



## **MEMORANDUM**

Date: April 6, 2016

To: Board of Park Commissioners

From: Patrick Merriam, Manager, North Region Park Resources

Subject: Change in Park Hours for Cowen Park, Ravenna Park, and Adjacent Parking Lots

### **Requested Board Action**

Parks recently completed an 18-month pilot project in Cowen Park, as well as the adjacent parking lot, that changed the operating hours from 4:00 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. This was done to respond to concerns regarding illegal behaviors and activities that were occurring in the park.

Based on Seattle Municipal Code Section 18.12.245, the Superintendent, in conjunction with the Board of Park Commissioners holds a public hearing and the Board makes a recommendation on whether to make the change in hours permanent. This decision is based on staff evaluation and public testimony. The Board's vote can occur the same day as the presentation of the evaluation or at a later date should the Commissioners require additional information to make a decision.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Cowen Park, Ravenna Park, and the adjacent parking lots meet the established criteria to permanently change the operating hours. Staff recommend approval of changing the operating hours to 6:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. in order to continue the progress made during the pilot. This adjustment in hours, over the 18-month pilot period, reduced illegal behaviors and noticeably reduced the number of complaints and negative impacts on the Cowen/Ravenna Park neighbors and community. Seattle Parks and Recreation staff have noticed a reduction in beer bottles, and other signs of illicit activities at the parks and in the parking lots. Because Cowen Park and Ravenna Park are connected by a path system, staff recommend that the change in operating hours include Ravenna Park. Ravenna Park was not included in the pilot.

## **Park Description and location**

Cowen Park, located at 5849 15th Ave NE, and Ravenna Park, located at 5520 Ravenna Ave NE, are categorized as Neighborhood Parks. The City of Seattle acquired the land for these parks in 1911. Cowen Park and Ravenna Park are connected by a path system, they are popular spots for hiking and jogging. These parks also provide children's play areas, picnic areas, athletic fields, and a creek.

## **Issues**

There have been continuous complaints about illegal behavior occurring at these parks and in the adjacent parking lots. Drinking and drug use occur around the clock and young people congregate at all hours. Neighbors and Parks staff cite four specific reasons for requesting the change in hours:

- 1) Maintenance workers are burdened with cleaning drug baggies, beer cans, broken glass, laden trash, and bio waste from the parking lot area.
- 2) Extensive graffiti is pervasive, especially when cars remain in the parking lot late at night and after the park has closed. Changing the closing time to 10:00 p.m. will enable SPD to do a sweep through the park and enforce the closure time.
- 3) Neighbors frequently call 911 because of the late night activities which often include loud and boisterous behavior, in addition to the illegal activity. A rape recently occurred at the comfort station.
- 4) Community members do not feel safe confronting those who loiter in the park after hours and the earlier closure time enables the police to confront these individuals.

## **Additional Information**

Patrick Merriam: Patrick.Merriam@Seattle.gov

## **Attachments**

Maps of Ravenna Park and Cowen Park