



# Minutes

Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

Via WebEx

Thursday, July 8, 2021

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

## Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Akita calls the meeting to order and the Board members introduce themselves.

## Public Comment

Christopher – Seattle Neighborhood Greenways, calling to talk about Olmsted Parkways; SPR opened Lake Washington Blvd to pedestrians and bicyclists. SDOT has reopened the streets to car traffic. He requests SPR asserts control over the Lake Washington Boulevard access.

## Superintendent's Report

Regarding public testimony – SPR and SDOT are working together to find best path forward on the access to Lake Washington Boulevard.

Department update:

- City Council unanimously passed the legislation combining the Board of Park Commissioners and Park District Oversight Committee and changing the name to the “Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners”.
- The first official meeting of the “Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners” will be on August 12th!
- SPR staff really stepped up and helped with the heat wave.
- July 4<sup>th</sup> Response
  - Field lighting turned on over the weekend: SPR turned on field lighting on ballfields throughout the city on the evening of Saturday, July 3 and Sunday, July 4 to protect the surfaces. The ballfield lights were turned on at approximately 8:30 p.m. until 10 p.m. or 11 p.m., depending on the field. The lights were turned on to discourage the use of fireworks, which are illegal in the city of Seattle and can destroy the artificial turf on the fields or surrounding facilities.
  - Temporary early closure of Alki Beach (10 p.m.) over July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend to deter illegal use of fireworks. The park has experienced an increase in public safety issues, including violent acts, noise, illegal fires and unpermitted events.
  - Minor fireworks and other damage throughout system
- New name and expanded function for Park Board

- At its June 28 meeting the City Council approved legislation to merge the Board of Park Commissioners and the Park District Oversight Committee and rename it the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners.

Clean City Initiative – Clean Cities work continues all over the city. Ongoing effort to makes parks clean and safe for public to use now and throughout the busy summer months.

- Clean City (6/14/21-6/19/21)
  - Needles: 468 needles collected
  - Pounds of trash: 43,960 pounds of trash from 48 encampment trash pick-up locations and 2 park focus cleans (Blanche Lavizzo and Chinook Beach Park)

#### Recreation

- Summer Aquatics: Unfortunately, due to a staffing shortage, we had to close a lifeguarded beach at Seward Park as of July 7. SPR based the decision to close Seward Park beach on a combination of equity considerations, geographic distribution, and proximity to other open beaches. With the closure of Seward Park’s summer beach, SPR will be operating 7 swimming beaches this summer: Madrona, Magnuson, Matthews, Madison, Mount Baker, Pritchard, and West Green Lake. Chlorine shortages have caused us to limit the amount of spray parks/wading pools SPR opens.
- Lake Washington Blvd: SPR in partnership with SDOT has brought back the Lake Washington Stay Healthy Streets along Lake Washington Blvd. Starting Fourth of July weekend, three (3) miles of Lake Washington Boulevard (from Mt. Baker Park to Seward Park) are open to people walking, rolling, and biking on weekends\* and holidays through at least September. Those driving to homes along the boulevard because they live there, are visiting, or making deliveries are allowed.
- Free Summer Lunch Program Begins: The Summer Lunch and Playground Recreation program, which runs from June 21 to August 25 this year, is a free opportunity that provides a meal and a snack, plus drop-in activities for kids ages 5-18. The program runs Monday through Friday at 10 locations from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and will take place rain or shine.
- Teen Employment - Career Labs Spring program has ended with 37 youth successfully completing the program. One youth emailed his team lead, to let her know he had been hired at Starbucks. He was excited and thanked her for providing the job training program. The Summer training session will begin within the next two weeks. We are hoping to serve 100 youth.
- Big Day of Play: Big Day of Play is a celebration of our city’s diversity, and it encourages neighbors, communities, and families to have fun, build relationships and be active together. Big Day of Play will be held on Saturday, August 21 from noon to 4 p.m. at Rainier Playfield (3700 S Alaska St.) and online. The event is completely free and includes activities for all ages and abilities. The event will showcase a wellness fair, in-person and virtual programs, and live performances.

#### Park and Environment Division

- Preparing for the holiday and responding to the heat wave.

## Planning, Development & Maintenance Division

- Green Lake Path restriped: SPR worked with SDOT on July 7 and 8 repainted the middle stripe on the inner loop path around Green Lake. No overall closure of the path was required, The inner loop path around Green Lake remains one-way and pedestrian only, as it has been since the beginning of the pandemic. Foot traffic and wheelchairs are permitted on the path; other wheels are not. The Green Lake path stripe was last painted in 2019; SPR expects the paint being used for this striping project to last 10 years or more.
- Drinking Fountains: Plumbers have turned on close to 100% of the operable drinking fountains and are now repairing the fountains that were vandalized during the pandemic.
- Lowman Beach Racket Sport Plan: 54 people attended the final online meeting on June 29 to explore the feasibility of providing a new racket court at Lowman Beach Park. Most of the people understood that adding a court to the center of the open space would significantly impact the feeling of the park and were happy SPR is encouraging leaving the space green and open. A pickleball court option is still part of the plan.
- Cheasty Trail construction begins: Construction of the South Loop of the Cheasty Mountain Bike/Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project in SE Seattle has just begun and is expected to be ready to explore this fall. Cheasty Greenspace is a great example of how a largely unmanaged forest is being restored to create improved habitat and access. [Friends of Cheasty Greenspace at Mountain View](#) helped restore the forest to a healthy condition and SPR embarked on the [Cheasty Mountain Bike/Pedestrian Trail Pilot Project](#) that includes both bicycle and pedestrian trails that will weave through the forest to connect multiple access points.

## Finance & Administration

- Booking indoor rentals: Staff are working to book indoor facility rentals given the less restrictive Governor's COVID-19 guidelines, beginning with Magnuson, Golden Gardens, Pritchard Beach, and Mt. Baker Rowing & Sailing facilities. We are aiming to reopen the Volunteer Park Conservatory on Sept. 1 or after Labor Day.
- Rent relief for tenants: Rent relief letters were sent out last week to tenants in SPR facilities. The rent relief program continues through August 2021, and it is expected that this will be the final COVID-19 relief offered. This was a continuation of rent deferrals for non-profit tenants and rent abatement to nonprofit tenants that has been in place during the pandemic. Tenants are being notified that August 31, 2021 will be the end of deferral and/or abatement rent relief measures
- Amy Yee Tennis Center: reopened for limited outdoor tennis lessons

## Policy, Performance, Property

- North Rainier Property Acquisition: SPR is close to completing the acquisition of 0.3 acres of land at 3638 34th Ave. S for \$2 million (with funding from the Seattle Park District). The property is next to an existing park in the North Rainier Urban Village area (in Southeast

Seattle) that is currently being developed and will make the park significantly larger. SPR Property staff are preparing legislation for City Council action to approve the transaction.

- Walt Hundley Playfield Property Exchange: City Council will be voting on and hopefully approving an ordinance authorizing an exchange of City-owned property at Walt Hundley Playfield for property owned by Seattle Public Schools adjacent to West Seattle Elementary School and ensures a portion of the property being transferred to SPS remains available for public outdoor recreation through the execution of an interlocal agreement between the two agencies.
- SPR owns and operates Walt Hundley Playfield in West Seattle, a portion of which is on land owned by the School District. The District is redeveloping the adjacent West Seattle Elementary School which will expand onto land currently owned by SPR. This ordinance authorizes a property trade of two pieces of land of equal value and size (approximately 35,500 square feet). This trade will give SPR full control over its existing athletic field and SPS full control, and the ability to develop, its property.
- Red Barn Ranch Update: Following the City Council's action to transfer the restrictive recreation covenant from City-owned property known as the Red Barn Ranch, located in Auburn, to SPR's North Rainier land-banked parcel, and in acknowledgement of public comments requesting clarity on next steps, SPR and Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) staff are developing a community engagement and visioning process to be designed and facilitated by an outside firm. We are also consulting with the City Attorney's Office on some legal questions and collaborating with OPCD closely on identifying a project management approach for this work.
- City Council: We will present SPR's RSJI update to the City Council's Public Assets and Native Communities Committee on July 16.

### **Briefing: What's new at Golden Gardens?**

Golden Gardens is one of the most popular park in the SPR system. The park closed every evening at 9pm. The popularity increased immensely over the last year. This resulted in increased traffic, late night/early morning amplified music and intoxicated users.

- Early April on a nice spring day, there were over 200 fires seen.
- Due to financial constraints, SPR could not hire the staff required to closely monitor Golden Gardens. SPR borrowed reader boards from SDOT, explained "no fires" to all entering the park, new signs installed and spent 2 weeks on this campaign to educate the public.
- SPR staff were engaging with the public while maintaining the park. However, there were still large amount of negative behaviors.
- Complaints received daily from neighbors, there was violence, loud rowdy parties and fighting, lost people, fireworks, poor behavior. SPD was called in to assist SPR with enforcing rules.
- SPR requested early closure with the City Clerk's Office on June 23, 2021 from 4:30am -11:30pm to 6am to 10pm.

- Also, added 600kw lights and parking control enforcement at the park to discourage poor behavior. The lights stay on all night. Plant ecologist did a study to ensure wildlife are not impacted.
- Jesús adds this is a 270-day pilot to assess and then it will return to the Board for a public hearing.
- New and increasing demands on SPR staff, curious about budget impacts and planning for future budget cycle and how that will play out?
- Superintendent Aguirre says this is what SPR deals with year-round, staff are creative and come up with solutions, but they do not want to ask staff to do more with less.

## **Presentation: Strategic Plan focus community engagement**

For more details on this process, please click [here](#).

Selena reviews the Strategic Plan engagement from 2019.

### 2021 Engagement Approach

- Lead with anti-racism – bring humility to framing, programs and practices have failed marginalized comm in past. Mitigate future harm and repair historical harm. Clear and specific about who SPR is trying to reach.
- Intentionality and accountability
- Appropriate infrastructure to follow through and results can be achieved.
- Openness to change – transparent around what is and is not possible.
- Build on existing community connections staff already have
- Decentralized and inclusive, train the trainer for true ongoing engagement and build sustainable infrastructure.
- Support and expectations

### 2021 Activities – Engagement methods

In-person staff-led outreach (including translation)

Goals for participation:

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower (support of community-driven efforts)

Prioritize resources for community engagement using criteria:

- BIPOC and marginalized – highest amt of resources focus; lifting voices in prior engagmt efforts
- Current spr participants – moderate amt of engagement resources
- Organized groups that partner with SPR for 4+ years – have established and sustained access and will not require as much support to be engaged in this process.

Engagement –

- BIPOC in-person staff led in language for participation – inform and collaborate, co-sponsored by community organizations; will include comm engagement ambassadors
- SPR Participants – hear about what’s changed since 2018 and what to apply to 2021; online open house; advisory boards/commissions and onsite engagement at 15 major parks.

- In-program engagement – hear from folks in SPR programs led by line of business work groups

#### 2021 Engagement Focus

Seeking to hear from communities most impacted by the parallel crises face about how their needs have shifted and how SPR can play a role in supporting recovery from:

- Racial reckoning
- Climate change
- Public health & well being
- Economic downturn

Danyal asks the Board members to provide support and facilitate discussions with other City boards/commissions. SPR staff will provide training and materials. Exercise will focus on 4 crisis areas and SPR's potential response. Danyal reviews the exercise the Board will be asked to lead with the Boards/Commissions. SPR staff will take notes so that the Commissioners can focus on facilitating a good conversation.

Big Day of Play – wonderful opportunity to volunteer and engage with community. Email [danyal.lotfi@seattle.gov](mailto:danyal.lotfi@seattle.gov)

Timeline for Strategic Plan outreach:

- August and September – Engagement focus
- October – Return with engagement report out; synthesis of what was heard; identify discreet priorities and start draft action plan.
- November – continue drafting working plan
- December – Publish action plan
- January 2022 – Planning for 2023-2028 Park District Cycle launches

### **Park District Cycle End Report**

Please [click here](#), to see this report.

Recap everything that happened in the first 6-year cycle of the Park District. Next 6-year cycle will start in 2023.

Background:

- Seattle voters approved Proposition 1 in 2014, creating the Seattle Park District
- A park district collects property taxes to fund parks and recreation services
- The district is governed by Park District Board with guidance from the Park District Oversight Committee
- Planning, development and services on a six-year cycle, 2015-2020
- Previous reports: annual reports for each of first 6 years; Mid-Cycle Report for first 3 years

Report Outline

- Main Report
- Background and Overview
- Cycle 1 Highlights

- Fix It First
- Maintaining Parks and Facilities
- Programs for People
- Building for the Future
- Highlight and Challenge – 2020
- Map
  
- Appendices
- Appendix 1: Cycle 1 Initiative Level Summary
- Appendix 2: Significant Financial Changes
- Appendix 3: Continuous Learning
- Appendix 4: Planning for the Next Cycle
  - Timeline
  - Lines of Business

#### First Cycle Accomplishments

##### Fix It First: Major Maintenance

- More than 540 acres of city's forests newly enrolled for restoration
- 120+ major maintenance projects completed on park facilities, play areas, pools, playfields and more
- Six community centers receiving structural and system upgrades
- Aquarium and Zoo major maintenance support

##### Maintaining Parks and Facilities

- Third Shift created – allowing overnight maintenance at recreation facilities (other SPR facilities) to avoid program disruption
- Grounds crews doubled cleaning of restrooms at 41 high-volume park sites
- SPR partnered with Animal Shelter to patrol parks to educate and cite dog owners per the City's leash, scoop laws
- Completed 21 improvement projects at City P-Patches

##### Programs for People

- Created recreation scholarship fund and allocated nearly \$1M to increase program access
- Provided free drop-in basketball, tot gyms and other programs
- Community-based "Art in the Park", "Get Moving" and "Recreation for All" programs served more than 50,000 participants
- Critical funding provided for programs for older adults and people with disabilities

##### Building for the Future: Development, Acquisition and More

- Five of 14 "land-banked" park development projects completed
- Purchased 18 properties totaling more than 9 acres
- Partnered with community organizations to "activate" parks in downtown neighborhoods
- Awarded more than \$7M in grants for community-based projects through the Major Project Challenge Fund

## 2020 Pandemic Pivot

- Beginning in March 2020, COVID-19 Pandemic triggered City of Seattle's emergency response
- No longer "business as usual"
- SPR established "Mission Essential Functions" and staff became essential workers
- Park District funding supported this effort

## Pandemic Pivot: Essential Functions

### SPR Essential Services

- Emergency shelters
- Showers and hygiene
- Childcare for essential workers
- Clean and safe parks
- Food distribution
- Testing and vaccination
- Social distancing
- Public health campaigns
- Virtual and mobile programming

### SPR Staff Step Up:

- 250+ people sheltered at 3 community centers
- 45,000+ social distancing ambassador hours
- 960+ children supported in childcare program
- Additional stats for your reference:
- 14,000+ showers at 5 community centers
- 9,500+ meals at 12 parks and emergency food distribution at Rainier Beach CC partnering with Food Lifeline
- Partnered with King County Public Health on COVID testing and vaccinations.
- 19 Naturalist education videos with 864 views, 374 Nearby Nature Kits distributed to children
- 1,168 Specialized Program registrations and 1,194 "dropin"; 197 YouTube + 324 Facebook videos; 1,079 newsletter recipients
- 1,945 Virtual Program registrations + special events via "virtual community center"
- Rec in the Streets hours of community-centered programming, serving 5,900 participants via "traveling community center"
- 191 operating days across 5 beaches, seeing 50,000+ attendance, 4 First Aid + 3 Rescues

### SPR Staff Step Up (Part II)

- 2,700+ Lifelong Recreation participants registered for Virtual Programs
- 275K hours of park grounds and enhanced cleaning hours

### Map of Investments will show:

- Capital investments
- Operational enhancements
- Activation



#### Cycle-End Initiative-Level Review: 2015-2020

- Report will include detailed results chart with
  - Description of each initiative
  - Financial investment
  - Mid-cycle (3-year) progress
- Cycle-end results
  - 2020 "pivot" noted where relevant

#### Lessons Learned: Seattle Park District Approach

- Park District model has proven critical to building resiliency in SPR's operations
- Stability and flexibility of Park District resources has allowed SPR to adapt to unprecedented uncertainty, support pandemic response, and kept our skilled and committed staff serving the public

#### Lessons Learned: Interlocal Agreement

Clearer Community Oversight – led to combining the Board of Park Commissioners with the Park District Oversight Committee.

Centering Equity in Community-facing Investments – Major Projects Challenge Fund becomes Project fund  
Reporting to Inform Planning – shift report timelines to better reflect planning

### **Old/New Business**

- Rachel sent a request for board members to send her their resumes for the appointment paperwork.
- SPR is hiring!
- First meeting of Board of Parks and Recreation on August 12, 2021.

There being no other business, the Board adjourns at 8:35pm.