Seattle Board of Park Commissioners Meeting Minutes January 12, 2017

Web site: <u>http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/</u> (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: Andréa Akita Marty Bluewater Tom Byers, Chair Dennis Cook Marlon Herrera Evan Hundley William Lowe Kelly McCaffrey Barbara Wright, Vice Chair

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Jesús Aguirre, Deputy Superintendent Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

The meeting is held at 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Byers calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. He reviews the Agenda and the Commissioners introduce themselves. He calls for approval of the Consent Items: January 12 Agenda, November 10 and December 8 minutes, and the Acknowledgment of Correspondence. The Commissioners approve all Consent Items unanimously.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

Ruth Laroque – She is dog trainer and consultant who is strongly in favor of the education certification component for dogwalkers in the People, Dogs and Parks Plan. She is starting a dog walker academy and hopes the Superintendent will add that into his equivalent program list.

Mark McDuff – He feels the briefing papers does not have an accurate count of the comments received regarding the People, Dogs and Parks Plan. He feels the plan lacks objective goals for off-leash areas in Seattle and accountability.

Sharon LeVine – Sharon feels there needs to be more time for the Commissioners to study all of the information and ask questions since there was not a quorum at the December 8 Park Board meeting.

Joyce Moty – She is opposed to the proposed expansion of the Seattle Asian Art Museum at Volunteer Park. She suggests putting the expansion underground and encourages SPR to maintain the existing building footprint. Those opposed have a website: <u>thinkagainsam.org</u> and encourages the Board to visit Volunteer Park and imagine what the new addition will do to the park.

Lori Fleiss – She is a business owner. Behavior consultation is her primary advocacy. Dr. James Ha is her professor and he has consulted with the Board. She fully supports the educational requirements. The University of Washington program is science-based and offers the City the opportunity to be in the forefront.

Honoring Gary Gaffner

Superintendent Aguirre takes a moment to thank Gary Gaffner for his time and efforts on behalf of the Board of Park Commissioners. Gary has attended nearly every Park Board meeting for a very long time. He is a historian and longtime lover of parks and park volunteer. He offers the department good advice and always has a balanced approach to the conflicts that arise. The Board and Superintendent Aguirre presents Gary with a personalized t-shirt and places a name plate on the back of his chair.

Superintendent's Report

Seattle Asian Art Museum Expansion– SPR asked the museum to pause their work for a brief time. They have done a good job of serving all communities. The museum is historic and the department believes the expansion is an appropriate use of park land.

Request for Proposals for Building 2 at Magnuson Park - After a long and difficult process, the department felt that neither of the 2 final bids were a viable response - SPR is asking for a large investment. It will cost approximately \$2million just to stabilize the building.

New Years – 1000 people came to Matthews Beach and participated in the annual Polar Bear Plunge. Thanks to Meadowbrook Community Center for all their work to make the event a success!

Design Excellence Award - The Seattle Design Commission notified SPR and SPU that the Lower Mapes Creek Restoration project will receive a Design Excellence Award. The project daylighted the creek in Beer Sheva Park through the partnership between the two departments.

PDD complete 24 Seattle Park District projects in 2016 – SPR has completed 24 Seattle Park District major maintenance (Fix it First) priority projects in 2016 which exceeds the goal of 23 projects and puts the department well on its way to completing 120 by 2020. Reducing Energy Consumption - SPR received a \$13,000 refund from Seattle Public Utilities for reducing natural gas usage. The department also saved \$44,000 in natural gas expenditures. Great work from our conservation folks.

Cascade People Center – This is a YMCA partnership. They are building a community garden to generate food for the community kitchen and local food banks.

Green Lake – Superintendent Aguirre requests people keep off the ice on Green Lake if it appears frozen over. It is dangerous.

Discussion and Possible Vote: People, Dogs and Parks Strategic Plan

Presented by Holly Miller, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Written Briefing

MEMORANDUM

Date:January 6, 2017To:Board of Park CommissionersFrom:Jesús AguirreSubject:Recommendations on People, Dogs and Parks Plan

Requested Board Action

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) has developed the Draft Dogs, People and Parks Plan (Draft Plan) and is seeking Board of Park Commissioners' (Board's) review and comments on recommendations contained therein, prior to final action on the Draft Plan by the Superintendent. The Board was briefed in February 2016 before the Draft Plan was released for public review, and again on September 15 on the Superintendent's preliminary recommendations. The Board has heard extensive public testimony on the issue and the draft proposal to date, including a public hearing on September 15 and a study session on December 8. Public comment on the Draft Plan was received until October 14. The Board is scheduled to make final recommendations to the Superintendent at the January 12, 2017 Park Board meeting. You will be asked to vote on the issues, shaded in blue, in this memorandum.

The Board briefing paper from September 15 is attached to refresh your memories on issues. (Attachment 1) Also attached is a summary of public input, (Attachment 2) and the power point presentation from the December 8 Board Study Session. (Attachment 3) Below, is an update for the Board on modifications to the Draft Plan under consideration as a result of considering public input and a proposed decision agenda for your consideration.

General Principles

The following "general principles" will be added to the Plan to add clarity about policy underlying the Draft People, Dog, and Parks Plan.

- ✓ Licensed dogs are welcome, on leash, in all Seattle parks excluding non-OLA beaches, children's play areas and ball fields.
- ✓ Fenced OLAs are an acceptable use of park property and support the SPR mission of "Healthy People, Healthy Environment and Strong Communities."
- Plan adheres to tradition of "multiple use" in Seattle parks which encourages development of spaces that accommodate diverse activities.
- ✓ Increasing demand for OLAs mirrors increase in demand for all park facilities.
- Plan represents a prudent approach to managing OLAs, based on the principle of "Fix it First" – first cycle of Park District funding.
- Recommends incremental addition of new OLAs based on community engagement process; does not create a "blue print" for future OLAs in specific parks.

Proposed Modifications to the Draft Plan

- 1. Clarify language in the draft plan to more clearly express departmental support for off-leash areas.
- 2. Modify language in the plan to be clarify that SPR is fully committed to taking an enterprising approach to finding ways to site OLAs.
- 3. Add COLA appendix that outlines potential new OLA sites to Plan, with stipulation that any proposed OLA must be reviewed by the processes described below.
- 4. Designate a staff person to be the department lead on off-leash areas and serve as liaison with COLA, Magnuson Off Leash Group (MOLG) and other interested residents.
- 5. Support the concept of pilot sites with the understanding that we can support only fenced areas. All OLAs are initially "pilot sites."
- 6. Evaluate proposals for pilot sites through our normal community engagement process, including with the ad-hoc committee described in the draft plan. We will work closely with COLA, neighborhood residents and environmental advocates once these sites have been identified.
- 7. Maintain off leash areas on non-Park, publically-owned land assuming we are funded to do so.
- 8. Support efforts by COLA and MOLG to engage in fundraising and grant writing for off-leash areas.
- Include a public engagement process in the development of 3 or 4 pilot sites, per the public engagement process outlined in the draft strategic plan: Hubbard Homestead Park, Stone Way at 125th, Maple Leaf Reservoir and Adams Street Boat Ramp.

- 10. Review plans for OLA improvements with COLA.
- 11. Understand that COLA want more OLAs with water access. Agree that more work to review regulatory requirements and develop standards for water access, including public health standards, accessibility, fencing, safety, etc. In nearly all cases where shoreline access is considered, we would need approval from a regulatory agency.
- 12. Recommend regular meetings/check-ins between the department and COLA and MOLG.

Decision Agenda

A. Process for Adding New Off Leash Areas (OLAs): SPR is committed to working with communities and volunteer groups, most notably, the Citizens for Off Leash Areas (COLA), to identify and develop new OLAs. SPR supports the addition of new OLAs in several ways, as described below.

1. New OLAs may be added in the following ways:

- a. Through new park development or existing park redevelopment processes. Landbanked sites will be examined for suitability as OLAs as they are developed.
- b. Through requests by communities, whether through Neighborhood Matching Fund processes or other community processes.
- c. By supporting groups like COLA in developing new OLAs on non-park public land suitable for OLAs, by convening a committee, as described above, assisting with design and committing to provide maintenance when an OLA is developed, assuming we are allocated the Maintenance funds in our budget when an OLA is developed.
- d. By supporting the efforts of groups like COLA to work with private property owners to provide OLAs on unused property.
- e. By encouraging private developers, through the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection, to include OLAS as part of prospective developments.

f. SPR will support community groups, most notably COLA, in exploring new partnerships and sponsorships to support the improvement of existing OLAs, and the creation of new OLAs. SPR will develop guidelines for donor recognition.

Park Board Recommendation: Does the Board support these methods for adding new OLAs?

2. OLA Review Committee

For each proposed new OLA, SPR will convene a committee including dog advocates, environmental advocates, a veterinarian or animal behaviorist, community members and SPR staff. This committee will consider the proposal and will make a recommendation to the Superintendent. SPR will maintain a list of approved OLAs for development when funding is available.

Park Board Recommendation: Does the Board support having a committee, as described above, to make recommendations on new OLAs?

3. Fenced vs Unfenced Off Leash Areas

- a. SPR is committed to continue to offer only fenced OLAs due to the potential for conflict between leashed and unleashed dogs and between dogs and other park users, very limited enforcement resources, maintenance issues, and feedback from other jurisdictions that have implemented unfenced OLAs and are now moving away from these types of designations. SPR is particularly concerned about the public safety of park users who may be co-users of these spaces.
- b. SPR does not recommend designated leash-optional trails due to reasons listed above, in addition to maintenance and environmental concerns. Forest stewards report frequent damage to newly planted native plants by off leash dogs.

Park Board Recommendation: Does the Board concur with having only fenced off leash areas and no leash-optional trails?

B. <u>Process for Improving Off Leash Area Conditions and the User Experience</u> <u>Park District Funding</u>

SPR proposes using new Park District funding (\$106,000/year through 2020) to improve existing OLAs based on the facility assessments included in the Draft Plan. SPR is committed to working closely with COLA, MOLG and local community groups on some of the specific improvements at existing OLAs to ensure our assessments and planned improvements are aligned with users' experience, with the caveat that improvements must meet SPR's construction and maintenance specifications as well as all applicable codes.

Park Board Recommendation: Does the Board concur with using the Park District off leash resources for capital improvements to existing off leash areas?

1. Dog Walker License, Certification and Limits

- a. SPR's Plan proposes a requirement that requires professional dog walkers using OLAs to become licensed (\$100/year). Further, to ensure safety of all OLA users, for two years, dog walkers will be allowed to bring 10 licensed dogs into OLAs or parks. At the end of two years, dog walkers who have obtained the three-course certification from the University of Washington or another equivalent program authorized by the Superintendent, will be allowed to continue to bring up to 10 licensed dogs into OLAs or parks. Dog walkers who have not received certification will be restricted to bringing 3 dogs into OLAs or parks.
- SPR recommends working with the Seattle Animal Shelter to consider raising fines for repeat violators of this new approach to professional dog walker use of public OLAs.

Park Board Recommendation: Does the Board concur with the proposed dog walker regulations?

Additional Information

Holly Miller: <u>holly.miller@seattle.gov</u> Project web site: <u>http://www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/policies-and-plans/people-dogs-</u> and-parks-strategic-plan

Presentation

Commissioner Byers explains the process by which the Board will move through the Decision Agenda. Holly Miller will provide an overview and recommendations; move through those items, discuss them and vote on each.

Jesus introduces the plan and how it has evolved.

• SPR welcomes leashed dogs almost everywhere.

- OLAs are appropriate use for SPR land and support our mission.
- Recognition of demand for OLAs mirrors demand for other uses in other facilities
- This approach manages the demand and allows us to engage with communities to create new plans. It does not create a blueprint.
- Received a lot of input and had many meetings with Citizens for Off-Leash Areas (COLA)
- Briefed the City Council about this and received good feedback.

In response to feedback, the draft changed in following ways:

- The department added language that explicitly states the support of OLAs
- The department supports COLA and Magnuson Off-Leash Group (MOLG) about locations and new sources of funding
- COLA has done great outreach to communities collaborating with SPR staff to determine if there are appropriate sites for OLAs.
- Created a designated staff person for OLAs someone who can be responsive and establish a relationship
- Working on a process to create new OLAs as new parks are developed OLAs will be considered as a use.
- Committed to work with other agencies or private property owners to support development and be responsible for maintaining OLAs on those properties
- Help organizations with raising money and writing grants
- Acknowledge the interest in off-leash beach access layer of regulatory review that would need to happen. Support administrative work through process with applicants.
- Regular meetings between SPR and COLA
- Implementation plan with timeline will be added to the final draft.
- Dogwalkers certification programs will have to contain certain information, but SPR will accept other programs besides the University of Washington.

Holly will walk through decision agenda:

A.1. Process for adding new off-leash areas

Justin and Holly are working on an application process- which will consist of a committee and review process.

Previously, funding for maintenance of off-leash areas came from patching money together from other areas. Going forward, there will be line items in the budget. The existing OLAs needs to be maintained.

SPR will work with developers and Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections to include OLAs in new development plans.

Advertisements and Sponsorship opportunities – SPR supports COLA in exploring this, although Seattle is sensitive to signs in their parks and openspaces.

Comments from the Board:

Development of criteria - When the Board was discussing the pilot OLA at Magnolia Manor; they heard from neighbors about how the barking was disruptive. Please include criteria about the proximity to housing. Need buy-in at the community level for the OLAs to work in a neighborhood.

Encourage private developers and work with non-park properties.

Implementation plan – There seems to be so much process and no promise. Commissioner McCaffrey has concern there is no intent to quantify amount of additional OLAs.

SPR staff respond: The final draft will include the application process for the community to nominate a site as an off-leash area; information about dogwalker criteria; timeline for developing legislation and protocols for implementation. Holly offers to return to the Park Board when it is done.

Will the public process be clear about support or dissension? Holly responds, they may include the Park Board as part of their public hearing process. The department will provide ample consideration to all points of view.

The Commissioners wonder how the application process will reach people of color? For many communities, public hearings are intimidating. SPR staff explain it will be incumbent on the applicant to do outreach. SPR staff will take advantage of Department of Neighborhoods and the Office for Civil Rights for help with the community engagement. SPR wants to make sure that the process and the outcomes are equitable to all communities regardless of socioeconomic status and ethnicity.

The Commissioners thank SPR for all the work and the public for their participation. Commissioner Hundley likes that the plan is incremental to figure out the best way to move forward instead of making promises. Dog owners will need to be patient. There will always be disappointment. He feels public/private partnerships is a good model for this.

Demand has really grown; what can each community handle? This will require an integrated community process.

Motion: Commissioner Byers asks if the Board will make a motion to recommend #A.1: Does the Board support these methods for adding new OLAs? Commissioner Wright moves, Commissioner Hundley seconds and A.1. has unanimous approval.

A.2. Off-Leash Area review committee

Comments from the Board:

The Board wonders about timing; could they approve a location prior to the site obtaining proper funding? SPR staff is working out how to prioritize sites and thinking through an equity lens.

- Commissioner Herrera wonders if there is a threshold point in the criteria. The process should be straightforward.
- Application processing a potential internship opportunity?
- Many portions of the city want more OLAs; priority to those who do not have OLAs. Louder voices know how to work the system; those who do not know how to use the systems should not be denied the opportunities.
- Figure out a phasing system so that development isn't promised.
- Imagine a scenario where many OLAs are proposed and funding is found how to decide when there are competing priorities for a space. The Superintendent will have to make these decisions.
- Composition of the review board Holly invites a Park Board member to participate.

A.2. Commissioner Byers asks for a motion to support having a committee, as described above, to make recommendations on new OLAs? Commissioner Hundley moves, Commissioner Wright seconds and it passes with unanimous approval.

A.3. Fenced vs Unfenced Off-Leash Areas

Due to potential conflict and lack of enforcement resources - SPR is recommending only fenced OLAs. SPR would need a robust enforcement system for unfenced OLAs to work. Maintenance is another area of concern; feedback from other jurisdictions have said they aren't working out in their communities.

SPR is also not recommending leash optional trails due to the environmental impacts to greenspace and habitat destruction.

Comments from the Board:

- The Commissioners feel this is the most contentious area. Liability is a key point; with unfenced OLAs liability rises greatly. Enforcing and controlling unfenced OLAs is greater than we have the capacity to address.
- There is inadequate staff to manage current OLAs; new unfenced OLAs would require more staff and more enforcement.
- Commissioner Hundley shares that people bring their dogs off-leash on his school property and students who will not play outside because they are scared of the dogs. He worries about off-leash dogs prohibiting kids from playing.
- Dogs on leash with a restrained dog makes it unpredictable.
- Unfair to other users

Motion A.4. Commissioner Byers asks for a Motion as to whether the Board concurs with having only fenced off-leash areas and no leash-optional trails? Commissioner Wright moves, Commissioner Cook seconds and the Motion passes with unanimous approval

B. Process for Improving Off Leash Area Conditions and the User Experience

1. Park District Funding

Working closely with COLA and other community groups on priorities for improving existing OLAs using Park District funding.

Comments from the Board:

The Commissioner confirm that there is \$106,000 per year in Park District funding for maintenance of the off-leash areas during this initial funding cycle. They ask for current priorities, which are:

- ADA issues accessibility
- Drainage issues
- User experience issues

The Department used the following criteria for prioritizing: safety, date of last major maintenance performed, and extent of need as an overall facility.

Public perception - this is a teaching moment - use funds to address issues. It will send a message that SPR cares. It is important to maintain what we have. Improvements to existing OLAs is important.

Asset based planning – ask the community what they would like to see better?

Motion B.1. Commissioner Byer asks for a motion on whether the Board concurs with using the Park District off-leash resources for capital improvements to existing off leash areas?

Commissioner Hundley moves, Commissioner Cook seconds – the motion passes with unanimous approval.

2. Dog Walker License, Certification and Limits

SPR will require dogwalkers buy a permit to have access to the off-leash areas. The cost is proposed at \$100 per year. Dogwalkers have been supportive of educational efforts. Beyond licenses, SPR will require dogwalkers to complete certification in animal behavior to bring more than 3 dogs to off-leash areas.

Holly would like feedback from the Board whether the Seattle Animal Shelter should consider raising fines for repeat violators. SPR staff are looking at data from violations.

Many of the violations are verbal warnings. There are those that get multiple violations and the fines do not seem prohibitive. How to make the penalty strong enough to discourage violating the rules?

Has COLA offered to help monitor the dogwalkers? WOLF has best practices posted at OLAs. Cole, Executive Director at COLA, offers to speak with the stewards about monitoring the dogwalkers and informing the department of repeat violators.

Holly mentions an idea that licensed dog walkers wear mesh vests to increase visibility and lets other dog owners know they are there and could provide assistance.

Comments from the Board:

- 10 dogs seems excessive
- Other than raising fines, money may not be enough of a deterrent.
- Acting Director Anne Graves of Seattle Animal Shelter Violations occur for a variety of reasons. The way to stop violations ranges from expanded capacity and quality of OLAs to increasing fines. \$54 fine is enough for some people. There is value in exploring the threshold to deter and be an effective tool.
- SPR has been laissez-faire about this, but not anymore. More education for regular dogowners.
- Enforcement!
- Very few dogwalkers go to the smaller OLAs.
- Complaint process for dog owners email COLA.
- There is ample signage at OLAs to prevent dog fights.
- Dr. Ha made it clear 10 dogs was too much and 6 dogs would be better. Businesses need time to adapt in a fair way. The department will compromise at the beginning to be where they want at the end. The number of dogs has been a concern. Dogwalkers are concerned about being able to make their livelihood.
- Commissioners wonder how someone with 10 dogs could watch all of them?
- What are other cities doing for their dogwalkers? It feels almost impossible to figure out how many dog walkers there are.
- 6 dogs is more the norm for other areas but we would be the first jurisdiction to adopt a certification program.
- Dr. Ha agreed that it was a trade off to have the certification and allow more dogs.
- Commissioner McCaffrey feels it would be great if the plan articulates the possibility to reevaluate whether the dogwalking requirements are working.
- There doesn't seem to be data for dogwalkers. Could there be certain hours? SPR is trying to balance supporting the dogwalker businesses and mitigate all the issues.
- Makes sense to evaluate and continue to change things around. Having a process to evaluate this is important.
- Increasing the licensing fee for dogwalkers to balance out the amount of dogwalkers?

B.2 Commissioner Byers asks for a motion to concur with the proposed dog walker regulations?

Commissioner Lowe moves to accept the proposed dogwalker regulations as recommended; Commissioner Cook seconds.

Commissioner McCaffrey moves to amend the motion to set an evaluation for 2 years after certification. Commissioner Herrera seconds the amendment.

Commissioner Wright adds a friendly amendment to raise the fee substantially for repeated violators.

Commissioner Lowe calls for a point of information: He feels the amendments are redundent because the Board can do any of this anyway at anytime. Commissioner McCaffrey seconds Commissioner Wright's friendly amendment.

Kelly moves to amend the motion to include a 2-year post certification evaluation point. The amendment fails.

Commissioner Wright moves to amend the motion to work with Seattle Animal Shelter to substantially raise fines. This amendment passes with unanymous approval.

Commissioner Byers asks for a vote on the motion to concur with the proposed dogwalker regulations amended motion - 6 approval; 2 opposed .

Thanks, Holly! This may be a slower process but it will be more durable. Commissioner Byers and SPR staff did a good job getting through this agenda.

<u>Presentation</u>: Tree Inventory and Preventative Maintenance Update

Presented by Jon Jainga, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Natural Resource Unit crews did a great job of clearing trees after the storms we had.

Superintendent Aguirre introduces the tree assessment program. Park District funding is being used for this. This is a new program being used to manage the trees and track the tree inventory.

Goal - visual assessment for trees that follows industry standards.

Jon states there is a stack of outstanding work orders. The department brought in a tree service, reviewed work orders, and completed 40 tree maintenance projects.

Another team from Bartlett completed hazard assessment and data collection of our trees. They have completed 6 parks and tagged some trees. They have inspected 2500 trees and tagged 300.

Tree I.D. tagging - This will allow for proactive tree maintenance – staff will know which trees need work and which require follow up. The tree inventory system is called Collector.

High use target areas: they are prioritizing heavily used areas in the park system – trees adjacent to pathways, picnic areas, walkways, and playgrounds.

He shows a snapshot of crews mobile devices which allows them to update onsite.

Collector allows for GIS Editing, scheduling work orders, proactive maintenance and inspection.

They will input all of this information to a web mapping system - public could use it to see what is happening with trees and creates transparency.

Estimate: 263,000 trees in SPR system; 171,615 trees in high use target areas

Information collected lets SPR staff review trends - tree failure and how weather systems affect tree removal.

Park District funded an additional tree crew last year. Q3 report shows tree maintenance by City Council district. In Q3, tree crews completed 546 work orders and 554 in Q4.

Strategy - proactive instead of reactive; use this new information and data to inform tree policy. Identifying hazardous trees and removing them.

Jon tells of an encampment at Mineral Springs right before Thanksgiving. There was a 140-foot tall, dead, pine tree. The tree crew worked with other agencies to help the homeless relocate and removed the tree in the same day.

Crews will be out completing the tree inventory.

Great work, Jon.

Comments from the Board:

How will staff determine what sort of trees are planted to replace those they remove?

Collector keeps track. When a tree is removed it goes into a database for 2 for 1 replacement. Some parks are getting very dense. SPR staff are working with Green Seattle Partnership to figure out best where to put trees. Plant ecologists will help to identify plant pallet in specific locations. The department will work to do a better job explaining to residents why certain plants are selected.

Are forest stewards helping with identification of trees that are problematic? Some of the volunteers are horticulturists and it's great to have horticulture volunteers involved in inventory.

Old/New Business

Election of officers:

Chair of the Board – Commissioner Hundley nominates Commissioner Byers for chair; Commissioner Wright seconds and the Board concurs with unanimous approval.

Vice Chair of the Board – Commissioner Byers nominates Commissioner Lowe for Vice Chair; Commissioner Wright seconds and the Board concurs with unanimous approval

There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 8:55 pm.

APPROVED: _____ DATE_____

Tom Byers, Chair Board of Park Commissioners