

February 17, 2009

TO: Board of Park Commissioners
FROM: Eric Friedli
SUBJECT: Park Operating Hours Briefing Paper

Requested Board Action

The Board is being requested to provide feedback on the question of park operating hours including initial comments, concerns and suggestion on what additional information they would like to see. Following a series of public meetings to be held by parks staff in March/April, the Park Board will be asked to host a public hearing and to make a recommendation on this topic in May [subsequently re-scheduled to the June 25 meeting.]

Background

Seattle Park operating hour's standard of 4:00 am to 11:30 pm was set in 1995 by City Council Ordinance 117645. The Superintendent has the authority to make exceptions to park operating hours for individual parks or parts thereof. Park Policy 060-P-7.13.0 outlines the process to be followed when exceptions are made. Several dozen exceptions have been made over the years in response to citizen and staff requests. Current Seattle park operating hours are outlined in Attachment A.

Purpose

The purpose of this review is to consider 1) standardizing park operating hours so there is less opportunity for confusion about what the operating hours are, 2) alleviating actual and perceived safety issues – alcohol use, graffiti, and noise, 3) demonstrating Parks intention to be good neighbors by limiting negative impacts on our park neighbors, and 4) providing Seattle Police an additional tool for resolving issues in parks. Parks has an ongoing interest in being good neighbors and alleviating late night problems in our parks. Operating hours is one tool available to us and Seattle Police to address issues of noise, graffiti, and alcohol use. This review is not intended to limit an individual's enjoyment of our parks. The final proposal will need to balance open access and use of our parks with the need to limit unacceptable behaviors.

New Operating Hours Proposal under Consideration

Parks staff has reviewed several options that would achieve the purpose of the review. Under this draft proposal, park hours would vary by type of park as follows:

<i>Park Classification</i>	<i>Proposed Hours</i>
Regional*	4 am –11:30 pm year round
Neighborhood / Pocket	One hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset
Downtown	One hour before sunrise –10:00 pm year round**
Parks with Indoor Facilities (Pools, CC's ELC's)	Parking lot hours would coincide with facility operation hours or surrounding park hours, whichever is later.
Boat ramps, Boulevards	Open 24 hours a day
Lighted Athletic Complexes	Governed by lighting / scheduling protocols

*Regional Parks: Green Lake, Magnuson, Carkeek, Golden Gardens, Seward, Lincoln, Alki, Myrtle Edwards, Volunteer, Discovery

** The proposed hours for Downtown parks will undergo further review with the Seattle Police Department West Precinct.

Alternatives Considered

1. No change: Parks standard operating hours remain open at 4 am and close at 11:30 pm; keep exceptions in place (see attachment A).
2. Parks standard operating hours remain open 4 am and close at 11:30 pm; CHANGE all exceptions to open at 6 am – and close at 10 pm. New exception requests would use these hours only.
This alternative would maintain the current standard but allow for exceptions where public safety is an issue. The exceptions would be standardized to reduce confusion. The process for requesting an exception would remain unchanged.
3. All parks open one hour before sunrise and close one hour after sunset.
This alternative would standardize all park hours – including regional parks. The shortest hours would be from approximately 7 am to 5:30 pm in winter and longest hours from 4 am to 10 pm in the summer.
4. All parks open at 6 am and close at 11:30 pm in summer and close at 10:00 pm in winter.
This alternative would standardize all park hours allowing for seasonal variation.

Next Steps

A series of public meetings will be held by staff in March and April. A public hearing is tentatively scheduled in front of the Park Board on May 14 and a discussion and recommendation on May 28 [subsequently re-scheduled to June 25.]. An ordinance adopted by the City Council is required and will be presented to the Council in the third quarter to implement a change in operating hours.

Additional Background: Other Jurisdictions Park Hours

Information was collected from other park and recreation agencies located primarily in the western U.S. and Canada. Of these agencies only Portland, Oregon, specifically has policies and procedures for establishing exceptions to standard park open hours. See Appendix B – Rule Exception Policy and Procedure. These appear to establish an appropriate procedure based on stakeholder involvement by users, adjacent property owners, neighborhood groups, and law enforcement entities.

Table 1: Comparative Park Open Hours

Note: Open Hours Listed in 24 Hour Format

City	Open Hrs Start	Open Hrs End	Hours Exemption Policies
Albuquerque, NM	0600	0000	Mayor may change opening and closing hours of any park. Skate parks 0700-2300 summer, 0900-2200 winter.
Bakersfield, CA	0500	2200	City sponsored events open hours, 0500-0000 (midnight).
Bellevue, WA			One-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset
Bellingham, WA	0600	2200	
Berkeley, CA	Dawn	Dusk	Dawn to dusk unless otherwise posted. When no hours posted 0600-2200. Skate parks open 0630-2130.
Denver, CO			Individual requests to Parks for altering hours.
Fresno, CA	0800	Dusk	Regional parks open from 0700-2200 summer. 0700-1900 winter. Neighborhood parks open daily by 0800 and close at dusk.
Kent, WA	Dawn	Dusk	Parks are open from dawn to dusk unless otherwise posted or authorized by the City of Kent.
Medford, OR	0600	2230	Exceptions: (a) pedestrians crossing the Mini Park or Library Park on a paved path; (b) participants or spectators of an athletic contest in park areas lit by park flood lights for those contests; (c) persons attending a scheduled event in a park or park building designated for community recreation or instruction; (d) city employees or other government employees during the course of official activities.
Minneapolis, MN		0000	Non-developed parks close 2200, developed parks close 0000 (midnight). Exceptions to closing times would be granted by permission of the Board, Superintendent or his designee.
Portland, OR	0500	0000	Yes. Also Specific rules downtown park open hours (0500-2100).
Sacramento, CA	0500	2300	Open hours Sun-Thu 0500-2300. Open hours Fri-Sat 0500-0000. Skate Park 0800-dusk. Dog park, dawn-dusk. Parks director, with the concurrence of the chief of police, may designate extended park hours or reduced park hours when the director determines that such extension or reduction of hours is consistent with sound use of park resources, will enhance recreational activities in the city, and will not be detrimental to the public safety or welfare.
Salem, OR	0500	2200	Neighborhood parks 0500-2200. All other parks 0500-0000. Exemption by permit only.
San Diego, CA			Various open hours, see Appendix B. Unknown policy.
San Jose, CA	Sunrise	Sunset	Regional Parks: 0800 to half an hour after sunset
Santa Ana, CA	0500	2300	The Director of Parks has the authority to set different opening or closure times based on the conditions, situations concerning individual parks.
Santa Monica, CA	0600	2300	
Seattle, WA	0400	2330	Case by case basis, see Appendix A for details. No overnight camping.
Tacoma, WA		2200	
Vancouver, BC	0600	2200	Golf courses open dawn to dusk every day.
Winnipeg, MB			

Sources: US cities 2000 Census, Vancouver, BC – Statistics Canada 2001 Census; acres/parks per 10,000 Trust for Public Lands 2001; City of Portland – Parks 2020 Vision (2000), New Data on City Parks, Trust for Public Land 2004, individual cities' websites.

Attachment A

SEATTLE GENERAL PARK OPERATING HOURS: 4:00am to 11:30pm

Pursuant To:

- SMC 18.12.245 General Park Operating Hours: 4:00am to 11:30pm
- SMC 18.12.235 Restrictions on Use of Vehicles and Animals in a Park
- SMC Section 3.02.030 (Administrative Code - Notice and Hearing on Adoption of Rules)
- Park Department Policy and Procedure #060-P Park Roadway and Parking Lot Closure to Motor Vehicles

Exceptions:

6:00 am to Sunset:

Fauntleroy Park
Lower Kinnear
Martha Washington School
Pratt Playground

Pritchard Beach
Ross Playground
Kubota Gardens

6:00am to 9:00pm:

Parsons Gardens

6:00am to 10:00pm:

Lake Washington Blvd. Parks:

Colman Park (including Colman Beach)
East Portal Park

Mt. Baker Beach Park
Day Street Landing Park

Others:

Mee-Kwa-Mooks Natural Area
Schmitz Memorial Overlook
Volunteer Park
Prentis I. Frazier Park
John C Little Senior Park
Pratt Park

Blanche Lavizzo
Flow Ware
Madrona Playground
Othello Playground
Roxhill
University Playground

6:00am to 11:00 pm:

Garfield
Laurelhurst
Miller Park
Seward Park Benefit Playground

Brighton Playfield
Van Asselt Playfield
12th Ave Viewpoint

6:00am to 11:30pm:

Boren/Pike Pine
City Hall Park
Freeway Park
Hing Hay Park
Hubble Place Fountain
International Children's Park
Kobe Terrace Park
McGraw Square
Occidental Square
Pier 62, 63
Pigott Corridor
Pioneer Square Park

Golden Gardens
Prefontaine Place
Regrade Park
South Washington St Dock
Steinbrueck Park
Tilikum Place
Union Station Square
Waterfront Park
Westlake Park
Westlake Square

Individual Parks with Modified Operating Hours:

Don Armeni Boat Ramp	4: am – 11:30 pm (Except for Vehicles with Boats Trailers and Permits)
Magnuson Beach Park/ Boat Ramp	4:00am to 11:30pm May 1 to Labor Day 4:00am to 10:00pm from the day after Labor Day to April 30
Pratt Park covered Basketball court	6:00am to 11:30pm May 1 to Labor Day 6:00am to 10:00pm from the day after Labor Day to April 30
Alki Beach	4:00 am to 11:30 p.m. Oct 2 nd to April 14 th 6:00 am – 11:00 pm April 15 th to Oct 1 st

Parks That Remain Open 24 Hours a Day (Policy 06-P 7.13.0):

- Green Lake Park
- Myrtle Edwards Park
- Kerry Viewpoint
- Eddie Vine Boat Ramp
- Lake Washington Blvd Jogging Trail
- Atlantic City Boat Ramp
- First Avenue so Boat Ramp
- Stan Sayers Boat Launch
- Ferdinand St Boat Ramp
- Sunnyside Ave. So. Boat Ramp (responsible for dock only)

The following Park **PARKING LOTS and ROADWAYS** are closed to Motor Vehicles at night (Policy 060-P 7.11.2):

Bitter Lake Playfield	10 pm - 6 am
Carkeek	10 pm - 6am
Discovery (all lots)	11 pm - 6 am
Gas Works	10 pm - 6 am
Golden Gardens	11:30 pm - 6 am
Green Lake Bathhouse Theater	11 pm - 6 am
Japanese Tea Garden	6 pm - 6 am
Lake Washington Blvd.	
Adams Street	10 pm - 6 am
Duck Bay	10 pm - 6 am
Ferdinand Street	10 pm - 6 am
Lakewood Moorages	10 pm - 6 am
Mt. Baker Beach	10 pm - 6 am
Laurelhurst Park	11 pm - 6 am
Leschi Tennis Court	10 pm - 6 am
Lincoln	11 pm - 6 am
Madrona Playground	10 pm - 6 am
Magnolia Viewpoint	10 pm - 6 am
(Between Howe & Montevista)	
Magnuson (May 1 - Sept. 10)	9 pm - 6 am
(Sept. 11 - Apr. 30)	6 pm - 6 am
Maplewood Playfield	10 pm - 6 am
Matthews Beach	Sunset - 6 am
Meadowbrook Community Center	11 pm - 6 am
Montlake Community Center	11 pm - 6 am
Museum of History and Industry	11 pm - 6 am
North Acres	Sunset - 6 am
Pratt Park	11 pm - 6 am
Pritchard Island Beach	Sunset - 6 am
Riverview Playfield	10 pm - 6 am
Roxhill	10 pm - 6 am
Schmitz Preserve	11 pm - 6 am
Seward	10 pm - 6 am
Volunteer	11:30pm - 6 am
Washington Park Arboretum	Sunset and Sunrise
(Upper Loop Only)	
Westcrest	Sunset and 6 am
Woodland Park/ Ballfield	11 pm - 6 am