

Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
March 8, 2012

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>
(Includes agendas and minutes from 2001-present)

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<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/watchVideos.asp?program=Parks>

Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Antoinette Angulo
John Barber
Megan Heahlke
Jourdan Keith
Diana Kincaid, Acting Chair
Brice Maryman
Barbara Wright

Appointee:

Yazmin Mehdi, Mayoral Appointee

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

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

This meeting was held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Acting Chair Diana Kincaid called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, welcomed members of the audience, and reviewed the meeting agenda. **Commissioner Barber moved approval of the March 8 meeting agenda, February 23 minutes, and acknowledgment of correspondence. Commissioner Maryman seconded. The vote was taken and motion carried.**

Superintendent's Report

A written report was distributed to Commissioners and available to the audience prior to the meeting. Acting Superintendent Williams reported on several additional items.

<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=6092> and move cursor to position 1.00.

Madison Park North Beach Fence Removal: Last fall, following a public hearing, the Park Board recommended removal of a chain link fence at North Madison Beach Park. Last week, Parks staff Michael Shiosaki and Susan Golub met with the stakeholders' group (Sam Smith, Shan Mullin, Gail Irving, John Pettit, Kenan Block, Knute Berger, and Colleen McMonagle) to discuss the removal and installation of a low barrier of plantings, driftwood, etc. They will have one more meeting to review and approve a site plan.

International Children's Park Renovation Celebrated: On Saturday, March 3, more than 100 people celebrated the renovation and ribbon cutting of this newly-renovated park, including Mayor McGinn and Commissioners Barber and Kincaid. For more information on this project, see http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/nmf/international_childrens_park.htm.

Rainier Beach Community Center and Pool Partnership Open House: More than 60 community stakeholders and interested organizations participated in a March 6 Open House sponsored by the Parks Department at the South Shore K-8 School. This launched the Request for Interest (RFI) announcement that Parks has issued for partnership opportunities at the RBCC, which will help determine how the newly-remodeled center will be operated. The center is located in the most diverse zip code in the country, with more than 120 languages spoken. Parks wants the center to be welcoming and inviting for all. Acting Deputy Superintendent Eric Friedli attended the meeting, along with Associated Recreation Council representatives. The RFI is due Monday, April 16, at 4:00 pm. For more information on the remodel project, see http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/rainier_beach_cc/.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Maryman whether there may be several winners in the RFI process, Acting Superintendent Williams responded that there is room for a number of community partners in operating the community center.

Commissioner Kincaid referred to the community's diversity and has concerns that information be translated effectively for the various groups. Acting Superintendent Williams stated that the Department must be intentional in hiring people from the community who use the center. This center is located in an international area and staff must reflect that diversity.

Volunteer Park Conservatory: Parks held a public meeting Wednesday evening with approximately 140 people present to gather public input on ideas for decreasing expenses and/or increasing revenues for the Conservatory. Attendees were positive and energized and contributed a lot of ideas, including: establish an entry fee, fundraising, and hosting more special events. An excellent consultant has been hired and he has researched conservatories around the country to determine the most successful elements. His research has found that no other cities have yet closed their conservatories or botanical gardens, although the highest amount of return any has garnered is about 40%. A suggestion is to install a tent on the west side of the conservatory for weddings and other special events, that could result in as many as 100 revenue-producing events each year. Acting Superintendent Williams stated he is buoyed by the interest in and support of the Conservatory. A final report is expected in about six weeks, followed by briefings to the City Council Parks and Neighborhood Committee and Mayor McGinn.

Commissioner Jourdan is interested in hearing amounts the Woodland Park Zoo makes from holding weddings and other events. Commissioner Barber likes the idea of the tent as a place for lunch and additional outdoor botanical displays. Acting Superintendent Williams agreed; having the opportunity to have coffee or a meal at a park location has been successful in many other park systems. Parks staff will keep the Board updated on the Conservatory.

Beaver Pond Natural Area Renovation: The final public meeting for the \$750,000 renovation is scheduled March 14, 7-9 pm, at the Northgate Community Center. This Parks and Green Spaces Opportunity Fund project modifies the existing park, refines and completes channel work in portions of the park by relocating two portions of Thornton Creek, removes invasive plants, and restores native habitat. An impressive amount of work has already been completed. Parks and The Watershed Company will present the final schematic plan that was created based on community feedback from the first public meeting in January. Parks is seeking community input on priorities for restoration and natural area improvements at this meeting. Design development will begin immediately and construction is slated for summer 2013.

North Precinct Advisory Council: Acting Superintendent Williams attended the March 7 meeting, with about 40 people attending. He talked about park safety and roles of homeowners, park visitors, and park staff, and attendees were reminded to call 911 when they observe suspicious behavior in a park. Issues raised included safety in parks, why the City is lidding reservoirs, how people can most effectively report problems, support for more park rangers, and the Parks Code of Conduct.

Race and Social Justice Initiative Update: Acting Superintendent Williams is preparing responses to the Department's Race and Justice Change Team's concerns about more transparency and better follow-up with unsuccessful candidates in Seattle Parks' hiring processes. He also unveiled the new mentoring program, which will help identify employees whose cultural norms may prevent them from being assertive about career advancement. From April through October Parks directors, managers, and strategic advisors will provide mentoring that could help make interested employees competitive in hiring processes. Parks wants to nurture employees and acknowledge the challenges they face. The Department's mission is to provide access, sustainability, opportunity, and choices. It is important for employees to get better communication from the top and to tear down silos that exist between divisions. Parks will hold a half-day, all staff retreat on Wednesday, March 14, at Seattle Center's Fisher Pavilion and the Park Board is invited to attend.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Keith, Acting Superintendent Williams answered that some employees are frustrated by their perception that some employees are groomed and prepared for promotion, while others aren't. Employees may self-nominate themselves for the mentoring and every manager in the department will participate in this program. Commissioner Keith asked what outcome tool will measure the program's success. Acting Superintendent Williams responded the quantity measure will be the number of employees who participate and the quality measure will be an increase in employee morale.

Commissioner Angulo asked how many management staff will participate and Acting Superintendent Williams answered that 52 directors, managers, and executive team members will participate and may mentor two-three employees each.

Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center (LHPAC): LHPAC's Legal Theater Mock Trial team placed 11th out of 20 school teams in the YMCA King County District Mock Trial Competition on February 25. Thanks go to the sponsors: Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative and Jefferson Community Center Advisory Council. And to the supporters: Volunteer Coach Russell Odell, Julie Kesler, Tom Grant, Tony Innovong, Honorable Judge Mary Yu, William Downing, Chris Washington, and Judge Jackie Lum for the use of the courtrooms for the scrimmage and all the past and present volunteers and alumni.

Recent Media: A piece ran in *NW Asian Weekly* about the Youth Green Corps:

<http://www.nwasianweekly.com/2012/03/for-cambodian-american-growth-at-youth-green-corps-not-restricted-to-plants/>

The *Seattle Times* did a nice piece on the "first viewing" at the Japanese Garden, and also covered the closing of Ft. Lawton, the wetlands at Carkeek Park, the tree socks at City Hall Park, the upcoming Arts on the Waterfront artsfest, and the Magnuson Park off-leash area. The *Times* also ran an op-ed recommending a nonprofit to develop the waterfront, written by Patrick Gordon, Bob Donegan, and Thatcher Bailey, Executive Director of Seattle Parks Foundation.

Public radio station KUOW had Pat Murakami on "Weekday Thursday", talking about crime in southeast Seattle and the need for policing and youth activities. *Crosscut* also contacted Parks; communication staff responded with information about Rainier Beach Community Center and the Youth Violence Prevention Initiative.

Upcoming Healthy Parks, Healthy You Event: Meadowbrook Community Center and Pool are combining forces to offer a "Walking in Water" event on April 4 at noon at Meadowbrook Pool. Participants will be able to do shallow water walking for 30 minutes. This form of exercise is a great way to minimize stress on the body's joints, so it is the perfect alternative to the traditional pounding of the pavement. People not wanting to get wet will be able to walk the pool deck while cheering on the people in the water. This festive atmosphere will include music to get everyone's heart pumping

Magnuson Park Strategic Management Plan: The Magnuson Park Advisory Group (staff and community volunteers) has met twice and is making good progress on assembling and analyzing all the input from the

February 11 public workshop and comments received since, are developing guiding principles, and are starting work on setting priorities.

Installation of People Counters at Community Centers: The installations are under way and staff anticipate the work will be finished by mid-to-late April. The City's Department of Information and Technology (DoIT) is developing software costs for the operation of the system.

Aquatic Therapies: The Plus One foundation, which recently contacted pool staff, is an organization that funds life-changing experiences for people with neurological disorders. Within Plus One is a fund called the Mary 'Mermaid' McKillop Fund, which supports aquatic therapies for people with neurological disorders who cannot afford to purchase a pool pass. Plus One is interested in partnering with Southwest Pool to help people who would benefit from swimming and would buy pool passes and distribute to people who apply to their foundation for assistance. Aquatics staff look forward to developing this partnership.

Crown Hill Elementary Park Development: While this project is physically complete, the fencing will stay up through the spring to allow the turf to get established. An opening celebration is planned for Saturday, May 19, in collaboration with Crown Hill Center.

Golden Gardens Landslide Repair 2011 & Lake Washington Boulevard Landslide Repair 2011: The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) signed the final paperwork on February 29, which allows Parks to make a formal request for federal funds for slope stabilization related to both the Golden Gardens and the Lake Washington Boulevard landslides. Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is helping process FHWA paperwork through WSDOT. Parks staff met with SDOT on March 1 to set up the next steps and will meet again later in the month.

Seward Park/Andrews Bay Shoreline Restoration: The Conservation Corps is finishing up the planting work along the east side of Andrews Bay, funded by a grant from King Conservation District. The work included the removal of 16 Lombardy poplars and other invasive plants. Two of the poplars were dropped into the water whole to provide aquatic habitat and the hollow trunk of at least one more was placed upland of the shoreline to provide terrestrial habitat. Parks staff and the Conservation Corps also planted 16 new trees, 180 riparian shrubs, and 30 ferns. The Conservation Corps did a great job with the invasive removal and planting work.

Jefferson Skatepark: This project, which includes the first lighted skate park in the city, is now open for use and is substantially complete. Users are already asking for improvements and the design team has made a proposal that Parks has submitted to the contractor for pricing. A July 14 opening celebration is planned for the entire park.

University Heights Open Space Improvements/University Heights South Lot Park: After several meetings and phone conferences Parks staff have resolved the main sticking points in project coordination with University Heights Community Center (UHCC). New design suggestions have continued to surface and staff believe the design development can proceed.

Children's and Family Music Event: On Saturday, March 3, Casper Babypants (children's musician): http://babypantsmusic.com/fr_home.cfm, entertained almost 400 toddlers and their parents at Northgate Community Center. The community center was very active with basketball games and toddlers.

Gun Ban in Seattle's Parks Ends: Earlier this week, the media reported that a Washington State Supreme Court decision to not hear an appeal has ended the City's ban on guns at parks and community centers. "The case started in 2008, when a suspect with a concealed weapon permit shot and injured three people at the Folklife Festival in Seattle. After that incident, then-Mayor Greg Nickels directed city departments to evaluate policies related to guns. Nickels enacted a ban on firearms in Parks and Recreation facilities intended for youth, including playgrounds, parks and community centers." Parks will bring this issue back to the Park Board for further discussion.

Bus Service Discontinued to Several Seattle Parks: Commissioner Barber voiced concerns that King County Metro will soon discontinue bus service to the entry of Discovery Park. Instead, the nearest stop will be six blocks from the park entrance. Buses which serve several other parks is also being discontinued/ altered. He is concerned how this affects access to the parks, especially in view of the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative. He urged Seattle Parks and the City to monitor these changes, as he doesn't believe the Metro planners are aware of the impacts to park users. Acting Superintendent Williams responded that Metro is undergoing its own budget challenges, as is Parks Department. Metro must make choices based on supply and demand and Parks is trying to be sensitive to that.

Commissioner Kincaid also voiced concerns with these decisions and asked that the Board receive more information as it is hearing high level briefings on the Park Department.

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 Old/New Business. Three people signed up to testify, with a brief summary of their testimony included below. To hear the testimony, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=6092> and move cursor to position 29.00.

Jamie Prantil: She is a Carkeek Park volunteer and past Parks employee and distributed a handout on the Watershed Project at Carkeek Park. The Parks' environmental learning center was closed during budget cuts and the community requests that the naturalist position be restored. She distributed a handout from park activist Nancy Malmgren.

Timothy Cox: He is a member of the Carkeek Park Advisory Council. Carkeek Park has 50,000 visitors annually and he believes restoring the naturalist program would be of great benefit to the community. The Carkeek Park Environmental Learning Center (ELC) is one of three in the City and the only one to be closed due to budget cuts. He asked that the Department consider cutting administrative and supervisory staff and use some of the savings to staff the ELC.

Carol Fisher: She requested a briefing from Parks Facilities Acting Director Dan Johnson to also include maintenance in the Department's dog parks.

Update Briefing: Seattle Parks Department Budget

Kevin Stoops, Seattle Parks Department Finance Director, presented a briefing on the Department's budget. He distributed a Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation Summary of 2012 Adopted Budget and gave many details on the budget in a detailed Powerpoint presentation. To hear the full presentation and Powerpoint and hear the Board's discussion, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=6092> and move cursor to position 32.45.

Verbal Briefing and Board Discussion

Ms. Stoops introduced himself and reviewed the purpose of tonight's briefing. The Board is being asked to consider reductions in the Department's budget, followed by briefings on both the Parks and Recreation Divisions' level of service, and to serve as a sounding board for the Department as it makes tough choices to adjust to the reduced budget.

The City of Seattle has approximately 10,000 employees, with 58% of the annual General Fund directed to public safety (Fire and Police.) Seattle Parks Department has approximately 900 employees and receives 9%

of the City's General Fund allocations, or \$81,463,580 for 2012. Tonight the Board will hear a briefing from the Parks Division, which is the Department's largest division, on its level of service and how that is impacted by the budget cuts.

He also reviewed impacts to Seattle's budgets over the past several years, which resulted in a decreased General Fund. Some recent economic recovery has been observed; however, expectations are that the budget will remain flat for the immediate future. In the first years of budget reductions Seattle Parks made a number of non-sustainable cuts which included employee furloughs and a wage freeze for strategic advisors and management. In addition, hours were reduced at five community centers, over 100 positions were cut, and athletic fees were increased. In 2012, a geographic system for operating the 26 community centers was implemented, which is expected to save over \$1 million, the Planning and Development Division was reduced, and the Special Events office and its staff were transferred to the City's Office of Economic Development. The expectations for the City's 2013-14 budget are for continued stagnation. He noted the Justice Department's evaluation of the Department's adherence to the Americans with Disabilities Act has resulted in a number of required improvements, which also impact the Department's budget.

Mr. Stoops next reviewed the Department's Guiding Principles, which include keeping the parks and facilities accessible, relevant, and sustainable. He also shared information on the Department's golf program, which is financially self-sustaining, its Capital Improvements Program (CIP), major maintenance projects, park levies, and the City's 2013-14 budget timeline.

Discussion

Commissioner Wright had several questions and observations on the Department's golf program, which includes four municipal golf courses, followed by responses from Mr. Stoops. *How do the golf fees compare to those at private courses?* They are a bargain! In addition, the Department offers "twilight" golfing and other fee reductions. *Does Seattle Parks have a profile of its golf users?* The participants include a wide spectrum, from teens to seniors and prices are kept affordable to attract them. *What are the profiles of the users?* The courses draw participants from around Seattle and other cities, too. *If the current fees are a bargain and are sufficient to cover all the operating expenses, a modest increase would provide funds for other programs.* The golf excess funds now goes into paying off its bond debt and some is directed to the General Fund.

Commissioner Barber asked what would be the most effective time for the Park Board to be involved in the Department's budget. Mr. Stoops responded that, once the City departments receive direction from the mayor's office - usually in April, a "cone of silence" falls over City departments where they cannot discuss the budget preparation and the Board should weigh in now. Commissioner Healke asked which issues are most critical for the Board to zero in on and Mr. Stoops responded that sustainable community center operations are a top priority. Superintendent Williams added that one way for the Board to weigh in is to assist the Department with its guiding principles which will help develop a budget proposal to present to the mayor.

Commissioner Barber asked for a list of the land banked parcels and asked what will move development of the parcels forward. Mr. Stoops hopes the land banking is a short-term solution and the Department will have funds in the future to develop the parcels. Responding to a question from Commissioner Barber regarding funding for urban farms, Mr. Stoops answered that the operators secured Neighborhood Matching Funds and some monies from the Levy Inflation Fund.

Commissioner Keith asked for examples of non-sustainable reductions and Mr. Stoops listed selling park property and furloughs. She next asked for examples of sustainable reductions and Mr. Stoops listed water conservation and reducing community center hours of operation.

Commissioner Maryman stated that stormwater costs caught his attention. The City's park lands absorb a great deal of rain and reduce Seattle Public Utilities' costs for dealing with stormwater runoff. He is interested in those savings being used to fund the Environmental Learning Centers. Mr. Stoops added the Department is

also negotiating with Seattle Public Utilities to help fund the Green Seattle Partnership [a program to restore the City's tree canopy on public lands.]

Mr. Stoops stated that last week the Department also held a series of open houses with staff, who were asked to make suggestions to reduce expenses. Viable suggestions will be considered for the Department's 2012 budget proposal; it is very helpful to receive these ideas before the cone of silence begins.

Commissioner Kincaid stated the Board is hearing about sustainable, long-term reductions and is also interested in sustainable long-term financing for programs. Acting Superintendent stated the Department is responding to a Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) on park funding, with the report finalized at the end of June. Parks staff will present the report to City Council and brief the Park Board. Seattle Parks Foundation is also doing a major study and great deal of analysis on adequately funding Seattle's parks system.

Acting Superintendent Williams stated the Department's budget story isn't just about cuts. It is also an opportunity to use assets in new ways, increase the number of volunteers, and develop new partnerships. And It's also an opportunity to do more analytical work, such as the next presentation by the Parks Division staff. Commissioners thanked Mr. Stoops for the informative briefing.

Parks Division – Maintenance Levels of Service

Dan Johnson, Parks Division Acting Director, and Leah Tivoli, Parks Division Strategic Advisor, presented a briefing on the Division's maintenance levels of service, including a detailed Powerpoint presentation. Patrick Morgan, Information Technology professional, prepared the data analysis and assisted in the presentation.

Prior to the meeting, the Board received a written briefing, which was also available to the public on the Board's web page and as hard copies at the meeting. A copy is included below. The Board also received a copy of the Division's organization chart, available at http://www.seattle.gov/parks/Contact/orgchart_prk.pdf. To view the full verbal and Powerpoint presentation and listen to the Board's discussion see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=6092> and move cursor to position 78.20.

Written Briefing

Requested Board Action

This briefing is for information only and no Board action is requested. Following the staff briefing we expect to engage the Board in an active discussion on levels of service.

Background

The Parks Division's primary mission is to maintain parks, buildings, specialty gardens and natural areas to a level that is safe and welcoming. More information about the Division is provided on the organization chart attached.

2011 Budget

| Facility | Staff (FTE) | Budget (\$) | Percent |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|---------|
| Parks | 285 | 20,309,310 | 73% |
| Buildings | 83 | 6,921,079 | 21% |
| Garden | 9 | 3,181,005 | 2% |
| Natural Areas | 14 | 635,606 | 3% |
| | 390 | 1,163,706 | 100% |

Seattle Parks and Recreation is the largest landowner in Seattle, owning 6,200 acres of park or 11% of Seattle's land area. Of these acres, maintenance occurs at 439 parks with 2,113 acres of actively maintained park land and 2,496 acres of managed natural area. The City of Seattle is a very 'green' city with the majority of residents living within ½ mile of ½ acre of usable open space¹.

Not every park is created equal. Parks has created a system of 'maintenance categories' similar to 'park classifications²' that help us define Levels of Service. Maintenance categories are defined for each park using a combination of factors such as intensity of use, regional draw, size of park and asset make-up. Although there are always exceptions, A-Mini Parks have a much lower frequency of service visits than D-Regional Parks. D-Regional Parks have a lower frequency of service than E-Downtown Parks. Greenbelts and Natural Areas have the lowest frequency of service requiring periodic inspections, trail renovation, restoration and perimeter maintenance.

| Parks Maintenance Categories | | Park Count ³ | Proportion of Staff Time ⁴ | Estimated Staff Budget (\$ Million) per category |
|------------------------------|--|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| A | Mini Park | 107 | 4% | 0.8 |
| B | Neighborhood Park | 143 | 29% | 5.8 |
| C | Community Park | 58 | 23% | 4.7 |
| D | Regional Park | 12 | 30% | 6.0 |
| E | Downtown Park | 18 | 7% | 1.5 |
| F | Greenway | 16 | 3% | 0.6 |
| G | Greenbelt/Natural Areas | 79 | 2% | 0.3 |
| H | Environmental Learning Centers and Specialty Gardens | 6 | 3% | 0.5 |
| | Owned but not managed by Parks | 32 | | |
| | | 471 | 100% | 20.2 |

Mini Parks and Neighborhood Parks are the most numerous parks located in the densest areas of the City where larger parks do not fit. Mini Parks range from a traffic circle to a small park with a sport court. Neighborhood Parks fit into the fabric of the neighborhood with assets such as play areas, sport courts, wading pools and fields for little league soccer and t-ball. Community Parks are generally larger and draw recreational use from the greater community. These parks house community centers, fields with tournaments, water features, comfort stations and many other assets.

Seattle has 12 Regional Parks that draw residents and tourists from across town to recreate. With the exception of Volunteer, all of the parks are on waterfront albeit Puget Sound, Lake Union or Green Lake, and offer an escape from urban life. Volunteer is a 100-year-old Olmsted Park that houses the Seattle Asian Art Museum and historic features such as the Conservatory and water tower. These 12 parks take 30% of the staff resources. Similarly, there are 18 Downtown parks sprinkled throughout the downtown core. These parks have a much more simple asset composition – benches, hardscape, planters and tables – but require a

¹ 2011 Open Space Gap Report Update, <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/publications/GapReport.htm>

² 5-11-01 Parks Classification Policy,
http://inweb/parks/Documents/1Administration/Policies_and_Procedures/5=Maintenance/5-11-01=Parks%20Classification%20Policy.pdf

³ Park count fluctuates with changes in management, park development, and reclassifications.

⁴ Based on PLANT actual hour distribution per maintenance category

much higher frequency of maintenance due to the intensity of use. Downtown parks comprise 1% of the total maintained park land (20 acres) and require 7% of the staff time.

Budget reductions began in 2008 with the global recession. In 2011-12, the Parks Division underwent major reductions adding to a loss of 10% of its Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff. Of the 43 lost positions, 26 came from the Park Cleaning, Landscaping and Restoration Budget Control Level (BCL) that houses the majority of park maintenance.

Today's staffing level reflects Park Resources staffing level before the 2000 Pro Parks Levy and 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy. These levies have added 137 acres (6% increase in highly maintained land), 46 new parks, and new developments to existing parks (for example, play areas, water features, reservoir lids, skate parks, dog parks).

The presentation to the Board will demonstrate how reduced staffing levels impact the frequency at which Parks can perform maintenance tasks and the resulting park condition. Park condition impacts neighboring properties and the City of Seattle a whole. Different policy options will be presented and a discussion of tradeoffs will ensue.

Additional Information

Leah Tivoli, leah.tivoli@seattle.gov , 615-0226

Verbal Briefing/Discussion

Acting Deputy Superintendent Eric Friedli introduced the briefing. The Parks Department is building levels of service based on its guiding principles and he asked the Board to consider tonight's briefing in the light of those principles, and at a very high level. Mr. Johnson next introduced himself and stated Parks Division staff have spent time during the past three years measuring, mapping, and recording the Department's assets and levels of service. Ms. Tivoli then introduced herself and Mr. Morgan and reviewed the information in the written briefing paper and the detailed Powerpoint presentation.

The Parks Division has 408 full-time employees, with 210 working in routine park maintenance and cleaning; 44 in land renovation and urban forestry; 16 in small assets and play area inspections; 13 in trails and restoration; 9 in specialty gardens; 80 in comfort station repair, irrigation, and picnic shelters; and 38 in other work. Seattle Parks is the largest landowner in the city, with 6,200 acres of land. Of those, 2,100 acres are actively maintained and 2,500 acres include natural areas. The Powerpoint included maps showing where each park is located and how it is classified.

Ms. Tivoli next addressed the park maintenance plans and explained that asset inventory X the nationally recognized time standard X frequency equals the number of hours for each park plan. The Division's staff spend 400,000 hours annually on routine cleaning. As the budget decreases and positions are cut, the area maintained by a crew expands. Seattle voters supported park levies in both 2000 and 2008 and a number of new parks have been acquired and developed from those funds. As the amount of parks has increased, the number of Parks Division staff have been reduced by 20% over the past three years due to budget reductions. City Budget Director Beth Goldberg predicts another \$40 million cut across the City for 2013. With Seattle Parks Department accounting for 9% of the City's budget, a hypothetical cut for the Park Division is \$2 million in 2013. Ms. Tivoli asked how would this impact levels of service? What would the tradeoffs be per maintenance category? What would the tradeoffs be between assets?

She next spoke to the Department's mission and its guiding principles of access (clean and safe parks and facilities); opportunity (affordable programs and facilities;) and sustainability (environmental, asset, and financial stewardship.)

Parks are of economic and environmental value, with the economic value including tax receipts from property value, increased value at time of property sales, and tax receipts and profit from increased tourism.

Environmental savings include stormwater management and air pollution mitigation. Parks are also a health and community value, with use of parks proven to decrease medical costs and improve cardiovascular and mental health. Parks also provide public services and community cohesion.

Ms. Tivoli next reviewed four value-based scenarios and gave detailed information on the levels of service under each:

- Focus on economic return: access, opportunity, tourism tax revenue
- Focus on neighborhood support: access, property tax revenue, increased personal wealth, community cohesion
- Focus on environmental sustainability: environmental cost savings
- Focus on recreational opportunities: opportunity, health care savings, direct use value

In conclusion, she noted that, aside from the environmental, health, and other benefits of parks, Seattle's parks generated \$3,336,383 in revenues in 2011. This included charges for weddings, special events in parks, picnics, ballfield fees, and outdoor tennis court fees.

The Department asks that the conversation be moved from 'competing priorities' to 'leading with principles' to prioritize services as the budget is reduced. She provided the following matrix for consideration:

- Asset quantity x Time Standard x Frequency = operations and maintenance
- Consider how to make changes with equitable impacts
- Mix and match – there is no one solution
- Develop the messaging to the community

| Options Presented | ACCESS-clean and safe | OPPORTUNITY-affordable | SUSTAINABILITY-environmental, asset, and financial stewardship |
|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--|
| ECONOMY/TOURIST | | | |
| NEIGHBORHOODS | | | |
| ENVIRONMENT | | | |
| RECREATION | | | |

Board Discussion

Commissioner Keith stated this was an excellent presentation and the audience and commissioners gave a hearty round of applause. She next asked about the 75% of homes that aren't within 500' of a neighborhood park and Mr. Morgan loaded an additional slide with that information. She next asked if the Department would consider trash cans similar to bear proof cans to reduce garbage scattered by seagulls at busy waterfront parks like Alki Beach. Ms. Tivoli responded the trash cans used at Alki Beach are 14' deep, with much of that underground. Only a portion of the cans sit aboveground.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Angulo on the 2010 census figures, Ms. Tivoli pointed out their location in the presentation. The figures were used in the data presented tonight. The conversation next focused on population density in Seattle. Figures from Trust for Public Lands show there are more people for each acre of park land in Seattle than there are in New York City. Commissioner Kincaid asked that the density levels and the presentation be forwarded to the Board. Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli agreed; the information will also be available on the Department's web page.

Commissioner Barber recalled an excellent presentation given by John Crompton, a professor who specializes in the marketing and financing of parks, making the case that maintenance levels are the last thing to cut when budgets must be trimmed. Parks maintenance is a matter of pride to most local voters, and when parks financing issues come to the ballot, good maintenance pays off more than any other parks or recreation element in the support by the voters for additional revenues. If the city wants to pass another parks levy, the parks need to look good and be maintained. He next asked about the graph showing planned hours vs. actual

hours and wondered if that is based on industry standards. Ms. Tivoli agreed it is. Acting Superintendent Williams added the Department must also take community expectations into consideration, along with industry standards for large U.S. cities. Commissioner Barber noted that, at a 60% level, a certain amount of maintenance is not being done. In addition, he recognized vegetation at some park systems may grow much faster and need maintenance more frequently than at other U.S. cities.

Discussion turned to maintenance performed at natural areas (which is high, because of the number of volunteers working at these sites.) Ms. Tivoli asked if shrub beds and hedges, which require high levels of maintenance, are maintained at a bare minimum, does that contributes to a clean and safe environment? They are often put on the "chopping block" when staff levels are reduced. Commissioner Kincaid added that sightlines into the parks are very important and help the public feel safe when walking in a park.

Ms. Tivoli asked, with all these considerations, how can the Department maintain the parks and ensure staff feel they are successfully maintaining them? Commissioner Heahlke asked if the Department has met with Parks staff to get their feedback. Ms. Tivoli responded yes; Parks Division management met with staff and asked what maintenance they already aren't doing. Staff also listed some work they don't like to do, such as cleaning off-leash areas and then not having time to maintain the parks' shrub beds. Commissioner Heahlke observed that some facilities, such as restrooms, are old and no matter how much maintenance work the staff complete, the facilities look bad. Ms. Tivoli agreed; Parks Division staff spend 25% of their work time on removing garbage and cleaning comfort stations, yet those received the most complaints.

Commissioner Wright also voiced this was an excellent presentation. She has observed that government agencies sometimes transition responsibility for bodies of work to other departments and suggested encampment removal be considered. Removal of encampments isn't a Parks Department mission; it is a public safety issue. Is Seattle Police Department better suited for this responsibility? She also noted the guiding principles for the Department's budget are somewhat different from the Parks Division and suggested they be uniform. She recommended that, as cuts are made, Parks focus on what feels peaceful and safe to the public, keep the parks relevant, keep historic parks in mind, and capitalize on greenways. Commissioner Angulo recommended Parks staff identify multiple strengths across the four categories.

Commissioner Maryman stated this was an eye opening and thought-provoking presentation. He recommended staff identify another level of deferred maintenance — when maintenance has been deferred for so long the asset is beyond repair and must be replaced. Parks are an asset to reach broader community goals such as public safety, health, and environmental needs, and the Department should concentrate on its function within the context of the broader community. To do so, staff should look at the Comprehensive Plan for goals/functions to tie in with these conversations. The Department should set aside assets that only meet a single goal, and focus on assets that reach several goals. He noted the presentation didn't speak to the number of people served by a park. Ms. Tivoli responded the number of park users is difficult to determine as parks have many entrances and there aren't methods to determine how many people visit a park. Commissioner Maryman agreed the information is difficult to collect. He lives in one area, works downtown, and uses the downtown parks more frequently than his neighborhood park.

Commissioner Barber spoke to the work accomplished by volunteers. The "baby boomer" generation are retiring in large numbers and he believes more of them would be willing to help maintain parks if they are made aware of the need. The Department must provide effective volunteer coordinators who can help volunteers develop a sense of ownership for the park they help maintain. Commissioner Angulo suggested a program where volunteers could earn public service credits for their work in parks.

Commissioner Kincaid thanked the Parks Division staff for the excellent work and Acting Superintendent Williams added the Department has great staff!

Old/New Business

Due to time constraints, Commissioner Kincaid deferred any Old/New business to the next Park Board meeting. Commissioner Wright moved the meeting be adjourned; Commissioner Barber seconded. The vote was unanimous in favor.

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

APPROVED: _____

Diana Kincaid, Acting Chair
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE_____