconded. The vote was taken, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Superintendent's Report

Acting Superintendent Williams reported on the following items. To learn more about Seattle Parks, see the website at <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/>.

Changes in Department Leadership: Former Parks Superintendent Tim Gallagher recently resigned. Deputy Superintendent Williams was appointed by Mayor McGinn as Acting Superintendent. Eric Friedli, the Department's Policy and Business Manager, has been appointed as Acting Deputy Superintendent. Mr. Friedli has briefed the Board on a number of occasions and is highly respected by Parks and City staff.

Acting Superintendent Williams listed the Department's goals as: resolving internal conflicts early; focusing on morale; thinking more strategically; and working closely with the Mayor's office and strengthening the Department's ties with the 7th floor (Mayor's office.) He noted Parks is the only Department that has been asked to meet face-to-face with Mayor McGinn and Acting Budget Director Beth Goldberg to discuss the Department's budget issues, a positive sign for the Department.

Magnuson Park – Building 41: The State Environment Protection Act (SEPA) checklist is now completed on Building 41. The appeal deadline to the Hearing Examiner was May 12 and it appears no appeals were filed. A citizens group has asked Parks and City Councilmember Bagshaw for a 6-month moratorium on demolition at Magnuson, until the City Landmarks nomination process is completed. Councilmember Bagshaw has asked Parks to set up a special Magnuson Park Advisory Committee meeting to discuss Building 41, in order to reach a final decision. Currently, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Parks support demolition of the building.

At a cost close to \$1 million to renovate, Building 41 (a former fuel station approximately 2,000 square feet), though contributing to the Historic District, is less a priority to SHPO. SHPO considers Hangar #2 (\$24 million to renovate), Building 18 (\$5 million to renovate) and Building 30 (\$9 million to renovate) as more significant to the Historic District.

The Park Board may hear more from the community about Building 41. For more information on Magnuson Park's Historic District, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/Magnuson/historicDistrict.htm>.

Capitol Hill Property Acquisition: Parks received the go-ahead from the Mayor's Office to proceed with a Parks and Green Spaces Levy project to acquire property at Federal Avenue East and East Republican Street.

Parks Budget and Swimming Pools: Acting Superintendent Williams noted that City Council recently held two budget public hearings. Commissioners Ramels and Holme testified and Commissioners Barber, Kincaid, and Kostka attended the hearings. Councilmembers heard many requests that pools be saved during the upcoming budget process.

Parks staff recently met with a citizen group, "Save Our Pools", interested in exploring other options to manage the City's pools. There are many hurdles to cross before pool operations could be turned over to an outside group. The City would have to ensure that the public benefits would remain. There are also labor issues. This proposal is part of a much larger policy question of what other services/programs the City might consider not providing. Parks is currently meeting with members of Save our Pools and the Associated Recreation Council to see how this proposal "pencils out." When the economy recovers, the Department wants to have a new service delivery model in place.

P-Patches/Community Gardens: The Board will hear a briefing at its May 27 meeting on community gardens. Seattle Parks and Department of Neighborhood staff have met, following Parks' concerns on term limits for the P-Patches located on park land, as well as the long waiting lists. Mayor McGinn has asked several Departments to develop a strategic action plan to address access to the plots and community gardens. Parks, Department of Neighborhoods, City Light, and Seattle Housing Authority will prepare and fund the plan. Parks will also work with Department of Neighborhoods (which manages the P-Patch program) on the Parks and Green Spaces Levy funds that are earmarked for community gardens/P-patches. For more information on P-patches and Community Gardens, see <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/ppatch/>.

Parks Operations Briefing to Senior Staff: On May 18, Parks staff briefed Mayor McGinn and several of his staff on the diverse nature of the Parks Department. The briefing was held at 100 Dexter. Mayor McGinn and his staff gave very positive feedback on the information. Parks staff will present the same briefing to the Park Board at its annual retreat.

Tree Trimming Permit Moratorium: The Parks Department is imposing a moratorium on its Tree Management, Maintenance, Pruning, And / Or Removal Policy until the policy is reviewed by the City Council's new Urban Forestry Commission [<http://www.seattle.gov/trees/meetingdocs.htm>.] Parks staff contacted the three people who requested permits. The Park Board will hear a full briefing on the policy at its May 27 meeting.

SR 520 Project Update: Governor Gregoire recently announced the preferred alternative for the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which calls for the freeway ramps to avoid the Arboretum. Instead, 23rd Avenue and Eastlake would absorb the traffic. This is a big win for the Arboretum. Acting Superintendent Williams thanked Seattle Parks Senior Planner, David Graves, for his excellent work on the responses to the DSEIS submitted by Parks Department, Park Board, and the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee. For more information on the preferred alternative, see <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/brhpdesign.htm>.

The Superintendent's report concluded. The Chair asked Commissioners to e-mail any questions to the Board's coordinator, in the interest of time.

Recognition: WRPA Award Winners and Former Superintendent Gallagher

Seattle Parks and Recreation received three awards at the recent Washington Recreation & Park Association (WRPA) annual conference. Park and recreation professionals, facilities and special programs throughout Washington State were recognized during the awards ceremony at the Greater Tacoma Convention and Trade Center on April 15, 2010. For more information on WRPA, see <http://www.wrpatoday.org/>.

The Warren G. Magnuson Park Wetlands and Athletic Fields project received the award for Best Park Design. The Seattle Conservation Corps Park Upgrade Program won the Youth & Adult Programs Award. Aquatics Manager Kathy Whitman received the Professional Citation of Merit Award.

"Magnuson Wetlands and Athletic Fields: The Wetlands and Athletic Fields project, built on the former U.S. Navy air station, constructed five new sports fields and a sports meadow with more 35 acres of wetland and habitat areas ingeniously interwoven into the design.

It includes baseball and softball fields, as well as North America's only synthetic surface rugby field and space for Ultimate Frisbee. The wetlands foster an array of wildlife, including migrating and native birds, amphibians and small mammals and reptiles.

The fields and the wetlands lace together offering both nature and sports enthusiasts a unique experience. This creative invention of active and passive uses was designed by The Berger Partnership of Seattle."

Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli recognized the perseverance and community involvement this project involved. The results are phenomenal! Commissioners Kincaid and Holme have long been involved in both the design and its review. He also recognized and complimented Kevin Stoops, Parks' Director of Planning and Development, and his staff for all their work on this project.

For more information, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/proparks/projects/Magnuson.htm>.

"Seattle Conservation Corps (SCC): The SCC is a unique Parks and Recreation program that provides homeless adults the opportunity to train and work in a structured program that provides them with job skills. It trains formerly troubled people for viable, living-wage jobs, provides them with the skills to succeed in a variety of environments and helps place find employment after they successfully complete the program.

Program participants are contracted to do work for City departments in jobs such as watershed improvement, urban forest restoration, park upgrades, recycling and many others.

Rather than relying primarily on public funding, the Corps covers 75 percent of its costs by doing work for City departments and others, and seeking grant funding for support services, training, and educational opportunities.”

Todd Meadows represented the Conservation Corps. Acting Superintendent Williams recognized this very successful program that was transferred in the early 1990s from the City’s Human Services Department to the Parks Department. The program employs homeless and unemployed people, as well as those in the criminal justice system. Participants receive help in getting a driver’s license, a GED, job training, and life skills. 65-75% of the participants graduate from the program, which pays for itself.

For more information on Seattle Conservation Corp, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/scc/>.

“Aquatics Manager Kathy Whitman: Kathy Whitman, Aquatic Manager for Seattle Parks and Recreation, received the Professional Citation of Merit Award, which honors leadership in the field of parks and recreation and overall contribution to WRPA.

Kathy has been with Seattle Parks for 35 years and currently manages: eight indoor, year-round pools; two summer only outdoor pools; nine summer beaches; 25 wading pools; two small craft centers; and seven boat ramps.

Examples of her creative hard work and dedication include her leadership in the development of Seattle’s Learn-to-Swim voucher program, being a leader in creating opportunities for minority youth as lifeguards, helping to secure funding for a multimillion dollar upgrade to the Mount Baker Rowing and Sailing facility, and creating a new program called School of FISH that provides learning for school age children who are afraid of the water.”

Acting Superintendent Williams recognized Ms. Whitman and stated her work is not only important today, but is also important for the future. Ms. Whitman’s 35 years experience as an aquatics specialist is well deserving of this award.

For more information on Seattle Parks’ Aquatics programs, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/pools.asp>.

Board Recognizes Exceptional Staff Briefings: Commissioner Ramels called out the following Parks staff who recently presented excellent briefings to the Board: Donald Harris for property acquisition; Marylou Whiteford for encroachments; David Graves for the SR 520 process; and Carol Everson for a number of budget briefings. The Board will send a letter to all four. Acting Superintendent Williams commented that Mr. Grave’s SR 520 resolution was replicated in part by several City departments as they prepared their response to Washington State Department of Transportation for the project’s Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Commissioner Ramels also noted a report from the Superintendent regarding a moving act of heroism by one of the Department’s staff. Ron White, a Parks employee, recently assisted a person driving erratically on the Aurora Bridge. Mr. White helped the person, who has diabetes, to safely stop their vehicle and get needed medical attention.

Park Board Recognize Former Superintendent Tim Gallagher

Commissioners next recognized former Superintendent Tim Gallagher. Commissioner Ramels agreed that he thinks outside of the box and listed as his accomplishments the following: development of the Department’s 5-year Strategic Action Plan which is precise and inclusive; weekly updates and videos directed to staff; the “Healthy Parks, Healthy You” initiative; a focus on public outreach; removing encroachments from park lands; development of the Golf Master Plan and the Bell Street Boulevard; moving the Department towards long-term sustainability; and involving the Park Board in the Department’s policy discussions.

Commissioner Adams stated that it has been a real pleasure working with Mr. Gallagher who is very enthusiastic and you always know where he is coming from. Commissioner Kincaid commented that he is a true advocate

for parks, is inclusive of all citizens, and made a great healing effort, and built trust, with several communities battling the Department. Commissioner Holme appreciates how he contributed to Seattle Parks by sharing his experiences from working in other cities. This has been very helpful to Seattle. Commissioner Barber had long dreamed that a true professional from the parks and recreation field would become the Parks Superintendent and believes he energized Park Department employees. Commissioner Kostka appreciates Mr. Gallagher's concern for the environment.

Mr. Gallagher thanked the Board and stated that he enjoyed his time as Superintendent and will miss working with the Park Board. The meeting adjourned for a 10-minute break for refreshments.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

The meeting resumed. 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 two minutes each and will be timed, and are asked to stand at the podium to speak. The Board's usual process is for 10 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. Five people testified.

Tim Gallagher: Mr. Gallagher referred to the Olmsted legacy of Seattle's parks, dating back to 1903. Seattle's parks are known internationally and the public has been generous in its support by approving park levies. However, City officials who take credit for these levies now need to step forward and show their support by providing park funding that is long-term and sustainable. He believes this should be through a voter-approved system such as a parks operations and maintenance or by establishing a Metropolitan Parks District – not by increasing user fees at the park facilities. The City must research options for this funding and share these with the public. The Park Board advises the Mayor and City Council and he requested that the Board urge the Mayor and City Council to come up with long-term, sustainable solutions and to do so quickly.

Daniel Johnson: In November 2008, the Park Board held a public hearing on nude events in Seattle's parks, following six complaints the Department received about the clothing-optional events it had previously permitted. The Superintendent (at that time, Gallagher) decided to go after these events and that did not go well. The Park Board asked the Department to look into a clothing optional beach, but the Department has not done so. This is the number-one public amenity requested in the Department's Strategic Action Plan; however, proponents of this are not allowed to meet with Parks staff. He read a letter from then Superintendent Gallagher that this is not within the Department's scope. Mr. Johnson asked whether it is or isn't in the scope.

Steve Mayo: He spoke on two issues: (1) thanked Parks staff person Randy Wiger for the great work he does at Cal Anderson Park; and (2) he is one of the original Fremont Solstice Parade Nude Cyclists. In 2005 he created the "Body Pride Ride" for the Seattle Pride Parade. He supports having one clothing optional beach and believes Seattle is ready for this.

Acting Superintendent Williams responded that a clothing optional beach is not part of the Department's focus.

Sharon Levine: Ms. Levine spoke in support of the Department's popular and self-sustaining Lifelong Recreation Program. This program has a large number of participants and she believes its affordability is the key to its success. 1,900 seniors participated in the 2009-2010 winter quarter programs. There is a rumor that the program will be cut or folded into community center programs. She is sending a message loud and clear to the Mayor and his staff: this program works well and the programming staff should not be changed.

Sue Geving: She is a Northgate resident and member of the Northgate/Phinney Community Center Advisory Council. The Lifelong Recreation Program is a great asset to the community, a lifeline for many people, and a way to meet friends. She is concerned with any budget cuts that affect this program. The Advisory Councils want to help find creative solutions to both the short- and long-term budget shortfalls.

Briefing: Seattle Parks Cumulative Reserve Fund

Kevin Stoops, Director, Seattle Parks' Planning and Development Division, distributed a spreadsheet listing the Department's draft list of the Cumulative Fund Subfund (CFS) Priorities for 2011-12 and reviewed the projects and estimated costs for both 2011 and 2012. To listen to the briefing and discussion, click on <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591047> and move left cursor to position "67." on time counter.

This briefing was scheduled to give Commissioners additional information on the Department's budget, in conjunction with an update briefing from Seattle Parks' Finance Director.

Update Briefing: Seattle Parks Department Budget

Carol Everson, Seattle Parks Finance Director, next presented a short update briefing on the Department's budget and answered questions from the Commissioners. A written briefing was not provided. To listen to the briefing and discussion, click on <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591047> and move left cursor to position "77." on time counter.

Following the briefing, Commissioner Holme moved that the Board write Mayor McGinn and Seattle City Council urging that a parks operation and maintenance levy be studied, with the results shared with the Board and the public. The vote was taken and was unanimous. Motion carried. The motion, as sent to the Mayor and Council, follows:

Given the urgency of the City's financial situation, particularly as it relates to the Parks Department, the Board of Park Commissioners recommends to the Mayor and the Seattle City Council to undertake a study to identify a voter-approved funding mechanism, such as - but not limited to - a maintenance and operations levy. The Board further recommends that this study take place in a timely manner to address the current budget shortfalls. The Board requests that findings be shared with the public and the Board.

Mayor McGinn is expected to release mid-2010 budget cuts during the first week of June. The Mayor's proposed 2011/2012 budget will be released to the public in late September. The Board thanked Mr. Stoops and Ms. Everson for the excellent and informative budget briefings.

Old/New Business

P-Patch Conflict of Interest: The Board will hear a briefing on P-Patches at its May 27 meeting. Commissioner Barber disclosed that he has a P-Patch and will refrain from any discussion.

Tom C. Wales Park: Commissioner Ramels noted that the Board has received recent correspondence about the direction of this project. The Board held a public hearing on this new park in 2007.

Alki Park Report: Responding to a question from Commissioner Ramels on the status of the new sand that was recently delivered to Alki Beach Park, which is coarse and contains rocks and other impurities, Mr. Stoops responded that the sand is being replaced.

Magnuson Park Advisory Council: Commissioner Holme noted that the Board recently received correspondence from individual members of MPAC. He is concerned that the Board had not yet heard from MPAC itself. Commissioner Adams is the Park Board's representative to this newly-formed committee, which is advisory to the Superintendent. He responded that the committee is still finding its way.

Annual Retreat: The annual retreat, tentatively scheduled for May, will be re-scheduled to later this year.

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

APPROVED: _____

Jackie Ramels, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE _____