



Department of Parks and Recreation

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
March 26, 2009

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>
(Includes agendas and minutes from 2001-present)

Also, view Seattle Channel tapes of meetings, June 12, 2008-most current, at
<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/watchVideos.asp?program=Parks>

Board of Park Commissioners:

Present:

Neal Adams, Vice-chair
John Barber
Terry Holme
Donna Kostka

Excused:

Jackie Ramels, Chair

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff:

Christopher Williams, Deputy Superintendent
Sandy Brooks, Coordinator

Commissioner Ramels, Chair, was out of town. Commissioner Adams called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the meeting agenda. **Commissioner Holme moved, and Commissioner Kostka seconded, approval of the agenda, the February 26 minutes, and the record of correspondence. The vote was taken and the motion carried.** The March 12 meeting minutes will be approved at the Board's April 9 meeting.

Superintendent's Report

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

Congratulations to Superintendent: Deputy Superintendent Williams congratulated Superintendent Gallagher on his marriage this past weekend.

National Recreation Parks Association (NRPA): Deputy Superintendent Williams and Seattle Parks Policy and Business Analysis Manager, Eric Friedli, traveled to Washington, DC, last week where they lobbied the Washington State delegation for additional funding for several urban parks, Magnuson Park wetlands, and youth anti-violence programs. For more information on the NRPA, see <http://www.nrpa.org/>.

Park Board Member Resigns: Amit Ranade recently resigned from the Park Board, after serving four years. The Department thanked Mr. Ranade for his excellent service and especially for serving as the Board's chair for two years. Deputy Superintendent Williams stated the process has started to find a replacement. Mr. Ranade will be missed!

Historic Preservation Designation Investigated for Sand Point: On March 23, a meeting was held between Sand Point property owners (Seattle Parks and University of Washington), City Council Central staff, Seattle Historic Preservation Program, and the Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to determine the feasibility of nominating the Sand Point Historic District [located within Magnuson Park] to the National Register of Historic Places. The City and State's historic offices are supportive of land marking the area; however, to remain on the National Historic Register, all the buildings in a landmarked district must remain and be maintained. Buildings 2 and 18 are in disrepair and discussions must continue on how these buildings could be landmarked and preserved – without any funds to do so. For more information on Magnuson Park and the Historic District, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/Magnuson/>.

Magnuson Park Spring Fest: Parks staff members continue planning all phases of the April 25 Magnuson Spring Fest. More details will follow soon.

Family Aquarium Night A Big Success: More than 500 people attended this March 19 event, co-sponsored with the Environmental Science Center. Attendees included many multi-generational family groups. Talks were presented in both English and Spanish. Kids made coloring books, paper plate puffer fish, and they dissected squid, fed urchins, and played with puppets. For more information on Seattle Aquarium, see <http://www.seattleaquarium.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=183>.

Dog Off-leash Update: Parks staff members continue to work closely with Seattle Animal Control in parks to help control the number of dogs illegally off their leashes. Several parks that do not have an off-leash area have become informal dog parks, where owners turn their dogs loose to run free. Recently, Animal Control officers issued 11 off-leash tickets at Volunteer Park - in four hours. For information on the 11 off-leash sites in Seattle's parks, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/offleash.asp>.

City Council Support of Dodgeball: Parks staff posted signs at Cal Anderson Park tennis courts that tennis players have "right of first refusal" to use the courts. [The Park Board held a public hearing on a possible pilot to allow dodge ball play at tennis courts in 2008, after dodge ball players began using the Cal Anderson courts for weekly, well-attended dodge ball games.] The dodge ball players who previously used the tennis courts continue to request an outside location to play. Parks provided three months of free dodge ball play at both Miller and Yesler Community Center indoor gyms. The dodge ball players have not used these facilities since the free play offer expired. City Council staff requested Parks to find an outside location on Capitol Hill, such as a tennis court, that can be converted to dodge ball use. The Department is now facing serious mid-year budget cuts and does not have the funding for this conversion, and the dodge ball players are interested in helping raise the \$10,000 needed to develop the court. Parks staff will direct the dodge ball players to the Neighborhood Matching Fund's Small and Simple Fund as a possible funding source. For more information on Cal Anderson Park, see http://www.seattle.gov/parks/park_detail.asp?ID=3102. For more information on dodge ball, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dodgeball>.

Anti-Youth-Violence Initiative: Mayor Nickels has charged the Department to reduce youth violence by 50%. Parks has funding for youth outreach coordinators in three areas: Central Area Teen Youth Program; Rainier Beach Community Center; and Delridge Community Center. Parks is working closely with three other major agencies on this initiative and is working to develop a new approach with Seattle Police Department to develop an approach with a recreational purpose. Royal Alley Barnes and Mickey Fearn, Parks staff leading the Anti-Youth-Violence Initiative, will brief the Park Board at its July 23 meeting.

Events already held include: (1) The Hip-Hop Lecture Series at Garfield Teen Life Center hosted the “Changing the Games, Overcoming Obstacles & Achieving Success” presentation by the following groups: United 4 Youth Coalition; Seattle Hip-Hop Youth Council Umojafest P.E.A.C.E. Center; Seattle Public Schools; Seattle’s Young People’s Project; and Mother’s Outreach Movement. (2) Youth Violence Prevention staff met with Milestone Adolescent Community Services (MACS) staff to discuss a two-day training on March 25 and 26 which focused on peaceful strategies for solving personal and community problems. Parks partnered with MACS to provide a venue and transportation. For more information on the mayor’s Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative, see <http://www.seattle.gov/mayor/issues/youthInitiative/>.

Parks All Staff Retreat: The Department will hold its second annual all-staff retreat on Wednesday, April 1, with K.C. Golden, Policy Director for Climate Solutions, as keynote speaker. The day begins with a 7:15 am breakfast, followed by a budget presentation, and trainings. This event helps to build morale and re-affirm the Department’s vision and direction. <http://www.climatesolutions.org/?s=staff>.

Update on West Seattle Stadium Request for Proposals: Deputy Superintendent Williams announced that only one party, O’Dea School, has indicated interest in the West Seattle Stadium RFP. The climate of the economy has changed quite a bit since the Department announced the RFP process earlier this year to gauge interest in a public stadium. For more information on the West Seattle Stadium, see http://www.seattle.gov/parks/park_detail.asp?ID=472.

Citywide Athletics Update: Ballfield scheduling staff started a new online scheduling and reservation system at the beginning of the year. The system is working well for the most part and staff are working with the vendor to resolve the last issues. Deputy Superintendent Williams stated that the new athletic fields at Magnuson will soon come online and staff designed a lottery system for these fields. The system will give equitable access to historic field users, as well as give opportunities for new groups to play on the fields. Commissioner Holme voiced interest in this scheduling lottery. Parks Citywide Athletics Manager, Dennis Cook, will brief the Board on athletic field scheduling at the April 23 meeting and include information on these new fields. For more information on fields and athletics, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/athletics/facilities.htm>.

Seattle Conservation Corps Sells Rain Barrels: The Conservation Corp just received a new shipment of the popular terra cotta rain barrels. The Corp expects to sell 1,300 this year and have sold more than 10,000 of the rain barrels since beginning the program. For more information on Seattle Conservation Corps, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/scc/>.

2008 Volunteer Hours: In 2008, 38,055 volunteers donated 289,522 hours to Seattle Parks to repair the urban forest and creeks, coach and supervise young people, support community art, music and theater events, and staff community holiday parties and festivals. Park Board Commissioners contributed several thousand hours in 2008! The value of these donated hours is estimated at more than \$5.6 million. Young people, who comprise 15.6% of Seattle’s population, accounted for 17% of the volunteer pool.

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 two minutes each and will be timed. The Board’s usual process is for 10 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 testified. A brief summary of the testimony follows:

Dr. Cris Kelley: Dr. Kelley attended the Park Board’s March 12 meeting, held at West Seattle Golf Clubhouse. She listened to the discussion on the Summer Streets proposal and urged the Board to take a stronger stand at the Mayor’s announcement of the program – before the Park Board completed its public hearing process on the proposal. Commissioner Holme responded that he has been on the Park Board for seven years and this was the first time that this had happened. It was a rare and unprecedented event and not business as usual.

Dr. Kelley also thanked Park Board members for touring the golf courses as part of its public hearing process for the Golf Master Plan. She hopes they rode carts in rain and mud and saw first hand the deep ruts that golfers experience at the courses. She hoped the tour gave Commissioners a good idea of the needs at the courses. She played at Jackson Golf Course today and noted serious damage around the periphery of the course.

Commissioner Adams noted that several Commissioners were unable to attend the first golf course tour and Parks staff members have scheduled another tour on April 21.

Discussion/Recommendation: Elliott Bay Water Taxi

At the Board's February 26 meeting, Paula Hoff, Seattle Parks Strategic Advisor, presented a briefing on the proposal for a temporary, year-round Elliott Bay Water Taxi which would dock at Seacrest Marina. To read the minutes, including the briefing paper on the proposal, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2009/02-26-09.pdf>. The Board toured Seacrest Marina just prior to their March 12 public hearing on this proposal. To read the minutes from that meeting, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2009/03-12-09.pdf>. Tonight the Board plans to discuss the proposal and make a recommendation to the Superintendent.

Ms. Hoff introduced herself and gave a brief overview of the proposal and the recommendation that staff are requesting. She listed amenities that will be available to park users if the new dock is approved and built: (1) the current dock, which was paid for by Forward Thrust funds and a Washington State IAC grant 20+ years ago, is currently removed each winter and the area is locked off to park users. If the new dock is approved and built, the dock will remain accessible year round. (2) Kayakers will be able to tie up their boats in a "kayak finger" area of the dock. She added that Seattle Parks will include stipulations in the contract regarding public access to the dock.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Kostka on whether non-ferry boats can tie up at the dock when the new ferry is there, Ms. Hoff answered that they can do so; however, most go to nearby Don Armeni boat ramp. Clear signage will be installed to designate the docking area for the water taxi.

Commissioner Holme asked if the concessionaire is comfortable with the kayakers and pedestrians going by their business on the dock and Ms. Hoff answered that they are very supportive of this foot traffic. Responding to a question from Commissioner Holme on how wide the new floating dock will be, Ms. Hoff answered that it will measure ten feet in width. Commissioner Holme referred to a citizen letter to the Board inquiring about a zoned permit area for locals. Ms. Hoff responded that the County is doing a parking study of the area and will work with Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to determine whether a zoned permit area is needed. Commissioner Holme urged that the County, SDOT, and Parks be cognizant of local people.

Commissioner Barber referred to the Forward Thrust funds that helped build Seacrest Park and Dock 20 years ago. Forward Thrust language requires that use of the dock be limited. Ms. Hoff responded that \$75,000 was spent on the dock 20 years ago and the dock is nearing the end of its life and is being removed. A new dock is being installed as part of the King County Ferry District's agreement with Seattle Parks. The new dock will not be used for commercial purposes and it will benefit recreational users. Commissioner Barber has spoken to others in the community about Initiative 42 and how it applies to this proposal. If any park space is converted, it can only be done so if there is no alternative and the City receives an equal value in exchange. He asked if the City has explored the use of parks space as a transportation corridor. Ms. Hoff responded that City Attorney staff and Seattle Parks have discussed this use and are comfortable with the agreement, as it adds new kayak slips and enhances recreational uses at Seacrest Park. Deputy Superintendent Williams added that the temporary year-round water taxi also helps with the City's environmental goals.

Commissioner Holme noted that the water taxi has been operating on a summer basis for 11 years at Seacrest Marina. He asked if the City has had to respond to legal repercussions from this use and Ms. Hoff answered that it hasn't.

Commissioner Holme moved that the Park Board recommend to the Superintendent to approve the staff recommendation to approve a change of use at Seacrest Park, allowing the Elliott Bay Water Taxi, which operates from the Seacrest dock, to provide year-round service. Commissioner Kostka seconded.

Commissioner Barber states that he remains concerned that this park area is being used as a transportation corridor. He read additional sections from Forward Thrust and Initiative 42 and stated that these were adopted by City Council ordinance. Responding to a question from the Chair on how Commissioner Barber would like to see the Park Board proceed in this matter, Commissioner Barber would like the Ferry System to provide new park land in exchange for using Seacrest Marina for the water taxi.

Commissioner Holme commented that this proposal was presented to the Board as a temporary measure, while the Ferry District locates a permanent site for the water taxi, and is not a permanent use. If it were permanent, he would also want more rigorous legal involvement. However, there has been no litigation about this site being used for the water taxi in 11 years and he believes these improvements will serve the immediate good of the public.

The vote was taken, with Commissioners Holme and Kostka voting in favor. Commissioner Barber voted against. The chair does not vote except to make or break a tie. Motion carried.

The Board thanked Ms. Hoff and King County Ferry staff for the briefings.

Discussion/Recommendation: "Summer Streets" – Arboretum Drive Segment

Karen Tsao, Seattle Parks Strategic Advisor, briefed the Board at its February 12 meeting on the Summer Streets (formerly "A Walk in the Park" proposal) and the Board held a public hearing at its February 26 meeting, and held some discussion at its March 12 meeting. For a copy of the minutes, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2009/02-12-09.pdf> and <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2009/02-26-09.pdf> and <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2009/03-12-09.pdf>. Tonight, the Board plans to discuss the proposal to permanently close Arboretum Drive and make a recommendation to the Superintendent.

Board Discussion

Ms. Tsao introduced herself and stated that the Department is asking the Board to recommend changing the status of Arboretum Drive to be permanently closed to through traffic. This change of status will give the Department more control of the road for park use. The Department is not asking the Board to make a recommendation at this time on the operational aspect of a permanent closure.

Ms. Tsao next referred to the press release that was sent by the Mayor's office announcing the Summer Streets program [it was distributed before the Park Board completed its public hearing on the program]; she doesn't believe the announcement moved ahead of the Park Board's public hearing proceedings on Arboretum Drive.

She also addressed how the Department will manage the operation side of the closure. Parks staff will work with Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) for succinct and welcoming language on signage and install different gates. SDOT and Parks staff will work with Arboretum Foundation and University of Washington Botanic Garden staff on the language for the signs.

Commissioner Adams asked Ms. Tsao to clarify why the Department wants a change of status and operations for Arboretum Drive. She responded that the road has been closed to through traffic for the past 18 months during construction of Phase I of the Pacific Connection garden. Vehicles that have needed access enter from

the north end where the gate has remained open, and turn around and exit from there, too – they cannot drive through the Arboretum. The gates that were installed for the construction are unattractive and the construction signage is not welcoming. Deputy Superintendent Williams added that there have been no complaints about the temporary closure. Commissioner Adams asked Ms. Tsao to confirm that the Department is still asking for a soft closure of the road and Ms. Tsao agreed.

Commissioner Holme referred to a letter the Superintendent recently sent to the Arboretum Foundation, which did not include a recommendation on how the soft closure would be managed. Ms. Tsao responded that the Department first wants to change the status of the road to permanently closed and not determine tonight how the operation of the closure will work. Deputy Superintendent Williams added that the soft closure would keep the north end gate open and the south end gate closed – as they are now - and vehicles that need access could drive into and exit the Arboretum from the north end. Ms. Tsao commented that new gates and signage will make it easier for bicyclists and pedestrians to access the Arboretum and will be more aesthetically pleasing.

Commissioner Kostka stated that she is especially concerned about the south end, as the Board has heard testimony that the gate doesn't allow good access to bicyclists and she would like to see the Board's recommendation address this. Commissioner Adams summarized the staff recommendation to the Board as being a change in status and that Seattle Parks will deal with the operations of the closure separately. Ms. Tsao agreed and stated that the Superintendent has made it clear that he is committed to keeping access open at the north end, as it is now, and working with the stakeholders on the operations of the road.

Commissioner Holme stated that having continued access from the north end is the real issue for him and he would like to see the operational steps developed before voting on a permanent closure. Ms. Tsao agreed that the signage needs improving and Deputy Superintendent Williams stated that this is a symbolic closure, with no enforcement, and access from the north end will be on an honor system. Commissioner Holme responded that it would be very helpful to him to have a summary of the operational details; this isn't firm enough for him. Ms. Tsao stated that all the operational details can't be worked out beforehand. The details must be developed and tested to see how they work. She asked that the Board segment the closure status from the operations aspect. Commissioner Holme responded that he would only support the concept of a closure at this time, based on testimony the Board received.

Commissioner Barber recalled that, during the development of the Arboretum's Master Plan in the 1990s, many people attended the public meetings and there was fervent debate. This debate included whether to close Arboretum Drive to vehicles. He believes it would be valuable to revisit the Master Plan and asked if any public meetings have been held on this. Ms. Tsao responded that the Park Board's recent public hearing was the public meeting. Deputy Superintendent Williams stated that language in the Master Plan speaks to the road being both closed and being open.

Commissioner Barber added that closing the south end forces people who live south of the Arboretum to drive an extra three miles to the north end. He is also concerned that buses bringing people into the Arboretum will have to make large detours for buses coming from the south due to a low-lying bridge that crosses over Lake Washington Boulevard East and prevents buses and trucks from passing through. Ms. Tsao noted that, if the status isn't changed, both buses and trucks will resume driving on Arboretum Drive.

Paige Miller asked if she could address the Board and speak to some of their concerns. The Chair recognized her. Ms. Miller has been Executive Director of the Arboretum Foundation for the past two years and Arboretum Drive has been closed for 18 months during that time. There have been no complaints about buses not allowed to drive into the Arboretum. Commissioner Barber believes this will change, as the Master Plan includes development of more educational uses of the Arboretum and that is one reason why Arboretum Drive is kept open in the Master Plan. Ms. Miller responded that the Arboretum Foundation has already developed educational programs with as many as 7,000 children attending annually and they have been entering at the north end of the Arboretum, with no complaints. Commissioner Barber stated that the Master Plan calls for a

new education center to be built and wondered how the road closure would affect access to it. Ms. Miller answered that it will be 10-15 years before that happens. Once it is built and operational, the road status could be reviewed, as needed.

Commissioner Holme asked Ms. Miller how the Arboretum Foundation has responded to the proposal to permanently close Arboretum Drive. Ms. Miller answered that the Foundation recently surveyed its members. The survey was mailed to 3,000+ people on the Arboretum's mailing list, with 360+ responses received. The survey asked (with yes votes shown) if they preferred a full closure of Arboretum Drive = 18%; that it remain as it is now, a soft closure = 41%; or both gates left open = 35%. Ms. Miller stated that she was reasonably comfortable that the Superintendent's management proposal - with the south gate closed and north open for reasonable access - is what the majority of Arboretum users favor.

Commissioner Adams stated that he would entertain a motion to approve the staff recommendation for a change of status of Arboretum Drive to be permanently closed to through traffic.

Commissioner Holme moved that the Board recommend to the Superintendent to continue the use and operations of Arboretum Drive as they now exist [from the floor, Ms. Miller added "with the south gate closed and the north gate open"] and Commissioner Holme agreed. Commissioner Barber seconded the motion. The Chair asked that the motion be read back to the Board before they voted on it, and then called for the vote. **Commissioners Barber, Holme, and Kostka voted in favor. Motion carried.**

Commissioner Holme added that he frequently visits the Arboretum and since the construction closure began a couple of years ago, he has been parking at the Washington Park Playfield/Japanese Garden parking lot. He believes that new pedestrian crossings must be added to Lake Washington Boulevard, with a well marked crosswalk from the Washington Park Playfield/Japanese Garden parking lot area to the south Arboretum Drive entrance, to give pedestrians safe access into the East side of the Arboretum and to the new Pacific Connections gardens. He referred to new SDOT crossings with lights imbedded in the pavement as a desirable type of installation for this hazardous crossing.

Commissioner Holme believes there has been a lot of confusion on the closure issue, and he asked that the Department distribute concise information to help clear the confusion. Commissioner Barber doesn't believe the permanent closure proposal was well vetted to the public and recommended that the Department hold a public meeting on the proposed closure.

Commissioner Adams asked that Parks staff bring the operations plan back to the Park Board and Ms. Tsao agreed to do so. He thanked everyone who testified to the Board for their input.

Briefing: Native Plant Policy

Barb DeCaro, Seattle Parks Resource Conservation Coordinator, presented a briefing on the Department's Native Plant Policy. The Board has scheduled a public hearing at its April 9 meeting, followed by a discussion and recommendation to the Superintendent at its May 14 meeting. Prior to tonight's meeting, the Board received a written briefing paper and draft policy.

Written Briefing

Requested Board Action

No action is being requested at this time. This briefing will present the proposed Native Plant Policy.

Staff Recommendation (if applicable)

Pending further review and Park Board comments, staff expects to recommend approval of the Native Plant Policy which includes establishing a standard of 80% of new plants installed in parks landscapes be native to the Cascadia bioregion.

Policy Description and Background

A key goal of the Departments Strategic Action Plan is to “Steward Seattle’s parks and open spaces for long-term-sustainability” and “increase planting of native species where appropriate and control invasive plants.” Specifically goal 1.B.3.i states: “Develop a native plant policy to improve plant diversity and reduce the use of invasives.” The development of the proposed policy is a direct result of the feedback Parks received from staff and citizens through the development of the Strategic Action Plan. This policy is intended to focus landscaping efforts on being sustainable in terms of the plants used, the wildlife protected, and the utilities and pesticides conserved.

The Parks Department values landscapes that are both beautiful in design, but also provide a home for wildlife, conserve water and reduce pesticide use. When designed properly, sustainable landscapes use native plants that require less maintenance over the long-term because they are well-adapted to the Northwest climate and ecology.

Parks is the environmental steward of 11% of Seattle’s land area as well as a role model for Seattle’s community. Because native plants provide an important mechanism for biodiversity and mitigating the impacts of urbanization on the landscape, Parks has an environmental responsibility to include these plants in the landscape wherever possible.

This proposed policy (Attachment 1) states: “Seattle Parks and Recreation will strive to achieve sustainability in all landscape design, construction and maintenance...” It specifically aims to achieve landscapes with 80% native plantings in developed parks with exceptions such as athletic fields, formal gardens, etc. It defines native plants as those originating in the Cascadia Bioregion which encompasses all or portions of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California, Nevada, Wyoming, Montana, Alaska, British Columbia, and Alberta.

