

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MEETING MINUTES
January 23, 2003**

Present:

Bruce Bentley
James Fearn, Jr.
Sarah Neilson
Kate Pflaumer
Kathleen Warren

Excused: Susan Golub

Absent: O. Yale Lewis, Jr.

Staff:

Ken Bounds, Parks Superintendent
Sandy Brooks, Park Board Coordinator

Chair Bruce Bentley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Kate moved that the agenda **consent items, December 12 minutes, and the acknowledgment of correspondence be approved. Kathleen seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.**

Superintendent's Report:

Superintendent Ken Bounds reported on the following:

Westcrest Park Update: Ken and Bruce attended yesterday's City Council Parks, Library, and Land Use Committee hearing on Westcrest Park, including a definition of the off-leash use area. Bruce read the Park Board's recent letter to City Council. The Committee had a divided report. Councilmember Steinbrueck supported the recommendation of the Park Board and Parks Department, which did not include fencing the loop trail. Councilmembers Drago and Nicasastro put forth an amendment to the recommendation to fence the loop trail through the woods on both sides and add it to the off-leash area. The divided report will go to the full Council on February 3.

Ken gave a brief overview of off-leash area history. The original ordinance of 1997, which authorized the pilot off-leash areas, identified the sites and some other specifics because running animals off-leash is against the law. For animal control purposes, those areas where animals can be off-leash must be defined by ordinance. This is a detail design decision that must be acted on by ordinance because of the City's ability/inability to enforce the animal control laws. Council makes a policy decision as to where off-leash areas are to be, then Parks Department goes through a process and its responsibility is to

make the plan work as best it can within the context of that area and then manage it. Ken does not believe that making the loop trail be an off-leash area is consistent with Parks' management of off-leash areas. The Parks Department is discussing this further with the Mayor's office.

Bruce was unhappy with the outcome of the Committee meeting. He believes that the Park Board went through a very extensive process before making its recommendation, and he believes that fencing the loop trail would fence in an area that shouldn't be fenced. Board members were encouraged to contact Council members before the February 3 vote.

New Community Center Hours: The 2003-2004 budget is being implemented, which includes new hours at the community centers. Although there have been some glitches, the new hours seem to be working okay. There is some unhappiness over morning access; Parks staff is working to clarify this.

Aquarium: During 2002, the Aquarium reported its highest attendance since 1981. More than 630,000 people visited the facility. The 2003 goal is 650,000. This increase can be attributed to a more aggressive marketing plan, including new signage, reader board, a mobile ticket booth on the pier, and the new exhibits. Kudos to the Aquarium staff!

Olmsted Centennial Celebration: The Seattle P-I featured Olmsted parks and the Olmsted Centennial celebration on the front cover of its Thursday "Getaways" section and in a display ad in the same section. Parks has been working with the P-I for several months and the newspaper has committed to weekly ads (at no cost to Parks) and news coverage of some aspects of the Centennial. More information on the Olmsted Celebration will be presented later in tonight's meeting.

Greenlake Park Algae Toxin Update: For the first time in months, a water quality sample showed the algae toxin level dropping to 0.5 microgram per liter, which is below the World Health Organization standards of 1.0 microgram per liter. This is the first time Parks staff can recall the water quality remaining poor for so long.

Kate asked about a student's letter regarding stagnancy of the water in Green Lake. Ken said a consultant has been hired to determine the appropriate methodology for surface water and bottom of the lake water testing. One solution, as part of a number of solutions, may be to apply alum in larger dosages than has been used in the past. Parks will update the Park Board in a few months.

Cheasty Boulevard: At its January 15 meeting, the Seattle Landmark Preservation Board designated Cheasty Boulevard South as a City Landmark. Parks currently has a project at Cheasty, which is part of the Olmsted park system. Parks Property and Acquisition Manager Don Harris believes the Preservation Board will adopt the plan that the Park Board recently voted to recommend.

Advisory Council Renewal Process: Parks is working with the Advisory Recreation Council to review implementation of the renewal process and clarify the conflict of interest guidelines.

Staffing Changes: Royal Alley-Barnes began her new role as Operations Division Manager for Central East, replacing recently retired Pat Elder. John Mallon has replaced Royal as manager of Parks' contract group.

Oral Requests and Communications from the Audience:

Bruce explained that the general public comment portion of the agenda is reserved for topics that have not had or are not scheduled for a public hearing. Three people gave testimony.

Pam Johnson: member of Yes for Seattle; applauds the Park Board's recommendation on Westcrest Park off-leash area that went to City Council; she will contact City Council members to support the recommendation; asked what Park Board will be doing tonight during the Review of the Mayor's Alternative to Creeks Initiative.

Ken answered that the agenda item is a briefing and the Board will determine what, if anything, it wants to do after the briefing. The briefing tonight will be similar to what was presented to the City Council. Yes for Seattle has requested, and is scheduled, to give a presentation to the Board at its February 13 meeting on Initiative 80 (I-80).

Pam and Yes for Seattle members brought copies of I-80.

Molly Burke: Victory Heights neighborhood resident; has two questions; the first is from the Neighborhood Farmer's Alliance the Lake City Farmer's Market opens May 29 and Albert Davis Park in Lake City Park is scheduled for renovation in June. Is the renovation still on schedule? Ken answered that if Molly would leave her name and phone number, Ken or the Parks' project manager would get back in touch with her.

Second question: neighbors in the area of NE 137th and Meridian Avenue have noticed several different people taking pictures of the Parks Department building there and are concerned with what is happening and if it will affect their neighborhood. It was determined that this is not Parks' property, but belongs to Seattle School District property. The School District recently had a notice in the newspaper regarding this property.

Janet Way: member of Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund and Yes for Seattle; also applauds the Park Board on its recommendation on Westcrest Park off-leash and she will send e-mails to City Council members in support of the Park Board recommendation.

Regarding I-80 - appreciates the opportunity to more fully brief the Park Board on February 13; as one of the signature collectors for I-80, she noted how meaningful this initiative was to the public; most people were willing to sign; represents the issue of open space to people in the city; creeks have a spiritual meaning to people; she brought a copy of 2001 Volunteer Salmon Watcher Program, published by King County that details

salmon routes; she believes that I-80 also fits with the Olmsted Plan; and she believes daylighting creeks that run into Green Lake could help with the water quality problems there.

Jan Brucker: supporter of I-80; seconds Janet's comments on citizen's zeal and enthusiasm to preserve and enhance creeks; she believes the costs were overstated by City staff; there are misconceptions in the Mayor's proposal; Yes for Seattle will bring more information to the Park Board at the February 13 briefing; urged the Park Board to ask questions of Yes for Seattle on the creeks initiative.

Oral requests and communications concluded.

Traveling Olmsted Exhibit:

Duane Penttila came before the Park Board to publicly unveil the Traveling Olmsted Exhibit for the first time. Many ideas have been discussed and many events have been scheduled during the year-long Olmsted Centennial celebration. Work began on the exhibit approximately five months ago. Duane thanked Park staff members Donald Harris, Lisa Chinn, Catherine Anstett, David Takami, and Carol Light. However, he noted that the people who really made this exhibit happen were citizen volunteers Jerry Arbes and Anne Knight. Both contributed an enormous amount of energy to this project.

A hearty round of applause followed the unveiling. Park Board members and the audience walked around and viewed the panels, which have pictures and much information on Seattle's Olmsted park system.

A member of the audience suggested that a journal be attached to the traveling exhibit to allow viewers to write their comments. There is also a site on the Olmsted web pages where people can write about their favorite Olmsted park.

Jerry Arbes said that 45 community partners have signed on for the Olmsted Centennial celebration. Each of these partners has agreed to include some Olmsted-related event in their regular business. Another focal point of the celebration is a monthly Olmsted Park walking tour. The first such tour was held on Saturday, January 10, at Volunteer Park with approximately 200 people in attendance. Jerry credited Karen Daubert of the Seattle Park Foundation with the walking tour idea. The second tour will be on Saturday, February 15, at Hiawatha Playfield and the Park Board is encouraged to attend.

Jerry also distributed a list of the projects that the Olmsted Centennial Celebration committee is trying to have funded and would like to have underway this year. Donations to help fund these projects are appreciated.

Jerry also discussed the publicity the Celebration is receiving, especially from the Seattle P-I. The newspaper has agreed to do a series of articles on Olmsted parks and has donated \$150,000 in display advertising for the celebration. Anne Knight is coordinating the articles and display advertising. In late February or early March, the P-I will do a series on current condition of parks, and in April (just prior to the national Olmsted

convention to be held in Seattle) will run a "Then and Now" spread on Olmsted parks in Seattle.

Ken said that the P-I has been a great partner in this celebration. The goal is to saturate the public this year with information on Seattle's Olmsted park system. In a time of decreasing County and federal funds and with more demands being made on budgets, this type of publicity emphasizes funding needs of parks and emphasizes the extensive support for parks.

The traveling exhibit will move to REI for one week, then Greenlake Community Center for two weeks, then the Northwest Flower and Garden Show. It will move to a number of different venues during the remainder of the year.

The Board thanked all those involved in the Olmsted Centennial Celebration, especially the efforts of Jerry and Anne. A second round of applause followed.

Mayor's Alternative to Creek Initiative Briefing:

Alix Ogden, Parks Department Strategic Planning Advisor, and Ray Hoffman, Seattle Public Utilities Director of Strategic Policy, came before the Board to give a briefing on the Mayor's Alternative to Creek Initiative, which is an alternative to Initiative 80 (I-80). A large packet of information was distributed to the Board members to read. Ray said these handouts focus on Mayor Nickel's alternatives on urban creek restoration. The handouts included:

- I-80 Seattle Creek Restoration Requirements and Implications, 11/27/02
- Mayor Nickel's Proposed Alternative submitted to City Council, 12/16/02
- Comparison of Certain Key Features of Initiative 80 and City Alternative
- Parks Superintendent Ken Bounds' memo to City Council members re: I-80 Impacts to Seattle Parks and Recreation, 12/17/02
- Municipal League of King County Review Committee Report on I-80 to Save Our Creeks to Councilmember President Peter Steinbrueck and Councilmember Margaret Pageler, Water and Health Committee Chair, 1/6/03

Earlier in the evening Yes for Seattle presented to the Board:

- Initiative 80
- Yes for Seattle evaluation of Executive's oral and written briefing to the Seattle City Council on Initiative 80, undated

Kate asked what is the Parks Board's role in this issue? Ken said that creek restoration is a 2003 Parks Department work plan item. This briefing is to give Board members information, and then the Board can decide if it wants to make a recommendation.

Ray said that signature validation on Initiative 80 is in progress and, once it has the required number of validated signatures, City Council has 45 days from the date of the validation for deliberations. Ken said that when the Mayor realized that City Council

could take action as early as late January, the Mayor wanted to have an alternative ready. The alternative was presented to City Council on December 16, one week after the Park Board's December meeting. Tonight's meeting was the first time the Park Board had met in January. Ken said that the question for the Park Board is whether it wants to provide any advice to the City Council as it deliberates Initiative 80 and the Mayor's Alternative over the next couple of months.

Ray said the Mayor's Alternative is called the Aquatic Enhancement Program and it focuses on public lands that may be creeks, riparian corridors, freshwater shorelines, Lake Washington, Lake Union, inland lakes Bitter, Haller, and Green Lakes and saltwater shorelines. All have in common the fact that they are aquatic habitat corridors under the control of the City or other public owners that have become somewhat-to-severely degraded over the last 150 years as the City has become settled and grown into an urban development.

The Mayor's Alternative establishes a program that involves the Directors of both Seattle Public Utilities (the department in charge of drainage and stormwater which is one of the most frequent challenges of water bodies), and the Parks Department (the largest public landowner in Seattle and the department most affected) to look at a variety of aquatic habitat enhancement projects.

The Alternative would have a dedicated funding source, which would be an increase in the monthly utility tax from Seattle Public Utilities on drainage, water, and wastewater. The tax is currently 10% and would be increased to 11%. That raises approximately \$2.4 million annually. This money would go into a dedicated aquatic habitat enhancement fund and would be used to provide revenues to do a wide variety of projects on creeks, freshwater inland waterways, lakes, and saltwater shorelines. The Mayor asked City departments to generate a list of projects. There is no guarantee that the projects will be funded, but the list would show the public the extent of work to be done and the projects might bear consideration for funding. A Citizen Oversight Committee of nine members would help decide which projects to fund. This Committee would review proposals and make recommendations, under specific guidelines and criteria, to department directors as to where the funds should be spent. The \$2.4 million per year would be added to a dedicated \$3-4 million of Seattle Public Utilities funds that are already used for aquatic habitat restoration. The annual funding package would then be between \$5-7 million annually. The Mayor asked for the evaluation of establishing a private sector matching fund of \$500,000 of the \$2.4 million. The \$500,000 would be used to effect change for properties that are not under public control and could be used to fund projects brought forth by an individual or group who want to restore the aquatic habitat of a piece of private property. The Citizens Oversight Committee would recommend approval of the matching funds and forward its recommendation to the Directors of Seattle Public Utilities and Parks.

The time span for the Mayor's Alternative is 10 years, and then City Council could assess and decide whether to continue. The funds would go into the City's general fund, then

into a sub fund. This protects the funding from being redirected to other, equally important public sector needs.

Components of the Alternative include selecting the projects, recommending members for the Citizens Oversight Committee, and approval of the Committee members by City Council. Aquatic habitat restoration work already being done by Parks and SPU would be increased.

The Board of Park Commissioner's challenge is to read the materials, determine what would affect Parks property, and what the benefit is to the public. These are difficult questions and the Park Board can have a role in this, as Parks is the major landowner in Seattle.

Alix talked further about budget sources and said that the typical homeowner would pay \$5 more yearly if the tax were increased. She listed details on what the Initiative would require the City, private landowners, and developers to do. She reviewed the Mayor's comparison page, which was prepared by City staff. Alix discussed how this could affect the Parks Department, especially requiring protection and restoration of surface and barrier creeks on all public property and elimination of pesticides on City properties within 200 feet of creeks. This especially affects golf courses, as there are creeks running through Jackson and West Seattle Golf. 21 Park Department properties would be affected and restoration of historic creek corridors would affect an additional 14 properties. Some redevelopment or existing projects the Department is working on, such as Mount Baker Park, could be affected.

Board Discussion

Kathleen asked if pesticides include fertilizers? Parks Department staff Duane Penttila answered that I-80 refers to fertilizers in one sentence only. Sarah commented that she is troubled at the timing of this briefing and feels like she started reading a book at Chapter Six.

Ken said Sarah's analysis was good. When it was anticipated in mid-December that there might be action on the Initiative in January and the Mayor decided to present his alternative, the clock started right then for the Parks Department. Ken's memo to City Council is dated December 17. The Park Board did not meet again in December. There may be large impacts to the Parks Department, which concerns Parks staff. The Park Board can either jump into the issue or choose not to. If the 45-day deliberation clock starts ticking and the Board decides it does want to be involved in this, members may need a subcommittee to really study the Initiative and the Alternative.

Kathleen asked if other groups have weighed in and is there plans for community debate/discussion? Alix answered that the Municipal League was asked by the City Council to weigh in on the Initiative; she was unsure if other groups have.

James stated that, for the record, he was involved in the review committee for the Municipal League. The Municipal League has taken a position on the Initiative. In

addition, an ethics complaint has been filed because of James' involvement with the Municipal League. He believes that 80% of the Initiative doesn't affect Parks and that Parks doesn't need to take a stand on the 80%. He thinks that the Park Board can deal with the issues that do affect Parks as the issues arise.

Sarah and Kathleen asked the proponents to come before the Board at the February 13 meeting with their scope focused on how I-80 affects Parks and the proponents agreed to do this. Sarah also asked that the Mayor's staff come before the Board and discuss the same scope. Ken said that the City's Law Department is looking at the language of I-80, trying to determine implications.

Kate believes that the impact on Parks is great enough that the Board should make a recommendation to City Council regarding the Initiative and the Mayor's Alternative.

Ken said there are three large issues of concern to the Parks Department: pesticides use; potential unintentional consequences of creeks trumping other recreational uses; and the uncertain impact on historical properties, e.g., on old historical maps Genessee was a creek that became a landfill, that later became a park. Parks is unsure what implications the Initiative would have in instances like this.

Kathleen asked if I-80 adopted is there a time buffer? Alix answered, yes, that there would be an 18-month time period. Kate asked what is the funding source in I-80? Ray answered that I-80 proposes a per-household fee. This has raised questions as to what that means and how it would be applied. Ken said that the Law Department and Department of Finance raised questions. Several years ago, the City imposed a similar fee for streets. The State Supreme Court later ruled that it was a property tax and that it could not be imposed.

The Board asked a few more questions on how the funds would be raised. Ray and Ken answered that tax increase in the Mayor's Alternative would be approximately \$5 per billing unit and in I-80 would be approximately \$7 per billing unit.

The Board thanked Alix and Ray for the presentation.

Golf Management Update:

Parks Superintendent Ken Bounds and Director of Recreation Support Division Herbye White came before the Board to give a briefing on the status of the City's contract with Municipal Golf of Seattle (MGS). Park Board members were given a copy of the January 14, 2003, letter, briefing paper, and supporting materials from Ken to City Council President Steinbrueck. This information was reviewed with the Parks, Education and Libraries Committee on January 22. A portion of the letter follows:

"The 1995 Agreement with MGS was approved by the City Council after a lengthy and participatory public process that included a recommendation by the Board of Parks Commissioners. The 1995 Agreement calls for management, operations, and

development of Jackson, Jefferson, and West Seattle Golf Courses by MGS with maintenance provided by City employees. The Department of Parks and Recreation administers the Agreement between the City and MGS and has worked with MGS to make the management arrangement successful.

The enabling legislation for the 1995 Agreement called for a review of the management arrangement after two-three years. A 1998 review and report by Economics Research Associates (ERA) listed a number of findings and led to a two-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MGS and the Department. Although there was progress in achieving the 1998 ERA report recommendations and MOU objectives, a follow up review and report by ERA in November 2001 concluded that the 1995 Agreement as presently structured would not work and identified three basic management options for the future a modified agreement with MGS; complete privatization of operations and maintenance; or contracting with a management company.

Last April, the Board of Park Commissioners recommended that we negotiate a modified agreement with MGS and try once again to make the management arrangement successful. We began negotiating such a modification but concluded, after MGS was unable to make payments to the Department for maintenance costs, that a complete change in management approach was needed. By mutual agreement with the MGS Board, Parks has concluded that the City should terminate its agreement with MGS, hire a single Golf Director to manage both City and MGS staff, and work through the existing (and successful) Association Recreation Council structure to provide for a seamless transition in operations. At this time we recommend against the total privatization and management firm options identified by ERA for three reasons: private golf firms are in serious financial difficulty (e.g., Family Golf and American Golf bankruptcies); we still are under contract with MGS and cannot simply conduct a Request For Proposals process for another operator until we have terminated the existing contract; and historically the City has adamantly opposed contracting out the City's maintenance work.

Our first objective is to return the golf operations to a financially viable enterprise. We have hired a single Golf Director to oversee the entire operation, and we are developing a business and strategic plan to cut costs, increase revenues, and get the operation back to a break-even footing. Once we have accomplished that, we will evaluate the long-term management options available to us and return to the Council with a recommendation for long-term management.

Therefore, as an interim approach which can be established relatively quickly with a fairly seamless transition and yet still address the most pressing financial needs, the Department is recommending terminating the agreement with MGS and converting the MGS Board to an Advisory Council under the fiduciary responsibility of a new golf Advisory Council and the Associated Recreation Council. This interim approach allows maximum flexibility and time for considering this and other options for the long-term management of Seattle's golf courses."

Ken gave a verbal briefing to the Board and introduced Andy Soden, recently hired to fill the position of Golf Director. Andy is the former golf supervisor with Pierce County Parks and Recreation.

Ken said that during the next few months of the interim management of the golf courses, Parks would develop a strategic business plan and then assess the long-term future.

Board discussion

Kate asked why will this plan work? Last spring, MGS told the Park Board that they could do a good job. How much loss is Parks willing to take?

Ken answered that single management and single control is more efficient. Parks must have more control over the dollars - MGS is paying everyone except Parks Department. Ken and Herbye said that Parks is totally committed to turning the situation around and have three excellent venues (Jefferson, Jackson, and West Seattle golf courses) to do so. Several years ago, Parks took over managing Interbay Golf Course and that has been very successful. Marketing all four golf courses at each course is a good opportunity.

James asked if, during the six-month default period, would MGS Golf continue to operate? Ken said this is still being determined. Kathleen said she was on the Park Board when MGS began managing the golf courses and there was discussion then that two groups managing the courses would be difficult. She also recalled that at last spring's discussion that there was concern that golfing revenues were down. Herbye said that golfers want to play somewhere - and the strategy is to attract them to the three City courses. Changing some simple things at the courses and a good marketing strategy can help do this.

Kate asked about the \$1.3 million arrears and how it will be paid. Ken said that it would come out of the net income at the courses over the next three years. Herbye said that he believes the City can retire this debt and move on to capital improvements at the courses sooner than it could if MGS continued management. Ken said that Parks has a vested interest to make the new management system succeed.

James asked if Parks would consider another private developer. Ken and Herbye answered that might be possible, but that Parks must get the golf courses back in good shape before management by another private developer could be considered. Bruce said he thinks the Associated Recreation Council is doing great job as partner in this.

The Board thanked Ken and Herbye for the briefing.

Park Board Business:

- Retreat: Initial plans were discussed to hold the Park Board's yearly retreat in early- or mid-March. Susan and Kathleen's terms have expired and the two new Park Board members may be on Board by then. The Board is interested in holding the retreat at the Cedar River Watershed. This location was selected for last year's

retreat; however, inclement weather caused the retreat to be moved to a different location.

- Sarah announced that she recently began serving as the Park Board representative to the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee. The ABGC includes stakeholders from three areas: City of Seattle, University of Washington, and the Arboretum Foundation. She found the first meeting to be very interesting.
- Bruce announced that the Advisory Recreation Council, which he is a member, will hold its annual meeting on February 16 at the University Plaza Hotel.

Other Business:

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Bruce Bentley, Chair