

Department of Parks and Recreation

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
October 28, 2010

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
Terry Holme
Jourdan Keith
Diana Kincaid
Donna Kostka
Jackie Ramels, Chair

Excused:

John Barber

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff:

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent
Susan Golub, Strategic Advisor

Commissioner Ramels called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and reviewed the meeting agenda topics. **The agenda was approved as presented.**

Superintendent's Report

Acting Superintendent Williams reported on the following items. To learn more about Seattle Parks, see the website at <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/>.

Budget Issue Summary:

City Council staff have identified issues regarding the Parks and Recreation budget:

Fee increase: The Council will be proposing to accelerate the fee increase proposed for 2012 and have the increase start in 2011;

Maintenance Apprenticeship Program: Three positions were to be cut and the Council wants to restore them;

Paid Parking: A Statement of Legislative Intent is being prepared asking the department to investigate charging for parking at some parks;

Fund Balance: Parks usually maintains a \$1 million balance to be ready for emergencies; the Council is proposing to cut \$500,000 from the fund balance;

Capital Improvement Program: Parks usually gets \$30 million in Real Estate Investment Tax funds; for 2011 the amount will be less than \$10 million, which won't go far to maintain assets;

Community Center Operations: A Statement of Legislative Intent is being prepared asking Parks to look at service delivery models and partnerships for Community Center operations.

Building 11 Update: The developers for Building 11, Building 11 LLC, have not yet secured financing for the building renovation. They are hoping to finalize financing soon so that pending subleases will not be

jeopardized. Once the developers secure funding and building permits, they will provide Parks with a Lessee's Notice. At that time current tenants will receive a 60 day notice to vacate. Many of the current tenants in Building 11 would like the building to remain under Parks jurisdiction, and are discussing ways to fund building 11 improvements should the building not be leased to Building 11 LLC.

An amendment to the current lease is being completed and may include:

- Extension of the lease term for Historic Tax credit purposes (40 yrs, plus 1-5yr extension from 30 yrs, plus 3-5 yr extensions)
- Addition of outdoor play area for the day care and an outdoor seating area. The outdoor play area will be open to the public except during hours that the day care is in operation.
- Inclusion of "quiet enjoyment" which will allow sub lessees to remain in the building under their current subleases, should Parks regain possession of Building 11 (if LLC defaults and mortgage holder does not assume the lease, which is unlikely).
- Allowing new driveway entrance construction costs as capital offsets to rent.

Levy Oversight Committee Update: The Parks and Green Spaces Levy Citizen Oversight Committee is nearing the end of their process that will recommend park acquisition and development projects to be funded from the Levy's Opportunity Fund. Earlier this year, Parks' planning staff reviewed and evaluated a vast number of Opportunity Fund proposals and prepared a ranked listing per criteria outlined in the Levy ordinance. Highly ranked project sites were visited on tours with the committee in September and discussed at their September meeting, at which time the Committee reached agreement on a slate of recommended projects. The public hearing on the draft list of projects was held this week at Miller Community Center. A number of citizens came forward to support the draft list of projects as well as additional projects. We expect the Oversight Committee to move the slate forward at their November 22 or December 6 meeting, such that we can submit legislation for these projects early in 2011.

Queen Anne Community Center: BizKidz, the proposed tenant for the Queen Anne Community Center gym has decided not to pursue tenancy at the Community Center. The revenue from BizKidz was to offset program costs. Recent misinformation in the community has referred to the department retaliating against the community because of the opposition to BizKidz. This is not true; the department does not retaliate. The department is trying to find a new plan to fund the services without the anticipated BizKidz revenue.

Rainier Beach Community Center Late Night Program: The department is working to find a site for our Late Night program once the Rainier Beach Community Center closes for rebuilding. We are working with the Seattle School District to reach an agreement on the use of the Rainier Beach High School gym.

Seward Park Play Area Opening: The new play area at Seward Park opened Saturday, October 23.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

The Chair explained 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-to-three minutes each, will be timed, and are asked to stand at the podium to speak. 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 Old/New Business. Four people testified, with a brief summary of their testimony included below. To hear the full testimony, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591071> and move cursor to position 19.08. Three people testified.

Ellen Taft: Ms. Taft is active with the Mt. Baker Rowing and Sailing Club. She asked that rules be posted and enforced regarding not talking to the cox, not interrupting a coach, and not telling others how to row. She suggested having rowers sign behavioral contracts.

Norman Fry: Mr. Fry is a tennis player who plays at Lower Woodland. Odors from the off-leash area above the courts and feces migrating down the hill to the courts is a big problem, especially in the summer.

Nick: Nick is a roller skater who has had problems with the "rumble strips" that mark the intersections on the Burke-Gilman Trail.

Discussion/Recommendation: Alternate Use of Tennis Courts

At its July 8, 2010, meeting, Dennis Cook, Seattle Parks Athletics Manager, presented a briefing on alternate use of tennis courts. To read the minutes from that meeting, including the briefing paper and the Board's discussion, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2010/07-18-10.pdf>. Mr. Cook prepared an additional briefing paper for tonight's discussion. It is presented below.

Written Briefing and Draft Policy

Requested Board Action

This is a follow-up paper on the proposed change of use for some of Seattle Parks' tennis courts to allow non-tennis activity. The Board held a public hearing at its September 23 meeting. At the October 28 meeting we are asking the Board for a recommendation on criteria for identifying courts suitable for alternate use.

Project Description and Background

Due to the increasing popularity of activities such as dodge ball, bike polo, in-line skating and street hockey, Seattle Parks and Recreation has endeavored to find locations to accommodate these sports. Parks initially proposed allowing non tennis court activities on tennis courts that were determined to have low use for tennis.

However, identifying tennis courts as "low use" has been a challenge. Parks keeps data only on permitted use of courts and does not have the ability to monitor drop-in use. (Permits are used to reserve courts to insure use for schools, camps and sometimes individuals.) Therefore, Parks is recommending using the term "alternate use" rather than low use.

Staff is recommending a three-tier eligibility criteria (Attachment A) which will be used to identify courts suitable for alternate use. The criteria describe first tier, competitive tennis courts that would be dedicated solely for tennis use. Second tier courts would not be subjected to bikes, skates and sticks that would damage community center /recreation tennis courts. The third tier of courts has the ability to withstand bikes, skates, sticks and other play and there are other courts nearby for tennis play. Examples of courts that would fall in each tier are provided.

Public Involvement Process

The Board held a public hearing September 23, 2010. A large number of e-mails and letters have been received regarding alternate use of tennis courts. As of Friday, October 22, the department had received 137 pro alternative use letters and a petition in support of dodge ball with 631 signatures; and 67 letters against alternative use and a petition with 52 signatures. Additional correspondence on the issue will be forwarded to the Board as it is received.

Additional Information:

Dennis Cook: dennis.cook@seattle.gov

Attachment A
Proposed Criteria for Selecting Alternate Use Tennis Courts

Changing Tennis Courts to Alternative Use Courts
Eligibility Criteria

- Geographic dispersal of court locations throughout the city
- Proximity to other tennis courts
- Maintenance history and general condition of the court
- Court surface material
- Frequency of use by tennis players
- Demonstrated high demand for alternative uses

Tier 1: Major Tennis Complexes/Competitive Courts: **(Not recommended for other activities besides tennis)**

- Color Coated
- 3 or more courts
- High school practices/matches
- Highly permitted
- Other courts within 1.5 mile radius

Examples of courts that represent the Major Tennis Complexes: Lower Woodland, Meadowbrook, Lincoln Park

Tier 2: Community Center / Recreational Courts: **(Potential for activities other than tennis but not wheeled or stick sports)**

- Two or less courts
- Color coated
- Concrete with asphalt topcoat
- Other courts within 1.5 mile radius
- High school practices only

Examples of courts that represent the Community Center / Recreation Courts: Jefferson, Rainier, Green Lake East, Cal Anderson

Tier 3: Neighborhood Courts: **(Potential for activities including wheeled and stick sports)**

- Two or less courts
- Concrete surfaces
- Non color coated
- Other courts within 1.5 mile radius

Examples of courts that represent the Neighborhood Courts: Judkins, Hutchinson, Cowen, Dearborn Park

Court Alternate Use Decision Process

1. Request initiated by non tennis user group to department for an alternative use;
2. Park staff determination that court meets suitability for alternative use;
3. Public notification of proposed change in court use: Parks posts a sign at the facility or a mailing to surrounding neighbors identifying the proposed change to the courts;
4. Allow 30 days for comments;
5. Review of comments;
6. Decision made by the Superintendent; and
7. Implement evaluation process to determine effects of change of use.

RULES

Similar to tennis court standard rules
Participation policy
Code of conduct
No alcohol
No smoking
No Dogs

FEES

No fees for drop-in use
Similar to tennis fees for court reservations

Additional facilities that may be considered as alternatives to tennis courts

Parks outdoor basketball courts
School District Property (playgrounds)
Parking lots

Board Discussion

Commissioner Ramels thanked the community for all of the input regarding alternative use of tennis courts, noting that the Board reads all of the written testimony.

Parks Athletics Manager, Dennis Cook, noted that different sports have different impacts: bikes and skates damage courts, but dodgeball doesn't necessarily cause damage. Parks is passionate about all sports and is trying to serve everyone: the department wants to serve emerging sports.

Commissioner Kostka asked whether citizens can remove tennis nets for dodgeball use, and whether Parks should charge a fee for alternative uses that might damage courts. Mr. Cook responded that a special tool is needed to take down a tennis court net. Regarding fees, there would need to be a public process around the development of new fees.

Regarding the tiers used to determine eligibility, Commissioner Kincaid noted that the proposal was going beyond the earlier discussion of just doing a pilot program at Cal Anderson at Judkins. Is this now a city-wide program? Mr. Cook responded that the earlier assessment was for "low use" courts and was a city-wide evaluation. However, it was not easy to identify low use courts; so the tiered criteria were developed. Commissioner Ramels stated that she had earlier expressed her concern regarding the different impacts of different sports and the need for criteria.

Commissioner Adams expressed a concern regarding the criteria. The criteria imply use and there may be unintended consequences. There has not been enough analysis of alternative uses and the impacts on other activities. For example, what is the level of need for tennis courts in the City. The Board has received a lot of feedback that not enough courts are available. If alternative uses are allowed, then the number of courts for tennis will shrink. How is the department to address this impact?

Acting Superintendent Williams stated that Parks must recognize that park users have changed and the department needs to change and stay relevant to users. Also there is significantly less money available to resurface courts than there used to be, so decisions have to balance between meeting new uses and the needs of tennis players.

Commissioner Keith stated she is concerned with long-term maintenance needs that would come from alternate uses and the higher impacts to the courts. How can we make sure people have a place for emerging sports, but that this use doesn't snowball into a maintenance nightmare. Would it be possible to designate one court for dodgeball and one for stick sports, and limit this to two specific courts?

Commissioner Kostka expressed a concern that the three-tier system is too complex for the public to understand; the department should make it simpler.

Commissioner Holme stated he liked the three-tier system; he asked who would conduct the public process and how many meetings would be required? He also noted that maintenance costs are an issue. Would there be any ramifications or a penalty for people damaging courts where alternative uses are not allowed?

Mr. Cook responded that there will be signs indicating what uses are allowed, but the department can't police everywhere. If a use is permitted, users will be required to follow the Code of Conduct and user groups are not allowed in they violate the code.

Motion: Commissioner Holme made the following motion, seconded by Commissioner Kincaid: **The Board recommends adopting the proposed criteria allowing for alternative uses on tennis courts, specifically for a pilot project and only for up to three courts.** Mr. Holme added he is not ready to adopt criteria for the entire system; therefore his motion is restricted to a maximum of three courts.

Mr. Adams stated that good policies are developed based on data and the Board does not have this for this issue. The design and evaluation of a pilot will help figure out long-term policy.

Commissioner Keith stated she is against the motion because there are too many gray areas. She thinks three tiers is too many, and that the real issue is use at Cal Anderson, so why expand alternative uses beyond that park.

Commissioner Ramels also spoke against the motion, noting that it is not specific enough.

The vote was taken with three in favor and two opposed. Motion carried.

Commissioner Adams requested the department bring the specific pilot project, including the list of courts for the pilot, to the Board for a recommendation, before announcing it.

Commissioner Keith asked for more specifics and offered a subsequent motion: **Allow one court at Cal Anderson Park to be specifically designated for dodgeball and bike polo; and use Judkins Park courts for bike polo. Have this be a pilot project. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Adams.**

Christopher Williams stated that a pilot project is typically 18 months.

The vote was taken, with five in favor and none opposed. Motion carried.

Briefing: Planning and Development Division Update

Asset Management Plan

Kevin Stoops, the Director of the Planning and Development Division, provided the Board with an update. The Department's Asset Management Plan has 400 projects on the list, equaling \$300 million. Every two years the plan is updated, with new projects added and completed ones removed. Based on input from the public and staff, the top 150 to 200 projects are ranked in importance and need. The plan is intended to be a six-year plan, but because there is not enough funding it is more like a fifteen-year plan.

Rankings are based on tiers of projects:

- First tier: previously approved projects are the first draw on capital funds, including Pier 59 redevelopment, Hubbard Homestead Park purchase.

- Second tier: projects that are required by code, such as Colman Pool discharge project.
- Third tier: safety projects;
- Fourth tier: projects that preserve the building envelope;
- Fifth tier: projects that improve facility integrity – that extend the useful life of the facility;
- Sixth tier: projects that reduce operations and maintenance costs; and
- Seventh tier: projects that save water and energy costs.

Synthetic Fields

Mr. Stoops responded to questions that have previously been raised about the safety of synthetic fields. Studies have been done in other countries and in the United States on the safety of synthetic fields. A 2008 Federal Consumer Products Safety Commission study found lead content in plastic fibers and developed guidelines for exposure.

Field Turf, the leading manufacturer changed its product so that there is no noticeable lead content. From 2002 through 2008, Field Turf product had lead in the paint pigment. Parks had one old field and Field Turf offered to sample the line markings and replace it if it was over the lead content guidelines. It was tested and was below the actionable level.

Responding to questions about rubber run-off having an impact on water quality, the department has done a separate study of the impact of the synthetic fields at Lower Woodland. The discharge from the fields is better/cleaner than it was with the sand fields.

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

APPROVED: _____

Jackie Ramels, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE _____