

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2015

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Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Lydia Albert
Antoinette Angulo
Tom Byers
Bob Edmiston
Brice Maryman
Tom Tierney, Chair
Barbara Wright

Excused:

Diana Kincaid
Yazmin Mehdi, Vice Chair

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent
Susan Golub, Policy Unity Manager
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

This meeting is held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Tierney calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Commissioner Tierney asks for approval of the Agenda. Commissioner Mehdi moves to approve the consent items and Commissioner Kincaid seconds. The Agenda is approved.

Oral Requests and Communications from the Audience

None.

Engaging Ethnic Communities

Jenn Hagedorn and Annee Althausser, University of Washington School of Public Health's Community Oriented Public Health Program

Written Briefing

March 2015

Increasing Seattle Parks & Recreation Community Center Engagement:
A Report on Advisory Councils in High Point and Yesler Terrace
A project by the Community-Oriented Public Health Practice Program (COPHP) Class of 2015
University of Washington School of Public Health

Project Overview

In partnership with Seattle Parks and Recreation, Neighborhood House seeks to continue their successful engagement of Seattle's historically underserved communities by strengthening their relationship with the various Associated Recreational Council Advisory Councils at community centers throughout Seattle.

Neighborhood House requested we research and develop a sustainable outreach plan featuring detailed recommendations on how to cultivate strong leadership and engage with the community to sustain the Advisory Councils.

We were asked to focus on the Yesler Terrace and High Point communities. Our teams identified key community groups, developed a list of interview questions, and completed site visits to speak with community members. Using qualitative research methods, we condensed information from our interviews into themes that would serve as the basis for our recommendations. It is our hope that these recommendations can be adapted by community centers across the city as a way of improving the recruitment of members for and responsiveness of their Advisory Councils.

Recommendations

1. Offer specialized trainings and resources to strengthen the skills and capacity of Advisory Councils and their partners.
2. Maximize the visibility of the Advisory Councils by increasing outreach activities and leveraging existing community assets.
3. Lower barriers to participating in the Advisory Council to encourage greater community engagement.
4. Identify future community leaders to sustain ongoing participation and engagement with the Advisory Council.
5. Strengthen partnerships and increase communication and collaboration with other agencies, organizations, and neighborhood groups working in the Community Centers.

Additional Considerations

Members of the ARC and Parks have expressed a desire to build empowered communities and the value of the community's voice. This vision is attainable, but requires thinking outside the box and revisiting the current institutional structure.

Reexamination of the current Advisory Council authority structure indicates a commitment to increasing the empowerment and capacity of communities across Seattle. Increasing transparency and using community engagement and participation frameworks can strengthen current efforts.

Presentation

Commissioner Tierney says the Park Board has been thinking a lot about community centers and this is very relevant to their work.

Jenn Hagedorn and Annee Althausen are presenting from the University Of Washington School Of Public Health's Community Oriented Public Health Program.

Be Active Together Community Programs –

Community Oriented Public Health Practice (COPHP) – The idea is to collaborate with the community with a social justice focus. They employ a health equity lens for those communities with poor health outcomes. Seattle Parks and Recreation is also working to reduce barriers to healthy lifestyles. There was a request from Neighborhood House to develop a sustainable outreach plan. Parks and Neighborhood House provided guidance.

High Point history - The High Point Community is one of the poorest and most diverse communities in Seattle. Highpoint is a mixed income planned community that was redeveloped in 2001 through Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a new urban design principle. The average income in the neighborhood has increased to \$21,000. 50% of the population is under 18 years old and Somali is the language most spoken. The redevelopment has caused some displacement, which makes it more difficult to engage the community.

High Point Community Advisory Council – Their strength is that they respond to community needs, and welcome representatives from Seattle Parks and Recreation and Associated Recreation Council. They are interested in broader structure, increased participation and engaging other advisory council members. The members live in the neighborhoods and view participation as a way to get involved with the community.

Yesler Terrace history – Yesler Terrace was built in the early 1940s; it was the first racially integrated housing project in the U.S. 80% of residents are African or Asian. The average income is \$18,000; Vietnamese, Somali and English are the main languages spoken. They are currently going through a redevelopment. They are retaining community and Advisory Council membership.

Yesler Terrace Advisory Council – The experience of the councilmembers is a mix of long time members and newer members with fresh energy. They work well as a team. Many members grew up in Yesler Terrace and feel this is a way of giving back to the community. The members value the community relationships and bringing residents together.

Methods of Engaging Communities – The UW students used the following avenues of communicating with and reaching out to these 2 communities.

- Identified the stakeholders – who to reach out to? Advisory councils, residents, staff and non-profit organizations that work closely with the communities;
- Performed outreach in person and over the phone;

- Community health workers at Yesler Terrace integrated questions during appointments regarding the Advisory Council;

The UW students recognize that the people participating in the study are not representative of the community because most were English speakers.

Recommendations:

Offer specialized trainings – better serve the council to figure out how to fundraise, secure funding, etc...

Maximize visibility of advisory council – UW results showed most people in the community didn't know about their advisory council. 4 out of 25 people at High Point had heard of their Community Council and at Yesler Terrace 1 of 19 had heard of their Advisory Council. High Point wanted to see more exercise classes for adults and Yesler wanted more childcare/ESL programs.

Have Advisory Council host an open house and publicize it through their newspaper and word of mouth.

Lower barriers to participating in Advisory Council – Currently to be on an advisory council requires a big time commitment, especially for parents and the meetings are conducted in English. The UW students created a model for a new application and provided resources for translation/ Yesler conducts their meetings in multiple languages and offers childcare and food.

Identify future community leaders to sustain ongoing participation and engagement with advisory council – the advisory councils have a hard time recruiting and engaging community members – find people who are invested and who have common interests and follow up with them.

Strengthen partnership with other agencies, organizations and neighborhood groups working in the community centers and include the community in the collaboration. There were a lot of questions and confusion about who to go to about different things.

Increase networking – this will create better support for the community and more of the community will know them.

Discussion

Antoinette thanks them for coming. She asks about their findings related to best practices and lessons learned. The students found the community members were not sure which decisions they were allowed to make; transparency and clarity on roles; investment in those groups so they have the capacity and ability to claim power that is being given to them.

Commissioner Mehdi worked at the library and had the same issue of reaching communities and figuring out how best to serve them. She asks for ideas/experience for most effective way to reach these communities. Liz says their primary goal was to look at Advisory Councils; giving people a sense of place through the community center. The more people who have that sense of community leads to empowerment to engaging with the advisory council.

Youth leadership training would be a great idea also. Acting Superintendent Williams says we use words like community building but how does one create a sense of neighborhood efficacy? The students referred to some members of the advisory council participating for a long time but does longtime participation create a barrier to new people? Does it look exclusive? It is important to retain the information and expertise but also allow for new faces and fresh ideas. Anne says maybe creating a policy for self-governance.

Commissioner Maryman wants to talk about a partnership to develop capacity building – building skills and expertise. It is important to recognize the advisory council; raise up the councils during the Denny Awards. Jenn says one frustration was that the advisory council wishes to have better fundraising and resources. Commissioner Tierney mentions that they are densely populated and very different ethnically. This poses different questions than other neighborhoods in terms of getting other community members a seat at the table. Anne agrees and asks whose table are we calling people to? Does the table feel comfortable to the communities? At the advisory council level, what would create community engagement to those participating communities?

Commissioner Kincaid suggests events where different cultures in the community could express what they value in their culture to exchange information and talk about advisory council and the value of participation. She asks about technology for future translation services – what tools could be used to cross that bridge? Anne responds that Yesler Terrace has a big community festival in June. The communities know each other and are not silos; the communities are representation on the community council. There is separation based on language barriers. Seattle has an interpreter through the library to get interpretation services.

Commissioner Angulo is curious about the High Point – 2 members of ARC are represented on the board and what plans/discussion to get representation from mixed income. They have been having a hard time getting people to show up more than once, which is hard for decision-making.

The commissioners thank the students for all the hard work they did and for their presentation.

Comprehensive Plan – Decision Agenda

Susanne Rockwell, Seattle Parks and Recreation and Tom Hauger, Department of Planning and Development

Changes made in the new element to address feedback received at last Park Board meeting. Identified policies that were geared towards Race and Social Justice and what additional ones we added. There is a request for a citywide equity statement, which will be pulled into the body of the Comprehensive Plan instead of in individual elements. They beefed up the introduction to be more visionary. They elevated recreation and activation and it now includes an appendices on how parks classifies facilities. There is analysis on open space and district goals.

Land is getting more expensive as growth continues – is there a way to talk about it in a new way? Commissioner Mehdi does not feel the parks element is aspirational enough; it says this is what we can achieve instead of being inspiring about what we want to achieve. Tom Hauger responds that the goals are aspirational but not poetic or inspiring; instead they are mechanistic. Commissioner Tierney adds that Seattle is facing significant growth so that even to maintain the current ratio; Parks would have to acquire significant more space in neighborhoods that are the most costly and fastest growing. Commissioner Mehdi feels that setting goals may mean coming up with solutions that are

more creative. This is the moment to be even more aspirational. Commissioner Kincaid says it is about place making – what kind of city do we want to live in? It is important to maintain the beauty of the city and the health of its citizens.

Acting Superintendent Williams says Parks did some work with project for public spaces, which found that "active" and "vibrant" are important adjectives for describing parks in urban settings. It is important to think more creatively about open space for the sake of community building and managing density. Tom Hauger adds that there are partnerships with government departments, developers, etc...

The commissioners feel using the old definition of 10,000 sq ft of park space is limiting. Commissioner Maryman says there is a desire to be prescriptive because it is something you can hang your hat on; maybe we need the baseline level and figure out performative quality of those open spaces. He wonders if the current goals will help to create the four outcomes created in the legacy plan. He feels there are ways to drill down to the outcomes beyond crude GIS mapping, ie. quantity v quality of the experience. Commissioner Mehdi agrees and feels that performance aspiration beyond quantity is spaces that are flexible to meet the changing needs of the community. Commissioner Edmiston adds that working in product development in the private sector there is a focus on technology and this thing one is making; but the focus has shifted to create a user center design and what people want. There is a new model of functionality-centered thinking – what functions will this perform for me? People value this open space because it allows them to do X.

New revised element: 1.13 develops parks and open spaces to make the most of land. 1.14 considers access by foot, transit, bike; 2.9 provide and maintain trails for bikes/pedestrians; 4.4 visitors to regional attractions impact those facilities; enhance with bus/light rail/public transit options. Commissioner Kincaid asks for the distinction between a boulevard, walkway, and a trail? She feels it would be nice to have those distinctions. Commissioner Edmiston agrees that the definitions are confusing. Commissioner Maryman wonders how climate change is reflected as adaptation or mitigation strategies. Tom says there are goals from energy consumption or tree canopy perspective but nothing in the parks element. Environment element, transportation, and land use element all relate to those goals. Commissioner Maryman feels there could be a mention about hazard mitigation and global climate change especially in regards to parks along the Puget Sound that will be affected by the rising sea level.

Commissioner Edmiston says they are doing great work and appreciates their collaboration with SDOT.

There will be a draft plan in July. Send comments to Susanne and she will write a draft letter and Commissioner Tierney will sign it.

Comprehensive Plan to come back to the Park Board with GIS analysis.

Commissioner Tierney requests the Commissioners to send comments to Tom Hauger about non-parks related issues. Thank Tom and Susanne for coming.

Superintendent's Report

Ron Davis worked as a Senior Coordinator at one of our Community Centers and he passed away suddenly. The funeral for Ron is tomorrow.

Park Board Calendar – Parks has gotten the green light from the Mayor to go forward with the smoking ban. On March 19 a press release went out for a smoking ban at all city parks. The Park Board is scheduled to hold a public hearing on April 16. On May 14 the Park Board will have a discussion and make a possible recommendation.

Greenbelts supplemental use guidelines – The Park Board schedule is as follows: May 28 briefing, June 11 public hearing, and June 25 Park Board recommendations.

Cheasty Mountain Bike and Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project – Presentation and Public Hearing on April 9, study session with Parks staff and consultants on April 23, and discussion and recommendation on May 14.

Park neighborhood briefing at the City Council – Parks will be looking for direction on next steps for the Red Barn Ranch. Parks is performing a comprehensive study on how to use the land and activate the Red Barn Ranch. Acting Superintendent Williams says it took a lot of staff and effort to fund the operation and is unsure where that funding would come from now.

Jesus Aguirre – The new Superintendent has his confirmation hearing date on Tuesday, May 27 at 9:30am at the Parks, Seattle Center, Libraries and Gender Pay Equity Committee; full City Council vote on May 11 at 2pm

City attorney is taking lead in parlaying a series of code violations from Roosevelt neighborhood related to Department of Planning and Development/land use violations, into a judgement that would result in city owning the property. The City is committed to giving the land to Seattle Parks and Recreation and funding to develop it.

Natural areas use public outreach – Parks staff hosting focus groups on March 19, 21 and 26; 55 groups expressed interest in participation in the focus groups. Mini summit will occur on April 4. Acting Superintendent Williams and staff are going to the Mayor next week to get his direction. They want to go into this with a strong opinion on what should happen, direction, and point of view.

Seattle Park District - Engaged in a lot of planning work with the Park District; Susan is coordinating the first meeting.

PI Globe – There is a revived proposal to put the PI Globe in Myrtle Edwards Park. There are concerns about placing a structure so close to the shoreline. Also, there is a covenant with the artist of the Heiser sculpture that says no other artwork or structure within 500 feet. Parks has not been involved in this discussion for the new placement. Commissioner Tierney asked to keep the Park Board apprised of the situation.

Old/New Business

Commissioner Kincaid mentions that the new Sound Transit Station at the UW will make it possible to get downtown in 8 minutes and Capitol Hill in 4 minutes. Currently, there is virtually no bus service to downtown from Magnuson Park – people would have to walk from 45th to a transit station. Requests the Park Board send a letter to King County Metro to approve Alternative 1 to provide better transit service to Magnuson Park. Bob says it would be great to see analysis of how this provides access to parks better.

Metro planning meeting on 3/26 so Commissioner Kincaid suggests drafting and finalizing a letter in the next week. She will write the letter and distribute it for comment. Magnuson Park Advisory Council (MPAC) – talk about the amount of events at the park and it would be great to have more ways to get there.

Commissioner Maryman moves the meeting adjourn; Commissioner Mehdi seconds the motion and the motion carries. The meeting adjourns at 8:11 pm.

APPROVED: _____ DATE _____
Tom Tierney, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners