

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
June 9, 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:

Tom Byers, Chair
Marty Bluewater
Dennis Cook
Evan Hundley
William Lowe
Kelly McCaffrey
Michael Padilla

Excused:

Barbara Wright, Vice Chair

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

The meeting is held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Byers calls the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

Commissioner Byers informs the Board and audience Superintendent Aguirre is stuck in traffic. He moves the Superintendent's report to later in the Agenda. Commissioner Byers asks for Approval of the Consent Items. Commissioner Hundley moves and Commissioner Lowe seconds; Commissioner McCaffrey notices the minutes reflect Commissioner Cook attended the May 26 meeting, but did not. The June 9 Agenda and May 26 meeting minutes, as revised, are approved.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

Joyce Moty – on the Board of GROW. She was talking to P-Patch staff at Department of Neighborhoods who oversees Cascade P-Patch and they mentioned they will be installing a Sharps container. She requests SPR make some restrooms 24/7, people are shooting up, leaving the needles in the gardens, and using the gardens as a bathroom. Please figure out a way to keep bathrooms open. Ignoring these problems and not addressing them, makes them worse.

Briefing and Discussion: Park Maintenance and Cleaning Program

Presented by Robert Stowers, Interim Parks Division Director, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Introduces Doug Critchfield, NRU manager; Jon Jainga, responsible for GSP and tree crews; Lisa Chen, Horticulture Manager and Specialty Gardens, Beverly Ross – Facility Maintenance.

Briefing Paper

Park Resources

- 9 geographic districts consisting of 506 park properties

Natural Resource Unit (NRU)

- horticulture unit: specialty gardens, greenhouses, and landscape crews
- urban forestry
- trails
- Green Seattle Partnership
- environmental
- heavy equipment, and turf program

Maintenance Applications (PLANT)

The Olmsted Legacy

- 1903: The Board of Commissioners recommended that the Seattle City Council contract with the Olmsted Brothers to design Seattle's park system.
- This was the beginning of a vision and investment into a park system that is now one of the best in the country.
- The Olmsted vision was one that embraced the natural beauty, waters, landscape, and topography of the city.
- Connections to parks, trails and waterways were part of the original design.
- Seward Park, Lake Washington Boulevard, and Green Lake Park, are just a few of the parks that helped Seattle become a city with hundreds of vistas, trails, and connections to neighborhood and regional parks.
- 113 years later, Seattle Parks and Recreation is proud to continue this legacy by preserving and maintaining all its parks and facilities.

Division Budget and Regular FTEs

Park Resources

- 2016 budget: \$28,979,638
- 2016 FTEs: 258.47
- Peak season workforce nearly doubles
- NATURAL RESOURCE UNIT (NRU)

- 2016 Budget: \$9,123,072
- 2016 FTEs: 75.93
- 2016 CIP GSP Funding: \$2,196,575
- Peak season workforce increases about 25%

Park Resources - Providing Maintenance Services for:

- 6,200 acres of park land
- Seattle's largest landholder – 11% of land in Seattle
- 24 miles of shoreline
- 3,600 acres of natural area (55%)
- 2,100 acres of actively maintained parks (45%)
- 465 parks and extensive natural areas
- 185 athletic fields and 33 unscheduled playfields
- 38 playgrounds
- 18 boulevards – over 25 miles
- 120 miles of trails
- 90 free-standing comfort stations
- 27 wading pools
- 36 picnic shelters
- 7 maintenance facilities for 9 park districts

Parks Division performs the following:

- Park & Comfort Station (Restroom) Cleaning
- Turf Maintenance
- Ballfield Maintenance
- Landscape Maintenance
- General Infrastructure Maintenance
- Recreation Facilities Grounds Maintenance
- Integrated Pest Management
- Tree Maintenance
- Natural Area Maintenance
- Garbage Collection
- Off-Leash Dog Area Support
- Encampment Postings And Cleanup
- Special Event And Volunteer Support
- Green Seattle Partnership

Robert reviews the Mission and Values for Seattle Parks and Recreation.

Park Cleaning, Maintenance and Landscaping

- Provide cleaner, safer, welcoming parks by providing restroom facilities that meet the highest standard possible.
- Provide cleaner, safer, welcoming parks that are an asset to the neighborhood by picking up litter and removing waste in a timely way.
- Provide cleaner, safer, welcoming parks that are an asset to the community and have long-term viability by regular maintenance of both the built assets and the landscape features.
- Maintain landscapes that will enliven communities, inspire neighbors, and attract visitors through colorful displays and native gardens.

Parks in our system have something for everyone: nature trails, playgrounds, athletic fields, boat launches, swimming beaches, gardens, pools, off-leash areas, and skate parks – just to name a few!

Parks Maintenance Crews perform an annual work program that includes garbage collection, recycling, play area maintenance, and turf management. Seasonal work includes planting beds, pesticide application, and comfort station cleaning. They also help set up and support special events such as Seafair and the 4th of July.

Park District Maintenance – Enhanced Customer Service

Through Park District Funding, Parks Division Maintenance staff are able to do the following:

- Provide additional afternoon, evening and weekend comfort station cleaning during peak season
- Additional Park District funding provides capacity for enhanced fall and winter project work above the routine maintenance performed.
 - Landscape renovation projects
 - Trail renovations
 - Hardscape cleaning
 - Deferred ballfield maintenance
 - District projects
 - Citywide jamborees

Parks division is also responsible for cleaning up encampments on Seattle Parks and Recreation property.

Volunteer Support and Community Engagement

SPR has thousands of volunteers who work in our parks to remove invasive plants and create better urban forests. The Crew Chiefs for each geographic zone work with “Friends of” groups to ensure the parks are consistent with community values.

Doug Critchfield comes up to talk about the Natural Resources Unit (NRU) of the Parks Division. NRU is located next to Jefferson Park on Beacon Hill.

The Landscape Crews support parks citywide:

- North and South Resource District projects
- Landscape improvement and long-term maintenance
- Shrub bed renovation and restoration
- Specialty garden support
- Special landscape feature construction
- Shrub bed renovation
- Capital improvement projects
- Specialty garden maintenance support and garden improvement projects
- Annual and perennial flowers display beds
- Volunteer Park and Freeway Park restoration
- Entrance beds

The Park District funding allows the NRU to have a 2nd landscape crew who support maintenance and annual plantings.

The Jefferson Greenhouse propagates and produces plants for the entire department:

- Annuals and perennials, bulbs, ornamental and native plants for park districts
- Specialty garden plant propagation
- Green Seattle Partnership native plant propagation
- Food and vegetable plant propagation for community gardens, P-Patches and food programs
- Annual Washington Garden Show - support for the Arboretum Foundation display
- Unique trees and plants that are utilized in special projects
- The Anne Frank tree was cared for here until it was planted at Seattle Center.

The Heavy Equipment crew supports volunteer work and provides construction services for the department.

The Tree Crew – Park District is funding a 3rd tree crew

- Coordination of the 2:1 tree replacement program
- Performs preventative maintenance
- Inventories and tracks trees and tree maintenance activities
- Injects our elm trees to treat for Dutch Elm Disease
- Responds to and remediates tree hazards
- Performs emergency responder duties during wind storms.
- Produces hazard tree evaluations
- Root prunes trees as needed for infrastructure repair
- Provides support for CIP planning

NRU Park District Initiatives:

Provide Clean and Welcoming Parks - \$815,704 (NRU portion)

- Landscape Crew Projects – Maintain landscapes that enliven communities, inspire neighbors, and attract visitors through colorful displays and native gardens.
- Third Tree Crew – Add third tree crew to protect the long-term health of our park trees decreasing the tree maintenance cycle from once every 18 years to once every 14 years

Saving our Forest - \$499,175

- Natural Area Crew- Restore the Natural Area Crew positions lost in 2010-11. The second Natural Area Crew will help GSP achieve the goal of restoring 2,500 forested acres of parkland by 2025.

Green Seattle Partnership Capital Investment - \$2.69 million

PLANT: Plant Labor ANd Activity Timekeeping

- Define maintenance categories
- Determine target level of service
- Develop resource management plans

Each park is categorized based on size, usage, location, popularity. This category helps determine the types and amount of services provided by the maintenance department. Each park is comprised of assets (ie. benches, picnic tables, play area), and each asset has a maintenance approach.

Park Maintenance Activities

Activities, and the frequency with which they are done (benchmarks), are used to maintain assets at an agreed-upon level

Best Management Practices are essentially detailed descriptions of maintenance activities

- Contents of a BMP:
 - Description of activity
 - Equipment and supplies required to perform the activity
 - Desired work standard
 - Procedure for performing the activity
 - Schedule for the activity
 - Time standard for average employee to perform that activity
 - Employee job title

Power of PLANT system:

- Define target levels of service using asset inventory, time standards and frequency of visits.
- Track actual time to do both routine and non-routine maintenance.
- Compare actual service to target levels of service.
- Project the time related to maintain new developments using estimates.
- Build a common understanding of what grounds maintenance entails.

Discussion

SPR maintenance staff are the unsung heroes. SPR laid off 45 maintenance workers during the budget cuts. They have hired 10-12 new employees but they are not close to where they were 10 years ago. There are 14 landbanked sites ready to be developed, but staff are stretched too thin. The maintenance staff do the best they can, but the lack of staff cuts into their ability to be responsive.

The morning crews are more devoted to cleaning up encampments and there has been more demand for comfort station cleaning in the last few years.

Synthetic fields increase workload because SPR has only 1 vehicle for all 24 synthetic turf athletic fields.

The Asset Management Work Order system will increase efficiencies by allowing for easier communication between staff about maintenance needs. It will also provide better and more accurate information. The AMWO can provide real time visual records.

Timeline for AMWO system:

- Deployment in shops by September
- Deployment in NRU by November
- Full deployment by Q1 2017

The Commissioners inquire about whether maintenance crews have been seeing a lot more needles and ask how SPR is dealing with it? Robert says there are Sharps containers in each of the Geo District locations. SPR provides gear and gloves for the maintenance workers. There is

a citywide Interdepartmental Team working towards finding solutions and protocols for the hypodermic needles.

Commissioner Byers asks about the costs of cleaning up encampments. Robert responds that the exact numbers are difficult because the crews were not coding their PLANT forms correctly. He is looking into it more carefully because the Mayor wants an accurate cost also. The clean up at Bayview cost approximately \$85,000 for 2 weeks. Restoration and CPTED (Criminal Prevention Through Environmental Design) work at the East Duwamish Greenbelt (aka The Jungle), will take approximately 8 weeks and \$400,000. Robert uses crews from the Department of Corrections to assist with the encampment cleanups. SPR pays for the encampment cleanups and receives no extra budget from the City.

The Conservation Corps have a contract with WSDOT to maintain the I-90 lid.

The AMWO system will be able to analyze data regarding garbage collection and disposal. The Park Board would like to see the financials on how much it costs to collect and dispose of garbage at parks throughout the system.

Briefing and Discussion: Parks Inspection Program

Presented by Patrick Merriam, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Briefing Paper

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 09, 2016

To: Board of Park Commissioners

From: Robert Stowers, Interim Director, Parks Division, Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR)

Subject: Reimplementation of SPR's Inspection Program (SPIP) Proposal

Requested Board Action:

The purpose of this briefing is to inform the Board of Park Commissioners about the history of the Seattle Parks and Recreation Inspection Program (SPIP) and request your thoughts on our recommendations to update the program to strengthen and improve the SPIP work that was done in 2001.

Brief History and Description of Program:

The Park Inspection Program was developed and implemented in 2001 to help SPR meet the City's goals for clean, safe, and well maintained parks. It was also intended to be an internal quality control system, ensuring that SPR resources were allocated appropriately and that parks were maintained at acceptable standards. The program required SPR staff to conduct field work and evaluate the condition of our parks. The results from these field inspections were collected, compiled, and prioritized into maintenance and job work orders that staff were assigned complete.

Issues for Discussion: Past Program Issues/Concerns:

The initial program, while important in the overall evaluation of park conditions, was a labor intensive process that involved a lot of paperwork, resulting in a slow turnaround time to identify and correct problems. Challenges from the 2001 process included:

- Inspections were based solely on the points and the rating system presented in this report. Observations and ratings made were often inconsistent with the actual condition of the park assets.
- There was inconsistency in the level of training and knowledge of the volunteers conducting the inspections.
- Strategies needed to be developed to recruit, train, manage, and retain a volunteer citizen base.
- The random selection of sites for inspection resulted in multiple sites being inspected several times a year and, and other sites not being inspected for years.
- The system was primarily SPR driven and lacked adequate citizen participation.

Due to these issues and other department priorities, this program was discontinued in 2010.

Current Program Proposal and Recommendations:

SPR staff has developed a new SPIP which will address past program challenges. The new inspection program will have two components:

1. Bi-weekly inspections of sites selected by Parks Crew Chiefs and volunteers from local communities;
2. Quarterly tours, led by the Park Resource Manager, with members of the Board of Park Commissioners, Council and/or Mayoral staff, and other interested stakeholders.

The additional citizen participation, involvement of SPR management, elected officials, and community based organizations, will ensure a broader level of assessment tools for evaluating the conditions of Seattle Parks.

Public Involvement Process:

Once we receive approval from the Superintendent to move forward with SPR's SPIP proposal, staff will begin outreach to community partners, volunteers, advisory groups, elected officials, and underrepresented communities about this program to ensure a balanced and representative team of evaluators.

Schedule: Program implementation will begin in the fall of 2016, after the summer peak season

Additional Information:

Robert Stowers: Robert.stowers@seattle.gov 684-8012

Presentation

Inspection Program Background/Update

- Current Park Inspection Program was developed and first implemented in 2001.
- The program required SPR staff to conduct field work and evaluate the condition of our parks.
- The results from these field inspections were collected, compiled, and prioritized into maintenance and job work orders that staff were assigned to complete.
- We are updating and modernizing the program to make it more efficient and accurate.

SPR Inspection Team - Robert Stowers – Sponsor/Interim Director, Patrick Merriam – Project Lead, Semere Melake – Asset Management Work Order (AMWO) Team – IT Development, Rebekah Anderson – Data Management

Elements of New Inspection Program

- Bi-weekly inspections of sites selected by crew chiefs and volunteers from local communities;
- Quarterly tours, led by the Park Resources Manager, with members of the Park Board, City Council and/or Mayoral staff, and other interested stakeholders
- Using a phone application, more technologically savvy and easier to use!

Goals:

- 20 parks inspected monthly (2 in each of the 10 maintenance districts)
- Crew chiefs or designees will lead inspections.
- Site selection will be determined using a random-sample methodology. Once a park is selected, it is removed from the sampling for one year. This addresses sampling concerns identified in the current program.
- To ensure fairness in the random selection process, each district will establish a selection method identifying one park per week to be inspected. The inspection selection will be equitable, consistent with RSJI values.

Recruitment of Volunteer Evaluators maintaining RSJI Values (in addressing concerns with past recruitment)

- District Park Inspection Volunteer evaluators will be recruited from community-based organizations that Crew Chiefs work with in underserved communities consistent with their work plans and RSJI goals. Also, we will post an invitation on the SPR website.
- Volunteer recruitment will be from community organizations that district crews have traditionally worked, and they will be added to the contingent of volunteer evaluators. This addresses previous recruitment issues.
- SPR will invite Park Board members, SPR stakeholders, and staff from the City Council, City Budget Office and Mayor’s Office to be volunteer evaluators on the park inspection tours. Tours will be held equitably throughout the city.

Training is planned to reduce the inconsistency in our evaluations, a concern in past inspection program

- Evaluator training (30 minutes)
 - Managers
 - Crew Chiefs
 - Leads
- Overview training (15 minutes)
 - Volunteers
 - Senior SPR management
 - Park Board and community stakeholders
- A video will be made of how to conduct an inspection and how to use the rating guide with suggestions/advice on how to rate with examples.
- The video training will first be conducted by the Manager for all Crew Chiefs and Senior Leads.

- Crew Chiefs will be responsible for training volunteers by conducting video training presentations before going on inspections.
- The Park Resources Manager will train Senior Staff for volunteers for the bus tour inspections.
- Parks will make online video training available

The AMWO system will immediately take any maintenance needs and prioritize them.

Discussion

The Commissioners express concern about the quality and consistency of the inspections and suggest a fun element to make it more interesting and engaging for the public. Staff specify these evaluations are in addition to regular staff maintenance inspections during their shifts.

The training video will be done in house, by SPR staff.

There will be a feedback loop for the people who perform the inspections. Reports will go to the evaluators to tell them what was fixed and/or when things will be repaired.

SPR staff are counting on a 2-year cycle to inspect all the parks through this program.

Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) lens to process? Yes, this requires all crew chiefs to outreach to underserved communities and organizations. Crew chiefs are engaged in various communities. They are using the RSJI Toolkit to ensure it is seen through a race and social justice lens.

Briefing and Discussion: View Tree Pruning Policies and Practices

Presented by Jon Jainga, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Written Briefing

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 2, 2016

To: Board of Park Commissioners

From: Robert Stowers, Acting Parks Division Director
Jon Jainga, Urban Forestry Operations Manager

Subject: Seattle Parks and Recreation Tree Policy Review

Requested Board Action

This briefing is to provide information and receive feedback from the Board of Park Commissioners regarding Seattle Parks and Recreation's current 2001 Tree Policy, as well as past tree management practices by the department that are outdated and no longer practiced in the industry and in vegetation management. The

purpose of the Tree Policy is to maintain, preserve and enhance the urban forest within parks and to provide public safety; increase the overall tree canopy, tree health and longevity within parks; and to ensure that trees in parks are managed in a manner that is consistent with other departmental and municipal policies.

Staff is requesting approval from the Park Board to move forward with updating the current 2001 Tree Policy (Policy 5.6.1).

Policy Description and Background

In May 2010, staff provided an informational briefing to the Commissioners regarding the Tree Policy and past practices. In the past, SPR issued permits to enhance private views through the removal of Bigleaf Maple trees and “topping” of park trees. The permits allowed a trimming process known as drop-crotching or crown reduction to create some height reduction in the trees. Canopy reduction was limited to no greater than 25% of the tree’s overall canopy, and all pruning cuts had to comply with International Society of Arborist standards. In some cases, pruning was done in conjunction with the application of hormonal growth regulator (no longer in use) which reduces the elongation of cells in the tree stems, thereby reducing the length the limbs will grow after the pruning.

Current Regulations Regarding Tree Cutting

Parks Tree Management, Maintenance, Pruning and/or Removal Policy 5.6.1:

Trees, shrubs and vegetation should only be removed to protect the public from hazardous conditions, protect public and private property, and to care for the health of the tree. Examples include:

- ✓ Hazard trees which pose substantial risk to the park users, adjacent properties or park facilities
- ✓ Trees, shrubs and vegetation which are dead, dying, or diseased
- ✓ Trees, shrubs and vegetation which create visibility problems (sight line) near roadways, bikeways and service access areas and may contribute to unsafe conditions to park users
- ✓ By an Approved SDCI Land-Use Permit for development which includes 2-1 replacement
- ✓ Trees, shrubs, and vegetation that may interfere with a designated public viewpoint as designated in Section 10.1 of Policy 5.6.1, **(this is inconsistent with the Environmentally Critical Areas(ECA) Ordinance)**
- ✓ Trees that block trails or obstruct the use and function of park infrastructure
- ✓ Parks sites where overplanting occurred by design; selective trees may be removed to maintain tree spacing for growth and function (Park Arborist)

City of Seattle Environmentally Critical Areas Ordinance, 25.09.320 (ECA) June 2014:

Trees and other vegetation in environmentally critical areas (ECAs) are essential for maintenance of a naturally functioning condition that maintains slope stability and prevents erosion, protects water quality, and provides diverse wildlife habitat. Consequently, the City of Seattle protects trees and vegetation within landslide-prone critical areas (including steep slopes), steep slope buffers, riparian corridors, shoreline habitat, shoreline habitat buffers, wetlands and wetland buffers. Within these areas, the ECA code only allows removal, clearing, or other actions that may harm trees and vegetation in limited situations.

The City of Seattle’s ECA code allows four types of tree and vegetation work in landslide-prone critical areas (including steep slopes), steep slope buffers, riparian corridors, shoreline habitat, shoreline habitat buffers, wetlands and wetland buffers:

- ✓ Normal and routine maintenance
- ✓ Tree and vegetation removal as part of an issued building or grading permit
- ✓ Tree and vegetation restoration
- ✓ Removal or other mitigation of a hazard tree

Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 25.11 – Tree Protection

It is the purpose and intent of this chapter to:

- ✓ Implement the goals and policies of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan especially those in the Environment Element dealing with protection of the urban forest;
- ✓ To preserve and enhance the City's physical and aesthetic character by preventing untimely and indiscriminate removal or destruction of trees;
- ✓ To protect trees on undeveloped sites that are not undergoing development by disallowing tree removal except in hazardous situations, to prevent premature loss of trees so their retention may be considered during the development review and approval process;
- ✓ To reward tree protection efforts by granting flexibility for certain development standards, and to promote site planning and horticultural practices that are consistent with the reasonable use of property;
- ✓ To especially protect exceptional trees that because of their unique historical, ecological, or aesthetic value constitute an important community resource; to require flexibility in design to protect exceptional trees;
- ✓ To provide the option of modifying development standards to protect trees over two (2) feet in diameter in the same manner that modification of development standards is required for exceptional trees;
- ✓ To encourage retention of trees over six (6) inches in diameter through the design review and other processes for larger projects, through education concerning the value of retaining trees, and by not permitting their removal on undeveloped land prior to development permit review. (Ord. 120410 § 2(part), 2001)

25.11.030 - Exemptions.

The following activities are exempt from the provisions of this chapter:

- ✓ Normal and routine pruning operations and maintenance;
- ✓ Abatement of hazardous tree or tree part as approved by the Director;
- ✓ Emergency activities necessary to remedy an immediate threat to public health, safety, or welfare;
- ✓ Tree removal undertaken as part of tree and vegetation management and revegetation of public park land and open spaces by responsible public agencies or departments;
- ✓ Tree removal approved as part of an Environmentally Critical Area revegetation plan as provided in Section 25.09.320;
- ✓ Tree removal shown as part of an issued building or grading permit as provided in Sections 25.11.060, 25.11.070, and 25.11.080;
- ✓ Removal of street trees as regulated by Title 15 of the SMC; and
- ✓ Additions to existing structures, shown as part of an issued building or grading permit as provided in Sections 25.11.060, 25.11.070 and 25.11.080. (Ord. 122919, § 2, 2009; Ord. 120410 § 2(part), 2001)

SPR has the authority to permit trees to be removed or pruned on park land, e.g., developed parks, natural areas or greenbelts, as approved by the Superintendent or approved designee (Park Arborist). If a tree is located in a City Environmental Critical Areas (ECA) on park land; trees are protected as outlined in SMC 25.09 and SMC 25.11. Any work would need to be reviewed by Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI).

SPR Urban Forest Restoration Goals

Seattle Parks and Recreation launched a 20-Year Strategic Plan for the Green Seattle Partnership to restore 2,500 acres of urban forested parkland, over a 20-year period from 2005 to 2025. In 1999, American Forests, a world leader in the science and practice of urban forestry, analyzed Seattle's urban forest. The group concluded that from 1972 to 1996 the city lost 46% heavy tree cover and 67% medium tree cover. That loss cost Seattle \$1.3 million per year in rainwater storage and management capacity and \$226,000 per year in air pollution-related health care costs. Forested park lands also clean the air. All trees can capture carbon dioxide and help remove soot and other pollutants, but our native conifer trees do it best because they continue to grow all year round. For example, the average acre of conifer forest captures 13 tons of carbon dioxide each year. Forests do this by

incorporating carbon from the atmosphere into the wood mass of the tree. At the market rate of \$6 per ton of carbon absorbed, this process, known as “sequestration,” provides city residents \$195,000 of annual air cleaning service. In addition, conifers along roadways trap soot on their leaves, which results in cleaner air and reduced incidence of asthma. The stated goals of the Green Seattle Partnership are to **increase the tree canopy, restore our urban forested park land, and help ensure a green “Emerald City.”**

Staff Recommendation:

The SPR Tree Policy should continue to maintain, preserve and enhance the urban forest within parks; increase the overall tree canopy, tree health and tree longevity within parks; and ensure that park trees are managed in a manner that is consistent with other departmental and municipal policies. SPR needs to update the 2001 Tree Management, Maintenance, Pruning and Removal Policy to:

1. Ban any tree topping on public lands
2. Ensure that our tree, shrub and vegetation management practices comply with the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Standards, current SMC land-use codes, and are approved by a Park Arborist
3. Require that tree, shrub and vegetation management work provides a public benefit to the community
4. Prohibit tree, shrub and vegetation removal for private view enhancement
5. Comply with the City’s Environmentally Critical Areas Ordinance 25.09.320 (ECA) and Tree Protection Ordinance 25.11

Staff is requesting approval from the Park Board and Superintendent to move forward with updating the current 2001 Tree Policy (Policy 5.6.1). This will ensure consistency with current regulations and policies and our urban forestry restoration goals.

Question/Discussion

1. Does SPR want to continue the practice of permitting tree removal and/or pruning on park land for private views or view corridors?
2. The current policy is in conflict with our restoration goal of restoring 25 acres of parks forested land. Are you supportive of moving forward with our recommendations for an updated policy that provides clear and consistent guidelines for managing our forested land?

Public Involvement Process

Prior to coming back to you with a final recommendation, we will initiate a community outreach process with our stakeholders and the public. A public hearing will be scheduled at a future Park Board meeting, prior to a vote on adoption of the final policy revisions.

Budget

The Tree Policy update will be funded out of the existing 2016 Urban Forestry Budget.

Additional Information

Jon Jainga, Urban Forestry Operation Manager
jon.jainga@seattle.gov

Attachments

Seattle Parks and Recreation Tree Policy
SMC Environmentally Critical Areas 25.09.320
SMC Tree Protection 25.11

Presentation and Discussion

The current tree policy is to maintain and preserve urban forests; provide public safety and increase tree longevity. Jon would like to update the 2001 Tree policy to make sure it is consistent with other municipalities and codes. Staff is asking for approval to update the current tree policy.

Background – 2010 staff presented information to the Board of Park Commissioners regarding SPR issued tree pruning permits to residents to top trees and enhance views. Treetopping deteriorates the health of the tree and SPR staff feel the need to review that in the current policy to make sure it does not conflict with SPR urban forestry goals. Previously, SPR staff would also inject trees with growth hormone regulators, which reduces the height but also jeopardizes the health of the tree.

In the current policy, it states that trees, shrubs, and vegetation should be removed only to protect the public and care for the health of the tree. For development, the Department of Construction and Permitting says any tree removed must be replaced 2 to 1.

The Department of Construction and Permitting say the following in their Environmental Critical Areas Ordinance: Trees are essential for maintenance and function for sensitive areas. They provide slope stability, clean air, filter water, and create habitat. The Environmentally Critical Areas Ordinance manages healthy greenspaces and currently is being updated. SPR Tree Policy needs to be consistent with this policy.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

4 types – wetlands, shoreline habitats, riparian corridors, and steep slopes.

Allowable work is routine maintenance, part of building permit, restoration, and to remove hazardous trees.

Seattle Municipal Code Tree protection:

- Reward for tree protection efforts; granting flexibility for developers to promote leaving as many trees on developed sites as possible.
- Protect exceptional trees - trees that are 2 feet in diameter or greater and try to protect trees that are 6" or greater.
- Exemptions to Code: Okay to remove trees that are an immediate threat to the public.

SPR has the right to remove or prune trees on park land as approved by the Superintendent, or his designee. In the current policy, the list of designees is outdated – Jon proposes the update specifies to use a park arborist. There are 6 certified arborists throughout the park system; this is not adequate for a system as large as SPR.

Create a safe atmosphere for trees and themselves, use line ropes to remove hazardous trees and branches.

Green Seattle Partnership goal: Halfway through - restored 1200 acres, 1300 acres to go by 2025. Take out invasives, introduce and plant native plants. Volunteers are going out 7 days a

week and plant 60-80,000 plants a year. Important to take restoration goal and policy and put it into tree policy for protection.

Asks Commissioners and Superintendent to approve the update to the tree policy. The update is necessary to ensure consistency between policy and urban forestry goals.

Questions for Commissioners to consider:

1. Does SPR want to continue practice of pruning trees on park land for private views or view corridors?
2. Move forward with recommendation that provides clear and consistent guidelines for forested park lands?
 - Any change in policy would require a public involvement process.
 - Move forward to develop policy that reconciles issues.
 - Provide flexibility and exceptions
 - Put enforcement into policy. Very long discussion about that with Department of Construction and Inspections; if it's park land and an Environmentally Critical Area SPR staff will need to work closely with partners – erosion control, engineers, law and others to figure out the repercussions. Private homeowners will incur financial penalties
 - Examples of other urban cities that do not allow tree topping.
 - This policy will go through the Race and Social Justice toolkit.

View discussions will be lively – fundamental difference between 2001 and now is our renewed effort to restore the forest.

Conflict in Agreement and policy – there is a historical permit that allows neighborhoods to continue view enhancement programs, while forest stewards are working the same area trying to plant. The update would allow SPR to revisit the permits received by homeowners in the past.

SPR is making different planting choices; old deciduous forests are dying off so staff and GSP are working to take them back to coniferous evergreen forests. These trees take on a different characteristic. Ensure restoration efforts is mentioned and consistent with tree policy update.

Commissioner Byers asks the Board to entertain a Motion to support the development of a tree policy. Commissioner Bluewater moves and Commissioner Lowe seconds. Commissioner Hundley asks if there is a procedure for protecting view corridors? Jon replies that trees take on stress from multiple pruning and result in unhealthy and dying trees causing slope instability and dangerous situations in some cases. The Commissioners suggest researching enforcement in other cities.

Motion to approve an update to existing tree policies; unanimous vote to approve the development of a policy update for urban forests.

The view corridor/view enhancement will be contentious. Come up with a plan to replant smaller native plants to replace what is there currently, which is tricky on slopes. How do you plant on environmentally critical areas?

Areas that SPR encourages views, but there is a need to be realistic on how to address environmental issues and maintenance concerns.

Superintendent Aguirre clarifies there are 2 issues, public viewpoint and private homeowners view preservation.

Commissioner Hundley feels torn about the loss of trees/homeowners desire for views. Community discussion will be interesting and lead to some tough decisions. Commissioner Bluewater agrees and feels there is not just one answer. Commissioner Lowe feels having a policy is a good first step. He feels there are less anomalies and more personalities. Commissioner McCaffrey feels the safety concerns with slope stability will be interesting and glad it will be addressed. She is very supportive of the work the GSP is doing across the city. Commissioner Cook feels torn between view preservation, but agrees the policy update is a good thing. Commissioner Padilla says the finances of who pays for viewpoint maintenance and mitigation efforts.

What is the direction with requests from private owners to preserve views adjacent to their homes? Jon says they are torn between private resident who wants the view and dealing with slopes.

Commissioner Byers feels these are two very different issues. He feels strongly for protecting public view corridors. However, he feels the burden of proof that whatever pruning takes place to preserve a view needs to be in best interest of the urban forest. Commissioner Hundley requests pictures of the view corridors on slides for the next presentation.

The Commissioners thank Jon for taking this on.

Superintendent's Report

Presented by Superintendent Aguirre, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Summer season – Aquatic facilities are open. SPR doubles in size during summer season with temporary and intermittent staff.

Washington Fish and Wildlife - Received 5-year permit to harvest milfoil at beaches, moorages and boat ramps. Scheduled to begin this week in several locations.

National Trails Day – Work parties at several parks last weekend.

Put the arts in the parks – MPD provides small grants to install temporary art installations and cultural events; 39 projects funded – all free and open to the public.

Park District Major Projects - 23 major projects through MPD funding in 2016; 3 done and 20 more to go.

Public service announcement – SPR staff became aware of organizers promoting a float event at Green Lake. This is a non-permitted event. SPR receiving support from SPR staff and police will be there to monitor. Event organizers are unresponsive to requests.

Animal enforcement –Good feedback from residents for holding people accountable. Last week there were 10 leash law citations and 1 for second infraction.

Japanese Garden – The transition from the Advisory Council to the Arboretum Foundation has been smooth. Children’s Day celebration had 1900 people - 45%increase.

Old/New Business

None.

Commissioner Hundley moves the meeting adjourn; Commissioner Cook seconds, and the motion carries. The meeting adjourns at 8:30 pm.

APPROVED: _____ DATE _____
Barbara Wright, Vice Chair
Board of Park Commissioners