



Department of Parks and Recreation

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2009
Meeting Held at 100 Dexter Avenue North

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:

Neal Adams, Vice-chair
John Barber
Terry Holme
Donna Kostka
Jackie Ramels, Chair

Excused:

Amit Ranade

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff:

Christopher Williams, Deputy Superintendent
Sandy Brooks, Coordinator

Commissioner Ramels called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the meeting agenda.

Commissioner Holme moved, and Commissioner Barber seconded, approval of the agenda, the January 8 and January 22 minutes, and the record of correspondence. The vote was taken and the motion carried.

Superintendent's Report

The Superintendent was in Olympia and Deputy Superintendent Williams reported on several park items. For more information on Seattle Parks and Recreation, visit the web pages at <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/>.

Parks Staff to Olympia: Superintendent Gallagher, Deputy Superintendent Williams, and Seattle Parks Policy and Business Analysis Director Eric Friedli were in Olympia this past week for the Washington Wildlife Recreation Coalition (WWRC) meeting. The WWRC oversees how the State recreation grant fund is awarded. Governor Gregoire has recommended cutting the fund from \$100 million to \$50 million. Parks staff met with several legislators to urge that the fund remain at \$100 million. The Legislature will make a decision next week.

For more information on WWRC, see <http://www.wildliferecreation.org/>. Their website includes the following information: "Coalition Requests \$100M for 115 Projects. We are asking the legislature to renew the WWRP

grant program at \$100 million in the state's capital construction budget. This would fund [115 parks, wildlife areas and working farms](#). A record total of \$272 million in requests and 370 applications were submitted for WWRP funding this biennium. For more see our [fact sheet](#) and list of [frequently asked questions](#)."

School Parks Agreement: Seattle Parks and Seattle School District's current Joint Use Agreement (JUA) will expire on August 30, 2010. Parks staff are currently working with the Mayor's Office to review the JUA and will then work with the School District to revise and renew the agreement. The City is focusing on four areas: (1) Review lessons learned. This would include adding language for any future property transactions; (2) Avoiding adverse operating impacts to either party from a decision made by the other. For example, the School District is considering an earlier start time for its high schools. The current Joint Use Agreement allows high schools use of the adjoining Seattle Park's swimming pools during school hours. The early morning swims are very popular with the public and a source of high revenue for the pools. If the high schools require use of them during this time, it would decrease the pool's revenue sources; (3) Include a comparable level of park and recreation vs. school district use of the facilities. Parks does not believe the use is balanced in the current agreement. The School District has three performing arts centers which Parks are not allowed to use under the current JUA; (4) Emergency sheltering. Parks has 26 community centers and could shelter 7,500 people during emergency conditions. The City's Key Arena could shelter another 3,500. If a major catastrophe occurred in Seattle, estimates are that 10% of the population may need to be sheltered, or 50,000 people. The City's public schools could be used for additional sources of shelter.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Holme on the duration of the agreement, Deputy Superintendent Williams answered that it is five years. He added that in 2005 the two parties reviewed and renewed the agreement, which was brought to the Park Board. The current agreement works well, but could be even better. Staff will brief the Board before the new agreement is finalized.

In early 2008, the Park Board held a public hearing on a proposed property exchange between Hamilton Middle School and Wallingford Playground. Commissioner Barber noted that during that process the Hamilton School PTSA did a survey and Parks staff did a different survey of the neighbors, with very differing results. He recommended that Parks and the School District work together and jointly prepare any type of survey. Deputy Superintendent Williams agreed that this is the type of process that staff are currently working towards.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Ramels on who makes the final agreement, Deputy Superintendent Williams responded that the City Council and School Board will finalize the agreement. Currently, Parks Superintendent Gallagher, Deputy Superintendent Williams, Property Manager Donald Harris, and Partnership Manager Rebecca Salinas are working with Seattle School District staff on the agreement.

Call for Service: In response to President Obama's call for an increase in volunteerism, Seattle Parks is encouraging staff to volunteer at the Compass Center, which provides transitional housing and hot meals. The date for this event has been re-scheduled from the last weekend in February to April 10, 11, and 12. The Department anticipates a good turnout from staff. Parks staff are also looking at ways to increase volunteer capacity. Seattle Parks benefits greatly from the work of volunteers; however, staff believe there are untapped talents, such as for marketing and environmental management.

Commissioner Adams praised the volunteer service idea and recommended that Parks staff ask for external input. He has previously trained people nearing retirement age on how they can volunteer their expertise to organizations. This training can really enhance the volunteer experience. Deputy Superintendent Williams agreed that this is a great idea. Commissioner Ramels asked if high school students can fulfill their community service requirement in Seattle's parks. Deputy Superintendent Williams answered that the Department has been working with the high schools on this for five years and it is a successful program. He will ask staff to brief the Board on this program in the near future.

Illuminating Langston Hughes: This successful annual fundraising event was held this past Saturday, with 150 people attending, including the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

The Chair explained that this portion of the agenda is reserved for topics that have not had, or are not scheduled for, a public hearing. Speakers are limited to two minutes each and will be timed. The Board's usual process is for 15 minutes of testimony to be heard at this time, with additional testimony heard after the regular agenda and just before Board of Park Commissioner's business. No one signed up to testify.

Briefing: City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen

City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, Chair of the Parks and Seattle Center Committee, attends a meeting of the Park Board each quarter to give Commissioners an update and answer questions.

Commissioner Ramels introduced Councilmember Rasmussen and stated that the Board is very pleased to have him attend the Board meetings on a quarterly basis. Councilmember Rasmussen thanked the Board for its work and for its strong support of the new park levy, and discussed several topics.

Economic Downturn in Seattle: Because of the current economic situation, the City's 2009 budget will be reduced by \$25 million. The Council and Mayor are trying to minimize the budget reduction to the Human Services, Fire, and Police Departments. Parks' budget will be cut, but the amount is not yet known. He asked that the Park Board prepare a recommendation and send to the City Council to help make the decision.

Commissioner Ramels remarked that it seems strange to cut back on the budget while implementing a new levy. What percentage of the \$25 million budget cut will come from Seattle Parks? Councilmember Rasmussen responded that the recommended cuts will be based on the general funds that Departments receive. Once the budget cuts are proposed, Council will schedule public hearings, with final amounts negotiated by the Mayor and Council.

Implement Parks for All Levy: The City Council and Mayor are appointing people to the new Levy's Oversight Committee. The Oversight Committee has a significant responsibility in helping to implement the Levy and will decide which projects the \$15 million Opportunity Fund will help support.

Commissioner Adams is also a member of the Oversight Committee and stated that it provides a great opportunity for volunteers to understand neighborhoods and community. He highly recommends that people apply to be on the committee. Councilmember Rasmussen noted that with the new Levy comes a new challenge – how to take care of any additional park land acquired through the levy.

Add to Parks Property Inventory: Councilmember Rasmussen is interested in transferring some pieces of City-owned land to Parks Department, as a way to get new park land. There is a parcel of land in West Seattle's Admiral neighborhood, which is owned by Seattle Department of Transportation and not being maintained. He would like to see this land transferred to Parks; however, City Departments are required to pay other Departments when land is transferred. It becomes even more difficult if the property is owned by one of the utilities (City Light or Seattle Public Utilities), as the property was purchased by the ratepayers who would have to be reimbursed for the sale. He is working to change this requirement and asked the Park Board to review this proposal and assist with his efforts.

Commissioner Adams voiced support for this effort. Commissioner Barber understands that there is a huge backlog of work in the Parks Department and advised the Department and City to prepare a big picture of what the Department needs to do in the next 6, 10, or 20 years in order to prepare for future park levies.

Staff Retirements: Earlier in the day Councilmember Rasmussen attended a retirement party for Stephanie Johnson-Tolliver, senior gardener at the Volunteer Park Conservatory. He noted that many City staff are

nearing retirement age and with those retirements comes a loss of skills. He encouraged the Park Board members to attend these retirement parties, as schedules permit.

City Council's Formal Work Plan for Parks: Councilmember Rasmussen distributed a copy of the Council's 2009 work plan for the Parks Department and gave a brief overview of items on the list, which included the Museum of History and Industry's move to South Lake Union, the central waterfront, the Aquarium, and the Department's Capital Improvement Projects, among others.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Ramels whether Council has adopted the Work Plan, Councilmember Rasmussen responded that it has. He agreed with her that the central waterfront properties is a large component of the Work Plan.

Commissioner Holme noted that this is the first time the Park Board has seen this Work Plan and thanked Councilmember Rasmussen for keeping the Park Board informed. He referred to articles in this weeks' daily papers regarding Mayor Nickel's project jobs list and Council's reaction to the list. Councilmember Rasmussen thinks Council is supportive and have been discussing a jobs list for several weeks.

Commissioner Holme next referred to the park ranger program and urged that the rangers be allowed to patrol parks other than the 10 downtown parks they currently serve. He recently talked with one of the rangers and is interested in ways that their presence can be made even more effective than it already is. He noted that Superintendent Gallagher wanted to assign the rangers to Golden Gardens Park during the 2008 beach fire season. However, the Police Guild had made an agreement that the rangers could only work in the downtown parks. Commissioner Holme encouraged the Council to help give the rangers more capability. Deputy Superintendent Williams added that Parks is also seeking a higher job classification for them. Councilmember Rasmussen responded that police are concerned about labor and training issues with the rangers. He has heard good feedback about the rangers and will be happy to work with Parks and Seattle Police Department on this issue. However, he noted that those who advocated for the rangers at downtown parks may object if the rangers are sent to other locations.

Commissioners thanked Councilmember Rasmussen for attending the meeting and look forward to their next meeting with him.

Briefing: Golf Master Plan

Susanne Friedman, Seattle Parks Project Manager, presented a briefing on the Golf Master Plan. Prior to the meeting Commissioners received a written briefing paper and the Golf Master Plan. The briefing paper is included below. Both were posted to the Board's web page prior to tonight's meeting.

Written Briefing

Requested Board Action

Staff provided the Board with an initial briefing on the project's background, existing conditions and plan goals on November 13, 2008. In this briefing we will provide an update on the public process and present the draft Golf Master Plan itself (Attachment 1). We will be presenting a financial plan to the Board on March 12. The Board is scheduled for a public hearing on April 9 and discussion and recommendation on April 23, 2009.

Staff Recommendations

None at this time

Project Description and Background

The goals established by the Department to be accomplished by the Golf Course Master Plan Update are to:

1. Improve public golf opportunities and experiences,
2. Increase environmental sustainability in the facilities, and
3. Develop funding options/strategies for specific, proposed projects.

Based on the review by staff, input from the public process and previous guidance from the City Council, six top priorities were identified for the Master Plan. Options were developed for each of the top priorities:

1. Perimeter trails around each golf course - The Draft Plan identifies a variety of routes for public access via perimeter trails around each course. Some of the trails would be dirt paths, some would be gravel, and others would utilize public rights of way or sidewalks depending on local conditions.
2. Clubhouse renovations – Clubhouses were analyzed with an emphasis on improving the condition, overall function, and revenue potential of each facility through major rehabilitation or replacement. A generic space program using national standards for a municipally owned clubhouse serving an 18-hole golf course was developed and applied individually to each facility. Views and multi-use rooms were a priority in siting.
3. Conversion to electric cart barns - For efficiency and environmental reasons, Parks would like to transition from gas powered golf carts to an all electric fleet. The transition will require adequately sized cart barns where the vehicles can be parked, recharged, and serviced. When feasible, the barns are incorporated with the clubhouses.
4. Tee-to-green cart paths - The Draft Plan identifies options for paving all existing cart paths and adding missing links to provide a continuous circuit. Paving will not add a significant amount of impervious surface since paving would be applied to the existing, impervious compacted gravel paths. On-course restrooms are also necessary amenities at all 18-hole golf courses. Most of the existing restrooms are in poor condition and require upgrading or replacement.
5. Possible driving range additions and expansions - The Draft Plan identifies options to provide driving ranges that will both enhance the golf experience and increase revenue potential. Whenever feasible, double deck ranges are recommended to maximize revenue, while also being sensitive to any potential light shed and ball trespass issues.
6. Maintenance facility renovations – Renovations focus around environmental sustainability, code compliance and equipment needs.

Public Involvement Process

We have been working closely with the Golf Steering Committee and LINKS Council throughout the development of this Draft Plan. These committees are composed of advocates from each of the four golf courses and represent the variety of the programs and groups that are offered at each course.

Parks hosted several open houses in early December 2008, one at each course, to present the draft concepts, options and proposals. Approximately 150 citizens participated in the public open houses, with an additional 60 comments being submitted via letter or e-mail. Overall public input was supportive and positive. The majority of concerns raised were regarding how soon improvements would commence, perimeter trails, parking issues, funding capacity, worry over fee increases and the need for banquet halls.

Issues

Perimeter trails were viewed as a very positive amenity; however, concerns were raised by some neighbors and golf patrons regarding right-of-way use, safety concerns and the potential effect on game play.

The biggest issue for this Master Plan will be how to fund all the desired improvements. We will be providing a financial analysis, a funding strategy and staff recommendations at our next briefing to the Board on March 12. This plan is subject to review by the Department of Finance and Executive during the 2010 budget process.

Environmental Sustainability

All of the design options will, at a minimum, embrace LEED silver building standards. The team is exploring a variety of ways to incorporate the use of photovoltaic and solar systems with the on course restroom facilities. The cart barns are being converted from gas to electric and alternative paving materials are being explored for the pathways.

Verbal Briefing/Board Discussion

Ms. Friedman introduced Bill Schickler, Executive Director of Premier Golf, and Andy Soden, Seattle Parks Golf Manager. She next reviewed information in the written briefing paper and displayed a chart showing the projected timeline.

Commissioner Adams asked for more information on any negative feedback on the plan. Ms. Friedman answered that, overall, the public comments were very positive. However, their concerns include: (1) trees not be removed (Parks staff continue to educate the public that the City plants two trees for any trees that are removed); (2) the possibility that the perimeter walking trails may be built too near existing homes; (3) that Parks ensure any golf amenities fit the surrounding neighborhoods; and (4) that golf carts aren't needed at all and the Plan calls for replacing the existing ones with electric carts.

Commissioner Adams asked if the West Seattle Golf trail and driving range were the most challenging to design and Ms. Friedman agreed. She showed a large diagram and pointed out the challenges.

Commissioner Barber commented that the Master Plan is a good document; however, he wants additional information, such as how many people currently use the golf courses and what are the trends in golf. The City's golf courses represent a large percentage of park land and he wants to better understand the current uses. Ms. Friedman responded that the use information will be included in the March 12 financial component briefing. Deputy Superintendent added that the golf courses are financially self sustaining and the Department wants to improve them to attract more golfers. Mr. Stickler, Premier Golf President, added that in surveys of golfers at the courses the greens get good reviews, while the clubhouses and restrooms get negative reviews. The courses are highly used and affordable, and they need to stay competitive. He added that the carts give accessibility to many. Ms. Friedman noted that it is not a golfing industry trend to eliminate carts, but rather to switch to electric carts.

Commissioner Ramels stated that the briefing paper and Master Plan reached the Park Board late. She urged staff to get this information to the Board earlier so the Commissioners have adequate time to fully review materials. [Note: the Board continued discussion of the late briefing papers during New/Old Business. Parks staff noted that the briefing papers for tonight's meeting were delayed in the review process and agreed to make every effort in the future so the briefings reach Commissioners in a timely manner.]

Commissioner Holme referred to the drainage at Jefferson Golf and Ms. Friedman responded that the Master Plan is not looking at the mains or greens at the courses. Commissioner Holme noted that Jefferson Park has Olmsted History and asked Ms. Friedman to review the historical implications. She agreed to do so and thanked him for the suggestion. Commissioner Holmes stated that adding perimeter trails to the golf courses is a great concept and a way to welcome others to the courses. One e-mail testimony stated that this was an emerging trend at golf courses.

Commissioners voiced strong interest in touring the golf courses. The Board's March 12 meeting is scheduled at West Seattle Golf and will include a tour of that facility. Ms. Friedman and Mr. Soden will arrange a tour of the other courses prior to the Master Plan's public hearing, which is scheduled for April 9.

Commissioner Kostka referred to e-mail testimony asking for opportunities to play a 9-hole course, with a reduced rate, and including holes 10-18. Staff responded that there are already short 9's at both Jackson and

Jefferson and a 9-hole course at Interbay Golf. All 18-hole courses have a 9-hole course, which is very popular in the summer and includes a great discount.

Commissioner Ramels asked if expectations are that more golfers will use the City's courses, with their lower fees, due to the current economy. Mr. Soden hopes so, but doesn't want to take that possibility for granted. Commissioner Ramels noted that it is ironic for the Department, on the one hand, to close park streets for walking, and, on the other, provide carts for people to ride. Mr. Stickler responded that the carts not only serve people with disabilities, they also serve elderly golfers who still play golf but cannot walk the full course. He noted that many, many people do walk at these courses and don't use carts.

Commissioner Ramels thanked Ms. Friedman and staff. She commented that the Golf Master Plan is a big job and a wonderful undertaking. Ms. Friedman will next brief the Board on the financial aspects of the plan at the March 12 meeting.

Briefing: Summer Streets Program

Karen Tsao, Seattle Parks Strategic Advisor, briefed the Board on the Department's "Summer Streets" program. Commissioners received a written briefing prior to the meeting, which was also posted on the Board's web page. The Board will hold a public hearing at its February 26 meeting, and plan to discuss the program and make a recommendation to the Superintendent at the March 12 meeting.

Written Briefing

Requested Board Action

This briefing presents a report of 2008 activities and outline of 2009 activities. A public hearing is scheduled February 26, and the Board discussion and recommendation is scheduled for March 12. To provide consistent promotion with related City activities, the name of the program has been changed to "Summer Streets." The proposal for 2009 continues and expands the program to provide an ongoing health-related recreational opportunity for the public.

Staff Recommendation

We request Park Board concurrence with the following four recommendations:

1. Midweek closure for "Walking Wednesdays" from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. May through September for the Upper Loop Road at Seward Park and the access road at Carkeek Park westward from the Environmental Learning Center.
2. Closure of Lake Washington Boulevard S (LWB) for every Sunday May through September (except July 5, and July 26 and August 2 for Seafair) from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., starting at Mt. Baker Beach and ending at the entrance to Seward Park. Seward Park would operate as usual, rather than close as it now does for Bicycle Saturday/Sunday. **Please note that the Sunday schedule is a change from that listed on the public hearing notification.**
3. Full-time, permanent closure of the western loop at Volunteer Park from just west of the conservatory circle to the west side of the water tower circle. This would also close entrances at 12th Avenue E and Federal Avenue to vehicles. Access for emergency, service and disability-permitted vehicles would be allowed. This closure would not affect event permitting.
4. Full-time, permanent closure of Arboretum Road from Lake Washington Boulevard to the Graham Visitor Center. Access for emergency, service and disability-permitted vehicles would be allowed, as would access for permitted weekend events (approximately 15 weddings scheduled during the summer). Permits would be issued for events.

Project Description and Background

Recap 2008 & lessons

Volunteer Park Western Loop – The Monday and weekend closures were generally favorably received. A few people expressed concern about preserving car access to all parts of the park.

Seward Park Upper Loop Road – The Thursday and weekend closures were generally favorably received. We maintain access for the summer camps which use the upper part of the park.

LWB – The added weekend days were well attended and generally well received. Thursday closures had very low attendance and caused significant concerns for the residents with driveways off the boulevard, and other nearby neighbors.

An important lesson from 2008 is that regular, planned programming is needed to promote the opportunity for healthy recreation, especially for weekdays. The pattern of closures was a bit complicated for easy public comprehension.

2009 Program Expansion

Emphasis in 2009 is on promoting the opportunity to use permanently closed roads for healthy activities all week year round through programming and outreach. Existing permanent closures are:

- Seward Park Lower Loop Road,
- Magnuson Lakeshore Promenade,
- Interlaken Blvd between 19th and 21st Avenues, and
- Discovery Park roads connecting between the north lot and Utah Avenue (Alaska, Kansas and Idaho Avenues).

All closures continue to be “soft,” allowing for emergency, service and disability-permitted access.

We propose two new permanent closures: Volunteer Park Western Loop and Arboretum upper road.

For additional weekday closures, we propose “Weekly Walking Wednesday” closures from May through September from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Seward Park Upper Loop Road and Carkeek Park Road west from the Environmental Learning Center.

Lake Washington Boulevard weekend closures are proposed to become weekly. Adding more days requires a new scheme for designating the days, and that scheme needs to be simple. The proposed schedule is every Sunday, except no closures for this program during the last weekend of July and first weekend of August because of Seafair. Other possible closure patterns are extending existing pattern to 1st-3rd-5th Sundays and 2nd-4th Saturdays, even- or odd-numbered weekend days, every Saturday. Seward Park would remain in usual operation, and we will revise barricade placement to reflect this.

Coordination and Programming

We are working with the Special Events Committee and Parks Events Management to ensure that the additional closures are well run and clear of other major events. We are coordinating with Seattle Transportation Department and Climate Action Now on the one-day Summer Streets events which will feature the closed park roads in June or July.

More regular programming opportunities are also needed and being discussed with the Recreation Division. Weekday programming may be a cost effective way of involving the Recreation staff. Also we are working with the Healthy Parks/Healthy You team on its Aug. 22 event at Seward Park.

Public Involvement Process

For the 2008 program, we collected input via paper forms and a web survey. Eleven people responded to the survey and 14 on paper. For the 2009 program, we held three community meetings during November 2008, at Montlake, Rainier, and Green Lake Community Centers. These meetings were advertised by email and press

release. Eleven people attended the Rainer Community Center meeting, and none at the others. We also had a web page to gather ideas, to which 15 people submitted comments.

Issues

- Other established uses at Seward Park – Any addition for weekly weekend closures will coincide with several events that have for many years taken place at Seward Park. These include Fishing Kids, Walk for Rice, Furry 5K Fun Run, Shore Run/Walk, STP Bicycle Classic, Sickle Cell Walk, Walk to D'feet ALS, as well as many smaller events. Currently Seward Park is closed on days of Bicycle Saturday/Sunday. In order to avoid a conflict with these established events, we are structuring the weekly closure to leave Seward Park open. This also virtually eliminates the impact on permit revenues. We will be working to improve the traffic management at the end of these events to reduce impact on the neighborhood.
- Lack of diversity in schedule for LWB closure – People who must work on Sunday and those whose religious observance precludes such activities on the Sabbath will be unable to enjoy this program.
- Other access needs for roads – All closures will continue to allow access for emergency, service and disability-permitted vehicles. The closures at Volunteer Park and the Arboretum may have some effect on parking patterns in and near those parks. Some weekends, highway projects may increase diverted traffic around LWB.
- Suggestions from public input –
 - Have more emphasis on other uses, not just bicycling.

Verbal Briefing/Board Discussion

Ms. Tsao introduced herself and reviewed information in the written briefing. She next reviewed a map showing the various locations for the street closures. Staff took last year's "Walk in the Park" experiences into mind for this year and are planning programs to attract additional people to the street closures.

She noted that the current proposal for the closures is every Sunday, not the even-numbered weekend days that was previously reported to the Board. Staff are trying to make it easier for neighbors to know when the closures will occur.

Commissioner Ramels asked if Arboretum Drive is the main road that runs through the Arboretum and Ms. Tsao answered that it isn't [Lake Washington Boulevard is the primary route.] She added that Arboretum Drive was a bicycle trail until 1934. Commissioner Kostka asked why Carkeek Park is scheduled to be closed on Wednesday, rather than a weekend. Ms. Tsao responded that, unlike the other sites, Carkeek's parking is in the interior of the park and visitors cannot park and walk into the park. The park has high usage on weekends, thus Wednesday was selected as the closure date.

Commissioner Holme thinks this is a great program. He believes that the previously-announced system of closing the sites on even days was a good idea. Parks should observe the Orthodox religions that honor Saturdays. This would recognize more people's religious beliefs. He hopes this will be open for additional review.

He asked if staff considered closing Lake Washington Boulevard through October, instead of through September, and believes there would be high use during October. Ms. Tsao responded that she reviewed the input from last year and the comments were mixed on support for extending the closures past September.

The Park Board received several hundred e-mails last year about the road closures and Commissioner Barber recalled that much of that was positive feedback. He believes most of the negative comments concerned the rude behavior of bicyclists and asked if staff will use new practices to address this. Ms. Tsao responded that the closure signage will have language to include "local access for vehicles." Some bicyclists don't recognize that

local homeowners and some service vehicles must have access to homes along the Boulevard during the closures. Staff are also contracting with local bicycle clubs who will take on the role of educating bicycle riders. Commissioner Ramels agreed with Commissioner Barber's assessment of the complaints, noting that the board qualified their endorsement of the 2008 program by recommending increased education for bike riders. Ms. Tsao responded that staff will continue working on this and she believes it is an element of the closures that will improve over time.

Commissioner Adams asked if exceptions will be made at Arboretum Drive, such as busloads of seniors or others who want to tour the Arboretum and have mobility limitations. Ms. Tsao answered that this has not been completely figured out and added that the Board's suggestions, as well as any made during the public hearing process, will be helpful in making the determination. She noted that event holders will have permits to drive into the area. Commissioner Adams asked that staff consider these needs when making a decision on the closure.

Commissioner Holme stated that there are two seasonal times at the Arboretum that have especially high usage (Mother's Day and fall viewing of the maple collections.) He urged staff to pay careful attention to these occasions, and asked whether a parking study has been done at Arboretum Drive and how many parking stalls are available for visitors to access the Arboretum. Commissioner Barber asked if staff know how many people currently use the Arboretum. He noted that he was there last fall and, along with groups of people, he noticed a lot of single people walking, too.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Kostka on whether vehicles with a State-handicapped sticker will be allowed to take their vehicle on Arboretum Drive, Ms. Tsao agreed. She added, however, that there are individuals with limited mobility who do not have these permits. Commissioner Holme noted that the handicapped parking in Discovery Park closest to the lighthouse has been being abused when he has visited the area to walk. He believes the abusers don't think the handicapped parking is well monitored and thus feel free to park in those spaces. Deputy Superintendent Williams will have staff check into this.

Commissioner Ramels asked if access to Arboretum Drive will be addressed more fully at the public hearing. Ms. Tsao responded that it will and that electric carts and a tram are being considered to give access to those with mobility issues. There has also been some discussion of Graham Visitors Center staff issuing temporary vehicle access permits on a case-by-case basis. Commissioners thanked Ms. Tsao for the briefing.

Update Briefing: Dodgeball

The Board held a public hearing in 2008 to consider a pilot for non-tennis uses of tennis courts. At the conclusion of that process, Commissioners requested that staff update them on the status of the dodge ball play. Dennis Cook, Seattle Parks Citywide Athletics Manager, presented the 2008 briefing. For the update briefing, Mr. Cook prepared a written briefing which was sent to Commissioners prior to this meeting and posted on the Board's web page.

Written Briefing

Requested Board Action

No action is requested from the Board. This is an update briefing on the question of developing a site for dodge ball. The Board was previously briefed on August 28, 2008 and asked staff to return for an update at the conclusion of the indoor pilot project.

Staff Recommendation

Parks and Recreation has no funding to develop a new location for outdoor dodge ball. This project could be a community-led effort for funding through the Opportunity Fund of the 2008 Parks for All Levy.

Project Description and Background

At the August 28, 2008 Park Board meeting, the Department of Parks and Recreation made two recommendations regarding non-tennis activity on tennis courts:

- Consistent with existing Park policies, dodge ball will no longer be allowed to be played on any Parks and Recreation tennis courts; and
- The Department will explore the possibility of constructing or renovating an athletic court that will host non-tennis activities, such as dodge ball, in the Capitol Hill area.

With the displacement of the dodge ball players from Bobby Morris Tennis Courts, the Department made arrangements at Miller and Yesler Community Centers to allow the dodge ball group to play, indoors, at no cost, on Tuesday and Friday evenings starting the week of October 6th and ending the week of January 5th, 2009. At the conclusion of the 90 days, the dodge ball group had to make arrangements with the community centers to continue to play at the site, at the current community center rental fee rate, if they chose to continue. Currently, dodge ball is not being played at either community center.

Susanne Friedman, Parks Planner, and Dennis Cook, Citywide Athletics Manager, researched possible sites for an outdoor venue that did not compete with active tennis use. Fourteen sites were evaluated for potential dodge ball use. Criteria applied to the sites included: accessibility, conflicting use, proximity to homes, existing fencing and/or lighting. A cost estimate of \$10,000 was developed for the possible addition of drop-down netting for the Pratt Park Basketball Pavilion. The cost for a new facility would be much higher. However, there is no money available for any new dodge ball project.

Issues

A number of issues arose during the evaluation of potential sites for future development:

- There are a limited number of sites that have potential to become an appropriate venue for dodge ball and other non-tennis court activities in the Capitol Hill area.
- Currently, the department does not have open space available on Capitol Hill or the surrounding area to develop a new venue.
- There is continuing concern about displacing another activity that has used a particular site, such as basketball.

Next Steps

Staff will include the dodge ball proponents on the mailing list for the Parks for All Levy, so that they are aware of the Opportunity Fund process.

Additional Information:

dennis.cook@seattle.gov

Susanne.friedman@seattle.gov

Verbal Briefing/Board Discussion

Mr. Cook last briefed the Board on the proposed pilot for non-tennis (dodge ball) use of tennis courts on August 28. [Dodge ball players had regularly been using the tennis courts at Cal Anderson Park on Capitol Hill for dodge ball games and were requesting a designated site. Parks offered two indoor sites, rather than the tennis court.] Following this decision, the Board asked Mr. Cook to return and give the Board an update after the 90-day indoor trial period ended.

Mr. Cook reported that dodge ball players were offered the use of Miller and Yesler Community Centers for free for 90 days. Some of the games had a large group show up to play and others had small groups. At the end of the 90 days, Parks staff asked the dodge ball players if they wanted to continue to play at the two indoor sites for a cost of \$2 each. The players declined and have not been in touch until this past week when they relayed that the sites are not conducive to their play and they have concerns with the cost. Mr. Cook will continue working to try to find a place for them to play.

Commissioner Ramels thinks this is a failure by Parks, as the dodgeball players have done everything the Department asked them to do. The department aims to “create community” and the dodgeball events certainly brought a diverse group of people together to pursue healthy activity. One of the city’s goals is to encourage community events within walking distance, and this activity likewise fulfilled those goals. Mr. Cook stated that he has heard that other dodge ball groups play on open fields, rather than playing on enclosed tennis courts. However, the group who were using the lighted tennis courts at Cal Anderson Park wants to play outside on Capitol Hill; however, those courts are in high demand by tennis players.

Commissioner Ramels noted that one of the Department’s goals is to encourage people to get exercise and walk. She was especially impressed that these young dodge ball players played every single Friday night, even in the snow – while she frequently sees empty tennis courts. Deputy Superintendent Williams responded that a number of the Department’s 180+ tennis courts are quite old and the Department does not have funds to renovate/repair them. If Parks allows the dodge ball players to play on any of the old and unused tennis courts, for which there is no money for renovations, then the Department has a liability. Commissioner Barber asked if the Department has a maintenance schedule to re-seal tennis courts on a regular basis. Mr. Cook responded that the Department has an annual budget of \$50,000 to maintain its tennis courts, which includes pressure washing every year and minor maintenance. Commissioner Barber asked what the cost would be to seal Cal Anderson more frequently. [Tennis players testified last summer that the dodge ball players scuffed/damaged the courts by wearing street shoes and more frequent sealings could help with this.] Mr. Cook will send this information to the Board. The Department has about 180 tennis courts and Superintendent Williams noted the high cost of refurbishing them. The recent refurbishment at Rainier tennis courts cost \$1,000,000, and at Lower Woodland cost \$800,000.

Commissioner Holme asked if Parks staff looked at any of the nearby school yards as possible dodge ball sites. Mr. Cook replied that staff looked at schools on Capitol Hill and as far south as Washington Middle School and none worked. The most likely site is T.T. Minor, which might work with some minor renovations.

Commissioner Adams asked if the \$2 fee is the primary barrier. Mr. Cook doesn’t believe it is. The dodge ball players want to play outside at Cal Anderson Park and noted again that other dodge ball teams do play at indoor sites.

Commissioner Ramels commented that the dodge ball players were a constituency we don’t often see at Park Board meetings who came to the board for help and she is sorry the process is at a current standstill. She is hopeful there will be future progress to find a place for these young people to play dodge ball outside. Commissioners thanked Mr. Cook for the update.

Old/New Business

Committee Assignments: Commissioners serve on a variety of committees, as part of their role on the Park Board. At the annual retreat, the assignments will be discussed more, both from the aspect of how assignments are made and the value of rotating from one committee to another.

California Place Community Meeting: Commissioners Adam and Ramels attended the recent meeting at Alki Community Center regarding a proposed Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) project at this West Seattle park. They noted that the audience contained a number of angry people. They believe that some misinformation was presented and that some people do not understand the NMF process. Deputy Superintendent Williams agreed and explained that Parks does not control the NMF process and projects. The City’s Department of Neighborhoods is in charge of the projects and the community meetings that are held on each project. When NMF projects involve a park, the Park Department is a participant – not the lead. Commissioner Ramels noted that the meeting notices were mailed from the Parks Department to the community and this may have added to the misperception that Parks is the lead on this project, and suggested that skilled facilitators be used to run

this type of community meeting. Deputy Superintendent Williams responded that Parks is working closely with the Department of Neighborhoods to help resolve this issue.

Fee Increase: Responding to a question from Commissioner Ramels on whether the Department increased fees on January 1, Deputy Superintendent answered yes and stated that more information on this will be brought to the Board. A briefing on fees is scheduled later in the year.

Emergency Vulnerability Study: Commissioner Ramels has heard that Parks is doing an emergency vulnerability study. Deputy Superintendent Williams agreed that it is and will ask Aaron Bert, the Department's Emergency Response Manager, to brief the Board on this effort.

Boards and Commissions Training: Commissioner Adams noted that Commissioners Ramels, Kostka, and he attended a very good training at Point Defiance Zoo this past Saturday. Commissioners from a number of nearby areas were there. It was helpful to learn where this Board is in relation to some of the others. Parks staff Susan Golub and Sandy Brooks also attended the training, which was sponsored by Washington Recreation and Park Association (WRPA.)

Seattle Parks 2009 Budget: Commissioner Barber requested that Parks staff keep the Board informed of any proposed cuts to the 2009 budget and that the Board review and comment on any proposed cuts before they are finalized. Commissioner Ramels stated that she is comfortable recommending that the Department not reduce its operating hours. Commissioner Holme responded that he is not comfortable with the Park Board recommending what areas of the Department's budget should be reduced.

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
Jackie Ramels, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE _____