

Board of Park Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
September 8, 2005

***Board of Park Commissioners:***

Present: Joanna Grist  
Terry Holme  
Debbie Jackson  
Kate Pflaumer, Chair  
Amit Ranade

Excused:

Angela Belbeck  
Jack Collins

***Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff:***

B.J. Brooks, Deputy Superintendent  
Sandy Brooks, Coordinator

Commission Chair Kate Pflaumer called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. **Commissioner Holme moved approval of the Acknowledgment of Correspondence, the August 25 minutes as corrected, and the September 8 agenda as presented. Commissioner Ranade seconded. The vote was taken and motion passed.**

**Superintendent's Report**

B.J. Brooks, Deputy Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation, reported on the following:

Aquarium Temporarily Closed for Construction: The news about the Aquarium being closed to the public due to construction September 6-16 has been carried by most of the local media. The Aquarium has “greeters” on duty to explain circumstances to the few visitors who do attempt to enter the facility. These visitors will be given discounted admission tickets for a return visit after the September 17 reopening.

Whale Tail Play Area Opens: The new Whale Tail Play Area officially opened at Alki Playground and Community Center. The play area was funded with Neighborhood Matching Funds and community fundraising efforts. Existing features include the whale tail sculpture and an old boat. New features include innovative play equipment, a sand play area, artwork, and new landscaping with stone built into the walkways and landscape beds. A celebration is scheduled for Saturday, September 17.

Pro Parks Acquisition: Acquisition was finalized on a 0.5-acre property in Kiwanis Ravine – one of the largest available parcels and one that has been sought after for years by Parks and the Heron Habitat Helpers. Kiwanis Ravine is just east of Discovery Park, and is home to the largest Great Blue Heron colony in the city.

Meeting on the Wawona: Parks staff met this week with Northwest Seaport representatives regarding the Wawona and other issues at South Lake Union. Northwest Seaport report they have taken no action to prepare the Wawona to be moved by November. They are planning for a “summit” meeting about the Wawona in November, and plan to have experts from around the country come together to talk about the future of the ship. In the meantime, Parks staff are working with King County staff to secure the North Lake Union site and are researching options for moving the boat.

Arthur Ashe Stamp Unveiled: Deputy Superintendent Brooks joined City Councilmember McIver and the regional U.S. Postmaster Thursday at the Amy Yee Tennis Center in unveiling the new postage stamp featuring Arthur Ashe. A small group of community members and tennis players attended the press conference. The Post Office gave the Department a poster-sized version of the stamp which will hang in the Tennis Center.

All Teen Summer Musical Is a Big Hit: Over six days, nine performances brought 7,000 audience members to Seattle Repertory Theatre for the performances of “Uncle Willy’s Chocolate Factory.” The show was a smash hit with audiences.

Dog Swim: The third Dog Swim offered at a Seattle Parks’ pool, “Drool in the Pool,” is scheduled for Sunday, September 12, from 4 to 6 p.m. at Madison Pool. Animal Control officers will be present to help monitor the pets and to make sure they are all licensed.

### **Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience**

The Chair explained that this portion of the agenda is reserved for topics that have not had, or are not scheduled for, a public hearing. Speakers are limited to three minutes each and will be timed. The Board’s usual process is for 15 minutes of testimony to be heard at this time, with additional testimony heard after the regular agenda and just before Board of Park Commissioner’s business. One person signed up to testify; a brief summary of his testimony follows.

Paul Dunn: He has lived in Seattle since the 1960s. He is Chair of the Friends of the Market and talked about its history. He distributed a copy of an essay from the September/October 2005 issue of “Preservation” titled “In Defense of Open Space” and asked the Commissioners to read the essay. The author, Charles Birnbaum, is a landscape architect and coordinator of the National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative and the founder of the Cultural Landscape Foundation, and asserts that 70-80% of park visitors surveyed visit parks for passive, reflective experiences and not for entertainment. Mr. Dunn referred to the Downtown Parks Task Force’s efforts, especially in the Pier 62/63 planning process. What is missing in the various Pier 62/63 proposals is a “no action” alternative. These piers are the only continuously open waterfront space and he asked for a “hands off” policy on them.

### **Semi-Annual Briefing: Seattle Parks Foundation**

Karen Daubert, Executive Director of the Seattle Parks Foundation, reported on exciting progress made by the Foundation during the past six months. A very brief summary of the projects is included below. To learn more, please see the Foundation’s web page at <http://www.seattleparksfoundation.org/projects.htm>. Commissioner Grist is an ex officio member of the Foundation, representing the Board of Park Commissioners.

South Lake Union Park: The Foundation has been working on this effort for the past four years and the final details are now being worked out. In March, the Foundation announced the largest ever donation to a regional park — \$10 million from Vulcan Enterprises to South Lake Union Park. The project goal is \$25 million, including \$5 million from the Pro Parks Levy. This past Tuesday, Seattle City Council approved the agreement with Vulcan and its donation of the first \$5 million. This will be used to help the Foundation fund phase one of the park’s construction. Seattle Parks Foundation is now working to raise a \$10 million challenge grant. Once this challenge grant is raised, Vulcan will donate the second \$5 million. Commissioner Pflaumer asked what happens if the Foundation is unable to raise all \$10 million. Ms. Daubert explained that, if that happens, Vulcan would not donate the final \$5 million.

Woodland Park Rose Garden: A \$90,000 project is nearing completion to restore water to the fountains and restore the art deco sculpture at the north end of the Garden. The Rose Garden is part of the Olmsted design for Seattle parks.

Lake People Park: Private citizens donated ½ acre land to this new park, which was dedicated in June 2005.

Homer Harris Park: A private donation of \$1.3 million was donated to develop this park, named in honor of Dr. Homer Harris. At this spring's dedication, hundreds of people attended.

Benefit Park: This newly-dedicated children's play area was previously a very dark park and underutilized.

Over the next six months, the Foundation will concentrate on South Lake Union, completing the Woodland Park Rose Garden, and a couple other projects.

Commissioner Jackson asked how long the Foundation has to raise the \$10 million and Ms. Daubert answered 2-1/2 years or until the end of 2007. Commissioner Holme commented that these updates are very important.

The Commissioners thanked Ms. Daubert for the briefing.

### **Briefing: Downtown Parks and Public Spaces Task Force Status Report**

Seattle Parks staff members Deputy Superintendent B.J. Brooks, who is also the Executive staff for the Task Force, Operations Division Director Christopher Williams, who is also on the Task Force's Operations Subcommittee, and Enterprise Division Director Eric Friedli, who is also on the Task Force's Programming and Special Events Subcommittee, briefed the Board on progress made by the Downtown Task Force. The Commissioners received written briefing information, as well as a verbal briefing. A portion of the written briefing is included in these minutes. The Commissioners were previously briefed on this effort at the May 27, 2004, meeting [http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2004/05-27-04\\_minutes.pdf](http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2004/05-27-04_minutes.pdf) and the August 12, 2004, meeting [http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2004/08-12-04\\_minutes.pdf](http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2004/08-12-04_minutes.pdf). City Council's Parks, Neighborhoods and Education (PNE) Committee was briefed on September 7, 2005. The Task Force has held nine meetings, and has five more scheduled.

#### ***Written Briefing***

In January of this year, Mayor Nickels appointed a group of seven people to participate in a task force whose charge is to make recommendations on how best to revitalize the parks in downtown Seattle. The Mayor began working in 2003 with park neighbors, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and other key City departments to craft an approach to this task, and decided to create a Downtown Parks and Public Spaces Task Force.

Recurring problems with vandalism, littering, and illegal activities have made some parks less than inviting to the people who work and live downtown, and the Downtown Parks Initiative is an effort to meet this challenge head-on and to reclaim downtown parks for everyone who lives, works, and visits downtown through physical improvements and active programming. The Mayor's premise is that the City needs to think about — and manage — downtown parks differently from the way we manage our neighborhood and “destination” parks.

The Task Force's role is that of leader and advocate to shape and recommend comprehensive policies and strategies for making our downtown parks the vibrant, attractive spaces they are meant to be.

The Task Force is charged with:

- Recommending a governance model and a management structure to oversee maintenance and programming in the member parks that addresses the unique location and amenities of each.
- Reviewing and making recommendations on how to streamline regulations that hinder “activating” the parks, i.e., rules against vending and other commercial activities that may help enliven and bring visitors to the park.
- Coordinating the interests of all stakeholders who conduct potential park activities and who want to participate in the initiative.
- Helping groups interested in managing and operating downtown parks build their capacity to do so.
- Collaborating with potential park management and operations groups on strategies for enhancing safety and maintenance in downtown parks.

- Identifying funding opportunities for capital investments in downtown parks.

The Task Force membership is:

- Ken Bounds, Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation, ***Co-chair***
- Kate Joncas, President, Downtown Seattle Association, DSA Board Representative, ***Co-chair***
- Catherine Stanford, Downtown Neighborhood District Council, ***Co-chair***
- B.J. Brooks, Deputy Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation, ***Executive staff***
- Bruce Bentley, Seattle citizen, ***Citywide Representative***
- David Brewster, former Executive Director, Town Hall, ***At-Large Neighborhood Representative***
- Jordan Royer, Senior Policy Advisor for Public Safety, Mayor’s Office, ***Mayor’s Office Representative***
- Ron Sher, Seattle citizen, ***At-Large Business Representative***
- Tina Bueche, Metropolitan Improvement District, ***MID Board Representative***
- Christopher Williams, Seattle Parks and Recreation Operations Director, and Peggy Emerson, MID Director of Field Operations, ***Operations Subcommittee***
- Eric Friedli, Seattle Parks and Recreation Enterprise Division Director, and Anita Woo, Downtown Seattle Association Communications Director, ***Programming and Special Events Subcommittee***
- Bonnie Berk, Berk & Associates, ***Consultant***
- Dewey Potter, Seattle Parks and Recreation Communications Manager, ***Communications***

### ***Verbal Briefing***

Staff displayed a large map showing the location of the 21 downtown parks and Deputy Superintendent Brooks presented a PowerPoint presentation, including photos of each park. (The map and additional information on the Task Force may be viewed at <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/downtown.asp>)

The 21 parks are divided into three categories: destination parks (Freeway, Occidental, Westlake, City Hall, Victor Steinbrueck, Myrtle Edwards, Hing Hay, and Waterfront Parks, and Piers 62-63); neighborhood parks (Kobe Terrace, International Children’s Play Park, Regrade Park, Cascade Playground, and Belltown P-Patch & Cottages); and small spaces (Pioneer Square, Prefontaine Place, Tilikum Place, Union Square, McGraw Square, Westlake Square, and Fortston Square near City Hall.) Fortston Square is owned by the Seattle Department of Transportation.

Commissioner Pflaumer asked if the information received in the essay during tonight’s Oral Communications segment stating that Seattle Parks intends to remove the main fountain at Freeway Park is accurate. The Deputy Superintendent answered that Parks is not proposing to remove any fountains, nor does it have the funds to do so.

Mr. Williams reviewed the approval and action process being used by the Task Force. Yesterday the PNE Committee was briefed, tonight the Board is hearing an update briefing, and the Board will receive an additional briefing, followed by a public hearing, at its November 10 meeting. The findings will be presented to the Mayor, an outreach plan will be developed, and Parks staff will craft an implementation plan from the recommendations.

Mr. Williams reviewed the top recommendation/ideas from the Task Force including: Operations and Facilities Routine Maintenance — 10 recommendations; Major Maintenance and Capital Improvements funded as part of CIP — 5 recommendations; Growth, Design and Use — 11 recommendations; and Safety and Security — 11 recommendations.

He distributed and reviewed a handout titled “Safety and Security Issues Problem Statements, Strategies, Next Steps, and Desired Outcomes.” The Task Force looked at a number of cities with successful downtown parks and determined that Seattle spends more on maintenance while those other cities spend more on safety issues. During the daytime, downtown parks are used by workers going to and from work and at lunchtime. After dark, the parks are primarily used by adult homeless males. This is a social problem and the Task Force wants to achieve a balanced use of the parks. A measure of how safe parks are is to determine how many women and children go there. The recommended next steps are to increase active uses and programming of parks and pilot commercial activity in downtown parks. The desired outcome is to create an environment where women with children feel safe. A strategy is to shift the core value of maintenance and operations funds, i.e., use Maintenance & Operations funds to increase safety in the parks.

Mr. Williams also distributed and reviewed a handout titled “Parks Maintenance Problem Statements, Strategies, Next Steps and Desired Outcomes.” Community stakeholders will be asked what they expect in the way of park maintenance. Commissioners Pflaumer and Holme cautioned staff to take care in how the questions are framed, so as not to raise expectations that cannot be met. Mr. Williams commented that the City will partner with volunteers to enhance maintenance in the parks. Downtown businesses currently pay for Cleanscapes, a service that does further maintenance after Seattle Parks crews have left a park. A recommendation will also be made to move all free meal programs indoors to a legal and enforceable location. Major Maintenance needs in downtown parks were reviewed.

Mr. Williams commented that this is only a snapshot presentation of the 37 recommendations.

Commissioner Holme asked about open property near the Yesler underpass and additional land at the south end of the waterfront that currently belong to other City departments, but could be transferred to and maintained by Parks. He wondered if the Task Force’s plan addresses this issue. Mr. Williams answered that one of the recommendations is that an interdepartmental team be established to look at these types of opportunities. Of course, the departments want fair market value for any land transferred to Parks, so it isn’t an easy process. Another recommendation is development of a design standard for all public space in downtown Seattle.

Commissioner Pflaumer referred to testimony about trees in Freeway Park growing large and needing to be removed because of their weight. There was some discussion on the removal process for the dozen or so trees that aren’t doing well and are slated for removal. Commissioner Pflaumer asked if any scientific study has been done that shows the benefit of foliage in minimizing air pollution. Parks staff will follow up on this question.

Commissioner Pflaumer also commented that she supports expanding Victor Steinbrueck Park as it is a very successful mix of homeless, local citizens, and tourists in a small amount of space. She referred to the recommendation to fine illegal outdoor feeding groups in parks. She believes that there will still be lines of homeless waiting outside any legal indoor feeding stations that might be set up and referred to Union Gospel Mission, which often has many people waiting outside for meals. Deputy Superintendent Brooks commented that the City wants to work closely with the “renegade” feeding groups, who just drop food off, on ways to deal with the ensuing trash and sanitation problems.

Eric Friedli, Seattle Parks Enterprise Director, next briefed the Board on the Task Force’s conclusion on programs and special events. He distributed a handout titled “Downtown Parks and Public Spaces Sub-Committee on Programs and Special Events.” This sub-committee has been meeting for months and has 35 recommendations. These include 8 recommendations on vending; 9 on programming; 12 on events programming; and 8 on marketing downtown parks. Some of these recommendations change the policy of how parks are currently managed.

Mr. Friedli noted the following vending recommendations: (1) First look to adjacent businesses to provide retail/vending in parks; (2) City should not put full financial risk on the vendor — look at percentage rather than flat rent; and (7) Streamline permitting of vendors — general approval, then Parks have authority for individual vendors.

Next he noted the following programming recommendations: (1) City should host, rather than just permit, events; (5) Allow commercial signage for recognition of event or program sponsors; (6) Allow commercial signage for recognition of event or program sponsors; (7) Allow exclusive use for corporate and private events; (8) and Art shows move from park to park.

Under events permitting recommendations, he noted: (5) Create an on-line application process that would automatically submit applications to each agency; (6) Consolidate (bundle) fees — signage, 10% use fee, trade show fee, business fee, and license fee; (7) Noise issues need to be resolved to allow louder events; and (12) Better education of elected officials and public about economic and social value of events.

To help with marketing the downtown parks, the focus was on Occidental Park in 2004. Freeway Park has been the focus in 2005, and next year a different park will be the focus.

Commissioner Holmes recommended the Task Force acknowledge the unintended negative consequences of commercialization in the parks and build a mechanism to address these consequences into the Task Force conclusions. He gave “renegade vendors” as an example. Mr. Friedli stated that this is good and helpful feedback.

The Board thanked Deputy Superintendent Brooks, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Friedli for the presentation.

### **Board of Park Commissioners’ Business**

- None

### **New/Old Business**

- Denny Awards: Nominations are being sought for the Denny Award, which recognizes extraordinary volunteer efforts to Seattle Parks.
- Committee Reports: Commissioners reported on the various committees each member is assigned to, as part of their role as Commissioner. There was a brief discussion on expectations of Commissioners in their role as members of these committees.
- Upcoming Events: Commissioners reviewed the latest Seattle Parks’ Project Development Division calendar of upcoming events. The Chair requested the Coordinator to e-mail the list to all Commissioners, who are asked to notify the Chair regarding which events each will attend.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

Kate Pflaumer, Chair  
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE \_\_\_\_\_