The Superintendent has the authority to set policies such as this for the Department and no further approvals are required.

Public Involvement Process

No public process has been held to specifically develop or review this proposed policy. However, guidance for the development of the native plant policy was derived from the positive feedback gathered from public meetings and input associated with the development of the Strategic Action Plan. Participants advocated for a “greener,” more environmental Parks and Recreation Department, with increased focus on habitat restoration, more natural, native landscaping, and a reduction of energy use throughout the Parks and Recreation system. People also spoke about the need for better environmental practices including working more with the Green Seattle Partnership, green maintenance practices and restoring native forests and habitat throughout the parks system. A summary of these comments are found in Attachment 2: Strategic Action Plan Comments.

Extensive discussion was held with Parks staff including landscape architects, project managers, gardeners and maintenance staff. Among staff there was debate and concerns that the policy would limit creativity, impose too many restrictions or cause the wrong plants to be planted based on soil conditions. All of these concerns were recorded (Attachment 3) and addressed through discussions regarding how this policy would be carried out, expanding the region that is called ‘native’, making the exclusion list clear and calling out that plantings will continue to complement land function. The proposed policy allows for exceptions where appropriate and offers some flexibility to account for unique conditions that may be found in particular locations.

Schedule

Native plants will be incorporated into landscapes consistent with the policy as part of normally scheduled projects and plantings.

For additional information

- Barb DeCaro, Resource Conservation Coordinator, 615-1660, Barbara.Decaro@seattle.gov
- Eric Friedli, Manager, Policy and Business Analysis, 684-8369, Eric.Friedli@seattle.gov
- Leah Tivoli, Strategic Advisor, 615-0226, Leah.Tivoli@seattle.gov

Attachment 2: Strategic Action Plan Public Comments on the Use of Native Plants

Suggestions/Accolades

"Congratulations on your developing commitment to native plantings and low water and chemical use landscaping."

"Restoration of open space (by removing non natives) and original purpose (mission) of specific locations (conservatory) are important to keep in mind."

"Sustainability in vegetation management: Senior gardeners should educate grounds staff so they pull invasive instead of natives. Also, better supervision of contract grounds maintenance (for the same reason)"

"[Prefer] If there was less emphasis on athletics, lights, golf, buildings and dogs...and more restoration of native areas, tree planting and removing invasive from the Lake Washington shoreline."

"Control invasive species of plants and encourage native species in their place (less water, less maintenance, less chemical controls)"

"Advocating increasing stewardship of the environment and the continued use of native plants, while promoting the "wildness" of our open space"

"Landscape naturally with native plants"

"Maintain city forests in a sustainable way (encourage next generation of native forest tree species - conifers)"

"More resources for native plant restoration of green parks."

"I stay in Seattle because of its great park system. Keep out any development [i.e. in Discovery Park] and make them as bird friendly as possible with native plantings/nesting boxes and even some hides if affordable. Keep up the good work, thank you"

"[More] serious native plantings, restoration and management for non-game wildlife"

"More natural areas, places to be close to nature observe wild animals, native plants, and walk or run"

"Congratulations on your developing commitment to native plantings and low water and chemical use landscaping."

"Pleased that there has been a focus on native plants—keep focus on native flora"

"Inspire property owners on sustainable practices – including pesticides and native plants. I'm pleased that the department has increasingly emphasized restoring the native flora."

"Showcase native landscape to maximum advantage—use for environmental education"

Attachment 3: Strategic Action Plan: Staff Comments on the Use of Native Plants

- Maintainability should be added as a goal because the plants get trampled and require more maintenance than is budgeted
- There are [more] problems outside the design than within the design process
- Definitions are needed
- Design standards can help define what is a native plant. There could be specific design standards for what the soil can support. Whatever terminology or language we use should reflect the language and perceptions of the communities. They understand the word ornamental and we should continue using that. We use informal versus formal plantings. Naturalistic is another way to describe plantings that are not native per se, but look like natives and are easier to establish and maintain
- We have a lot of Asiatic plantings that we use because they look beautiful and can grow well in our climate.
- Native plantings should be included as part of the guidelines in the Best Management Practices and not as policy
- Native plants may be more difficult to establish and more resource intensive even out in their natural environment.
- Planting is a matter of opinion
- Planting design should remain somewhat stable over time
- The landscape is like a living document and we should allow the landscape to evolve
- We already parallel historic design some parks eg. In a couple Olmsted Parks (Volunteer?) plants are being used that are reflect original plant lists
- The individual process [of gardeners and landscape architects] is already consistent and would likely be similar if each person was asked to define what they did
- There are already maintenance plans, but the maintenance workers may change and the plans do not carry over to the next person
- Outdated plant lists are limiting
- Design standards are helpful for contracting work and maintaining consistency across the department
- Designer currently pulls together information about the land, function of the park, stakeholder interests, guidelines and resource limitations.
- We could use an establishment program to improve our oversight, protect/steward our assets.



Your City, Seattle

Department Policy & Procedure

Subject: Native Plant Policy	Number
	Effective
	Supersedes
Approved:	Department: Parks & Recreation
Page 1 of	

1.0 PURPOSE

As a steward of Seattle’s park land and an environmental role model to Seattle’s community, Seattle Parks and Recreation aims to provide landscapes for park patrons to enjoy that are sustainable in their design, construction, and maintenance practices. Sustainable landscapes utilizing native plants conserve plants and trees that are native to the Cascadia region; protect and provide wildlife habitat and a healthy ecosystem; achieve utility conservation and integrated pest management goals.

2.0 ORGANIZATIONS/INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED

- 2.1 Staff who design, construct, and maintain Seattle Parks and Recreation landscapes.
- 2.2 Consultants, landscape architects and park designers hired by the Department to design park landscapes.

3.0 POLICY

- 3.1 Seattle Parks and Recreation will strive to achieve sustainability in all landscape design, construction and maintenance in order to:
 - i. Help balance human and ecological interests;
 - ii. Use more plants that are naturally adapted to local climate and soils;
 - iii. Mitigate the effects of urbanization and improve habitat for indigenous plant and animal communities;
 - iv. Contribute to the Northwest's sense of place;
 - v. Provide a forum for education and understanding ecological value in natural and developed landscapes.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 Native plants are defined as those originating in the Cascadia Bioregion. The Cascadia Bioregion (also referred to as the Pacific Northwest Bioregion) encompasses all or portions of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California, Nevada, Wyoming, Montana, Alaska, British Columbia, and Alberta. The Cascadia Bioregion claims the entire watershed of the Columbia River (as far as the Continental Divide), as well as the Cascade Range from Northern California well into Canada (Attachment 1).

5.0 RESPONSIBILITY

- 5.1 Each Park and Recreation division that designs, constructs or maintains landscapes shall provide targets annually to the Superintendent that demonstrate the division's commitment to increasing the use of native plants in developed parks and natural areas.

6.0 PROCEDURE

- 6.1 Seattle Parks and Recreation aims to achieve landscapes with 80% native plantings in developed parks through all design, construction, and maintenance, with the following exceptions:
 - 6.1.1 athletic fields,
 - 6.1.2 designated community and horticultural gardens (eg. P-Patches and Japanese Garden),
 - 6.1.3 parks and arboreta with horticultural plant collections and interpretive displays,
 - 6.1.4 significant floral displays, historic and cultural landscapes such as Olmsted parks,
 - 6.1.5 parks with vegetation management plans not conducive to a native vegetated landscape, or
 - 6.1.6 other parks as approved by the Superintendent.
- 6.2 Natural areas within parks shall continue 100% native plantings in design, construction, and renovation.

6.3 For horticultural projects designed and/or constructed, the application of the 02950-01 “The Design of Plantings within Functional Landscapes” checklist is required if one or more of the following criteria is met:

- 6.3.1 The project will change plant species utilized over 80% of a planting area that is 1,000 square feet or larger in total area addressed by project;
- 6.3.2 The project will change irrigation requirements (e.g., discontinues or adds in-ground irrigation, discontinues or adds hand-watering);
- 6.3.3 The project disturbs lands on or adjacent to critical areas.

7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 Reference: 02950-01 “The Design of Plantings within Functional Landscapes”

Verbal Briefing/Board Discussion

Ms. DeCaro introduced herself and gave a brief summary of the written briefing paper and policy. A goal of the native plant policy is for sustainability in the landscape, with trees that will live 60 or more years and shrubs that will live for 10-20 years – and be beautiful. Bee studies have shown that native landscapes can help restore the diminished native bee colonies. The Department has an environmental responsibility to plant in this manner.

Parks has received some public feedback on the Native Plant Policy and expects to receive more. Staff will work to develop plants lists, educate the public, and train Parks grounds maintenance staff on new planting methods.

Commissioner Kostka commented that this is a tremendous initiative and she strongly advocates for the new policy. She complimented Ms. DeCaro and the Natural Resources Unit for their work on the policy. She does have two concerns: (1) How did staff develop the Cascadia BioRegion as a source for native plants? Ms. DeCaro responded that staff used internet native plant research and focused on marine climate native plantings. Commissioner Kostka recommended that the sources be included in the policy. She is a member of the Washington Native Plant Society and mentioned a couple of sources that botanists frequently use. Ms. DeCaro responded that she is also a botanist and used both these sources in developing the new policy. (2) Commissioner Kostka helped found the Kiwanis Ravine, which is mostly native plants. She urged that Parks try to purchase any native plants from within 100 miles or less of Seattle – and not purchase plants in Montana for planting in Seattle.

Commissioner Holme noted that native plants are usually in the background of plantings and not the focus; it may take the general public some time to become accustomed to this new style of plant beds. Ms. DeCaro answered that staff are working to develop more “borrowed landscape” methods, where a small area in the front of plantings are decorative plants and the background is native plants. Woodland Park Zoo has successfully used this concept.

He believes that difficult budget times are very appropriate for new policies to be introduced. Staff have more time to study the plants, hold charrettes, and brainstorm on best methods and practices. Ms. DeCaro agreed with Commissioner Holme. She added that Great Plant Picks Northwest includes several native plants in its list and Parks staff have asked for their process in selecting these plants to emulate.

Ms. DeCaro noted that she has taken classes in planting Northwest native plants. She referred to a book on the Northwest Climate and global warming, which reads that the warming is slower in the Pacific Northwest and native plants have a better chance of survival.

Commissioner Holme asked how turf grass fits in the 80% shrub bed area/trees goal. Ms. DeCaro responded that staff are still discussing the grass component and will look at the parks on a park-by-park and site-by-site basis. Additional language will be added to the native plant policy to address this. She noted that the native plant policy does not address forested land or athletic fields.

Commissioner Adams asked how staff plan to get additional public input. Ms. DeCaro stated that along with the input already received and the Park Board's public hearing, the Natural Resources Unit staff will continue doing public and staff education. In addition, public meetings are held on each capital project and if landscaping is an element, these meetings will be another opportunity to educate on the native plant policy. Commissioner Adams asked if staff are planning a native plant demonstration garden. Ms. DeCaro answered that there is a native planting at Seward Park that was planted about 15 years ago and she encouraged the Board and public to visit it. Native plants have been incorporated into several of the smaller park's landscaped areas and there are remnant native trees and salal shrubs in some parks. Commissioner Adams wondered if the department has a way to point these sites out to the public. Commissioner Holme suggested a map on the Department's web page and Ms. DeCaro responded that this is a great idea. Commissioner Kostka strongly supported this suggestion and asked that the map point out which ones are good examples of native vegetation. Commissioner Barber added that the map could point out the most important and sensitive areas at wetlands and streambeds.

Commissioners thanked Ms. DeCaro for the briefing. The Board will hold a public hearing on the native plant policy at its April 9 meeting, followed by a discussion and recommendation at its May 14 meeting.

Old/New Business

Thank you letter to Amit: Board members expressed their regret at the resignation of former Park Board Commissioner Amit Ranade, due to work and family time commitments and discussed ways to honor and thank him for his four years of good service to the Board and the Department. Parks staff will prepare a certificate of service.

West Seattle Stadium RFP: Commissioner Holme has been asked by the Department to serve on this review committee. He has agreed to do so, if responses are received to the Request for Proposals. The Chair commented that Commissioner Holme is a good choice for this committee.

2008 Parks and Green Space Levy Oversight Committee: Both Commissioner Adams and Holme have been confirmed as members of this new committee, with Commissioner Holme representing the Park Board. Deputy Superintendent Williams stated that there will be supplemental language that allows this new oversight committee to complete the final business of the previous Pro Parks Levy. The Committee and staff will present a final report to City Council on the Pro Parks Levy. Park Board Commissioners would also like a briefing on this report.

Associated Recreation Council (ARC) Board Meeting: Commissioner Adams represents the Park Board on the ARC Board and attended its most recent meeting. He commented that ARC plays an important part in operations of Seattle Park's facilities. ARC has many advisory councils and is moving in a new direction on these councils to broaden interests and increase the cross section of people involved in the councils. Commissioner Holme thanked Commissioner Adams for serving on this committee and reporting to the Park Board. ARC Executive Director Bill Keller is scheduled to brief the Park Board on ARC operations at the June 25 Park Board meeting.

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

APPROVED: _____

Jackie Ramels, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE _____