



# Minutes

Board of Park Commissioners

100 Dexter Avenue North, Seattle 98109

Thursday, February 28, 2019

6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

## Commissioners:

Andréa Akita, Vice Chair

Dennis Cook

Marlon Herrera

William Lowe, Chair

José Ochoa

Tom Byers

Jessica Farmer

Evan Hundley

Kelly McCaffrey

## Welcome and Introductions

Called to order at 6:30pm. He welcomes everyone and asks the Board to introduce themselves. Evan moves to second the approval of the agenda, it is approved. January 10 meeting minutes, Jessica moves and to second the minutes are approved.

## Public Comment

Suze Rutherford – long-time resident of Seattle; e-vehicle enthusiast. Supports any charging stations throughout the city. Magnuson and Gas Works are great. It's great that 3-phase charging is available. SPR and charging stations are a rational partnership. People will come to the park to charge their vehicle and play while they wait. When there are big events, they put sleeves over the charging stations. She encourages the City to continue installing more stations.

Margy Bresslour – Colman Park Project – 6000 shrubs and trees planted on the slope before the Vegetation Management Plan was started. Historical and design consideration in VMPs is part of City policy. Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks put together a report to assist the department with the historical context of Colman Park. She asks:

- Will FSOP and Colman volunteers be allowed to provide input?
- Will there be a project to remove the big leaf maples?

SPR isn't trustworthy don't listen and are unaccountable.

Florence Peterschmidt – Friends of Colman Park; She supported the effort to bring back Olmsted vision of Colman Park. The study found slope stable even though SPR says it is not. SPR requested the Green Seattle Partnership to create a VMP. 31<sup>st</sup> was a scenic drive when she grew up. Effort has provided additional views, but summer will be different when the leaves come in.

Nanette Martin – SPR has been dishonest about the wants of the community. Volunteers have been maintaining and stewarding the park. She lists all the efforts volunteers have made over the

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>

last 28 years on behalf of the park. Top 5 attended Green Seattle Day in the city. She is very upset about the possibility of using an SPR parking lot as a Seattle “Safe Lot”.

Adam O’Sullivan – He reviews the history of the restoration efforts at Colman Park. SPR staff have been misleading the community about the plants growing in Colman Park, how many stewards work there, and the level of work needed.

Eve McClure – SPR staff implies the community does not take steep slopes seriously. Much of grant money was invested in Geotech consultant; report showed stable conditions. Friends of moved forward with development of the VMP. Board asked staff what specific criteria are necessary for slope stability. SPR staff promote incorrect generalities to the Environmentally Critical Areas ordinance. SPR staff implies they would need an ECA waiver, impact statement and would need to go before SDCI and Hearing Examiner. The slope is not too steep to access it. GSP stewards have worked on that slope safely.

Evan Wright – Some trees were removed and there was not an Environmental Impact Statement done. Important for the Board to be informed in order to accurately weigh in on this. At this point, things will probably move quickly. He would like more time for the community to provide feedback on the Vegetation Management Plan.

## **Superintendent’s Update**

Christopher Williams, Interim Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Safe lots – Designed for people who sleep in their cars; this is an effort to make people who sleep in their cars slightly safer with access to bathrooms and a tiny house with some heat. No decisions have been made in terms of locations. Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections has requested permits on SPR land; however, SPR is not involved but has been asked to grant the permits. The City is holding public meetings and not all are on SPR property.

Supervisor training today for employee engagement. Morale ebbs and flows and lots of external influences around employee engagement. Managers rolled up their sleeves and discussed engaging employees through a lens of race and gender equity. SPR leadership will continue to track this. This is a follow-up to the Foundations of Change training.

SPR hired a Race and Social Justice Strategic Advisor: Bianca Hill. They served as SPR’s Aquatics Manager, and in addition to a portfolio of parks and recreation work, they have lead programs and services with a focus on equity and social justice.

Snow storm – SPR opened warming centers at Garfield and Bitter Lake Community Centers for homeless people to get inside. Averaged about 180 people over the three weeks. SPR staff experienced the gamut of homelessness: lewd conduct, drug use, mental health issues, ... It was mostly single adults, SPR staff was not trained for dealing with this population. SPR recreation staff

served 780 shelter clients, served 11,000 hot meals. Maintenance staff cleared snow from 11 elementary schools, libraries, and trucks brought rock salt to neighboring smaller cities. SPR also assisted Seattle Public Utilities in siting large garbage containers.

There were lots of lessons learned; more discussions about whether SPR is the best org to operate low-barrier shelters. If so, SPR would need more Seattle Police Department support in the evenings; having a dedicated officer would have been good. Staff were working 12-hour shifts; duration of shelter operations; a dedicated human services provider should come to help.

3 staff persons were assaulted one evening.

SPD and human services providers were bringing people to the shelter community centers for shelter.

Through this experience, there were highlights. There were some homeless people who reconnected with their families and went home.

The snow event provided HSD with a captive audience to talk with people and find out who is living unsheltered in the city and what they need in order to be housed.

6 people died during the storm due to exposure.

HSD was largely responsible for triage. City's emergency management plan delegates mass sheltering and emergency sheltering and safe parking lots. HSD decided SPR facilities would be low-barrier because that has the most need.

Lowman Beach – SPR staff met with Councilmember Herbold; she was well-versed on this issue. There is a seawall at the north-end of Lowman Beach that is failing. SPR has asked other agencies if they would permit replacement of the seawall. The Seawall is being removed because it is better for the salmon. There is no conclusive evidence that this will happen. SPR staff had a meeting with neighbors and elected officials about mitigating impacts from the seawall removal. There is a tennis court that will become unstable because of the removal of the seawall. Public meeting tonight, SPR staff are telling neighbors the department is looking at ways to mitigate impact.

Replacing the seawall is not environmentally-friendly; removal promotes salmon recovery; budget for the project is being funded to replace the wall and create the beach area.

SPR hired new Recreation Director – Justin Cutler. Cutler comes to us from Colorado and has robust experience in parks and recreation. He has a proven track record in performance management, building bridges to increase safety in facilities, and improving customer experience.

Safe parking lots – Commissioner Byers asks for a list of sites being considered. And what the criteria are that city is using to determine where sites will go. And what kind of care will be

involved. Commissioner Akita expresses interest and would love to get information for community meetings in advance.

The safe parking lots meet a safety need.

## **Presentation and Possible Vote: Electric Vehicle Charging Stations**

Presented by Joelle Hammerstad, Sustainable Operations Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation  
Jacob Orenberg, Capital Projects Coordinator, Seattle City Light

Joelle introduces herself and Jacob Orenberg from Seattle City Light.

Drive Clean Seattle Initiative -announced in 2016; seeks to electrify transportation in Seattle to achieve the City's climate change goals. The purpose of Drive Clean is to reach carbon neutral goal by 2050.

The initiative tasks City Light with installing 20 public fast chargers for electric vehicles to encourage the purchase of electric vehicles. As of today, they have installed 2 fast chargers near the Beacon Hill light rail station, and these 4 chargers proposed today will also count toward that goal of 20 fast chargers.

This project has been in planning since 2017; Both City Light and Parks Department staff have been working together to plan for this project since 2017. We investigated 7 different Seattle parks for EV chargers and eventually determined that Magnuson Park and Gas Works Park were the most feasible options. SPR staff briefed the Parks ProView team twice in 2018 and incorporated all their feedback into the station designs and expect to brief the Parks ProView Tech team soon. Internal ProView has done initial vetting on design; public process has been done.

After this meeting; staff will take it to another review process if Interim Superintendent Williams directs them to move forward.

Jacob Orenberg gets specific about the locations and technology involved.

Magnuson - Locate charging stations in Parking lot W6; centrally located to most of the park facilities and Solid Ground housing facilities. 2 fast chargers will take 3 existing parking stalls and will be fully accessible for ADA purposes.

Gas Works Park - West side of parking lot along N Northlake way. Improve ADA accessibility; install new transformer on existing pole. Like Magnuson, taking 3 parking spots for 2 Electric-Vehicle spaces with 5-foot access aisle. The charger is on a different side than the cables, which allows them to operate the charger without impeding pedestrians on the walkway.

## **Outreach and Engagement Activities**

In general, there was support for the project. SPR and SCL staff attended stakeholder meetings. There were some questions that are answered in the briefing paper. SPR has a prescriptive public involvement plan that they followed. Posted signs at each site and sent out notices to neighbors within a ¼ mile.

Outreach on social media and through the SPR blog.

Timeline: End of March/beg April to get to construction; it would probably take weeks not months; project staff will take into consideration the event scheduling.

Average cost to charge - .43/kwt hour; rate redesign happening through Seattle Public Utilities. Costs roughly \$7.00.

Vandalism? Very few reports of vandalism of this infrastructure; sometimes people unplug the car meaning they will stop charging.

At this point, SCL has 2 stations in 2 locations and 1 on Beacon Hill. They hope to have 20 E/V charging stations by year end. The sites are identified and in various stages of planning. No other park locations. Looked at over 120 sites in the service territory and these 2 sites are the best.

They will implement 1-hour time limits for charging; much of the charging is about 15 minutes in length.

There are several apps that people use to find publicly accessible charging stations – plugshare – lists every publicly accessible charging station in the country.

What is SCL's percentage renewable electricity? 100% is renewable; SCL buys carbon offset if, for some reason, an aspect of it is not renewable.

Commissioner Byers moves the Board recommend the Superintendent to approve this project and commend the staff for doing such a great job; Commissioner Cook seconds. Interim Superintendent Williams adds that staff has done a great job moving through internal bureaucracy to get this done. The board approves unanimously.

## **Colman Park VMP Update**

Jon Jainga, Natural Resources Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Interim Superintendent Williams reminds the Board and community members in attendance of the principles Superintendent Aguirre laid down originally:

- Support gradual transition and creating view corridors
- Support Green Seattle Partnership to remove and plant trees;
- Supported the creation of a viewpoint taskforce which was done a few months ago.

## **Background**

In 2004, Mayor Nickels asked the Cascade Land Conservancy to team up with the City to help make the vision of thriving forested parklands a reality. The resulting Green Seattle Partnership is dedicated to promoting a livable city by re-establishing and maintaining healthy forested parklands. The partnership's goal is to improve quality of life in Seattle by restoring and maintaining 2,500 acres of forested parklands by 2025. It is the largest urban forest restoration effort in the nation.

Nearly fourteen years in the making, the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) is now more than halfway through the initial strategic plan, And over 1,691 acres of Seattle's forests are well on their way to being restored to fertile, valuable and beneficial spaces for communities to enjoy.

Seattle's park system is made up of 485 parks on 6,412 acres with an estimated 300,000 trees, all which support Seattle's urban forest. The urban forest is comprised of not just trees, but also shrubs, understory plants, soil, insects, and wildlife. SPR's urban forestry division maintains trees and forested parkland on SPR property.

The Vegetation Management Plan and the Tree policy share common ecological elements including specifications for non-native invasive plant removal, a native plant replacement plan, and a scheduled ongoing maintenance plan to ensure success in restoring and maintaining our urban parklands.

The Vegetation Management Plans restores the forest health and bring back the traditional Puget Sound mixed lowland forest. Over the years, Seattle forests have been un-managed mis-managed, neglected and poorly stewarded. In recent years Seattle residents have been re-engaging and volunteering in parks, SPR has seen a shift towards better, more sustainable urban forestry practices. The traditional forests in this area contained a mixture of coniferous and deciduous trees. Unfortunately, what staff see on the ground are monoculture forests of predominantly deciduous trees (Big-leaf maple) which in many areas have been topped or otherwise mis-managed for a variety of reasons such as views and utility conflicts. Deciduous trees do not provide the year around stormwater benefits that one sees from evergreen trees and shrubs.

## **Timeline**

Robert Stowers, Parks and Environment Division Director reviews the timeline for Colman Park community group.

- 2015
  - Community group applies for a Neighborhood Matching Fund.
  - Friends of Colman Park Vista receives a Small and Simple grant to help them develop a Vegetation Management Plan.
  - The Friends of submitted the VMP to our department. SPR returned the plan with edits and requested a plant list.

- 2016
  - May: Public meeting to discuss project and review site options
  - June: Second public workshop held
  - FoCPV presents plans to ProView
  - Revised VMP submitted to SPR
  - Oct: SPR requests edits and a plant list
  - Nov: SPR sends letter to FoCPV laying out expectations and path forward for project completion
  - Dec: Meeting to discuss next steps. SPR hires environmental consultant
- 2017
  - Conversations continue between SPR and FoCPV
  - May: Superintendent's report at Board of Park Commissioners
  - June: Presentation at Board of Park Commissioners
  - Sept: SPR Superintendent announces decision regarding Colman Park restoration
- 2018
  - March: SPR Engineering, Arborist, and Plant Ecologist site visit
  - May: Walking tour with SPR and community members
  - Oct: Colman West Slope walking tour
  - Nov: Draft VMP reviewed
  - Dec: SPR develops planting scope, aligning with proposed VMP
- 2019
  - Continue reviewing draft VMP
  - Feb: Update presented to the Board of Park Commissioners
  - March: VMP released for public comments – March 1 – 31
  - Continue restoration efforts at Colman Park

**Colman Park VMP –**

- The 2015 Small and Simple Grant application was defined to restore Colman Park's West Slope to Olmsted Design Principals.
- The original Friends of Colman Park Vista (FoCPV) proposal aligned with our SPR Vegetation Management Plan goals.
- The original proposal was also consistent with the Olmsted Design Principles.
- The July 2016 draft VMP submitted by FoCPV could not be approved by SPR; the draft Vegetation Management Plan turned into a view development proposal.

The original Friends of Group's proposal aligns with the SPR Vegetation Management Plan goals and objects of: Improving the overall park and forest health; Restoring and sustaining a healthy diverse forest type of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees; Reestablish Seattle's Urban Forest; Improving the urban wildlife habitat and species diversity; enhancing the natural aesthetic and public perception of our parkland, and improve the stewardship in parks.

Their original proposal also associates with the Olmsted Design Principles;

### **Sustainable Design and Environmental Conservation**

The design should allow for long-term maintenance and ensure the realization and preservation of the design intent. Plant materials should thrive, be non-invasive, and require little maintenance. The design should conserve the natural features of the site to the greatest extent possible and provide for the continued ecological health of the area.

SPR's goal for the Colman Park VMP is the restoration of the forest complexity in species type and size which provides better habitat, plant species diversity, ecological function and slope stability

Plant materials should thrive, be non-invasive, and require little maintenance. The design should conserve the natural features of the site to the greatest extent possible and provide for the continued ecological health of the area.

As property owner SPR has the final say on design elements and vegetation. A directive was made and SPR took on the task to complete the VMP.

### **Colman Park VMP – SPR Completed**

SPR's goal is to complete the Vegetation Management Plan to help guide future restoration work in Colman Park, consistent with the citywide effort and the Green Seattle Partnership goal of parkland restoration. To that end, staff completed the following actions in moving forward.

- GSP staff completed outline for Colman Park (Nov. 7, 2016 Letter)
- SPR provided the plant list and a phased approach to the work
- SPR Engineering, Arborist & Plant Ecologist provided new site profile and plan view
- GSP completed Phase 1 Invasive Plant Removal and thinning areas for native plants
- The consultant was rehired by SPR to incorporate edits to the VMP
- GSP Staff developed and incorporated the Colman Park planting plan into the VMP
- Draft VMP reviewed by SPR
- GSP Staff started Phase 2 Native Plant Installation and planting

These are the tasks that were asked of SPR to complete; these tasks have been completed.

Because there was much public conversation and inquires regarding park viewpoints citywide; SPR formed a Viewpoint Advisory Team

### **Viewpoint Advisory Team**

As part of its 2018 work plan, SPR committed to reviewing and updating its viewpoint policies. This includes reviewing criteria, developing sustainable maintenance strategies, associated policies, and determining funding needs for the 16 officially designated viewpoints.



As part of this work, a Viewpoint Advisory Team was convened and charged with developing a set of options to the Superintendent that provided a feasible and equitable approach to preserving and maintaining our 16 designated viewpoints.

Over the course of four meetings, the group received several formal presentations to help with the development process. The Viewpoint Advisory Team concluded its work on Thursday, October 24, 2018 and consensus was reached among the members who were in attendance at that meeting. Those recommendations were presented as a final report to Interim Superintendent Williams on December 6, 2018.

The group determined early on to focus on the 16 officially designated viewpoints. The subsequent recommendations fell into four categories: resources, vegetation management plans, best management practices, and future considerations.

Colman Park is not one of the 16 officially designated viewpoints.

The highest priority is to begin restoration efforts on the 16 designated viewpoints. To ensure success, SPR staff need to develop the following:

- Comprehensive budget pertaining to all costs associated with the effort.
- Timeline, outlining the various steps to fully understand the extent of work to ensure success.
- Updating the 2005 Viewpoint Management Plan, including applying a landscape designer lens for specs/renderings.

**Next steps:**

Public draft Colman Park VMP

March 1 starts public comment period. The Board seems to agree that there is not going to be a 1964 viewpoint as it was in the past.

Commissioner Byers says the Colman Park project has been a very frustrating issue. These people tried in good faith to do something for their park; at various times the department has provided inconsistent answers and there has been a lack of communication. Viewpoint Committee was established to protect views in a thoughtful way. Colman was not even a part of that process; and the Taskforce did not create a process for formally designating a viewpoint. Because it was never designated a viewpoint there will not be a mechanism for people to try for a viewpoint.

Interim Superintendent Williams says the department does not want to create a mechanism for new viewpoints because funding for viewpoints is always vulnerable. Viewpoint funding gets cut to keep doors open at community centers; SPR cannot maintain all the viewpoints that people want. Maintaining view corridors has been a major contention for communities.

SPR can return with a proposal on how to consider future viewpoints. However, it feels irresponsible to make these mechanisms if we cannot maintain it. Commissioner Farmer says there

are planting plans that could allow for view corridors; she hasn't yet seen the VMP so she doesn't feel able to comment.

Interim Superintendent Williams says he is afraid of setting a precedent to others who may want views. Interim Superintendent Williams reminds the Board about having to be tough and disappoint community members around projects; and he also comments he loves saying yes and he isn't insensitive to the community's disappointment. Interim Superintendent Williams agrees to discuss funding and regulations with other city departments and elected officials regarding creating viewpoints.

There is a need for ensuring that the VMP links up with a timeframe; Andréa asks for more detail on how next steps get carried out.

No new acreage in restoration because they are having to water, mulch and weed. GSP has removed several big leaf maples and poplars;

Jon says this will be an iterative process to remove trees, assess the view or lack of view, and then continue the editing/planting process.

The Board requests SPR/GSP keep people involved after there is an assessment.

Interim Superintendent Williams reiterates that they are committed to a process and a VMP that is pliable to allow for modifications.

SPR will incorporate comments in VMP or provide reasons to not use comments and bring that back to community.

The other viewpoints are on similar slopes.

SPR hears from groups that want viewpoints designated all over the city.

Neighborhood Matching Fund Grant was a trigger for this conversation.

SPR has a true compassionate effort to make; there are 16 designated viewpoints that need maintenance and VMPs.

VMP was for the whole park. The Mt. Baker view is 2 blocks away.

## **Old/New Business**

Jessica went to the Bitter Lake Pancake Breakfast. She had a great time. Jessica talked to staff and they loved that the board member was there. Biggest feedback – sharps containers. The folks said they missed Interim Superintendent Williams's welcome letter in this season's Lifelong Learning catalog.

Fund the fun Breakfast – the board is invited to attend the Fund the Fun Breakfast, a fundraiser for recreation scholarships. Commissioner Cook is hosting a table and he invites the commissioners to attend. It is on March 21. There is a Special Master of Ceremonies for the breakfast – Commissioner Lowe!

**There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 8:45pm.**

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
William Lowe, Chair  
Board of Park Commissioners