

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
January 28, 2016

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:

Marty Bluewater  
Dennis Cook  
Bob Edmiston  
Diana Kincaid  
William Lowe  
Michael Padilla  
Tom Tierney, Chair  
Barbara Wright, Vice Chair

Excused:

Tom Byers

***Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff***

Christopher Williams, Deputy Superintendent  
Paula Hoff, Strategic Advisor  
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

This meeting was held at Queen Anne Community Center. Commissioner Tierney calls the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

Deputy Superintendent Williams introduces the newest Park Board Commissioner, Dennis Cook. Commissioner Cook retired from Seattle Parks and Recreation a few years ago after working for 37 years. He is deeply engaged and has many ties to the community. Dennis is very excited to be a Park Board Commissioner. He has presented to the Park Board many times and he is looking forward to being on the other side of the table.

Commissioner Tierney asks for approval of the Consent Items: the January 28 Agenda, the June 25 and October 22 meeting minutes. Commissioner Edmiston moves and Commissioner Bluewater seconds and the Consent Items are approved.

**Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience**

Ellen Escarcega, Chair of Citizens for Off-Leash Areas, a 20-year-old 501c3 non-profit. COLA has an agreement with Seattle Parks and Recreation to maintain parks and advocate for more off-leash areas. COLA has played an advisory role to SPR during the Off-Leash Area Master Plan process. COLA buys supplies and provides labor. COLA is advocating for more designated land for dogs because there are more dogs here than any other city. More demand, not enough space.

Barbara Downward – GSP steward from Lawton Park and Seattle Audubon member

- more regulation, not less
- enforcement with animal control
- improved signage to communicate responsibility of pet owners
- Upgrading service to off leash areas. fee system for off-leash areas

Susan Casey

- great need for more off-leash areas.
- size of off leash areas matters – too small is a waste of space.
- Surface of OLAs is important.

Carol Burton – thanks SPR and Leah for all the outreach. Seattle is getting dense and we need places for people’s dogs. Parks need to be more multi-use.

David Sinclair – Wildlife is important factor to consider. Our parks have potential for varied wildlife population. Most dogs at Discovery are off-leash. Please keep Discovery free of off-leash dogs.

David Perusso – Friends of Martha Washington Park, Forest Steward. The process is not being run the way the Statement of Legislative Intent said it should be. The focus groups included stakeholders but not parents, neighborhood groups, etc. all the stakeholders should be included.

Esther McElroy – Friends of Martha Washington Park, Dogs off-leash destroy that park – lawn, native plant beds being dug up. There is no leash enforcement. Older, disabled friends no longer use the park because of the off-leash dogs.

Connie Sidles – Seattle Audubon – Conservation Committee – Supports parks for everyone, but is concerned with ensuring SPR takes wildlife and wild areas into consideration and cautions against using natural areas in other ways. She offer to help with the plan. She is concerned with underfunding of dog parks and animal control enforcement.

Denise Dahn – Seattle Nature Alliance – Dogs off-leash impact wildlife. Thus far, the plan was developed with only a specific interest group. Concerned with discussion floating around comparing with other cities. She supports OLAs where appropriate. Seattle does not have nearly as much open space/parkland as other major cities.

Mark Ahlness – Seattle Nature Alliance, Friends of Lincoln Park. The process has been flawed – not enough outreach to other interested parties. Environmental groups have not been included. There is so much pressure on the remnants of natural areas in Seattle.

David Hansen – Having so many dogs in so little space is unnatural. Responsible pet ownership means people have an obligation to protect themselves and others. Dogs can cause health issues.

Laura Osterbroek – Magnolia Manor Dog Park. It is within 35 feet of residences and no noise abatement has happened yet. There is a huge apartment building overlooking the OLA and it’s very hard on them.

Michael Hanson – Reiterate importance of keeping parks accessible for everyone. More enforcement and education.

Emily Friedman – Dog owner who lives in Wallingford. There is a huge conflict by park users; large off-leash population. Most people pick up after other dogs. 2 issues to using existing dog parks – not convenient locations and her dog doesn't enjoy dog parks. In New York, the parks are open to dogs before 9am and after 9pm.

Carla Kotila – Magnolia Manor Park – do not put dog parks close to residences. Fort Lawton could work as a temporary OLA. She suggests a process of using land that is empty.

### **Preliminary Discussion: Off-Leash Area Plan**

*Presented by Susan Golub, Seattle Parks and Recreation*

## Written Briefing



### **MEMORANDUM**

Date: January 21, 2016  
To: Board of Park Commissioners  
From: Susan Golub, Manager, Policy and Performance Unit  
Subject: Off-Leash Area Plan

#### **Requested Board Action**

This update will describe progress to date in the development of the Off-Leash Area Plan. No action from the Board is requested; the January 28 meeting will be an opportunity for the Board and Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) staff to engage in a conversation about off-leash area issues.

#### **Project Background**

The 2014 Adopted Budget included a City Council Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI, 69-1-B-1) regarding off leash areas (OLAs). Specifically, the SLI requested Seattle Parks and Recreation work in conjunction with the Citizens for Off Leash Areas (COLA) and other stakeholders to create a dog off leash area (OLA) master plan. The purpose of the OLA master plan is to identify a long term plan for the City's existing 14 OLAs, as well as for maintenance, acquisition, and expansion of OLA projects. In May of 2014, Parks submitted a request to wait until the Park District was approved so that funding included in the District (about \$100,000 annually) could be used to fund the master plan efforts.

#### **Public Involvement Process**

In July 2015, Seattle Parks and Recreation invited Seattle dog owners to complete an online survey to understand their behaviors and needs. A link to the survey was made available through the Off-Leash Area (OLA) Strategic Plan page of the SPR website and publicized by local organizations, such as COLA, and various local media outlets. Approximately 3,900 responses were received.

In addition, Parks and Recreation held seven focus groups to hear from people interested in off-leash areas. Through a selection process to ensure representation of a variety of viewpoints, the focus groups included people who self-identified as off-leash area users, individuals opposed to dogs off-leash in parks, and representatives of environmental interests. A facilitator led the focus group discussions aimed at:

- Learning how members of the public perceive off-leash issues;
- Exploring potential alternative designs used in other cities (e.g., hours, off-leash without a fence, using the corner of a regional park, whether we need more fenced areas);
- Identifying potential solutions/options with broad community support;
- Informing development of a set of guiding principles to assist Seattle Parks and Recreation decisions; and
- Understanding priorities for Park District funding.

Input received from the survey, focus groups, on-line comments, and emails will help inform recommendations in the draft Off-Leash Area Plan. Additional public review will occur when the draft plan is completed, currently estimated for late February.

### **Issues for Discussion**

The purpose of the January 28 Park Board discussion is to hear the Board's thoughts on the issues staff are considering for the Off-Leash Area Plan. There are no recommendations before the Committee; the following list includes the issues staff are considering.

1. Should we allow/encourage sponsorships and advertising? It is likely additional funds for off-leash area maintenance and amenities could be raised through sponsorships and advertising at the off-leash areas. Advertising could be in the form of inward-facing signs on off-leash fences. While this type of advertising is consistent with Parks and Recreation's sponsorship policy, it would be a departure from current practice.
2. Should we have unfenced, hours-only off-leash areas? Some cities have unfenced park areas which are used as off-leash areas during specified hours of the day. In these cities, hours-only off-leash areas are very popular with dog owners. Staff heard the following concerns from parks and recreation staff in other cities: 1) Because these areas are unfenced, dogs go beyond the designated off-leash areas; 2) Dog owners do not abide by the specified off-leash hours and the "hours-only" areas become all-day, unfenced off-leash areas.
3. How should new OLAs be added to the system? One approach to create new OLAs would be similar to the approach used for other park uses, such as children's play area, p-patches and athletic facilities. This would allow for new OLAs to be added to the system through public involvement processes around new park development and/or existing park redevelopment. Another approach would be for Parks and Recreation to identify gaps in the City and pursue locating off-leash areas in these neighborhoods.
4. Should there be a restriction on the number of dogs an individual can bring to an off-leash area? Parks staff have seen professional dog walkers bring as many as ten dogs to an off-leash area. Currently people in Seattle are

limited to three dogs per household. Should this limit carry over to how many dogs a person can bring to an OLA?

Marymoor Park in King County has a large off-leash area with a three dog per person limit, plus a permit which allows professional dog walkers to bring more dogs. Should Seattle investigate/institute a professional dog walkers' permit?

### **Budget**

The Off-Leash Area Plan will review maintenance needs at the existing 14 OLAs. Funding for the maintenance improvements will be from the \$106,000 provided in the Park District's Improve Dog Off-Leash Areas initiative.

### **Schedule**

Leah Tivoli, the former lead for the Off-Leash Area Plan, recently began a new job in the City Budget Office. The extensive research and public process Leah conducted, and her work on the draft Plan, provide a strong base for moving forward, although at a slower pace than originally hoped. We now anticipate the draft Plan available for public review in March.

### **Additional Information**

[susan.golub@seattle.gov](mailto:susan.golub@seattle.gov)

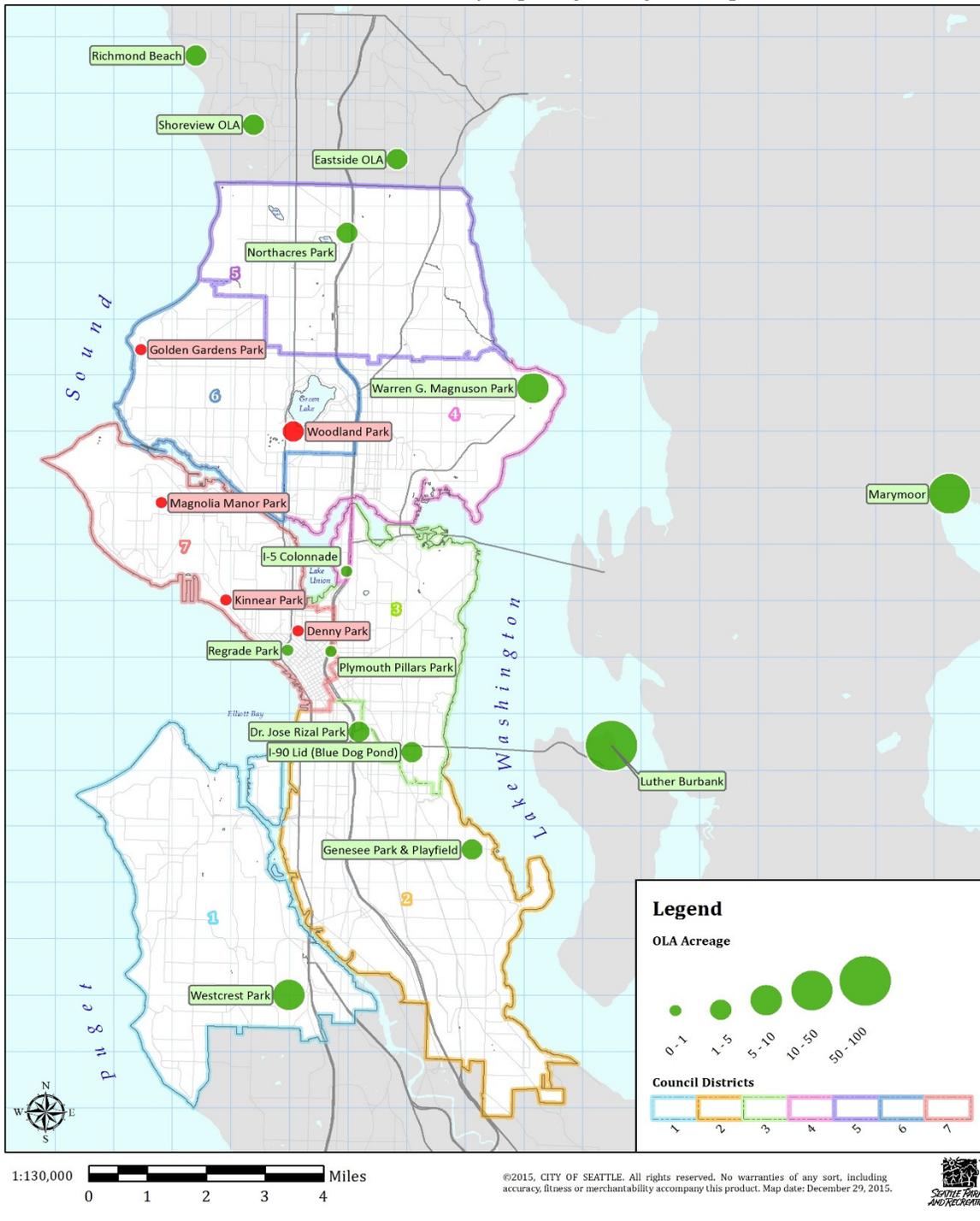
<http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/offleash/>

### **Attachments**

Attachment 1: Off-Leash Area Map

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Off Leash Area Peak/Capacity Analysis Map



Discussion

The Park District funded 100,000 each year toward off-leash areas (OLAs). This money will be used to operate and maintain what we already have. There is no funding to build new things. Huge

inability to live up to the standards of other cities. Funding more animal control support. The department will be opportunistic when sites open up for new OLAs.

Leah Tivoli, the staff lead on this project, left for the City Budget Office – the new project lead, Holly Miller, formerly SPR superintendent. She is fabulous and able to jump in. There is a high population of dogs. The #1 Complaint department wide is enforcement of off-leash dogs. Starting soon, there will be 1 animal control officer and 1 SPR staff person patrolling parks for off-leash animals.

## Outreach

SPR held an online survey regarding how dog owners and their dogs recreate. Held focus group discussions with people who had a mix of opinions to get people talking with different points of view.

## Issues

1. Sponsorships/advertising: new approach to fundraising for OLAs.

- People like parks because they are not bombarded by information or advertising; slippery slope?
- Other ways advertisers could benefit without being in signage in parks.
- Signage Should be avoided; perhaps other ideas.
- Athletic fields did a pilot; perhaps see how that turned out.
- License fee in lieu of advertising? Pay a fee for exclusive use.
- No fee for users at a dog park.
- Do not want to discourage COLA members from volunteering their time.
- Giving up something you value in exchange for money; can be misleading and not turn profit.

2. Unfenced OLAs – parks are off leash for certain areas and/or times; heard from some cities that there are issues.

- Dogs don't know the boundaries of the off-leash areas;
- Access to OLAs can be difficult so having activation late at night could be good;
- Provide opportunities to those who don't have access to OLAs - equity.
- Not near wildlife, environmentally critical areas; enforce it to protect the wildlife.
- Pet owners need to take responsibility; never met a dog owner who said their dog wasn't friendly; never seen a dog respect boundaries; how to find a sense of co-existence. Not enough OLAs. Come up with commonality in order to coexist.

3. How do we proceed to add OLAs to the system: part of normal park development process?

Look at how are parks used now in terms of dogs. Does it make sense?

- Pilot of change in hours policy.
- Should be part of Planning and Development and balanced with other needs.
- Looking at temporary locations in unused sites around the city. Bring non-public land, other city departments into use. Could have paid advertising at those sites because it wouldn't be a park. Pressure doesn't need to be just on park land.

- Make sure to look at gaps in the city that are least served.

4. Dog walkers bringing 7-10 dogs in at a time; permit for dog walkers – who bring in more than 3 dogs.

Restrict how many dogs come into a park with one owner/dog walker.

### Next Steps

Susan is handing off the planning to Holly. She will prepare a draft plan. There will be more opportunities for public outreach and public comment. SPR anticipates there will probably be a big reaction to the increased enforcement.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Presented by Christopher Williams, Deputy Superintendent Seattle Parks and Recreation

Bell time changes – studies show youth benefit from later start times; starting fall 2016 the high school students will start later. This has many impacts for the department use for athletic fields, swim leagues pushed to a later time. Impacts to the ordinary user of starting later. Proposed delaying the Joint Use Agreement, between SPR and Seattle School District until SPR staff better understand impacts to every day users.

All-staff Conference – SPR held their all-staff conference on Tuesday, Nov. 17 at Magnuson Park. It was an awesome sight to see more than 900 Seattle Parks and Recreation employees in one large space (Hangar 30). Jesús had a chance to share his initial vision for the department and the day was spent informing and involving staff in workshops and breakout sessions focusing on three key themes: 1) **Performance:** using data to be our best and tell our story; 2) **Access:** distributing programs, services and resources equitably; and 3) **Responsiveness:** actively shaping the community experience of parks and recreation in response to ever-changing needs.

Moorages RFP – Concluded the process. Looking for a long-term commitment to moorages. SPR had 2 respondents and will be making the decision very soon.

Golf – The 2<sup>nd</sup> tier of Jefferson park driving range is done and SPR is using the revenue to pay debt service on the investment.

The Jungle – During the Mayor's speech about the plight of homelessness in the city, there was a shooting at a homeless encampment, known as the Jungle. Part of the Jungle goes into the East Duwamish Greenbelt, which is Seattle Parks and Recreation property. The area under the freeway is controlled by WSDOT – this is where the shooting occurred. SPR is committed to contribute input to be a part of solution.

Smoking ban – Enforcement Monitoring Committee met to review enforcement data from Seattle Police Department and the Park Rangers. SPR staff handle each encounter with respect and dignity. Rangers said Social responsibility and pressure seems to be working. SPR to check on the amount of litter/butts from cigarettes.

Staff changes – Leah Tivoli moved to the City Budget Office; she will be doing performance management for the city. SPR has hired a new Communications Strategic Advisor, Christina Hirsch. She comes to the City from various non-profit organizations.

Japanese Garden Transition – The management of the Japanese Garden in the Washington Park Arboretum has transferred from Associated Recreation Council to the Arboretum Foundation. This is a natural partnership with an organization that has a vast amount of experience fundraising for specialty gardens. Paula did a great job working with all the partners to make this happen.

Request for Proposal for Building 2 at Magnuson Park – SPR is looking for someone willing to make \$25million worth of improvements while being sensitive to historic preservation. Hoping to find a team of investors to collaborate on this. Interests have been expressed to have indoor swimming to indoor archery to a sound stage for theater and filming.

Is there enough value to invest in it? is it worth saving? Deputy Superintendent says there is no choice. The department wonders how long term the lease should be because of the initial investment required.

Lake Union Pedestrian Bridge – Sawdust and wood debris make up some of the ground beneath the bridge. Built the bridge on heavy soils to build. Soils move and compress and create expansion. The bridge has moved 6” laterally. In order to fix the bridge, much of the soils will have to be excavated, replaced with geotechnical foam and would require almost starting over. Right now, SPR has a budget of \$1.2million. Hope to have a firm estimate by the end of this month. SPR knew soils were going to settle but not at the rapid rate it occurred and the battering from the abutments took a toll. The engineers had anticipated a much slower settlement rate. Partnership potential? Vulcan? SPF? Deputy Superintendent Williams says correcting this is on us.

Greater Greener Conference in 2021 – The Seattle Partnership Alliance took the lead on applying for Seattle to host the Greater Greener Conference in 2021. There should be news tomorrow. This would be an excellent opportunity to show off our great park system and all our accomplishments. City park Alliance selected Seattle to host their fall conference this year.

### **Communications Strategies Workshop**

Presented by the Communications Committee, Board of Park Commissioners

Members: Diana Kincaid (chair), Bob Edmiston, Lydia Albert Landrey, Michael Padilla

Commissioner Edmiston set up roleplay for Park Board Commissioners

Commissioner Padilla set up music system

Commissioner Kincaid Introduced Concepts for Improving Public Communication and distributed Handbook:

- Creative catalysts – changing the mood and aspects of a room to create a positive mood.
- Incubation – give yourself time to consider an issue – helps to foster creative thought.
- Change environment, sound and space
- Dynamics – anticipate what people need to feel comfortable.

Commissioner Edmiston hands out cards to members of the Park Board to play a role playing game. They used the traditional Park Board layout and format of public hearings. Each character felt differently on a particular issue. Afterwards, Commissioner Edmiston asked if the characters felt heard, if they felt the department was listening and whether or not they felt their expressed opinions made a difference.

Commissioner Edmiston, then, handed the same cards to different Commissioners and SPR staff. He set a table with tea and cookies, had tablecloths, flowers and soft music. They characters sat in a circle and discussed their feelings on a particular issue. These characters were asked the same questions. These characters seemed more satisfied with their interactions with the department, felt they had been heard.

This reinforces the ideas Commissioner Kincaid shared regarding creative catalysts and changing the environment to make it more relaxed and conducive to sharing ideas.

Deputy Superintendent Williams commends them for all the thought put into this. He feels this should be done again so the public can see it.

The Park Board really enjoyed being out in the community and would like to do it more often. They also really liked getting the pre-briefing on the Off-Leash Area Plan.

Deputy Superintendent Williams suggests the Park Board introduce themselves at the beginning of the meeting and have a preamble in order to set up expectations right up front.

**The meeting adjourns at 9:00 pm.**

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

Tom Tierney, Chair  
Board of Park Commissioners