



Minutes

Joint Board of Park Commissioners/Park District Oversight Committee

Via WebEx

Thursday, January 28, 2021

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

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting is called to order at 6:35pm and the Board members introduce themselves.

Public Comment

Terry Holme – former Park Board Commissioner; Rainier Valley Coalition of Greenways and Safe Streets. Advocates for long-term changes to disallowing motor vehicles on Lake Washington Boulevard between Mount Baker Beach and Seward Park. This is an opportunity to protect this beautiful shoreline park for future generations.

Judy Tangen – Loyal Heights Advisory Council; ARC runs all programming for Seattle Parks and Recreation – for childcare, before and after school care. This pandemic is really impacting ARC, decimating their budget. Is there a plan to ensure that ARC survives?

Superintendent's Update

Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Responds to public comment:

- Meeting last week with SDOT to discuss closing portions of Lake Washington Boulevard more regularly; including a closure for mid-winter break.
- ARC is a critical partner for recreation programming; SPR supports them as much as possible.

South Lake Union Community Center: The on-line open house for the new South Lake Union Community Center (part of the Mercer Megablock development) is live as of this morning and open until 2/18. You can find the link on the SPR website: <https://slucc.infocommunity.org/>.

Salmon Bay Park: On January 21, SPR held a virtual public meeting to share three concept designs for the play area renovation.

Clean City Initiative – Interdepartmental team cleaning public spaces.

- Needles: 1,339 needles removed from encampment locations.

- Pounds of Trash: 106,560 pounds of trash removed from 44 encampment locations and 2 park emphasis cleans.
- Park Emphasis Cleans/Jamboree locations: Meridian Playground and Woodland Park

Financed through supplemental funding to surge the clean-up efforts.

Indoor Shower Program: Shower Program: We served 406 users from Jan. 20 through 26. Uplift NW served the most users: 140. Rainier was closed on Jan. 20 for repairs

Food distribution: Food Lifeline continues to distribute free food boxes (meat and vegetables) at the Rainier Beach Community Center on Wednesdays.

ADA presentation at ET: SPR Staff have been working on introducing a mandatory ADA training specific to each division. This training will include: learning to communicate differently-abled people

RCO Board meeting re transferring Red Barn Ranch to North Rainier: On Wednesday, January 26, 2021, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board approved the City's request to transfer recreational covenants from the City's Red Barn Ranch property onto another property in the Seattle Parks and Recreation system – a site called the North Rainier Park. This step was part of a larger, ongoing effort to address the fact that the City no longer uses the Red Barn Ranch property for recreational purposes. The immediate next steps involve formalizing and getting City Council approval for the covenant transfer documents.

SPR is supportive of transferring the property to a BIPOC org that can leverage its' value and support Black farming org that can take advantage of the land.

Commissioner Sivarajan asks about the sanitation and resulting health issues in parks in letter from community member. SPR staff will provide the letter to Superintendent Aguirre and respond to the Boards about it.

Commissioner Lowe asks about what SPR staff are doing to ameliorate conditions around Williams Place Park. Superintendent Aguirre responds that staff clean their regularly and outreach efforts are ongoing.

Councilmember Lewis' Tiny house villages proposal – Superintendent Aguirre is supportive of improving housing and safety for homeless.

Update: Park District Planning

Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Next 6-year Planning Cycle: 2023-2028

- SPR has made this decision given ongoing pandemic and economic uncertainty. We will continue delivering emergency services and focusing on supporting pandemic response and recovery before launching a long-term planning effort.
- There is still abundant work to be done -- particularly reexamining some of our recent commitments within new context the pandemic, economic downturn, and racial reckoning have introduced.
- Our 2021 efforts will include some focused outreach – we will seek partnership & input from the Park Board on this work, keep PDOC in the loop as well.
- We will follow the 2021 model to develop a standalone “bridge year” for Park District funding for 2022 budget.
- Full cycle planning for 2023-2028 cycle will resume early 2022.

2021

Refresh & Reflect:

- **Refresh:** Early in the year, SPR will be revisiting some materials seen before (some updated, some not) to refresh their memories on the analysis already done and questions already answered about the Park District in 2015-2020
- **Reflect:** As SPR works to report out on the first cycle of the Park District, SPR will reflect on major accomplishments and lessons learned.
- And discuss how to best describe the financial changes that occurred along the way as well as the disruption in normal programming associated with the pandemic – which will show up in the numbers and performance measures

Reorient: SPR will plan to engage in discussion around:

- Strategic Plan focusing efforts.
- Deepening commitment to equity.
- Parks and Recreation’s role in recovery.
- Possible implications of all that on the next Park District planning effort.

Budget implications of the delay for projects not able to be evaluated/reviewed in the last cycle. Overhauling Major Projects Challenge Fund will result in disappointed community members due to delay in planning cycle. Superintendent Aguirre agrees, given what is happening, SPR and the Boards will need to have difficult discussions about how to prioritize funds.

Commissioner Byers is optimistic that President Biden will create a “New Deal” type package, has SPR started to identify projects that would qualify? Superintendent Aguirre says yes, the City is looking at this from a citywide perspective. Commissioner Byers asks if there’s a citywide list to the capital project priorities. Superintendent Aguirre will see what can be shared.

Outdoor Recreation Legacy program – Great American Outdoors Act funding as a potential funding opportunity.

Discussion: Response to Board letter regarding Boards structure

Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Superintendent Aguirre reviews the 2021 Calendar for the Boards. Joint meetings will occur once a month on the 2nd Thursday and Board of Park Commissioners meetings on the 4th Thursdays. This will allow broader conversations about budget at one meeting, and more focused policy discussions at Park Board meetings.

Commissioner Farmer would like to schedule a Park Board retreat in October.

Seattle Parks and Recreation staffs and supports two department-wide community-based oversight boards/commissions: The Board of Park Commissioners (Park Board) and the Park District Oversight Committee (PDOC).

The Park Board recently sent a letter to Seattle Parks and Recreation requesting that we identify and present options on consolidating the Park Board and PDOC.

Concerns

Specific concerns raised by the Commissioners and PDOC members include:

- Ambiguity and overlap of efforts in communicating information and in discussions that occur in separate, parallel meetings.
- Confusion and frustration from members of the public on lack of clarity on how or whether they should engage with the Board, PDOC or both on issues.
- Uncertainty among Board and PDOC members on their respective and collective roles in advising the City on policies and funding.

Park Board Roles & Responsibilities

The Board of Park Commissioners acts in an advisory capacity to the Mayor, City Council, Seattle Parks and Recreation and other City departments in respect to park and recreation matters.

Responsibilities and Board make-up are specified in SMC 3.26.010.

Consult with the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation on:

- Comprehensive plan and capital improvement program
- Policies for planning, development and implementation of policy
- Proposed SPR annual budget
- Hold public meetings for the purpose of reviewing park and recreation programs and objectives with community groups

PDOC Roles & Responsibilities

Provide advice to the Mayor, City Council, and SPR Supt. related to the Seattle Park District.

The roles and responsibilities are laid out in the Interlocal Agreement and include providing the Mayor, Council, and Superintendent:

- Annual report on the progress of expenditures
- Mid-term report half-way through each 6-year period
- Public meetings to help inform recommendations to the Superintendent on the 6-year spending plan update
- Final report in advance of each 6-year update to the spending plan
- Major Project Challenge Fund evaluation
- Report to the Superintendent and Park Board on implementation and/or needed adjustments in services or spending.

PDOC was created to ensure specific accountability to MPD similar to what community had for prior levies. There will need to be engagement and messaging around this to ensure stakeholders understand rationale for change

PDOC & Park Board Membership and Terms

PDOC

- Representatives of the seven City Council districts
- Four City of Seattle commission representatives
- Four Citywide representatives (currently through a Park Board membership requirement)
- **Positions are staggered 3-year terms*

Park Board

- The Board consists of 9 members
- Four appointed by the Mayor
- Four appointed by the City Council
- One is a young adult position (Get Engaged)
- **Positions (aside from Get Engaged) are staggered 3-year terms*

Potential Option for Consolidation

- Consolidate the Board of Park Commissioners and PDOC. Merging these two advisory bodies would allow them to consider resources in the full context of SPR's overall funding, policies and needs.
- Utilize membership approach for current PDOC. Given the larger size of the Park District Oversight Committee (PDOC) as well as the inclusion of Council district representation and City Commission members, staff recommend utilizing its structure with broader

representation of the City of Seattle and those we serve (elected officials have already endorsed this structure)

- This group of individuals could serve on a single entity, the Board of Park Commissioners. They could continue meeting twice a month and provide the functions currently assigned to the Park District Oversight Committee and the Board of Park Commissioners.
- The open seats would be filled with individuals that fill gaps in current membership and take into account diversity of representation based on background, areas of interest and/or expertise.

Discussion

- The Interlocal Agreement was thoughtful to ensure broader community representation. The joint Boards has provided a lot of great discussions and better insights into issues that come before them.
- The 4 Park Board members on PDOC would be put into other seats.
- Challenging to make decisions as a PDOC member since they do not get the same department-wide perspective as the Board of Park Commissioners
- Critical to public engagement to make it clearer how the public may engage with the Board. Sub-committees are great for providing structure to Board issues.
- Continue discussion regarding what items come to a vote. Commissioners could use clarification.
- Suggest orientation/onboarding materials for new members.
- Adding another layer to PDOC duties and diluting the strength of the PDOC.
- Add another Get Engaged member or 2.
- Member recruitment – Identify better ways to increase representation on the board and make it more accessible to apply.
- A planning commission member to help with upcoming Park District planning efforts.

Legislative Action Needed for Changes

In order to consolidate the Board of Park Commissioners and PDOC the following legislative action would be required:

- Amend the current Seattle Park District Interlocal Agreement – Provision 4.4 and Resolution 1 to reflect this work would be done by the newly combined committee.
- Amend SMC 3.26.010 to align the Park Board’s charter with new responsibilities and membership requirements for the Board.

Timeline and Next Steps

March – May: Identify gaps that need to be filled and seek opportunities to attract qualified applicants.

June – September: Review applications, interview potential candidates and prepare legislation packets for City Council.

October – January 2022: Bring legislation to the City Council for consideration and approval. Onboard new members.

Discussion & Questions

- New entity would maintain responsibilities of joint Boards. This should be articulated more clearly to the public.
- What are the Mayoral/ City Council appointment responsibilities of representatives?
- Flexibility of Commission representatives because needs may change over time.
- Serious care on composition and representation – mindful of having diverse voices; BIPOC and various interests and specialties.
- Would SPR have to amend the Charter? SPR staff will follow-up.
- Does SPR anticipate these changes being controversial? SPR will need to be clear with the public. There will have to be a public process, so the public has an opportunity to chime in.
- Strong committee structure within the Board; What could subcommittees be? Commissioners to brainstorm and discuss at next opportunity.
- Strong executive committee will be really important.
 - Lessons learned before next meeting from current exec committee; executive committee members to brainstorm and discuss at next opportunity.
- More officers within the larger Board
- SPR staff will review comments and staff will work on a refined proposal and next steps.
- SPR staff to remain mindful of the amount of time and expectations for board members as they look at structure and process.
- March 11 will be the next Joint meeting for this topic to return to the Board.
- Remember that there are external Boards for Park Board representatives; ARC will need a new member when Dennis' term ends.
- Concerns and questions can be emailed to Rachel or Paula. Board and staff should be mindful about the pros and cons before decisions are made.
- So many appointments on PDOC are specific for districts or commissions, Commissioner Byers worries that there will be special interests instead of city-wide perspectives.
- Pros/Cons of restructure, background information regarding time commitment, responsibilities and obligations for each board.
- Consideration of timeline for research/legal constraints and challenges
- Transitional period of time in SPR and City; new administration will also change the focus and charge of the boards.

- History of PDOC/Park Board relations with SPR staff; reexamine relationship and communication void between Board and staff.
- Is there space for indigenous representation on the Board?

Old/New Business

SPR has not received confirmation that a representative from Human Services Department or Deputy Mayor will attend the February 11 meeting. Rachel to amend January 14 minutes to add a bullet to the list of questions from the Deputy Mayor to include a response Commissioner Byers' article.

There being no other business, the meeting is called to adjourn at 8:30pm.