

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
April 23, 2015

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:

Lydia Albert
Antoinette Angulo
Tom Byers
Bob Edmiston
Brice Maryman
Tom Tierney, Chair
Barbara Wright

Excused:

Diana Kincaid
Yazmin Mehdi, Vice Chair

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent
Susan Golub, Policy Unity Manager
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

This meeting is held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Tierney calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Commissioner Tierney asks for approval of the Agenda and the April 9 meeting minutes. Commissioner Maryman moves to approve the consent items and Commissioner Edmiston seconds. The consent items are approved. Commissioner Tierney introduces Tom Byers who made it through City Council Parks Committee on Tuesday and will be confirmed at the next full Council meeting on Monday, April 27 at 2pm.

Oral Requests and Communications from the Audience

None.

Study Session: Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project

Panel: Parks staff Paula Hoff, Doug Critchfield and Jon Jainga; along with project consultants; Maggi Johnson from Johnson-Sutherland, Donald Huing from HWA GeoScience and Claire Hoffman from ESA Environmental

Maggi, the trail designer gives a presentation on the trail design.

Cheasty acts as a community barrier between Beacon Hill and Rainier Valley and there is no safe way for kids to walk to school. In the greenspace the majority of the topography is between 5-40%. GSP

and Cheasty at Mountainview have done much restoration. There are issues with trash and ivy; Parks staff are cleaning up encampments area.

The general goals of the project are restoration and opportunity for everyone to enjoy and interact with nature; including trails to leverage energy towards restoration.

The intention of the pilot project is to test the suitability of mountain biking in Seattle's greenspaces.

The characteristics of the perimeter loop trails will differ on whether they are for bicycles or pedestrians. The pedestrian trail will be 4-feet wide and inside that will be 1-3 feet wide bike trail. There is a lot of construction knowledge and post occupancy knowledge in terms of durability and impact on the land.

Accessibility is important for the American Disability Act and there is a relatively long stretch of accessible trail.

Perimeter loop will go one direction; no steeper uphill than 8% and no steeper downhill than 5% to control speed and erosion. There will be information kiosks at major entries with rules and bike racks.

When designing a trail there are 2 sensitive areas – the steep slopes and wetlands. In order to make the least impactful and safest trails, the design uses boardwalks and the geotech engineer will provide specifications. On the steep slopes designers will use a retaining wall.

When crossing pedestrian trails, bikers will be going uphill. There will also be signage and the trails will be made out of different materials.

Kiosk at entry would give interpretation, work party dates, etc..

The pedestrian trail goes along Cheasty Boulevard and drops back into the greenspace, this was done because the bike trail can cross with less impact but because the pedestrian path is wider it would require more engineering and this design limits the environmental impact.

This is the schematic design but the professional builders and geo tech will go out and make micro-adjustments.

Commissioner Edmiston asks if it is their intent to keep people biking and walking on separate trails? Maggie says the rules, through culture, encourage bikers to stay on their own trail. The trails will be designed in such a way that makes the bike trail more enjoyable for bikers and same with pedestrians. Bicyclists have the right-of-way on the bike trail but pedestrians can walk on them.

Commissioner Wright asks about the progress to the natural area supplemental use guidelines and the feedback from the mini summit. Acting Superintendent Williams says there were a series of focus group meetings representing 47 different organizations. 120 people attended the mini summit and the panel consisted of people from the University of Washington, Forterra and other community organizations. It was a rich discussion. The May 28 Park Board meeting will be a presentation on the greenbelt and natural area supplemental use guidelines. People would like the Cheasty process delayed until Parks has a clear set of guidelines. This is not about changing the natural area policy

from 1998. Commissioner Maryman asks if leveraging this user group will accelerate the forest restoration? He recognizes the project development for Cheasty has been different from other processes, because typically there would be value engineering and wonders whether there has been a cost estimate. Acting Superintendent says Parks lives by value engineering projects. Jon adds that this is at 65% design stage; after planning and development takes it over they will be working with consultants to develop that cost. They are currently in the construction document phase - still in the early stage of schematic design. Commissioner Maryman says there is an expectation that what the Park Board and City Council approve will be built and he wants to be clear that it will depend on cost estimates. Acting Superintendent Williams adds that this is a multi-phase project. 15-month evaluation starts when the project is complete.

Maggie believes that the Cheasty Mountainview community is committed to the full vision of the trail design and will fundraise for it. Commissioner Tierney says when the Park Board first approved a pilot project it was a more comprehensive set of trails beyond a perimeter loop and that was scaled down at City Council for the funding from the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) grants. It isn't clear what the grant funds will cover and what it is the Park Board are going to be recommending. Acting Superintendent Williams says Parks view the City Council direction as phase 1, and not constraining future elements. He clarifies that no environmental work has been done on the interior of the space.

Don, the Geotech engineer says there are 2 environmental considerations – wetlands and steep slopes. He performed reconnaissance of the perimeter trail and became familiar with the soil conditions and slope conditions. He did not find anything that would preclude an interior trail. There is some near surface sloughing issues but not global instability issues. He cautions that costs go up as one routes a trail through a steep area. Given that cross trails are going up and down slopes there will be more cost.

Claire, the environmental consultant did reconnaissance but did not delineate the wetlands and did not do the interior. Further work would need to be done before interior trails could be done. She imagines there will be more wetlands on the bottom of the slope.

Commissioner Wright asks about a timeline for the project and funding? Are there funds being raised to restore the area if the pilot doesn't work? Jon says if pilot doesn't work then Parks would restore it. If pilot isn't approved, Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) will continue working on it. They have 33 zones in Cheasty Greenspace. The process for the GSP: Phase 1 is removing invasives; Phase 2 is planting and weeding; Phase 4 is maintaining the site. This work at Cheasty is included in the GSP budget.

Paula adds the Park Board recommendation will happen on May 14. The Council meeting for the \$100,000 DON grant will be held shortly after the Park Board meeting. After the approval by the Council and funding secured, the project will be turned over to planning and development for project management. The money would need to be there to move forward.

Commissioner Byers asks for clarification: One of the motivations for this project is to enable the community groups to connect through the greenbelt from home to school; if the perimeter trail is the first phase does this alignment speak to that need? Maggie says that there is a more direct route but there are not cross trails in the project; this is an improvement.

The Cheasty Mountainview folks would prefer a more comprehensive trail network. Commissioner Byers asks what happens when people start making social trails to get through the forest. Paula responds the forest stewards are responsible for returning those trails to their natural status. Doug says there is a 14-day window for maintenance to occur. Commissioner Byers asks who will be evaluating the success of the pilot project. Doug responds that the criteria evaluates the bike trail and pedestrian trails; however, the pedestrian trail would be there regardless of whether bike trail passes or not and parks would maintain it.

Commissioner Albert asks about what will happen with the social trails that are already in the greenspace. Maggie says there are trails there for restoration purposes and then the homeless have done some trails; Jon adds that on restoration site there are small social trails to allow work to be done. When restoration work is complete, they restore trails by planting native shrubs or ground cover.

Commissioner Maryman asks about how the project plan aligns with or diverts from the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) guidance? Maggie says best practices are IMBA standards and were consulted closely for layout and the trail conforms to their standards. IMBA guidelines supplemented with the knowledge of the geotech consultants enriched the trail plan.

At a conceptual level, IMBA would recommend a more robust system so that people do not create trails on their own. They would create opportunities for different skill levels and age groups.

The commissioners wonder about evaluation criteria and baselines against which to compare during the pilot project. Doug responds they will monitor illegal dumping, littering; and whether there are fewer encampments and less negative use of the site. Barbara feels that bicycle use on the pedestrian trails should be spelled out and included as an inappropriate activity. The baseline would be looking at the trail once original construction and after 15 months. Commissioner Byers says it strikes him that the greenbelt has a set of circumstances now that one measure success is whether it is used more appropriately by the public and perceived as more of a public benefit. Does the evaluation intend to measure that and how strong is that measured now? Doug says with proper maintenance, positive use and better community, it will be. Paula says getting pictures of the greenspace in its current state is a good idea.

Acting Superintendent Williams feels common sense measures should reduce illegal behaviors; recent cleanup act is worth measuring against. He proposes a Cheasty committee to discuss how the park is doing and have conversations between the community, the Park Board and the department.

Monitoring checklist –

Commissioner Wright thinks the materials and presentation shows the enormous amount of work and effort put forth by the staff.

Natural areas – These places were set aside as natural areas and this is not being looked at strongly as an evaluation criteria; the use by people in a natural space. Commissioner Maryman says much of the proponent testimony talked about fostering the next generation of environmentalists and wonders if there is a way to test that.

Commissioner Angulo agrees and wonders if there is a public education component during the pilot project, i.e., naturalists tours, tracking number of people who tour it. Paula says that is difficult to measure it but they will look at it.

Commissioner Albert wonders if bikes will more quickly erode the space and threaten the environment and asks to what extent adding bike trails will change the environment. Maggie says it is hard to find relevant studies; she read one that startled animals – to do some comparisons and the result was that bikers and hikers had a similar effect on wildlife depending on the distance. There is not enough information on that. Maggie walked the bike trail at Swan Creek, her experience is anecdotal but it seemed like a good wildlife environment. Commissioner Tierney adds the impact on fauna was one of the driving questions for having a pilot project. He adds that without having interior trails, the pilot will not answer many of those questions. Don says the ability to measure various impacts will be really difficult. What you will see is the physical manifestations of trails. Is there erosion, litter? Success will be highly dependent on how well the trail is maintained. If the volunteers do not maintain, then there will be siltation issues in the wetlands, turbidity in the water, erosion on the trails. Context will be significant in the evaluation criteria. Acting Superintendent Williams asks if the evaluation criterion takes into account that this greenspace is in an urban area.

Commissioner Edmiston wonders if Parks staff considered correlation versus causation. Any plan to imbed trail counters to count how many people use the trail. Commissioner Tierney says the Cheasty committee could make these types of recommendations going forward

Commissioner Byers wonders about measuring the connectivity to the elementary school from below. Paula offers that it would be hard to measure. Self-reporting and surveying the kids at the school are suggested mechanisms for obtaining data on school commuters. Paula adds the access to the school is not great. The current design is not great for families who want to let their kids go ride their bikes in the woods because of the length of the trail. Certain goals will not align well with the current design.

There is a moratorium on changing the Bike Policy until after the pilot project is over. Staff have recommendations on how to treat the Bike Policy piece of the decision. Acting Superintendent Williams says the pilot will inform future decisions about the Bike Policy.

Acting Superintendent Williams says there is not a lot of space for maintenance yards in the city but they are essential and necessary for the operation of the department.

Commissioner Maryman asks how much forest is being restored now and what is typical performance of the GSP project. He wonders if having a broad volunteer base will accelerate the restoration of the greenspace. Jon replies there are 31 zones on this site. Some are in phase 1 which means they are still removing invasives. There are areas that have not been touched but hope to get to them in the next 2-3 years. Each zone worked differently to restore the greenbelt. Each zone takes 3-4 years to get native plant material established. The amount the GSP can accomplish depends on the site – the amount of invasive species and the steepness of the slopes are two factors. Maggie suggests looking at the Cheasty at Mountainview portion to compare with the greenbelt.

Commissioner Tierney says one piece of work needed for the Park Board to make their recommendation is to map out what some of decision variables are in terms of process. There are still questions about how a decision will come about and what will be put in place.

Parks staff will send out a decision agenda prior to next meeting and try to answer some of these questions. Is this a phased approach? Do we anticipate later phases if evaluation goes positively? What are we really saying?

Commissioner Tierney thanks the panelists for coming and answering all of these questions.

Superintendent's Report

Trust for Public Land – annual report came out. Acting Superintendent Williams will order enough copies for everyone on the Board.

American Planners Association Annual Conference – APA partnered with National Recreation and Park Association to increase interest planning in urban cities and several Parks staff made presentations. Acting Superintendent Williams gave presentations on public/private partnerships and characteristics of a great urban park system. The conference was well attended and people commented that Seattle is a great place to live and spoke of the Olmsted legacy.

Moorage Lessee Notification – Parks has terminated the lease for the current lessees. Parks staff to develop a Request for Proposal process, which will probably happen in the fall.

State budget – Parks submitted grant proposals for \$475,000 for the Arboretum Waterfront Trail and \$500,000 for the Yesler Development Project; at this point the money has not been cut from the budget.

King of Norway is coming to Ballard – King Harald of Norway is coming to Bergen Place Park for the unveiling of a new mural. King Harald's only public appearance (Friday, May 22, 4:30 – 5 p.m.) during an upcoming visit to the U.S. Details are not finalized but the event at Bergen Park will include a few public speakers, music, and the unveiling of the park's restored mural. Parks is working with the Friends group to ensure that the park kiosk is repainted.

2016 North American Gaelic Games – Acting Superintendent Williams is meeting with the organizers to ask them to consider holding their 2016 games at Magnuson Park. The games include football (soccer), curling and camogie.

Jimi Hendrix Park construction will be underway at the end of this month. Phase 1 of the park, designated "Little Wing," will include a new stairway and grand entrance at the southeast corner of the park, paved pathways, a chronological timeline of Jimi's life and career, enhanced landscaping with trees and native plantings, seat wall benches, improved fencing, rain gardens, a butterfly garden and a central plaza for community gatherings and performances.

International Special Event Society - Magnuson Park hosted 1-week training at Building 30. Parks introduced the site as a potential for special events. Many of the attendees expressed interest in

renting the site for future events. Parks spent \$9million in debt income on rehabilitating that space so the more interest to use it the quicker the debt will be paid.

Jefferson Golf Facility – Jefferson Golf Facility has been renovated as part of \$19million Golf Master Plan. The Golf Master Plan included improvements to 4 golf clubs; driving range at Jefferson and Jackson, cart paths at West Seattle, food service at Jefferson and 2-tiered driving range at Jefferson. Parks has come to 90% completion of the Golf Master Plan and this will culminate on April 11.

Greenwood urban village acquisition – more open space acquired in Greenwood; it will double the size of a new park in Greenwood.

Kubota Garden – Seattle Parks and the Kubota Garden Foundation are hosting a celebration for the new terrace overlook at Kubota Garden on Thursday, May 21, 2015 at 2:30. We have requested that the Mayor attend and speak. The new overlook structure, located at the north end of the garden above the Spring Pond, provides a much-needed informal event space and casual viewing area. This public / private partnership project includes work by international stone masons, design from Bob Hoshide of Hoshide Wanzer Williams Architects and a railing crafted by local artist Gerard Tsutakawa.

Old/New Business

Commissioner Tierney mentions the Partnership luncheon on May 5 at 12pm at the Belltown Community Center.

Susan Golub, Policy Unit Manager, states elections of officers is postponed until Parks staff have time to check with candidates

Commissioner Wright moves the meeting adjourn; Commissioner Angulo seconds the motion and the motion carries. The meeting adjourns at 8:28 pm.

APPROVED: _____ DATE _____
Tom Tierney, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners