



Department of Parks and Recreation

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

Meeting Minutes
March 22, 2007

Board of Park Commissioners:

Present:

Terry Holme
Jackie Ramels
Amit Ranade

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff:

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

Commissioner Ranade called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Commissioner Ramels moved, and Commissioner Holme seconded, approval of the agenda and minutes as amended. The vote was taken and motion passed.

Superintendent's Report

Interim Deputy Superintendent Brooks reported on the following items. For more information on Seattle Parks and Recreation, please visit the web pages at <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/>.

Freeway Park Renovation: Parks staff met this week with representatives of the Freeway Park Neighborhood Association and the architect and developer of Seneca Tower to discuss improvements to Pigott Corridor's fountains and landscape plantings. Iain Robertson, University of Washington professor of Landscape Architecture, is helping Parks with the landscape renovation. The discussion also focused on the new connection to Freeway Park from the Seneca Tower development (near Horizon House) and near the 8th Avenue ramp. When the repairs are completed all the fountains will once again be operating. For more information on Freeway Park, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkspaces/FreewayPark.htm>.

Golden Gardens Bathhouse: Though heating the Golden Gardens Bathhouse is costly and inefficient, private rentals during the cold months are still well worth the expense. Net revenues for rentals at the Bathhouse from January 2 through February 15 of this year were \$14,680. Propane costs to heat the facility for the same time period totaled \$2,386.

Commissioners asked about the concessionaire operations at this building. Superintendent Brooks answered that a women's group was hired as concessionaire and made a number of renovations to the building. They will sell food from the beachside window of the building.

For more information on Golden Gardens Bathhouse and its rental, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/teens/goldengardens.htm>.

Unauthorized BMX Track Dismantled from Parks Property: The unauthorized BMX track that had been built by BMX enthusiasts in the Northeast Queen Anne Greenbelt has been dismantled. Park Resource's South Region staff have been working with the BMX enthusiasts to secure an approved location somewhere within the City's Park system. To date six locations are being reviewed as a potential BMX site. The BMX and other cycling enthusiasts clearly want a larger planning process and have lobbied for resources to conduct a broader comprehensive planning process to address all cycling interests.

Commissioner Holme asked if the current BMX track located near the site of the Lower Woodland Skatepark will remain. Superintendent Brooks answered that Parks has no plans to remove it. Commissioner Holme recommended that the Department formally sanction it as a BMX track if it has not previously done so.

Commissioner Holme asked the cost of the cleanup and commented that supporters of the BMX tracks must realize that there is a financial consequence for the Department to remove unauthorized sites. The funds are better spent on maintenance, not on removal, and he feels there should be consequences for the removal if it occurs again. Superintendent Brooks commented that the money to remove the site came from the Department's general fund. A letter has been sent to the BMX group stating the cost for removing the site and requesting a mediation session with the group. Parks staff will forward the cost information to the Commissioners.

Lake Washington Boulevard Cleanup: Mount Baker Rowing and Sailing Center recently hosted its Fifth Annual Lake Washington Boulevard clean up. The clean up covered over six miles of shoreline starting at Day Street Park south around Bailey Peninsula/Seward Park. Over 100 volunteers turned out for the community events and the volunteers were brightly attired with "CREW AT WORK" T-shirts. This event connects with the Mayors "Cleaner Seattle" efforts.

Lower Woodland Skatepark: Parks has postponed the start of construction for the Lower Woodland Skatepark until after the law suit filed against the project is resolved. The suit is an appeal of the Hearing Examiner's ruling in favor of Parks regarding its environmental review conducted for the project. A May 21 court date is scheduled. Since construction was to begin in late April/early May, City attorneys advised construction be delayed until the suit is resolved. The two contractors for the project have agreed to hold their bid amounts for two months, so hopefully the Department will only lose time and not money from this delay. Commissioners asked that they be sent a copy of the lawsuit to review. For more information on Woodland Park, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkspaces/woodland.htm>.

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. Three people signed up to testify; a brief summary of their testimony is included.

