

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MEETING MINUTES
October 11, 2001

Present:

Bruce Bentley, Chair
James Fearn
Susan Golub
Yale Lewis

Absent:

Kathleen Warren

Staff:

Patricia McInturff, Deputy Superintendent
Barbara Pelfrey, Staff Assistant

Chair Bruce Bentley called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The agenda consent items were approved as submitted including approval of the October 11 agenda, meeting minutes of September 13 and September 27, 2001, correspondence from the Seattle School Board President, and two Revocable Use Permits – Leschi Park City Light installation of underground service to 118 Lake Washington Boulevard South and Interlaken Park for Seattle Public Utilities to install underground improvements for public water system.

Oral Requests and Communications from the Audience

Perry Jones, Queen Anne Community Council member and Kerry Park neighbor, is opposed to cutting down any heritage-type trees in the park. He has gathered more than 70 signatures, with the help of his neighbor Mimi Crystal, from people in the immediate area and people passing through the park who do not want to see the trees cut to accommodate the view from Upper Kerry Park. The plan that has been presented in the past did not address a lot of issues of what you would end up with if a lot of the trees were cut down, e.g. blackberries. There is no irrigation available in the park. He has had two arborists check the trees and it was determined the trees are safe and can be pruned to provide views. The Kerry Viewpoint Park Revegetation is not workable.

Don Harper, Queen Anne Community Council Parks Chair, stated there have been a number of meetings about this plan with his Parks Committee. Last April the Committee requested the Department bring back a plan to show what trees they were going to cut. People were unwilling to say that they would like some trees cut. He invited the Parks Department to revisit the Queen Anne Community Council Committee and present the proposal.

Smith McLain, Queen Anne resident, frequently walks in the park and likes to picnic in the shaded park area. Several months ago he noticed an informational sign regarding the revegetation plan. The plan was to remove all non-indigenous trees and replace them with

native trees. He questioned how this could be a valid reason for tree removal and replacement. He likes the idea of thinning and reducing the height and still enjoys the trees and he still does not understand why a non-indigenous tree needs to be removed from any park.

Karen Jones, Queen Anne resident, wants people to enjoy the park and neighborhood. The neighborhood is more important than the people who come through on buses. The trees on 2nd West are in worse condition. People come from all over to enjoy the park. They enjoy the natural habitat and the shade of the trees.

Denise Derr, Queen Anne resident, has personally witnessed her neighborhood turn into an urban village. The problem is the accumulation of all the projects and the negative impact that is created for those that live on the hill. There has been a population growth explosion in the last few years. The hill was once surrounded by a ring of green and is quickly being surrounded in a ring of concrete. Residential property is being subdivided. Canopy trees are being cut down by developers. Long neglected heritage trees are being cut down and being replaced with very unlike Olmsted trees. The view of the Interbay area is now steel poles. The Queen Anne natural grass playfield field has been replaced by plastic. As a resident Denise urges the Board to uphold the fundamental responsibility of the Seattle Parks Department to buffer its citizens from the negative impacts of urban development. The standard for tree removal must be very high and every effort must be maintained to preserve existing trees. Tree replacement programs must mitigate the immediate negative impacts of citizens.

Ellen Taft read her letter of resignation into the record dated September 13 to Sharon Priebe, Friends of the Conservatory of Volunteer Park. Ellen stated the instructions she was given to refrain from asking dog owners to leash their off-leash dogs during the plant sale was something she could not do. Ellen requested a letter from the Department to the Friends of the Conservatory stating that she did not do anything wrong. The plant sale area had signs that no dogs were allowed and yet dogs were in the area. Ellen requested the name and address of the volunteer who had a dog off-leash at the end of the plant sale so Animal Control can issue a citation.

Sharon LeVine, Queen Anne resident, stated Parks does not have any oversight to monitor to what is really going on and what the effect of a project in one park is going to mean to the other parks in the area or to look at what is happening in the community and how the changes made to parks actually impact the community. Sharon would like to see a long-term plan prepared for Kerry Park. The definition of a “view” could be discussed as a “view” may be framed by the beauty of the trees, tree tops and the changes of the leaves. Humes Place on Queen Anne is now a greenbelt and will soon be six townhouses. The old growth trees at West Lee and 1st West will soon be lost to another construction project. Kinnear Park will lose a number of trees because of the management project in that park. The Northeast Queen Anne greenbelt lost 50-60 mature trees. Rogers Park has lost six or seven trees in the last year and a half and there is no tree management plan or replacement plan. Trees are also being taken down off the historic Bigelow Boulevard. Sharon would like Parks to stop the Kerry Park process and assign someone to look at

what is happening in all the parks and what that means to the community. The community has requested more public input. Before trees are taken down there should be an adequate replacement plan.

Kerry Viewpoint Revegetation

Mark Mead, Senior Urban Forester, presented the Kerry Viewpoint Revegetation plan to the Board/ A Powerpoint presentation was shown. The intent of the project is to preserve views from the top of the hill, to reduce maintenance requirements, to remove hazardous trees, and to establish erosion-reducing plants along the slope. This particular project will focus on the removal of the invasive trees and plants such as blackberry, Scotch broom, and non-native maples and conifers along the slope areas. Plants for the slope will be selected to enhance views of the city, to reduce erosion and to reduce maintenance costs, and to beautify the slope area.

Kerry Viewpoint Park sits directly on top of the community park playfield and playground. The playfield was developed before the top of the hill was purchased by Parks Department. The lower residents consider Kerry Park a community play area and enjoy the setting of tall trees and semi-forested setting. The tourists, as well as local media, find the expansive views from Kerry Viewpoint provide a good backdrop for photographs. Kerry Viewpoint is listed in the SEPA documents as one of the 24 designated public viewpoints in the city. The Tree Policy states that views from designated public view parks and viewpoints will be preserved through maintenance and management of parks vegetation in front of or below the viewpoint.

Two public meetings have been held. Over 500 meeting notices were mailed to neighbors and public notices and meeting signs were placed at the park. Although turnout was low, the majority of the public meeting attendees were in favor of some form of tree management to obtain views. Significant objections were voiced from the immediate neighbor to the east of the park. After the public meetings were held a series of Queen Anne Parks Advisory Committee meetings were attended by Parks staff. At these meetings, Parks presented options to the removal of the trees, replanting plans and reductions in the amount of trees that would immediately be cut down or trimmed. The Committee's final recommendation was that no trees are removed and all efforts are made to trim or top the trees to accomplish some view mitigation. Parks has received a petition signed by 65 citizens that are opposed to the "logging of Kerry Park." Parks staff has developed a phased and prioritized approach to projects throughout Queen Anne. This plan has been reviewed by senior staff and has been approved for implementation.

Mark reviewed the park vegetation, which includes Ash, blackberry, Hawthorne, Horse Chestnut, Norway Maple and Black Spruce. The ash trees have been topped twice in the last 20 years and are now weak and in poor health. The horse chestnut tree has grown up in the understory of the maple and will dominate the area if not removed. Horse chestnut has the potential to grow to over 60-70 feet and is considered invasive. The Norway maple has a rapid growth rate and reach potential heights of over 80 feet and will quickly block city views. There is some imminent hazard associated with potential limb and top failure. The Black Spruce trees may reach heights of 40-50 feet. Previous attempts to

control growth through topping have not been successful. Topping of all conifers accelerates the top growth of the tree, quickly reclaiming and surpassing the previous height of the tree. Topping opens the tree up to infections and will weaken the canopy of the tree.

Priorities have been placed on the maintenance work to be performed in this park based on three criteria:

Health and Hazard – tree health and related potential failure of the portions of the tree are the most important evaluations performed. Previous topping or trimming overall tree health, disease, and potential targets are the basis for this evaluation.

Invasive Plants – non-native plants have reduced the amount of native plant species and consequently native habitat in all areas of Seattle. The increase of native species through plantings and the removal of non-native invaders have been identified as crucial objective of the Parks Department’s Best Management Practices. Removal of non-native invaders will over the long-term reduce maintenance needs and the use of herbicides.

View Issues – Park property designated as view sites will be maintained by the Parks Department for view corridors. Designated view corridors are the only place on Parks property where the topping of trees is permitted. In all other Parks areas, topping is not allowed due to its long-term effect on tree health and the increased maintenance costs of repeated topping.

It is desired to achieve a lower canopy in the park. The immediate replanting of selected species of trees that will retain the character of the lower park without growing to heights that will impact the Viewpoint is the goal. Parks Landscape Architect Pamela Alspaugh is working on a replanting plan for Kerry Park. The plan also calls for the removal of the ash trees along West Prospect as they are hazards to traffic. The spruce along the upper slope will be removed. There will be removal of five or more of the large deciduous trees to create view corridors.

A public hearing is scheduled before the Park Board on October 25th.

Frink Park Final Draft Vegetation Management Plan

Mark Mead, Senior Urban Forester, distributed a summary of the “highest” and “high priority” action items and relevant goals for forest, trails and aquatic resources as identified in the Frink Park Concept Plan. The park was donated to the City in 1907 and is a densely vegetated ravine. It is 17 acres and of Olmsted Brothers influence. Blaine Boulevard winds through the park and opens onto Lake Washington Boulevard. Mark presented a Powerpoint program outlining the plan.

The Friends of Frink Park met almost weekly and broke into groups to discuss the forests and trails, the edge environment and wetlands and streams. Sheldon and Associates, funded by the Starflower Foundation, primarily focused on the wetlands. Starflower Foundation is a Seattle-based charitable foundation, which focuses on preserving and rehabilitating Northwest native plant communities and wildlife habitat areas on Seattle

public lands. The projects are structured as hands-on educational experiences for all participants. The Friends of Frink Park funded a survey and received 250 replies. J & A Associates was hired to do a historical review. A forest management review was completed. Eight different volunteer groups help maintain the park. The Smith Brothers go out and pull ivy for an hour or two every day. Treemendous has done great things in the park. Treemendous is a public/private partnership whose mission is to unite and coordinate the efforts of volunteers, communities, businesses, not for profit organizations and government agencies to plant, preserve and maintain a healthy urban forest in Seattle. The UW Restoration Ecology Network (UW-REN) created the plan for the upper wetlands and buffer zone above the waterfall. Garfield and Nova highschoools worked cooperatively with Treemendous in Frink Park. A grant was received from the Department of Natural Resources. Work has been done with the Stable Landscape Program and Seattle Public Utilities/Earth Corps has given \$45,000 to the project.

The focus of the Urban Forestry Program is to develop, enhance and preserve the forests of Seattle's Parks and open spaces. Six goals are listed to help define the direction of the Frink Park Forest Plan.

- Assist natural processes: a major focus of this plan is to emulate the natural succession and regeneration that would be expected on an undisturbed site of similar habitat by proposing programs and projects that will promote the transition from deciduous to coniferous forest.
- Promote native character: proposed management activities will emphasize control of non-native species and planting of native species typical to urban forests of the Pacific Northwest.
Conserve soil and water quality: vegetative cover will be retained and planted to buffer runoff and reduce erosion.
- Protect and enhance wildlife habitat: existing habitats will be managed for a healthy and diverse species composition, as set for in the Urban Wildlife and Habitat Management Plan. Important edges and corridors will be identified and conserved.
- Buffer land uses: trees and shrubs will be planted and/or maintained to screen and separate types of land use.
- Ensure public safety: the health and location of all significant trees will be evaluated. Potential hazards will be identified and mitigated.

Some of the priority projects include: removal of invasives, planting the outer boundaries, remedy the unsafe trail conditions such as stairs and slippery slopes, focus on an early demonstration project at 33rd Avenue Street-end, stabilize the stream channel, enhance wildlife habitat, increase opportunities for aesthetic enjoyment of accessible/visible wetlands and increase native plant species diversity in the wetlands. Some of the proposals to be considered include the narrow bridge area off Lake Washington Boulevard, hedge encroachments on trail property, signage kept to a minimum, a trail needs to be created to keep people of the roadway, focus on entrance, kiosks, short and long-term solutions and keeping people out of the wetland areas

The plan creates a coordination and guideline for non-profits organizations, provides a foundation for contractors who come into the park, is used as a document to seek grant funds and is used to show people there is a direction for the park, including over 75 specific projects or recommendations.

James Fearn moved the Board of Park Commissioners approved the Frink Park Final Draft Vegetation Management Plan. The motion, seconded by Yale Lewis, was unanimously approved.

Park Board Business

Superintendent's Report by Patricia McInturff

- 1500 Alki Avenue South Landslide – At approximately 3 p.m. on October 10, approximately 15 cubic yards of soil and trees on Parks property hillside slid down the hill and caused minor damage to a small resident and an adjacent condominium. This site is adjacent to a recent slide mitigation project. The exact cause of slope failure is still under investigation. SPU has taken the lead to repair damage to the private property. Parks crews are taking the lead to remove debris and remove potential tree hazards from the remaining slope.
- Mayor's Clean Sweep Program – On October 8th the Downtown Parks Resource Unit, SPU and SeaTran kicked off the Clean Sweep Program for the downtown corridor. This program will be in effect for the next 28 days and will focus on cleaner sidewalks, litter cans and walkways.
- Carkeek Park – The sewage leak discovered on September 30 at the south end of Carkeek Park was repaired by October 2. The beach remained closed through October 6 pending notification by the Health Department. King County Wastewater Division did an outstanding job keeping the Carkeek Park staff up to date.
- Bicycle Saturday/Sunday Program – 31,920 participants were counted for the entire 2001 series, which included ten activity dates.
- Budget – There is currently a hiring freeze in the city due to less tax revenues but Department has a waiver for the Pro Parks staff hiring.
- Sand Point Project Advisory Team – The Wetland, Sportsfield and Drainage project advisory team met on October 9 and hosted a public education forum on athletic field lighting. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for October 22nd.
- Seattle Management Award – Dewey Potter, Parks Public Relations Manager, won the SMA Award for Program Support.

New Business/Old Business:

Don Harper, Queen Anne Community Council Parks Chair, requested the public hearing scheduled for October 25 on Kerry Park be postponed. The Queen Anne Community Council would like a presentation on Kerry Park on November 7. Mark Mead will be contacted to see if there is a timing issue.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

APPROVED: _____ DATE: _____

Bruce Bentley, Chair