

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
April 27, 2017

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**Board of Park Commissioners**

Present:

Andréa Akita  
Marty Bluewater  
Tom Byers, Chair  
Dennis Cook  
Marlon Herrera  
Evan Hundley  
William Lowe, Vice Chair  
Kelly McCaffrey  
Barbara Wright

**Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff**

Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent  
Christopher Williams, Deputy Superintendent  
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

The meeting is held at 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Byers calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. He asks for approval of the Agenda; Commissioner Hundley moves, Commissioner Lowe seconds, and the agenda is approved unanimously.

**Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience**

Margy Bresslour – Coleman Park Vista Restoration – A lot of history and pieces to the restoration project. SPR approved a plan to top those trees and they have been neglected. Many are damaged and not in great shape and people do not feel safe. It is dominated by Big Leaf Maple trees. Colman Park Vista Restoration would like to come back and present this project to the Board and get their support.

Elizabeth Riggs– Save Our Community Center – The residents voted on the Levy to maintain the community center and promised that something would be done, but the promises have been going on for 9 years. We want to see a Request For Proposal for the maintenance.

Susan Helf – Save Evans Pool and Community Center - a 2008 study indicated the community center could be renovated for a few million dollars. None of the work on the

centers has been done. 2014 levy was approved and SPR has not met the needs of the community and say there is not enough money to renovate the community center and pool. She asks the department to keep their promise for maintenance and renovations to the community centers.

Joyce Moty – Colman Vista – She is concerned about restoring the steep slope at Colman Park – SPR recently shut the project down. Steep slopes are poorly maintained and full of invasives. SPR needs to develop a real policy for restoration of steep slopes so there is a solution that gives people their views but does not harm the vegetation.

Evan Wright – Colman Park Vista Restoration – This is an example of a community working together and would love to share details about project and get feedback. This project received enormous community support. SPR asked them to suspend the project in order to perform a thorough evaluation of the slope, meanwhile, they recommended the community group work towards viewpoint designation. SPR went to the Urban Forestry Commission without inviting the community group. Their presentation was full of miscommunication. The community group lost trust in SPR staff. They ask the Commissioners to be vigilant about SPR's intent to spoil the project.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Colman Park Vista – The group reached out for a meeting and he will meet with them. He agrees with Joyce about a policy to reflect the work they are doing for restoration. He'll follow up with the board.

Green Lake Community Center and Evans Pool – There is funding from a previous levy, Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) money, and Park District funding available for maintenance and rehabilitation. The Park District does provide funding for all of the community centers. The 8 community centers identified in this first 6 years of Park District funding have a designated \$18million over the first 6 years for rehabilitation.

SPR staff performed an estimate of the total work needed to renovate all 8 of the community centers and it equaled \$62million. Most of that is for Green Lake and Lake City. However, this estimate encompasses current programmatic capacity; not including future needs of a growing city.

Study being performed to determine short and long-term goals for the community centers throughout the city. SPR staff estimate it will cost approximately \$12million to stabilize these 8 centers.

For example, Green Lake enhancements: repair gym floor, renovate the roof, replace an electrical panel, ADA enhancements, and minor pool renovations.

Requests for Proposals (RFPs) will go out and SPR will let the community know when this happens.

Draft timeline for RFPs – internal stuff this fall and summer of 2018 for the roof work. Pool systems – scheduled closure to minimize disruption.

Superintendent Aguirre emphasizes he wants to be smart about how the department invest those public dollars; and want to be responsive to current and future needs of the communities.

Important reminder that SPR maintains all the other buildings. The Park District funds deferred many deferred maintenance projects.

References annual report which can be found here:

Superintendent Aguirre is performing walkthroughs of all the other 6 community centers to determine priorities system-wide.

Funds are not being taken away but the system has huge needs.

Several funding sources could potentially be used to fund the renovation of Green Lake Community Center:

Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) money

Former levy money from prior years will be used, however, those dollars have already been identified for certain projects.

There are current gaps in service throughout the system. The department is trying to ascertain how to invest in community centers to best serve the communities.

The Commissioners feel SPR needs to increase information going to the public so they understand how the money is spent. Jesus agrees, SPR can do a better job of putting information out there. They created and distributed a "Frequently Asked Questions" sheet for Green Lake and will do them for other community centers.

The 3rd shift crew performed maintenance at Green Lake to keep the buildings operational during normal hours.

Commissioner Cook reminds Superintendent Aguirre that many activities take place in the gym during the fall – requests the department keep in mind the community needs when going in to do the repairs.

The Commissioners understand community frustration; it is tough for people to wait considering they've been waiting so long already.

SPR is starting to plan the next 6-year cycle of the Park District which will have new investment initiatives; the planning process could take up to 18 months.

The Commissioners wonder if it is possible to shorten the timeline for repairs? Superintendent Aguirre states he has a responsibility to manage funds and be creative to move it forward as quickly as possible. There is a possibility that SPR could work with the Finance and Administrative Services department to move this quicker through designating it an emergency.

Commissioner Byers asks Superintendent Aguirre to follow-up with the Park Board about hastening timeline for roof repair.

Commissioner Byers mentions the Board wrote a draft statement which they will discuss later in the meeting; the basis is that the Board is here to listen to the community and elucidate the difference between privatization and partnership.

Denny Park Ribbon Cutting on May 6 – This is the city’s first park. The park received new sewage, irrigation and other projects aligned to make it more efficient. With support from the neighboring community to add upgraded lighting from Vulcan, Amazon and Clise properties; representatives of these companies and other members of the South Lake Union community donated the lights in an effort to launch Friends of Denny Park.

South Lake Union Park bridge – Work will start this summer. Bid came back below expectation.

West Seattle Greenbelt – Numerous trees were removed from the West Seattle Greenbelt last fall. The Mayor and City Attorney announced the City reached a settlement with 2 couples in the sum of \$400,000. This money will be used to restore what was there and for education/advocacy. The city recovered almost \$75,000 per tree.

SPR staff are preparing for summer.

### **Discussion: Retreat Summary and Next Steps**

*Presented by Christopher Williams, Seattle Parks and Recreation*

Deputy Superintendent Williams starts the discussion with the Board. He reviews some of the key points they made at their retreat a week prior.

- More strategic impactful work to shape the future of the SPR system
- Use Board for more controversial issues
- Provide opportunity to stake out a position and speak out
- Leverage Board energy and time –acting on behalf of the public – less operational
- More Board time with an issue and earlier – Board wants time to consider issues more deeply
- Up-to-date Park District information

Strategic issues –The issues Superintendent Aguirre thinks about and supports the ongoing strategic work of the organization.

- Long-term planning
- Public Engagement
- Building and leveraging advocacy and resources
- How do partnership opportunities differ?
- Building a results and mission driven organizations
- Become more outcome focused; outcomes that align with the vision for the city.
- Sustaining a healthy organization

Operating principles – Establish clear shared mission and values between the Board and SPR for the public and the Board. Deputy Superintendent Williams says it is important for the public to hear us engage in this conversation.

The Board and the department are beholden to statutory and regulatory framework; there are rules that must be followed in many of the processes of the department and this creates an opportunity to explain and articulate this to the public.

- Future Park Board meetings schedule
- Agree to proposed strategic areas
- Could result in multi-year work plan; agenda items structured from a work plan
- Discuss and agree on a set of shared values
- Review and revise proposed roles and priorities
- Establish benchmarks and milestones to measure the success; include public engagement

Pie-chart for meeting time allocation

- 60% work plan
- 20% codified work of the board – land use issues
- 20% areas of innovation, community groups, partners, discussions with community

Reactions to Summary of retreat

Commissioners talked about closing the loop when people come and speak to the Board at meetings. They want to be responsive to the public.

The Board can spend an inordinate amount of time reviewing and not doing. Important to not just talk about doing something but actually be impactful.

The Board recognizes there is a challenge to maintain system, especially in light of how far behind SPR is.

Public engagement – Questions the Board is considering:

- How does the board communicate to the public?
- How is the board responsible to the public?
- Meeting at other sites through meeting in a variety of locations.

The Board asks for more time to consider the Strategic Issues presented in Deputy Superintendent Williams' Briefing Paper. They would like to discuss and modify the bullets at a future meeting.

The Commissioners question where their authority starts and ends/not stepping on toes but still making a difference.

People go to Park Board meeting when something isn't working; would like the interaction with the public to be results oriented.

More time for Board discussion regarding issues at the meetings.

Criteria matrix for what comes to the Board and what doesn't – keep it handy as a reference.

Reserve time for innovation and opportunity – be poised and adaptive to take advantage of opportunities.

Outlook toward the future – SPR is taking advantage of technology and engaging with the public in different ways; using phone/tablet applications and increasing engagement across the board.

There is initial discussion among the Commissioners to focus on the following strategic issues: Long-Term Planning, Public Engagement, and, Building and Leveraging Advocacy and Resources

Being able to close the loop on issues brought to the Board; if it comes to the board the Commissioners want to know how SPR will respond.

Where the Commissioners' role begins and ends; authority is challenging.

Deputy Superintendent Williams says the Board is given legitimacy and responsibility by the City Charter and appointed by elected officials, but they are volunteers. They are not part of the bureaucracy, and so outside of the constraints of city employees. They can speak a bit more freely. They are charged with stewarding the whole park system; and charged with worrying about parks and openspace. The Board does not have

formal authority except to advise the Superintendent and elected officials to create a great park system. Although, they do have a fair amount of influence.

These initial conversations are intended to set the stage for continuity; discussions that will go on over a period of time.

Commissioner Byers proposes homework – be prepared with 3 issues that are worthy of strategic conversations at the next meeting. One related to each Parks initiative: healthy environment, healthy people, and stronger communities.

Commissioner Wright feels the influence of the Board should be drafted into a document. Strategic issues could be in there, also.

One outcome should be a report that goes into the Mayor's Weekly.

The Board would also like to draft a formalized process to close the loop on public comments in order to help hold the department accountable to the public who come.

### **Presentation: Partnerships**

*Presented by Victoria Schoenburg, Seattle Parks and Recreation*

Many partnerships are already established. The work getting started now is taking off from an established foundation. SPR is looking at how to strengthen and expand the department's capacity to build capacity and public benefits. SPR staff are creating an inventory. They are talking internally with SPR staff and will come back with a briefing in July.

A new division was created this year to expand partnerships and better support the existing partnerships. Having designated staff will mean the department will have the ability to better leverage partners, create structures, support systems, and accountability for both parties.

One goal is to push partners to provide for underserved communities. The Partnership group will examine all the great stuff already happening and push it forward. The staff person to support this effort will be funded through the Park District.

The Commissioners suggest the department looks to define the different types of partners and clarify the types of partnership that are allowed to present to the Board.

Timeline: Discovery phase is through end of July, SPR staff hope to have staff hired by the end of this year.

Commissioner Wright talks of a survey done by the Board's Partnership Committee that included a critical review of SPR by partners. She asks SPR to ensure Victoria has access to that information prior to meeting with community groups.

Policy – In reviewing the Partnership Policy, it is suggested there be a stronger emphasis on public benefit and include partnership criteria and an assessment checklist.

Expanding partnerships – looking at leveraging resources to fund our mission. Can and might not include managing of community centers. Privatization intimates SPR hands over the keys to the facilities.

Partnership means the organization would comply with our mission and provide the current level of service or better.

Clear line of demarcation between partnership and privatization. SPR staff working on a document to clarify the difference. SPR is looking at more public benefit partnerships. Address this as soon as possible

Examples of partnerships in Washington D.C. –

- Group of nonprofit, community-based organizations implemented programs in a building owned by the district.
- The District paid a nonprofit group to come in and provide a particular activity.

As stewards of SPR, the Board and staff protect the mission of the parks and recreation system.

Commissioner Byers states the draft statement regarding SPR meeting the challenge of renovating the community centers is in an effort to launch a discussion with the Board, the community and SPR – about the goals and values that drive partnerships.

The Board is interested in the community point of view about whether public benefit is adequately reflected in the policy.

Welcomes comments from the public through Rachel, her contact information can be found here.

### **Old/New Business**

Draft Statement about community center maintenance

In discussing the Board's statement, Commissioner Wright feels any mention of privatizations could be removed.



The Board is aware of the mere mention of a partnership has raised concerns and fears about reduced access. The Board supports a partnership, that's a true partnership based on shared values and goals. If partnership isn't aligned with basic mission, values and goals, then it is not negotiable.

Questions from the Board arise over the funds available for the restoration work and how much maintenance is needed.

In house people did the estimates for Green Lake Community Center and Evans Pool, totaling \$25million. There is \$8million in Park District funding for this work and the work needed to renovate the other 8 identified community centers.

The Board wonders aloud:

- How much spending on repairs at Green Lake?
- Should other options be discussed in the statement?

They recognize that Green Lake Community Center and Evans Pool need to be rebuilt. The funding and steps to get there is to be determined.

It is possible to fund the repairs sooner, but the city must balance park system needs with every other priority in the city.

Has the department looked at bonding strategy? Taking an increment of Park District funding over time and bonding that revenue stream.

Conversations about paying for this happens simultaneously with planning for it. Green Lake is one of 27 community centers; small piece of a much larger pot.

Funding options: Increasing amount of taxes for Park District or city bonding capacity

Superintendent and PDOC committed to sticking with the first 6-year plan; there is a clear spending mandate on initial 6-year cycle.

Superintendent Aguirre will engage in conversation with the Green Lake community about whether Green Lake is a viable option.

Some funding sources don't fit into partnerships.

>>Capital projects – follow-up on timeline of funds and amounts

General support for the statement about Community Center Maintenance funding at Green Lake? At next meeting prepare to approve the statement.

Executive Committee to provide information about how the statement from the Board is distributed? Establish how these types of letter will be distributed in the future.

ARC Board – Commissioner Cook was asked to find out if a project is done with Park District money does it say that it's done with Park District money?

Superintendent Aguirre mentions that the Mayor's Executive Team wanted feedback from the Board regarding the 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan. The Mayor's team considers the Board representative of the public interest.

**There being no other business the meeting adjourns at 8:48pm.**

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