Clarence Dunn: Mr. Dunn lives near Dr. Blanche Lavizzo Park, which he described as a secluded park in a busy urban neighborhood. Seattle Parks is doing a great job keeping this park clean and Seattle Police Department has increased its patrols due to the high rate of illicit behavior in the park. He talked with staff at the Odessa Brown Clinic, located next door to the park, and they stated that they have stopped using the park for lunches and other daytime uses due to drug dealing, illicit sex, and people defecating in the park. Parents who live near the park will no

longer allow their children to play there and neighbors are effectively kept out of the park by this behavior. He asked the Park Board and Park Department for suggestions on ways to invite the community back to this park.

Commissioner Ranade commented that SPD recently asked the Park Board to recommend a change in hours at the park from 4:00 a.m.-11:30 pm to the new hours of 6:00 am-10:00 pm. The Board unanimously supported this request. SPD must now enforce the hours. He asked that the community give time for this change to be enforced and evaluated. Superintendent Brooks is meeting with officers from SPD in one week to discuss the situation. The most effective way for the community to take back the park for the community is to activate it. She will discuss this further with Cheryl Fraser, Seattle Parks' South/Central West Resources Manager.

Commissioner Ramels commented that at a national parks conference she attended, she heard of a similar condition at a New York City park. Neighbors of the park joined together and formed a park watch, which was very successful in re-claiming their neighborhood park. The neighbors became the parks' "watchdogs."

Joe Linn: He also spoke about issues at Dr. Blanche Lavizzo Park and thanked the Park Board for voting to approve the Parks' staff recommendation to change the park's hours. However, the abusers don't care when the park is open or closed. Their other illegal behavior in the park is much more serious than being in the park when it is closed. He expects things will get worse as the weather gets warmer. The park structures [large trellis with roof, picnic shelter with fire pit, and amphitheater] encourage the illegal behavior, as the covered shelters protect the abusers from inclement weather. Neighbors who want to use the park are deterred by the illegal behavior. Activating the park will help but the activities would generally be scheduled during the day and would not help at night. And on weekends, SPD has bigger issues to deal with than enforcing park closure hours. He suggested changing the structures as one way to help this situation. In answer to questions from the Commissioners, he clarified that this park is located at 23rd and Yesler/Jackson, with Washington Middle School located at one end.

Commissioner Holme commented that SPD has staff to assess and improve sight lines to deter crime and recommended that the speakers involve those staff. Parks staff can help the citizens connect with them. He has concerns with changing the infrastructure of the buildings in the parks as they were built with capital dollars and, once removed, would be gone permanently. If the park improves and the neighborhood begins using it again, the buildings could have positive uses. He urged caution on any demolition or removal until all avenues are explored. He asked if there has been programming at the amphitheater in the past. Parks staff will send this information to the Commissioners.

Lex Voorhoeve: He is a member of the Carkeek Park Advisory Council and distributed a handout to the Board. He stated that Northwest Seattle is growing twice as fast as the rest of Seattle in population. He described Carkeek Park's role as a major park in this area. As the population grows, the park is being used more frequently and parking is becoming more and more difficult.

Viewlands Elementary School is slated for closure and its property adjoins Carkeek Park. This is a great opportunity to secure the flat sports fields at the school as well as additional parking spaces for Carkeek Park. The Viewlands Future Use Task Force has formed and he is its spokesperson. The group has scheduled a meeting with Interim Deputy Superintendent Christopher Williams and asked the Park Board to add a discussion of the proposal to one of its future meetings.

Superintendent Brooks commented that Seattle School District (SSD) owns the property and are still working on their surplus property list and nearby Crown Hill Elementary may be included. When SSD announces the list in approximately two months, then a discussion will be added to a Park Board meeting agenda. Commissioner Holme requested that the Board be briefed on any surplused property for which Parks and SSD have a joint use agreement or Parks has funds earmarked for the properties. Superintendent Brooks agreed to this request.

Briefing: Bi-yearly Update from Seattle Parks Foundation

Kimberley Bowen, Deputy Director of Seattle Parks Foundation, presented the bi-yearly briefing on the Seattle Parks Foundation. Commissioners received both a written and verbal briefing. For additional information on Seattle Parks Foundation, please see the web site at: <http://www.seattleparksfoundation.org>.

Written Briefing

Bands of Green: The Bands of Green report on linear parks, trails, and boulevards was released in February after consultation with major partners. Successful roll-out meetings were held with Seattle Mayor Nickels, his senior staff, the City Council Transportation chair, the Port of Seattle, and Department of Neighborhoods. The Mayor later assigned a staff person to implement Bands of Green among City agencies. Seattle Parks Foundation received a headline news story and an editorial the next day in the Seattle P-I. [To read the article, see http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/303334_bandgreen12.html.] We have since distributed more than 100 electronic, CD, and print copies to key individuals and organizations, and have received significant and positive feedback.

Lake Union Park Groundbreaking: The Groundbreaking Celebration on February 28, 2007, was a huge success, and was attended by over 200 people despite blustery weather. The park was officially renamed Lake Union Park at the unveiling of a large banner of the future design. Speakers included Deputy Mayor Tim Ceis, Parks Superintendent Ken Bounds, Sally Jewell, Ada Healey, Phil Lane Jr., Doug and Maggie Walker, Dick Wagner, and Seattle Parks Foundation Executive Director Karen Daubert. This event was heavily covered by the press.

Lake Union Park Construction: Currently construction for Lake Union Park is on track due to increased activity to make up for a few setbacks. At this time the sheet pilings should be in place by the end of the month, anchors and braces are also in process, and the fill should be in shortly after. Three cranes, two excavators, and multiple other vehicles are working six days a week to complete the seawall before the fish window.

Lake People (Xacua'bs) Park: Lake People Park continues to be maintained and receive habitat restoration work from the Parks Foundation and volunteers, and is nearing completion. Seattle Urban Nature Project recently mapped, surveyed, and characterized the park vegetation, which will help in future restoration efforts to this new urban natural area when it is transferred to Parks and Recreation next year.

Tree Donations Taking Root: Following a direct mail appeal to our members, 20 new tree donations have been made to this new program. Planting is underway, with one special landscape restoration at Volunteer Park scheduled for early April.

Verbal Briefing

Ms. Bowen thanked Commissioner Ramels for representing the Park Board as an ex-officio member of the Seattle Parks Foundation. She talked briefly about the history of the Parks Foundation, which has now expanded to ten full-time staff members. She next showed a Powerpoint presentation on recent Park Foundation projects, including Bailey Gatzert school grounds, Lake People's Park, Homer Harris Park, Lakewood Triangle Park, and restoration of the Woodland Park Rose Garden fountains. She listed the fiscal sponsorships of projects at I-5 Colonnade, Discovery, Hitt's Hill, and Counterbalance Parks, as well as the whale bone sculptures at Volunteer Park. Upcoming fiscal sponsorships include both Denny and Me-Kwa-Mooks Parks. Lake Union Park is the Foundation's first large project undertaking. The February 28 groundbreaking ceremony at Lake Union Park was well attended.

Bench and tree donations: The Foundation handles all donations of furnishing to Seattle's parks, including benches, and has facilitated the installation of over 80 benches in Seattle's parks, with 20 installations during the last year. The Foundation coordinates the donation of the bench or other furnishing in accordance to Seattle Parks and Recreation's policies and procedures. The Foundation has also started a tree donation program.

Bands of Green: This is a comprehensive plan for the continuing development of bicycle and pedestrian trails, boulevards, and linear parks in Seattle. The plan was updated recently and is available at http://www.seattleparksfoundation.org/project_BandsOfGreen.html

Board Questions & Answers

Commissioner Ramels asked how the three years of enhanced maintenance at Lake People's Park will be funded. Ms. Bowen answered that the Seattle Parks Foundation will pay a nearby neighbor to mow the park and will pay Earth Corp to mow the steep slopes. Both will contract with the Foundation, rather than Seattle Parks, to do this work. The Foundation only does this type of contracting when the maintenance of the projects becomes a burden for Parks Department to handle. She commented that a community group has formed around this project. The groups' excitement for the Lake People's Park project has led to excitement to build another park nearby.

Commissioner Ramels asked for more information on the Me-Kwa-Mooks project. Ms. Bowen stated that this park at first had no neighborhood group to steward the project. Then, an interested group stepped forward and is now developing a plan. Commissioner Ramels recommended additional publicity for the project, as she doesn't believe it is well known to West Seattle residents. Ms. Bowen will work with Commissioner Ramels to connect to the larger West Seattle community.

Commissioner Holme asked about the commemorative bench program. Ms. Bowen answered that the program is working well. Foundation staff work closely with the donors who want to install a bench in honor of someone. Commissioner Holme asked if some of the tree donations could be earmarked for planting along Lake Washington Boulevard. Ms. Bowen answered that this brand new program has a list of parks which need trees and what type. Foundation staff work closely with the donor and the City's urban foresters. The \$750 cost includes insurance that the tree will live for a certain amount of time, extra watering for the first three years, and administrative fees. Commissioner Holme asked how donation of a tree is acknowledged. Ms. Bowen answered that the donor receives a special card showing the exact location of the tree. For a short time, a metal tag with the donor information is attached to the tree. Donors are encouraged to have a photo taken of the tag on the tree and then remove the tag and take with them. Commissioner Holme stated that this is a brilliant plan.

Commissioner Holme referred to the Lake Union Project, the first major project for the Foundation, and asked if part of the Foundation's mission is to have at least one large project in process. Ms. Bowen answered that the Foundation has a very strong board and staff. It has accomplished a number of smaller projects, is working on its first large project, and is now looking at a steadily growing mixture of smaller and big projects. The Bands of Green may be growing into a major project. The Foundation Board will revisit its mix of small and large projects next year. Commissioner Holme commented that he is especially interested in the Foundation's strategic planning.

Commissioner Ramels asked if the Foundation is considering a waterfront park as part of its efforts. Ms. Bowen answered that it looked at the area about six years ago; however, it isn't ready at this time to take on that project.

Commissioner Ramels commented that the Lake Union Park is a great project for the Foundation's first large project effort. Commissioner Ramels commented that the Foundation has done a fabulous job, and it is wonderful for Seattle's parks to have this creative and well-financed partner. The Foundation is a very successful and skilled fundraiser — and is still growing. Commissioner Holme commented that the many small projects the Foundation has already completed have touched many lives in a positive way.

The Commissioners thanked Ms. Bowen for the briefing.

New/Old Business

Future Park Board Meetings: Commissioner Ramels will be out of town at the April 12 meeting. The Board agreed to have the meeting, although only two Commissioners will be present. The April 26 meeting is canceled.

Meeting with Councilmember Della: Commissioner Ranade met with Councilmember David Della, chair of the City Council Parks, Education, Library, and Labor (PELL) Committee this week. Councilmember Della would like to attend a portion of the Park Board's annual retreat [tentatively scheduled for fall 2007.] Commissioner Ranade invited the full PELL Committee to attend one or more Park Board meetings.

High Point Reservoir: Commissioner Ramels noted recent construction work at West Seattle’s High Point Reservoir and asked if a skatespot or skatedot is planned for the site. Interim Superintendent Brooks answered that there is no funding for the skatepark sites at this time and all those listed in the recent Citywide Skatepark Plan have yet to be prioritized.

Bitterlake Baseball Field: Commissioner Ramels also stated that one of the coaches who coaches at Bitterlake Playfield recently commented about the condition of the baseball field. He wrote down his recommendation on the amount of soil and work needed to improve the field. Interim Superintendent Brooks will take his recommendation under advisement. The information was subsequently relayed to recreation staff who supervise the fields. Commissioner Ranade stated that he plays soccer there and doesn’t find those fields to be in particularly especially poor condition.

APPROVED: _____
Amit Ranade, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE _____