

## Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
October 14, 2010

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### ***Board of Park Commissioners:***

Present:

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

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

Eric Friedli, Acting Deputy Superintendent  
Sandy Brooks, Coordinator

This meeting was held at Seattle Park Headquarters at 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Ramels called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, welcomed the audience to the meeting, and reviewed the meeting agenda. **Commissioner Holme moved and Commissioner Keith seconded approval of the October 14 agenda, September 9 minutes, and Acknowledgement of Correspondence received since the September 23 meeting. The vote was taken and the motion approved.**

### **Superintendent's Report**

Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli reported on the following topics. To listen to the report, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591078> and move cursor to position 1.3.

Carmen Martinez Winner of the 2010 Latino Heritage Award: Earlier today, Mayor McGinn presented Ms. Martinez, South Park Community Center Coordinator, with the Seattle Management Latino Heritage award. Great job, Carmen!

Green Seattle Partnership: Cynthia Sullivan award by Earth Corp (non-profit for teens, late 20s to do environmental restoration back to countries, international).

Delridge Skatepark Bid: The Parks Department decided to reject all bids for the Delridge Skatepark and rebid this project later this year or early next year for a mid-2011 construction.

This decision has been reached after a review of the very restrictive supplemental bidder qualifications that were issued by addendum to the original project requirements. These focused on volume of work rather than specific construction requirements to complete the work, and were unnecessarily restrictive. The project will be re-bid with clearer contractor qualification requirements outlined in the construction documents. The design of the skatepark will not be changed.

Further, issuance of a construction contract involving excavation and concrete work at this time of year will be problematic as we are now ready to enter a wet rainy period for some time. The construction window for skatepark concrete work is already rapidly coming to an end for 2010 and an extremely wet winter is forecast. Starting construction in the face of such would likely lead to unintended site costs due to wet conditions.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Adams on how the community is responding to the delay, Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli answered that the opening will most likely not be delayed. Instead, the construction schedule will be condensed.

Lifelong Recreation Programs Barn Dance: This fun event was held this past Saturday with approximately 100 people attending, including City Councilmembers Bagshaw and Rasmussen and Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli.

Parks YVPI students Art Show in Tacoma: During a 2010 gathering of youth to talk about what youth want to do with their time - how they want to create, learn and grow – Parks staff were surprised that the creative arts were so important to them. Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center responded with the 2010 Performing Arts Academy for youth placed at risk for violence. The curriculum included string instruments, theater, and acting. Over 39 youth participated and gave a public performance on August 20.

Another creative art form was visual arts, with youth leading the process. In response Parks YVPI worked with youth to create an exhibition during ARTS CRUSH at the B-2 gallery in Tacoma. Two young people, Abdi Adan and James Siu, created four 3' x 3' panels being prominently displayed until the end of October at B-2. These are just two of the POWER OF PLACE Extended Hours Programs under the Parks Youth Violence Prevention Initiative.

MOHAI Loan to City: Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli briefly reviewed the agreement between the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI.) The land is being bought by Washington State Department of Transportation for the SR 520 re-build project. The City is scheduled to receive the funds when the land is sold but wants earlier use of the funds.

Downtown Rotary Environmental Committee: More than 100 members of this civic organization have volunteered their time for the November 6 Green Seattle Day. The Rotary has voiced interest in becoming more engaged with Seattle Parks in volunteer opportunities.

Magnuson Park Advisory Committee (MPAC) Meeting Summary: MPAC met on October 13 and members heard updates from developers for Building 11 who are hoping to take possession before the end of the year and complete renovations by late spring of 2011. The committee also heard a presentation on the proposed new entrance driveway just south of the

Mountaineers building. This entrance has long been planned; it is in the 1997 Sand Point Physical Management Development Management Plan that was passed by Council Resolution and a recommendation in the 1999 Blue Ribbon Committee Report. Building 11 LLC and Arena Sports will pay for the construction of the new entrance driveway. Committee members gave positive feedback recognizing the value of a new entrance to easing traffic at the NE 74th Street entrance and to making the Northshore a vibrant recreational area. The next regular MPAC meeting will be on Nov 10, and there will be a special meeting on Nov. 17 during which Parks staff will make a presentation outlining all the capital and development needs at Magnuson Park.

Commissioner Kincaid asked about opening the NOAA road on the north end of the park. Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli responded that the Department had worked for some time with NOAA to open this road; however, the agency had a lot of security and other concerns. NOAA will instead fund an entrance 900' north at NE 77<sup>th</sup> and Sand Point Way, that provides a better timeline. Responding to a question from Commissioner Holme on the project's timeline, Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli answered that the plans will be presented to Seattle Department of Transportation next week, with construction in December-January.

Building 30 Events: A number of public events are held at this aging building. Because of the building's condition, and Parks has no money to fund improvements, the City's Department of Planning and Development has limited the number of public events that can be held in the building. This ruling does not affect the building's office space.

Arboretum's Pacific Connections Gateway Opening: The Arboretum Foundation, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and the University of Washington Botanic Gardens will celebrate the official opening of the new Gateway to Chile garden this Sunday, from 1:00–4:00 p.m. There will be tours, music, dancing, and a ribbon cutting ceremony. Visitors who attend the Opening Celebration can also enjoy glorious fall foliage at the Maple Viewing event on Sunday from 11:00 am-3 pm in the Seattle Japanese Garden, just across the street from the Gateway to Chile.

Solid Ground Open House at Sand Point: This non-profit, which provides well-managed housing for the homeless, will hold an open house on Saturday, October 16, 1:00-4:00 pm at Sand Point (in Magnuson Park.) Solid Ground currently has 103 units of housing at Sand Point, and is constructing 57 new units. It can build up to 200 units at the site.

Michelle Obama's Let's Move campaign: Parks has recently been working with the Mayor's Office, Health and Human Services and other City departments on Michele Obama's "Let's Move Campaign. Parks has been at the table with others to talk about what Seattle's already doing on the health and wellness front. In part, because of the Healthy Parks, Healthy You Initiative, Parks has been asked to speak with White House liaisons on how it is engaging folks to get moving. In conjunction with the national campaign, Mayor McGinn will host an October 28 Walk to School event at Concord Elementary. It should be a great event and help to begin his Seattle support of the national Let's Move campaign.

The Mayor has committed to attending a number of healthy activities hosted by Parks and he will actively participate with youth in Late Night Basketball, youth volleyball, urban golf, or ultimate Frisbee, to name a few. We are also working with the Mayor on other ways that he

can help Parks deal with the obesity issue. Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli noted that First Lady Obama will visit Seattle in November.

### **Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience**

The Chair explained 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-to-three minutes each, 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 Old/New Business. No one signed up to testify.

### **Briefing/Discussion: Seattle Parks' 2011 Proposed Budget Impacts**

Carol Everson, Seattle Parks Finance Director, Robb Courtney Seattle Parks Division Director, and Sue Goodwin, Seattle Parks Recreation Director next presented an update on Mayor McGinn's proposed 2011 budget and how that may affect the Department. Handouts included a copy of Ms. Everson's Powerpoint and a 17-page handout listing details of the proposed cuts to the Department's budget. To listen to the briefing and Board discussion, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591078> and move the cursor to position 24.00.

Ms. Everson reviewed a Powerpoint presentation that has been shown to Parks employees and managers, Associated Recreation Council, and Seattle Parks Foundation. The City has a \$67 million shortfall in its General Fund and must adopt a balanced budget. Parks receives a large share of the General Fund and cutting the Department's budget is a big part of the solution. Business as usual is not an option.

The Powerpoint included detailed information on the Department's baseline budget, its Guiding Principles (Race and Social Justice, Diversity of Opportunities, Capacity Building, Partnerships, and Asset Preservation), Service Impacts, and gave some detail on Additional Cuts.

Parks Division Director Robb Courtney next presented information on how the proposed budget will affect his division and will result in a loss of 14% of the division's staff. This amounts to 40.83 full-time employees. He next detailed the position cuts to the various work groups and described what programs/work will no longer be performed.

Recreation Division Director Sue Goodwin next presented information on how the proposed budget will affect the Recreation Division, with a loss of 19.75 full time employees. The Mayor's proposed budget also calls for changes at five of the 26 community centers, including Alki, Ballard, Green Lake, Laurelhurst, and Queen Anne and gave extensive information on the proposed changes. In addition, management of the Green Lake and Mt. Baker Rowing and Sailing Centers will be transferred to the Associated Recreation Council in 2013.

Mr. Courtney and Ms. Goodwin expressed how difficult these cuts are to the public and to staff.

### *Board Discussion*

Commissioner Ramels thanked staff for the excellent presentation. Commissioner Barber referred to the productive Seattle Green Partnership and asked how this partnership can be maintained. Mr. Courtney responded that it is a challenge; however, Parks staff are working to find capital money and develop different ways to continue this work.

Commissioner Adams stated it is difficult to hear about these drastic cuts to the Department's budget and he applauds strategies that staff have developed. He asked if staff are also looking at examining work processes to make them as efficient as possible and to build capacity. Mr. Courtney responded that one way to build capacity is with volunteers. This proposed budget retains higher-skill trade staff and cuts those at a lower level, and the Department's installation maintenance workers are being looked at as a source of new capacity by increasing their use for maintenance and repair work.

Commissioner Kostka referred to the Environmental Learning Center cuts and asked if Parks considered using docents to run the programs or raising fees to pay for staff. Mr. Courtney answered that the Department will work to expand the number of docents; however, fees would have to be quadrupled in order to pay the costs associated with keeping staff at the Centers.

Commissioner Kostka asked if trimming trees on a 22-year cycle is effective. Mr. Courtney responded that this isn't a good direction to go in and the health of the trees will go downhill over time. Commissioner Kincaid asked if this will result in increased safety hazards. Mr. Courtney answered that staff will remove tree hazards as they know about them.

Commissioner Kincaid noted that the Department already has a lot of deferred building maintenance and many of the aging facilities need significant repairs. She asked who will do this work. Ms. Everson responded that the Department has \$230 million in deferred maintenance and repairs of this scope are contracted out and not performed by Mr. Courtney's crews. Commissioner Kincaid asked at what point the Department will lose buildings due to lack of maintenance or needing to be privatized in order to remain open. Ms. Everson answered that the Mayor and City Council realize that Parks has a long-standing under-funded major maintenance budget. Over the next year, the Department hopes the Park Board will help explore options for this funding need. Commissioner Kincaid stated that the Department is doing great work during a difficult time; however, it is still expanding parks [with funds from the Parks and Greenspaces Levy] and she wondered if it makes sense to keep doing this with the current budget constraints.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Holme on the productivity of half-time vs. full-time staff, Mr. Courtney clarified that the half-time maintenance staff work six months on and six months off resulting in good efficiency. Commissioner Holme commented that studying the economics of the system is very important. Ms. Everson agreed and stated that the Department has funded a half-time senior economist for this purpose.

Commissioner Keith questioned why the Carkeek Park Environmental Learning Center (ELC) is being hit hardest [the proposal is to only have it available for rentals.] Mr. Courtney responded that Carkeek has the least program volume and facility use of all the ELCs. The Camp Long ELC will be the focus of connecting urban youth.

Commissioner Keith asked for further information on the \$1 million transfer from the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs to the Parks Department. Ms. Everson explained that this came about as a way to support arts programming in parks.

Commissioner Keith noted that the budget allows for the hiring of 105 youth and asked where these positions will be allocated. Ms. Goodwin responded that this is part of the Summer Youth Employment Program; however, it hasn't yet been decided in which program the stipends will be used. Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli added that some of the funds will be used for youth playground attendants and Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center youth

Commissioner Keith stated she understands the timeline the Department faced in its consideration of the BizKids proposal. However, she questioned if Parks doesn't use an established process to make this decision, how can the public assume there is equity and access for small and large for-profit and non-profits who want to use park facilities? Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli responded that Parks will do a process to determine if it should close Queen Anne Community Center, do a Request for Proposals, and then take another year to decide. Commissioner Keith believes that if Parks can streamline the BizKids proposal it should also be able to streamline the RFP. She urged the Department to ensure that the facilities are open to the public and not just for the use of for-profits.

Commissioner Ramels asked what amount of revenue the Department expects from BizKids and Ms. Everson estimated \$80,000. BizKids is a for-profit, with a youth focus. Parks has a similar relationship with the Audubon Society, which is a for-profit organization that uses a parks building at Seward Park. Commissioner Ramels stated that the BizKids proposal was not vetted to the public and was a surprise. She doesn't believe this proposal is the right thing to do.

Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli stated that BizKids approached Parks in March after they lost their north-end lease. Parks isn't about film production, but the work of BizKids meets the focus of Parks. Parks realizes this proposal is "on the edge" and would do a one-year agreement and then determine whether it is working. The Department has been told to be creative and look at new ways to operate and this is one way to do this. Responding to a comment from Commissioner Ramels that the Department does not have a policy for this, Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli noted that there are several for-profits at Magnuson Park. Commissioner Ramels pointed out that there was a lengthy public conversation before those agreements were made. Ms. Everson added that Pratt Fine Arts Center is another example of a for-profit using park facilities. Parks staff reflected that the Department needs a way to respond to opportunities as they arise.

Commissioner Barber wondered whether City Council is discussing some type of park maintenance levy maintenance levy. Commissioner Adams stated that these budget problems will last a long time and the Department needs long-term strategies – he is hearing short-term solutions tonight. He repeated his earlier question whether the Department is studying its practices to increase efficiencies and save money. Ms. Everson responded that the Finance Division budgeted for a consultant to determine whether it would be a cost savings for the Accounting Division to move to a paperless system; however, the funds for the study were cut from the budget. Commissioner Adams stated that this is typical. He believes if Parks will study its practices for best efficiency, it will pay off. Ms. Goodwin added that Parks also wants

to determine why some community center are busy and others aren't and look for efficiencies there. Commissioner Adams commented that this disparity in demand makes it more difficult for the Department to develop its budget. Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli noted that Mr. Courtney and two of his staff did extensive work in looking for efficiencies and how to best use the Parks Division workforce.

Commissioner Holme stated it is critical to have good information available to the public to keep them informed on what will stay, what may go away, and what is going away under the proposed budget. Ms. Goodwin responded that information is posted on the internet and is being updated frequently. Parks staff have also posted the information at community centers and sent it to neighborhood blogs.

Commissioner Kincaid believes Laurelhurst Community Center is shifting from a family focus to a services focus. There are challenges to getting to the location as it is in a hilly area, with limited mass transit access. Ms. Goodwin noted that services and programs will continue to be available at other sites. Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli agreed and added that this will focus on services will at least keep the facility open, keep it heated, and pay for the utilities.

Commissioner Kincaid asked if the Ballard community steps forward to manage the daddy/daughter dance, could it continue. Ms. Goodwin stated emphatically that it could. She next asked if volunteers do the work at facilities, if their fees could be reduced. Ms. Everson responded that the Department already has reduced rates, scholarships, and has informal arrangements where the community can trade services, such as translating, for lower use rates. The Department has many volunteers and they are a great benefit; however, Parks staff also need to be present at the sites when they are open to the public.

Commissioner Ramels commented that Parks staff are doing a great job on the budget, and have ensured the Department's situation is much better than what could have happened. Commissioner Adams believes the budget is being driven by process and he hopes the Department can develop strategies to get ahead of the game and be more proactive in planning. This will benefit both the public that the Department serves and the Parks and Recreation staff members who are also affected by these proposed cuts.

Commissioners agreed to send any additional questions to the Board's Coordinator and she will forward to the Board.

**Old/New Business:**

<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=4677> and move cursor to position 58.00  
Park Board Annual Retreat: The Board's annual retreat is scheduled on Monday, October 18, at the Seward Park Audubon Center, 2:00-8:00 pm. Parks staff distributed the agenda packet.

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Diana Kincaid, Vice-chair  
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE \_\_\_\_\_