

## Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
August 12, 2010

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  
John Barber  
Terry Holme  
Jourdan Keith  
Diana Kincaid, Vice-chair  
Jackie Ramels, Chair

Excused:

Donna Kostka

### ***Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff:***

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent  
Eric Friedli, Acting Deputy Superintendent  
Sandy Brooks, Coordinator

This meeting was held at Seattle Park Headquarters at 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Ramels called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and Board members introduced themselves. She welcomed the audience to the meeting, and reviewed the meeting agenda. **Commissioner Barber moved and Commissioner Holme seconded approved of the August 12 agenda, July 22 minutes as corrected, and the record of correspondence received by the Board since the July 22 meeting.**

## **Superintendent's Report**

Acting Superintendent Williams reported on the following topics. To listen to the Superintendent's report, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591065> and move cursor to position 4.00.

Dodge Ball Update: In 2008, the Park Board held a public hearing whether to allow a pilot of allowing dodge ball to be played at the Cal Anderson tennis courts. Acting Superintendent Williams, in response to ongoing interest in this concept, asked the Park Board to re-visit the issue. The Board has followed this concept closely since the public hearing, has heard several update briefings from Parks staff, and will revisit the issue.

Focus on Youth Employment: The Department's work with youth brings positive results. Research has found that work is a great way to keep young people out of trouble and help build their confidence. Teens who work and attend school are less likely to have pregnancies. Seattle Parks plays an important role in offering work to youth. Acting Superintendent Williams reviewed several programs the Department sponsors to give youth jobs. These include:

- YES program: Kids receive a stipend for 120 hours work while they learn leadership and civic engagement skills. The Department has community partners who hire the youth.
- STEPS program: This summer the Department involved 400 kids in this new program. The program includes one day of life skills and training paid at a rate of \$8.55 per hour. 90% of the enrollees are kids of color.
- Summer of Service: 150 kids attended this summer program and earned a stipend of \$8.55 per hour.

Re-modeled Camp Long Dedication: Mayor McGinn, Seattle City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, and Commissioner Kostka, as well as 100 community members attended the re-dedication of this historic facility in West Seattle that now has a new kitchen, multi-purpose room, and boiler room. The Board and public are urged to visit.

101<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of Leschi Park: Acting Superintendent Williams noted that Commissioner Barber attended this anniversary party. He shared some interesting history of the park: it was a Native American campground of the Leschi tribe and later the site of Seattle's first zoo. At one time, a trolley line ran from Pioneer Square to the Leschi casino. He gave additional history of Chief Leschi.

West Seattle Totem Restored: Acting Superintendent Williams credited West Seattle Rotary for the successful restoration of the West Seattle Totem. The totem was stolen from the park, recovered, and re-installed. The community held a wonderful celebration to welcome home the totem.

### **Community Events and Celebrations**

Big Day of Play: The Big Day of Play is scheduled for Saturday, August 28, at Magnuson Park. This is the feature event of the Department's "Healthy Parks, Healthy You Initiative." The schedule features a 5K run/walk, paddling and sailing activities, and fun activity booths. The entire Seattle community is encouraged to attend.

Rainier Community Meeting: On July 29, Acting Superintendent Williams met with community members at Rainier Community Center to learn how Parks can provide better activities and services that meet neighborhood needs. Dinner and child care were provided.

Magnuson Park Shore Ponds Public Meeting: The Department will hold a public meeting on Phase 3 of the Magnuson Park Wetland Habitat and Athletic Fields project on August 24 pm. This phase continues wetland development to the east, nearing the Lake Washington shore.

South Lake Union Park Opening: The Seattle Parks Foundation is leading the way on this grand opening celebration on Saturday, September 25, which will feature family fun and entertainment. The new park includes an interactive water fountain, model boat pond, history trail, non-motorized boat launch, new pathways, parking, lighting, furnishings, and the

necessary utilities to support the park. The Board and public are invited to attend this celebration.

### **Free Events in Parks**

- Othello Park International Music & Art Festival, August 26
- Pratt Park Summer Art in the Park Celebration, August 20

### **Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience**

The Chair explained 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-to-three minutes each, will be timed, and are asked to stand at the podium to speak. The Board's usual process is for 10 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 Old/New Business. Two people testified, with a brief summary of their testimony included below. To hear the full testimony, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591065> and move cursor under screen to position 18.1.

Steve Widmayer: Mr. Widmayer is in his 50's and has been an avid dodge ball player for three years. The local dodge ball team is playing in the world tournament in Chicago. They want to play at Cal Anderson Park. Last week an altercation happened between one tennis player who wanted the court and asked a group of dodge ball players to leave the court. The police intervened. He thanked the Park Board and Acting Superintendent Williams for re-visiting the concept of using tennis courts for other sports. He asked that the Board check out SeattleStreetDodgeBall.net (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=15601773644>).

Nila Widmayer: Ms. Widmayer is Mr. Widmayer's 11-year-old daughter. She stated that dodgeball is fun and she makes friends there. The older players help the younger ones and don't hit them very hard with the ball. It is an especially friendly environment to newcomers.

Nick Dolan: He is a slalom skater and is looking for a designated site for this emerging sport. A tennis court has a smooth, flat surface and works well. He noted that roller hockey was played on the Cal Anderson tennis courts in the 1930's. He suggested several possible sites, with one in the north end (Green Lake Community Center tennis courts), south end (Cowen Park), and in the Capitol Hill area.

Commissioner Ramels thanked audience members for taking the time to attend tonight's meeting and for testifying.

### **Public Hearing: Atlantic City Nursery Site Use**

At the Board's July 8 meeting, Michael Shiosaki, Seattle Parks' Planning and Development Division Deputy Director, and project manager Emily Fuller presented a briefing on the site use of the former Atlantic City Nursery. Tonight the Board held a public hearing and plans to vote on a recommendation to the Superintendent at its September 9 meeting. To read the briefing paper from the July 8 meeting, please see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2010/07-08-10.pdf>. To hear the discussion, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591059> and move cursor to position 51.25. To hear tonight's public hearing, see

<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591065> and move the cursor to position 25.00.

Mr. Shiosaki gave a brief review of the proposal. Since the July 8 meeting, most of the Park Board commissioners have toured the site. No decisions about the future use of the site have been made. He next reviewed the filters the Board is asked to use as it makes its recommendation on this proposal: does it create a new use? does it foster community building? is it a healthy use of the site? is it a legitimate use? does it adhere to the City's Race and Social Justice goals? and is it a benefit to the public?

Acting Superintendent Williams agreed that no decisions have been made. The Department is listening to the public's input and asking the Park Board for a recommendation. He added that other filters used to make the final decision are: equal access to all; manage risk and liability for park users and those who live nearby; maximize the Department's current resources; and that Seattle Parks be a good neighbor.

### ***Public Hearing***

The public hearing began. All who requested to speak were allotted two minutes each to testify, asked to speak at the podium, and timed. The Chair urged anyone with additional comments to e-mail their testimony to the Board's coordinator.

Harry Hoffman: Favors the Department's proposal; safety concerns. He lives adjacent to the site and is co-chair of Friends of Atlantic City Nursery. He highlighted three points: 1. re-purpose the site for the benefit of neighborhood; 2. restore wetlands, and 3. believes that safety concerns are best addressed by the urban garden concept.

Sue Gibbs: Favors. She has been a Columbia City resident for 30 years and became involved in the project during its early stages. There is lots of positive excitement about the concept, especially at the most recent community meeting. She has seen lots of positive changes in Columbia City and now is seeing them in the Rainier Beach community.

Patty Matthews: Favors. She lives in the neighborhood and realizes that many kids do not know about healthy foods. This is a great opportunity to tap into the schools to help educate children on healthy foods and lifestyles. The Rainier Beach zip code of 98118 was recently recognized as the most diverse in the United States. She believes an urban farm is a good project for this area.

Wendy Jensen: Favors; safety concerns. She is also a member of the Friends of Atlantic City Nursery and has lived in Rainier Beach for 12 years. She is excited about the urban farm concept, as it has great potential and is a unique opportunity for the south end. She works with the Head Start program and has seen children as young as four years old who are diabetic. It is exciting that the urban farm could help turn things around for kids with little access to healthy food. However, she urged the Department to also address the community's concerns with safety at the site.

Michelle Venetucci Harvey: Favors. She is a member of the University of Washington's 600-student member farm group. She suggested bringing in vendors to help bring "eyes on the

park” and increase safety. She urged the Board to watch the documentary “The Garden”, which follows the history of a transforming urban farm in South Los Angeles.

Yalonda Gill Masundire: Favors urban farms and wetland restoration; safety concerns. She believes this could be a great enhancement to the Rainier Beach community. However, she urged that residents be very involved in the design and that Seattle Parks respond to their safety concerns – they are warranted!

Steve Felman: Favors. He is a member of Seattle Tilth and Seattle Youth Gardens program, which teaches kids how to raise food, do resumes, and find a job. He and his wife funded a study by Washington State University at Marra Farms which found one acre of land can result in a return of 96,000 lbs in produce, if it is done well. The income from the produce can fund the program and allow it to expand. He will send the Park Board a copy of the study.

The Board commended Mr. Felman and Ms. Knowlton for funding the study.

Kathy Knowlton: Favors. She is very pleased with the study results and believes Seattle Tilth is a great steward for the urban farm at Atlantic City Nursery. Tilth has goodwill throughout the Seattle area. She and her husband want positive elements for the kids from Seattle Youth Gardens program. This concept can provide a higher level of gardening where they can continue to learn.

Peter Masundore: Favors. He is the co-chair of the Friends of Atlantic City Nursery and believes this project has the potential to be a jewel. These are tough economic times and the community can help oversee the site and help with funding. This is a great Park Department community building opportunity in the most diverse zip code in the nation. It can provide a great deal of educational and job opportunities, as well as help meet the City’s social justice goals.

David Reyes: Favors. He lives several blocks from the site, is a nurse, and believes a healthy lifestyle must have support. He has met many good people in this process helping build positive community in this area. Many are immigrants and bring gardening experience from their homelands to the table. He has discussed the concept to a number of nearby business owners and they are interested in the project.

Jack Anderson: Favors concept; safety concerns. He is a neighbor of this site and applauds the idea. However, he does not support removing the fence. He has lived near the site for 30 years and when the fence was installed, it helped deter burglars. The blackberries currently on the site also helped deter them. No one at the June 30 voiced support for taking down the fence to provide a pathway.

Jeff Steinborn: Favors concept; safety concerns. He has lived in the area since 1948 and supports the urban farm concept. However, the history is that there were many burglaries in the area until the fence was built. At the last public meeting on June 30, security was a major issue. He urged that the fence remain and that the gardens be locked at night to deter crime. He asked that Parks be a good neighbor to the community.

Andrea Dwyer: Favors; safety concerns. She is the Executive Director of Seattle Tilth, which supports urban farm and wetland restoration, as well as increasing food sources, community building, civic engagement, and education. Neighbors are understandably concerned with safety and with having a strong community involvement in the project. Seattle Tilth has a history of good relationships with its neighbors. Its other garden sites are open to the public, with little vandalism.

Betsy Welsh: Favors. She is thrilled with the concept and believes it is a project for people from many cultures to work on together.

Anna Lord: Favors concept; safety concerns. She noted that the basketball hoops were removed from adjoining Beer Sheva Park some time ago to discourage youth from hanging out in the area. She urged that attention be focused on providing positive places for youth.

Mark Moburg: Favors urban farm concept; strong safety concerns. He is a neighbor of the site and very concerned with safety. At the June 30 meeting, attendees were most interested in safety and security.

Jim Helland: Doesn't oppose urban farm concept; has safety concerns. He thanked the Commissioners for visiting the site and asked if they visited Beer Sheva (Commissioners responded they did not.) He is concerned with the process and security and safety. He pointed out the primary area where crimes occur on the map. Some of this happens in the wetland area, which isn't well maintained and has become an area of prostitution. He talked about the vegetation, which is attractive, and he doesn't want it removed as a result of the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED.) He asked that Parks work closely with the nearby community who will be most affected by this proposal.

Thomas Taylor: Favors farm and wetland restoration; safety concerns. He is a neighbor and has been very active in previous projects at this site. In the past ten years, it has been neglected and become a source of crime. He asked that Parks look at this as a model of what not to do in a park. He urged the Department to include security, lighting, and maintenance funding in its proposal.

Sharon Lerman: Favors. She is the youth program manager at Seattle Tilth and worked on the Rainier Beach Learning Garden at Rainier Beach Community Center. She gave more details on the learning garden, which was expanded by a grant award from the Department of Neighborhoods.

### ***Board Discussion***

Commissioner Ramels noted that several people who testified referenced the June 30 community meeting. Ms. Fuller responded that another public meeting was held on December 3, 2009.

Commissioner Keith asked staff for specifics on crime and neglect of the site, and Commissioner Ramels asked for a report from Seattle Police Department on the CPTED and the police perception of the project. Responding to a question from Commissioner Kincaid, Mr. Shiosaki answered that this is a use plan with partners, with no funding to implement.

Commissioner Adams noted that the heart of the testimony to him is that the comments made at the June 30 public meeting have been distorted. Have the comments been shared with the Park Board? Mr. Shiosaki responded that the briefing summarized the major themes from the meeting, with safety and security at the top of list.

Commissioner Holme will not be at the Board's September 9 discussion and recommendation to the Superintendent. He asked Parks to take a hard look at the site and analyze security, access, and parking. He has visited this park several times and believes that wetland restoration can bring unintended consequences to a park.

The Board will continue its discussion of this proposal at the September 9 meeting. Written testimony will be accepted through Tuesday, September 7. Commissioners will send any additional questions to staff via e-mail.

### **Discussion: Board of Park Commissioners' Guiding Principles**

Mayor McGinn plans to release a proposed 2011 budget in late September. Board members have expressed grave concern that the Park Department may have deep cuts. Board members agree that a set of guiding principles will help it determine the most effective response to both the Mayor and City Council to the budget proposal. The guiding principles will also aid the Board in any future deliberations.

To hear the Board's discussion, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591065> and move the cursor to position 85.00. The Board will continue this discussion at its October 14 regular meeting and October 17 annual retreat and finalize its response to the budget proposal.

### **Old/New Business:**

To hear the Board's discussion of Old/New Business, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591065> and move cursor to position 122.0

Extend Park Board Meetings: Each year, the Board has an extensive list of agenda items to be scheduled during its two-hour meetings. Board members expressed concerns about the amount of time allotted for its discussion and determined that additional meeting time is needed. After discussion, **Commissioner Kincaid moved to change the Board's meeting time to 7:00-9:30 pm. Commissioner Holme seconded. The vote was taken with all in favor. Motion carried.** The Board's staff will allow additional time for those topics needing more discussion time, as well as keep the number of agenda topics to an average of two, and no more than three, topics.

Ride With a Ranger: Commissioner Ramels recently went on a "ride-along" with one of the Department's park rangers and found it to be extremely interesting and informative. The Board has agreed to write a letter of support for not only continuing the program in 2011, but to enhance it when additional funding becomes available.

Low-Use Tennis Court Public Hearing: Commissioners asked for an inventory of low-use tennis courts during its upcoming public hearing on the concept of allowing other uses at courts so designated. Responding to a question from Commissioner Adams whether it creates a new

liability for the Department to allow alternate uses at these courts, Acting Superintendent Williams responded that the Department will look at the uses on a case-by-case basis.

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

Jackie Ramels, Chair  
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE \_\_\_\_\_