

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
October 9, 2014

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

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<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/watchVideos.asp?program=Parks>

***Board of Park Commissioners***

Present:

Barbara Wright  
Brice Maryman  
Tom Tierney, Chair  
Yazmin Mehdi  
Antoinette Angulo  
Lydia Albert

***Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff***

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent  
Susan Golub, Strategic Advisor

This meeting was held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Tierney called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. The meeting agenda was approved.

To hear and view the full meeting, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=6517>

Oral Communication from the Audience

Gary Gaffner: Regarding the selection of a new Superintendent for Seattle Parks and Recreation, Mr. Gaffner stated it takes a year for an outsider to get to know our park system and that is a wasted year. Get someone from Seattle who knows the system. The person does not necessarily have to be a parks and recreation professional, but they should be from Seattle.

**Superintendent's Report**

Acting Superintendent Williams gave the Park Board a summary of current issues.

- **City Budget** – Parks' presentation regarding the department's 2015 budget took place at the City Council earlier this week. Perhaps because of the Council's in-depth involvement in the development of the Seattle Park District, the session went quickly with few questions. Two issues arose:
  - 1) Lake City Community Center: Councilmember Licata asked what the cost would be to build a new, full-service community center in Lake City. This raises the challenge that Parks will face in developing criteria for spending the Park District's funds for Community Center Rehabilitation and Development. There are seven centers untouched in the past levies and we will need to determine, via criteria, which centers go first.
  - 2) Alum Treatment at Green Lake: Alum treatment for algae control is not scheduled for Green Lake until 2016. Councilmembers expressed an interest in moving the alum treatment up to 2015 due to the recent algae outbreak that caused the lake to be closed to swimming.

- **Smoking Ban in Parks** – Parks briefed the Mayor regarding the proposal to ban smoking in all Parks (now smoking is banned in children’s play areas, on playfields and within 25 feet of another park patron). The proposal, which will be coming to the Board, is an outright ban. The Mayor raised the issue of how the ban will be enforced. Parks will be meeting with representatives from the Seattle Police Department to discuss enforcement before the ban comes to the Board for consideration. In addition, The City Attorney raised the question of whether vapor cigarettes should be covered, as there is not conclusive evidence that vapor cigarettes are harmful to health. In addition, using vapor cigarettes can be a bridge from tobacco to non-smoking, so it may be counter-productive to the effort to reduce smoking to ban vapor cigarettes.
- **Cheasty Project Advisory Team (PAT) Meeting:** Thank you to Tom for speaking at the first Cheasty Pilot mountain bike and pedestrian trail project advisory team meeting and explaining how the trail became a pilot project. Since the meeting, Parks held a follow-up call with PAT members to clarify that the only thing being considered for the pilot project is a perimeter loop trail, with no interior or bisecting trails. The scope for the work of the PAT is to make a recommendation to the Park Board on the trail layout and criteria for measuring success of the pilot. The trail proponents are disappointed that the only trail being considered for the pilot is a perimeter loop trail; however, this was clearly the direction from the City Council when the Council considered the Neighborhood Matching grant for the project.

There will be public meetings after the PAT completes its work and we anticipate the issue to come back to the Park Board in the first quarter of 2015.

- **Synthetic Turf:** There have been recent news stories about health concerns related to the crumb rubber that underlies synthetic turf fields. The synthetic turf industry has certified that the crumb rubber is safe, but others are arguing against it. Parks has 21 synthetic fields with crumb rubber; the first was installed in 1997. The synthetic fields allow for year-round use (grass fields are shut down over the winter) and are less expensive to maintain.
- **Downtown Parks:** Parks recently reorganized downtown park management by combining maintenance, park rangers and programming/activation under one manager, Victoria Schoenberg. There are still lots of concerns about downtown parks, especially related to the large population of transient and homeless people in the parks.

### **New Superintendent Selection**

Tom Tierney explained that Mayor Murray has convened a search committee to assist in finding a new Superintendent for Seattle Parks and Recreation since Christopher Williams decided not to accept the position of permanent Superintendent. Tom is on the search committee and solicited the Board’s input on two questions related to the Superintendent search. The questions and the Board’s input follow.

#### **1. What are the qualities, skills, and abilities you think are important in order to succeed as the next Parks Superintendent?**

- A. Possess a vision for the role of public spaces in making great cities, and have the ability to inspire others toward that vision

- B. Ability to manage change, both cultural change within the department and adaptation to a changing city
- C. Aggressive attention to race and social justice equity
- D. Collaborative spirit and management style and demonstrated ability to partner with other groups
- E. Passion for parks and recreation
- F. Good communication and listening skills
- G. Proven record of transparent accountability and continuing performance monitoring

**2. What experience is needed to effectively perform the Superintendent’s role? How important is it to have experience managing a public parks and recreation system?**

- A. Broad based experience across parks and recreation programs is an advantage; (be wary of candidates that specialize in narrower aspects of parks and recreation)
- B. We should welcome candidates from outside Seattle, but look for ones who can recognize and adapt to the city’s unique and special qualities (emphasis on collaboration, partnerships, social equity)
- C. Understanding of the nexus between parks and recreation and public health
- D. Understanding of the nexus between parks and recreation and climate change

**Old/New Business**

Commissioner Maryman attended the first meeting of the University District Open Space Forum. The second meeting will be October 30; Chip Nevins is Parks lead.

Commissioner Wright talked about re-engaging the Board’s Partnership Committee and deepening the relationship between Parks and our many partners.

**Commissioner Tierney moved the meeting adjourn; the motion was seconded and the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.**

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tom Tierney, Chair  
 Board of Park Commissioners