

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
February 25, 2016

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>
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Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Marty Bluewater

Tom Byers

Dennis Cook

Bob Edmiston

Diana Kincaid

William Lowe

Michael Padilla

Barbara Wright, Vice Chair

Excused:

Tom Tierney, Chair

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Christopher Williams, Deputy Superintendent

Susan Golub, Policy Unit 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.

John C. Little Award Presentation

John C. Little, Sr. was a longtime community volunteer and former Park Board member who was devoted to the growth and well-being of young people.

Deputy Superintendent Williams presents Johnnie Williams, Recreation Leader at High Point Community Center with the John C. Little Award. The people who nominated Johnnie for this award highlighted his passion for and dedication to mentoring youth, and supporting culturally diverse families in some of the most under-served communities in Seattle.

Stephanie, John C. Little's granddaughter, bestows gifts upon Johnnie Williams. She thanks him for his dedication and service to his community. He makes a difference and embodies the spirit of the award.

Consent Items

Commissioner Wright asks for approval of the Consent Items, the February 25 Agenda and the Acknowledgment of Correspondence. Commissioner Bluewater moves and Commissioner Edmiston seconds and the Consent Items are approved.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

Ellen Escarcega, Chair of Citizens for Off-Leash Areas, a 20-year-old 501c3 non-profit. She states the need for more off-leash area and improvements to existing Off-Leash Areas (OLAs). Seattle has fewer areas for off-leash dogs than other major U.S. cities. She details COLAs participation in creating of the Master Plan, including survey taking, road trips to Portland and Vancouver with SPR staff, and participating in all seven focus groups. There are 100,000 dog owners in this city and they are supportive of more off-leash areas. Enforcement increases are supported, but will not make a difference.

Alex Brott – Dog ownership is a privilege. She feels she has a right to public safety instead of unsanitary conditions and uncontrolled off-leash dogs. Interactions with dogs should be at the discretion of the non-owners. Play fields should not be considered. Current rules are not enforced already. She has made 13 reports to Animal Control 13 regarding off leash dogs. There needs to be more fenced OLAs for dogs.

Cole Eckerman – Dog bites incidences fall when dogs have more areas to run. Access to OLAs is an equity issue. Dog owners want to be able to walk to an OLA. South Park wants a dog park.

Marianne North, Stone Ave Neighborhood Committee – gives the Park Board a petition 350 people signed asking to convert a lawless 5-block right of way that currently is used for illegal camping and dumping into a dog park. She says they have been lobbying for this for a year.

Carrie Nolen – COLA member, OLAs are not conveniently located. She demands water access; only 1 OLA beach in the entire city. There are not enough dog parks; much demand because there are many large dogs.

Gretchen Hager – dog walker in Seattle for 16+years. Population grows and the demand has grown. Organization collaborating with COLA - Walkers are Off-Leash Friends – WOLF, education on OLAs for public users. Improve IQ of basic dog owner. Pilot education program on Bainbridge. She extends an invitation to work with the city.

Cameron Justam – Remind the board of the Hearing Examiners Decision regarding Cheasty. The study SPR did was inadequate. No other locations were proposed. Project overrode bicycle policy and no high impact in greenspaces.

David Perasso – Forest steward at Martha Washington Park; \$100,000 for Off-Leash Area Master Plan and nothing has been resolved. He implores SPR to work in conjunction with various stakeholders.

Zyanya Brewer – Graduate student at the University of Washington, her dog walker takes her out every day and she feels this is essential for her dog. Limiting the number of dogs, the dog walker can take will make it more expensive and there are no foreseeable benefits to the OLAs. Her dog walker vets and interviews the dogs for social issues.

Kevin Pelletier – Other large cities have more acreage for OLAs.

Eleanor Holstein – There are problems with drainage and structural issues. Large dogs need water access and Magnuson is not enough. Southern part of the city does not have enough. More beach access.

Shawnie Zahniser– dog owner, need more open space for dogs; does not agree with fee for dog walkers.

Charlotte Bontrager- Seattle professional dog walkers, create consistency in industry. Established WOLF in March 2015 with support from COLA. They now have over 35 members equaling 700 taxpaying households. No clear way to correct growing imbalance. Dogs need large spaces to run.

Darren Gill – President Seattle Jr. Seahawks. – Dogs have parks, but African American kids do not. They should be able to play games in their neighborhoods without traveling. Participate in leagues that utilize fields in North Seattle. SPR is segregated. Equity for people of color who need field space. SPR is not considering equity when making these policy decisions.

Donna Hartmann-Miller – Dogs are members of our family and our responsibility to keep them healthy, she asks SPR to look for more dog park opportunities.

Briefing and Discussion: Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI)

Presented by Charles Ng, RSJI Change Team Executive Sponsor and Jules Posadas, RSJI Change Team Co-Lead

Written Briefing

MEMORANDUM

Date: February 25, 2016
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Charles Ng, Executive Sponsor of Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR)'s Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI), and Seattle Parks and Recreation's RSJI Change Team Leadership Subcommittee

Subject: Overview and Summary SPR RSJI efforts and Accomplishments

Requested Board Action

This is an informational briefing about the City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI). It will include an overview and summary of the 2015 accomplishments of the RSJI Change Team, working closely with SPR Leadership.

RSJI Description

The Race and Social Justice Initiative is a citywide effort to realize the vision of racial equity. The Initiative works within City government and with community leaders to get to the root cause of racial inequity: institutional racism. RSJI is led by the Seattle Office of Civil Rights and an interdepartmental team of City staff. All elected officials in the City of Seattle have endorsed and are promoting RSJI.

Brief History

The RSJI was launched in 2004 by former Mayor Greg Nickels, who recognized that there are institutional barriers that create disparities and inequities in the provision of city services to all citizens and communities, as well as within city governments, particularly to those who are underserved and underrepresented. The RSJI required all city departments to become more culturally competent, inclusive, and equitable in its delivery of city services. It also required city departments to look at developing its policies and major initiatives through a RSJI Lens and build a workforce that is reflective and representative of the city's changing demographics. The Seattle Office of Civil Rights (SOCR) was charged by the Mayor to lead efforts and oversee the implementation of this Initiative.

Early Adopters

All city departments were required to create RSJI Change Teams to lead RSJI efforts in their departments. SPR was one of the first departments to get on board. SPR created a RSJI Change Team that consists of a diverse cross section of employees, ranging from management to front line staff. The SPR RSJI Change Team's focus in its early years consisted of learning and receiving Seattle's Office of Civil Rights RSJI trainings and raising awareness about institutional racism and its negative impact on communities of color, employees of color, as well as other forms social inequities, including those related to gender, sexual orientation, and people with physical disabilities. While this focus is still relevant today, the last 5 years' work has been about implementing and effecting change that will result in equitable outcomes in the city's provision of services and workforce equity.

RSJI Change Team Charter Mission Statement

Mission Statement

The Change Team supports the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) and the City's commitment to eliminate racial disparities and achieve racial equity in Seattle by ending institutional and structural racism and inequities in City government. Our mission is to increase access and opportunities for underrepresented and underserved communities to participate in city programs and services, therefore making a difference in people's lives.

2016 RSJI Work Plan:

The SPR RSJI Change Team completed its work with the SPR Management Team to create the 2016 SPR RSJI Work Plan (To be presented at meeting).

Going forward, the SPR RSJI Change Team would like to be a resource for the Park Board and provide any tools and technical support it would like to receive to help it perform its work through a RSJI lens.

Additional Information

Charles Ng: Charles.ng@seattle.gov 684-8001

Briefing

The Race and Social Justice Initiative Change Team is charged with looking at ways to reduce inequities. Citywide initiative for over 10 years and aligns with the core mission of Seattle Parks and Recreation.

The goals of RSJI are incorporated into the Legacy plan core values of Access, Opportunity, and Sustainability.

The current SPR Change Team consists of 18 members from different divisions with 70% people of color and 30% white. Who we are should be reflective of all levels of the organization.

2015 Accomplishments

Advancing opportunities and dismantling racism through use of the racial tool kit, which views policies through an equity lens. Policies reviewed through the tool kit were athletic field scheduling, performance management, and the off-leash area plan.

The Change Team provided technical support for the performance management work so the metrics included equitable outcomes.

Environmental Learning Center Programs – 63% low income and underserved populations

Women and Minority Owned Business (WMBE)

- Purchasing—Achieved 27%; department goal was 16%
- Consulting—Achieved 22%; department goal was 12%
- Construction Contracts—Achieved 26%; department goal was 17%.

2016 goals

- Ensure the development of Parks' 2016 RSJI work plan will include measurable RSJI outcomes that have internal and external focus.
- RSJI Change Team will work with SPR Leadership to conduct outreach back to underrepresented communities that were contacted during the initial Parks Legacy outreach process to inform about the status of the Park District Initiatives and how their input was considered.
- RSJI Change Team will work with SPR's HR Division in making recommendations for improving the department's hiring practices.
- Ensure Park District Funded Initiatives and core SPR business have performance management outcomes aligned with RSJI values and outcomes.

These were baseline goals through a 3-year lens; going forward the department will set higher expectations.

SPR holding workshops and talking to construction companies and subcontractors regarding how to access competitive bid process.

Applications for scholarships is cumbersome – figuring out a way to make it more accessible. The Department continues to make steps forward and leadership has made a commitment to this work.

Currently, SPR does not have any requirements in its construction contracts that require companies to have apprenticeships. There are programs through the Parks division and the Conservation Corps. The City system does not award extra points for hiring companies that provide apprenticeship opportunities.

SPR will be more comprehensive in their strategy working with other city departments to ensure that they are aware of changing demographics and the needs of each community. One result of the Demand Study for recreation is that the needs will change as the population changes. SPR's work will be adaptive to changing communities.

Under-represented populations have a challenge coming to SPR meetings. SPR creating a dedicated position to work full-time on this issue. Align programs offered to cater to life situations. Look at the communities and figure out who to talk to.

Attempt to take RSJI lens and apply it to fees structures; goal is to eliminate drop-in fees. Fees are a barrier to access to community centers. Pay to play is a barrier.

Discussion: Off-Leash Area Plan

Presented by Holly Miller, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Written Briefing



Date: February 25, 2016
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Holly Miller, Senior Policy Advisor
Subject: Off-Leash Area Plan

Requested Board Action

In January, 2016, the Park Board was asked to provide preliminary guidance on key policy issues related to the Off-Leash Area (OLA) Plan. That guidance was reported to Mayor Murray in a policy briefing following the Park Board input.

This update will describe the Superintendent’s preliminary decisions to date in the development of the Off-Leash Area Plan. No action from the Board is requested at this time. The draft plan will be released for public review and comment in March. A public meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 14 as part of a citywide discussion about “livability” in Seattle. Thereafter, the Plan will be finalized along with a final consultation with the Park Board and transmitted to the City Council. We welcome any additional advice or comments from the Park Board.

Project Background

The 2014 Adopted Budget included a City Council Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI, 69-1-B-1) regarding off leash areas (OLAs). Specifically, the SLI requested Seattle Parks and Recreation work in conjunction with the Citizens for Off Leash Areas (COLA) and other stakeholders to create a dog off leash area (OLA) master plan. The purpose of the OLA master plan is to identify a long term plan for the City’s existing 14 OLAs, as well as for maintenance, acquisition, and expansion of OLA projects. In May of 2014, Parks submitted a request to wait until the Park District was approved so that funding included in the District (about \$100,000 annually) could be used to fund the master plan efforts.

Public Involvement Process

In July 2015, Seattle Parks and Recreation invited Seattle dog owners to complete an online survey to understand their behaviors and needs. A link to the survey was made available through the Off-Leash Area (OLA) Strategic Plan page of the SPR website and publicized by local organizations, such as COLA, and various local media outlets. Approximately 3,900 responses were received.

In addition, Parks and Recreation held seven focus groups to hear from people interested in off-leash areas. Through a selection process to ensure representation of a variety of viewpoints, the focus groups included people who self-identified as off-leash area users, individuals opposed to dogs off-leash in parks, and representatives of environmental interests. A facilitator led the focus group discussions aimed at:

- Learning how members of the public perceive off-leash issues;
- Exploring potential alternative designs used in other cities (e.g., hours, off-leash without a fence, using the corner of a regional park, whether we need more fenced areas);
- Identifying potential solutions/options with broad community support;
- Informing development of a set of guiding principles to assist Seattle Parks and Recreation decisions; and
- Understanding priorities for Park District funding.

Input received from the survey, focus groups, on-line comments, and emails will help inform recommendations in the draft Off-Leash Area Plan. Additional public review will occur when the draft plan is completed, currently estimated for late February.

Issues for Discussion

The purpose of the February 25 Park Board discussion is to present the Superintendent's preliminary recommendations on issues related to the Off-Leash Area Plan and to receive any additional advice or comments the Park Board may wish to offer.

1. Should we allow/encourage sponsorships and advertising? It is likely additional funds for off-leash area maintenance and amenities could be raised through sponsorships and advertising at the off-leash areas. Advertising could be in the form of inward-facing signs on off-leash fences. While this type of advertising is consistent with Parks and Recreation's sponsorship policy, it would be a departure from current practice.

At the January 28 Park Board Meeting, Board Members expressed concerns about commercialization implied by the potential posting of signs in OLA's representing donor organizations. The Superintendent conveyed those concerns to the Mayor and both the Mayor and the Superintendent will take the Park Board's concerns under advisement.

2. Should we have unfenced, hours-only off-leash areas? Some cities have unfenced park areas which are used as off-leash areas during specified hours of the day. In these cities, hours-only off-leash areas are very popular with dog owners. Staff heard the following concerns from parks and recreation staff in other cities: 1) Because these areas are unfenced, dogs go beyond the designated off-leash areas; 2) Dog owners do not abide by the specified off-leash hours and the "hours-only" areas become all-day, unfenced off-leash areas.

While there was some support expressed at the January 28 Board meeting for a pilot unfenced area, staff also heard concerns about conflicts between dogs and people if off-leash areas are unfenced.

Based on these concerns and limited animal control enforcement in Seattle, the Superintendent is recommending against establishing unfenced, hours-only off-leash areas at this time.

3. How should new OLAs be added to the system? One approach to create new OLAs would be similar to the approach used for other park uses, such as children's play area, p-patches and athletic facilities. This would allow for new OLAs to be added to the system through public involvement processes around new park development and/or existing park redevelopment. Another approach would be for Parks and Recreation to identify gaps in the City and pursue locating off-leash areas in these neighborhoods. No funding is available for creation of new OLA's: Park District funding will be available for increased maintenance and rehabilitation of existing OLA's.

Consistent with the discussion at the January 28 Board meeting, the Superintendent is recommending new OLA's be added through regular new park development and/or existing park redevelopment processes. Community engagement in such processes is robust and allows community members to weigh in on specific community needs and trade-offs. Parks and Recreation can also highlight geographic dispersion issues during the planning process. Typically, when new features are added in park development/redevelopment, Parks and Recreation requests or allocates funding for maintenance in a systematic manner, thus helping to prevent further dilution of maintenance of the OLA's.

Also, in response to the Board's discussion about dogs being a City issue and not just a Parks and Recreation issue, the Plan will recommend exploring locating off-leash areas on non-Parks and Recreation property.

4. Should there be a restriction on the number of dogs an individual can bring to an off-leash area? Parks staff have seen professional dog walkers bring as many as ten dogs to an off-leash area. Currently people in Seattle are limited to three dogs per household. Should this limit carry over to how many dogs a person can bring to an OLA?
Marymoor Park in King County has a large off-leash area with a three dog per person limit, plus a permit which allows professional dog walkers to bring more dogs. Should Seattle investigate/institute a professional dog walkers' permit?

The Superintendent recommends limiting the number of dogs one person can bring at one time into an OLA to 3, the same cap the City has on the number of dogs per household. The Superintendent also recommends implementing a professional dog walker permit process, modeled on the Marymoor Park permit, with a permit fee. Seattle may want to decrease the maximum number of dogs permitted per dog walker from Marymoor's maximum of 10. Staff are consulting with COLA and professional dog walkers to recommend a Seattle maximum, bearing in mind this is a business for many individuals.

Additional Update **Enforcement**

Beginning this month, there will be a two-person team, one Animal Control staff and one Parks and Recreation staff, patrolling parks with the sole purpose of enforcing leash and scoop laws. Funding for the team comes from the Park District's Make Parks Safer Initiative and addressed the number one complaint received by Parks: off-leash dogs in parks.

Budget

The Off-Leash Area Plan will review maintenance needs at the existing 14 OLAs. Funding for the maintenance improvements will be from the \$106,000 provided in the Park District's Improve Dog Off-Leash Areas initiative.

Next Steps

February

- Review Superintendent's recommendations with Park Board on February 25.
- Notify City Council of delay in delivery of proposed plan in response to SLI (the SLI is due Feb.29.)

March

- Release draft People, Dogs and Parks Plan
- Brief City Councilmembers on draft plan

April/May

- Conduct public meeting(s)
- Finalize plan incorporating public feedback
- Brief Park Board on final plan
- Brief Mayor on final plan
- Brief City Councilmembers on final plan

June

- Submit final plan to City Council

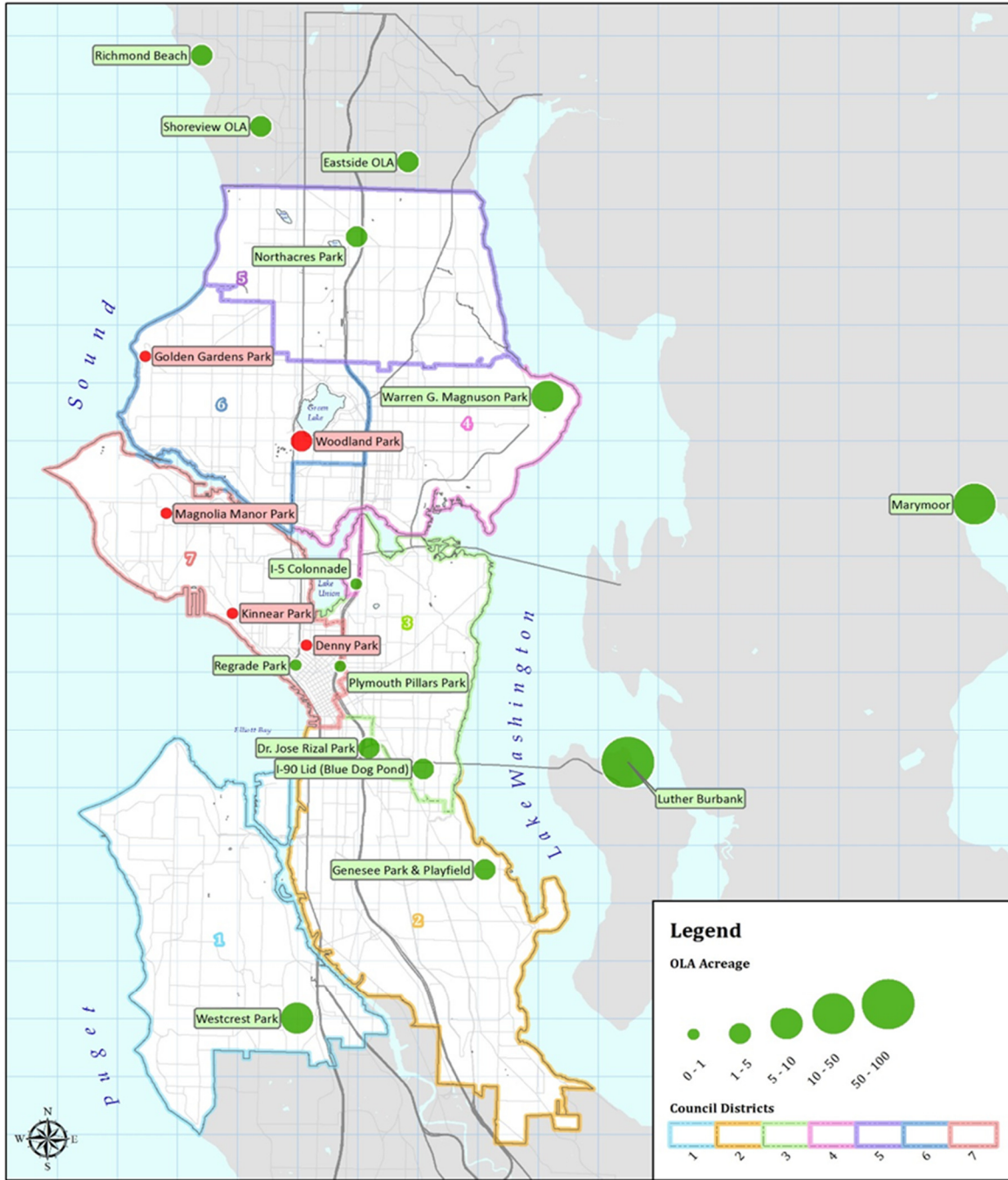
Attachment: Off-Leash Area Map

Additional Information

holly.miller@seattle.gov

<http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/offleash/>

Off Leash Area Peak/Capacity Analysis Map



1:130,000 0 1 2 3 4 Miles

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Discussion

SPR staff will be engaging much more with the public to receive feedback. They will submit a draft plan in June. The Seattle Park District funds are for maintaining and enhancing what we already have. \$100,000/year is not enough to create expansion of the Off-Leash Areas (OLAs).

Deputy Superintendent Williams introduces Holly Miller, former Seattle Parks and Recreation Superintendent, who will be the lead on the OLA Master Plan work.

Holly emphasizes the department came to the public and the Park Board early on in the process because they are trying to be transparent and have the discussion of issues early on. There is still a much larger process and more opportunities for substantive input. She acknowledges there are constraints.

Issues inherent in OLAs:

The Park Board discouraged the use of sponsorships and signage. This conversation is still open and staff are willing to have conversations about it. The OLAs need funding – will it be worth it?

Some cities have unfenced areas during specified hours of the day or because a park may be unsafe. Off-leash dogs can create activity and make parks safer. SPR staff visited these cities and there were positives and negatives. From a management perspective there were more negatives; dogs do not understand boundaries and dog owners expand and abuse hours of multi-use areas. There is more enforcement in some other cities. Seattle has a relatively short list of acreage needed for these types of OLAs.

Need more OLAs, but how does SPR do it? Best way to add OLAs is to look at redeveloping parks and there are 14 land banked sites in the Park District; they will be going through planning and OLAs to be considered as a use. There should be a deliberative process with community input. Interest in looking at land owned by other State or other city departments.

SPR is considering limiting how many dogs a dog walker can bring to a park, the number of dogs that any person can bring, and whether or not dog walkers should buy a permit to use the OLAs.

Heard from dog walkers and other stakeholders who feel there should be a limit to the amount of dogs; the Superintendent supports a license for dog walkers.

Next steps – plan draft in June. Will return to Park Board
Stone avenue and 115th is SDOT property; talk with SDOT about that as an opportunity.

Superintendent's Report

Presented by Christopher Williams, Deputy Superintendent Seattle Parks and Recreation

NRU Plant Ecologists Michael Yadrick, Lisa Ceicko and Bob Baines held their Forest Steward Orientation and trained 31 new stewards.

Seafair decides against activation of Lake Union Park for 4th of July, will focus on events at Gas Works.

Lake Union Park – Soils under the bridge at the park is settling and the bridge is losing camber – which gives the bridge structural integrity. Concrete bench pads have upended. SPR will be undertaking major maintenance project in the fall. There is \$1.5 million funded for this. The bridge is unsafe. SPR convened community and public meetings. SPR staff will look at displaying better signage.

Cheasty – The Hearing Examiner invalidated Determination of Non-Significance (DNS) and determined more information is needed about the wetland impacts. SPR will return with full hydrology study and are continuing to move forward with the Pedestrian and Bike Trail Pilot Project.

Dan Johnson – Director of Parks Division accepted a job in the City of Shoreline. Dan has worked for Seattle for 25 years. Great colleague and coworker. His last day will be March 24.

KUOW did a story on some surplus property on Meyers Way. A community group lobbied for SPR to purchase the 33-acre parcel. SPR did not have funding for it and there is already large park property in the same vicinity. SPR is focusing acquisition on urban villages to help mitigate density in ever densifying city.

Partnership Alliance – The Seattle Parks and Recreation Alliance has been meeting with councilmembers to introduce Seattle Parks and Rec Alliance and share information on the Metropolitan Park District and expectations from public for that vote. Asking for support in coordinating policy work and development issues; asking for support for non-profit partnerships looking outside boundaries. The councilmembers seemed to understand and supportive regarding partnerships and density issues. They want to keep faith with the voters regarding spending plan in the MPD and think about the plan citywide.

Old/New Business

Workshop – Olmsted Boulevards for 21st century. Will look at the role of the Olmsted Boulevards? May 21st at Jefferson Community Center.

Commissioner Byers reminds the Board they voted to write a letter regarding the need to ensure park space to compensate for density. He will have a draft letter at the next meeting.

Commissioner Wright wrote a letter to Donald Harris thanking him for 46 years of service to SPR.

Commissioner Kincaid makes a motion to approve the letter and Commissioner Cook seconds. The letter is approved unanimously and the Commissioners all sign it. The party for Donald is Thursday, March 31 at Golden Gardens.

The meeting adjourns at 9:00 pm.

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