

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
March 24, 2016

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

Present:

Marty Bluewater

Tom Byers

Dennis Cook

Diana Kincaid

Michael Padilla

Tom Tierney, Chair

Barbara Wright, Vice Chair

Excused:

Bob Edmiston

William Lowe

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent

Susan Golub, Policy Unit Manager

Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

This meeting is held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Tierney calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. The order of the Agenda is changed. Commissioner Tierney calls for approval of the March 24 Agenda, as revised; Commissioner Wright moves and Commissioner Kincaid seconds. The Consent Item is approved by unanimous vote.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

Carol Fisher – Volunteer and supporter, feels the department is wasting money on public outreach and surveys but ignoring the data. She asks Deputy Superintendent Williams to address this. COLA has not been kept in the loop. She feels SPR needs to break the cycle of ignoring people after asking for their thoughts.

Sharon LeVine – Magnolia Manor construction project must pause. The plan changes require stakeholders to be informed of specific details and the department needs to consider community input. SPR staff never posted a notice to off-leash area stakeholders with reduced square footage. The Planning and Development Division sign says “improvements and modifications”.

Park Board Business

Election of Chair: Commissioner Wright nominates Commissioner Byers as Chair of the Park Board and Commissioner Cook seconds. The Commissioners approve the nomination unanimously.

Comments to Retiring Commissioners: Commissioner Byers mentions he worked with Commissioner Tierney 30 years ago. He thanks Commissioner Tierney for his service and steady leadership on the Park Board. Commissioner Wright adds that Commissioner Tierney did a great job as chair for both the Park District Oversight Committee and the Board of Park Commissioners; she thanks him for his contributions.

Commissioner Wright says Commissioner Kincaid has trained many commissioners as Park Board members. She has asked many tough questions and led us well during her tenure as Chair.

She feels both Commissioner Edmiston and Commissioner Angulo were wonderful and added great perspectives to the Park Board.

Commissioner Aguirre adds his thanks to the retiring Commissioners. He is impressed by how well run the Board is and how committed people are. He announces to the Park Board and Commissioner Kincaid, in particular, that King County Metro is starting a pilot to get more access to parks. Commissioner Tierney runs meetings with patience and respect.

Commissioner Byers adds that Commissioner Tierney runs the meetings with gentleness and openness. Commissioner Kincaid offers persistent, gentle comments that keep everyone on their toes.

Deputy Superintendent Williams states that being a Park Board Commissioner is a big job. The department was able to get through the tough times with good relationships.

Superintendent's Report

Presented by Superintendent Aguirre, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Moorages – SPR staff held two open houses this week to introduce the Foss Waterway Team, the proposers that SPR are currently negotiating a contract with for operating and making significant improvements to these facilities. Parks presented updated information on the state of the marinas and an outline of the contracting process. We are hoping to get a contract to the City Council in the next few months.

AT&T hackathon – Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Department of Information Technology and AT&T hosted a mobile app competition with a parks and recreation theme

last weekend. Participants had 24 hours to design and build their mobile apps. Winning application developed a mechanism to provide feedback to service. Other great apps provided map trails with color-coded levels of difficulty.

Animal Shelter partnership – This partnership pairs a Seattle Animal Shelter officer with a Parks Facilities Maintenance Worker to patrol parks with the sole purpose of enforcing leash, scoop, and licensing laws. There was a story in the news about it, which received positive feedback.

Medgar Evers pool – A high utility bill brought to light a major leak at Medgar Evers Pool. A nine-day closure is planned to begin on April 26 to allow the repair to be completed. We estimate that about 135K gallons has been lost because of a cracked flange.

Helicopter disaster support exercise – On Wednesday, March 30, noon to 5 p.m., Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Fire Department, the Washington National Guard and Northwest Regional Aviation will conduct a joint helicopter and communications exercise. They will be using Discovery Park and Magnuson Park.

Woodland Park Zoo CEO – Superintendent Aguirre has been part of the hiring process for the new CEO for the Woodland Park Zoo. He feels the candidate is a great leader who will focus on equity and conservation.

Commissioner Kincaid – Seattle Parks and Recreation had to make severe cuts during the recession and she feels it is important to convey to the public, the hole out of which the department has to rise. There is still a lot of basic work that needs to be done to return to where it was years ago. She applauds staff for their perseverance and their efforts.

Presentation: City Parks Alliance Best Practices Research

Presented by Deputy Superintendent Williams

City Parks Alliance (CPA) supports the commitment to achieve aspirations for urban parks. They focus on issues and challenges big urban park systems face. CPA is engaged in strategic planning as part of their research, Deputy Superintendent Williams engaged in professional inquiry to improve business intelligence as a way to look at new solutions for intractable situations. CPA is a repository for best practices.

Deputy Superintendent Williams interviewed Liam Kavanaugh, First Deputy Commissioner of New York City (NYC) Parks regarding parks services, user expectations, and commercial activity.

Liam says it is not enough to deliver good services and programs. People need to feel that their basic needs are being met. Partnerships are crucial.

Measuring social impact – Are facilities safe, do people feel safe? These measurements go a long way to tell how the NYC park system how the public perceives how the system is doing.

Inspection is critical – There is a need for an outcome measurement system. Report on feelings of safety for women and children at parks and recreation facilities. Frame performance management through a survey. Overlay this with Park District Management effort.

Services – Maintaining clean, safe parks is imperative; NYC thinks of this as a commodity. They think about it economically - helps frame a different expectation of maintenance for the public.

System runs on public/private partnerships and commercial activity. Pros/cons of public/private partnership – how to use resources to leverage against the need for services. Avoid inverse benefit, in which the private partner receives more benefit than the public -- NYC has figured out a way to guarantee the public receives benefit through their negotiations. SPR has unique agreements with everyone, NYC proves it is better to take a formulaic approach and build into the negotiation process.

NYC uses QR codes for customer feedback and 24-hour response. SPR looking at using Customerville to provide this same instant feedback to supervisors.

NYC extensively uses social media and they hire people to handle social media. SPR does not have staff to dedicate to expanding reach and depth. Young people share information through social media. Organizations that are not deeply engaged in social media are not talking to a large percentage of the population.

Deborah Cohen, Author and Senior Natural Scientist at the Rand Corporation. The focus of the conversation was that park agencies need to use research and science-based information to make decisions. There is a lack of science-driven, evidence-based information to back up decisions. Have not formed enough partnerships with universities and have a hard time telling SPR story during budget because we do not have the evidence.

Key research areas – Parks is new to evidence based approach; needs to create new language and science for credibility with public. A lot of theory but not much hard data. Partner with public colleges and other park agencies (regionally) to hire graduate students.

Parks viewed as economic contributors – property values much higher for being situated near nice parks, but poorly maintained parks are a magnet for anti-social behaviors.

Parks can play a better role around equity and health - pay to play and fees for athletic field use create barriers for use. Parks need to be programmed, SPR used to hire Playground Attendants that would activate parks. Important to staff parks and community centers with people who look like the people in the community.

Social impact – Ask people what they want and if SPR is meeting their needs. How to communicate performance measures from Park District? SPR is hiring a consultant to put together a resident survey to find out if residents see the benefits, what SPR should do different, and what SPR does well. Dewey Potter is beginning work on the survey.

Dr. Cohen, several park agencies in a region should take on social impact research. Focus on trying to put stake in the ground on research that makes a difference.

Commissioner Wright thanks Deputy Superintendent Williams and thinks it is great education for the Board and the public. Pleased with the talk about connection to parks and public health. Dr. Frumkin will be coming to a Park Board meeting later in the summer; he is a national leader on this very topic. Dean Frumkin's students could work to collect data. Commissioner Kincaid agrees and feels it is good to back up what we know, instinctively.

Presentation: Conservation Corps

Presented by Cathie Andersen, Conservation Corps Manager

Briefing Paper

The Seattle Conservation Corps (SCC) is a comprehensive work experience program for homeless adults.

The SCC is part of the City of Seattle, Department of Parks and Recreation. Our mission is to utilize private and publicly funded work projects to employ homeless persons in a supportive work environment, offering paid work experience leading to long term employment, housing, and personal stability.

The SCC provides up to one year sheltered paid employment to participants as well as on site case management services, housing assistance, transportation assistance, a staffed learning center, support for drug and alcohol recovery, life skills training , mental health counseling and job search assistance. The SCC has been providing these services to homeless individuals since 1986.

- SCC serves approximately 100 people per year.
- About 65% of the people who start the program complete the program and leave with permanent employment.
- About 80% of our participants leave with stable housing.
- SCC has a GED certificate program and assists people to get their driver's licenses.
- SCC also assists people to clear up legal issues, set up child support payments and resolve child custody issues.
- SCC participants work 40 hours per week. They earn \$15.00 per hour.

- When participants complete the program they enter paid job search and work with a job developer to find permanent employment.

The Seattle Conservation Corps contracts with many City Departments for projects, which provide work experience and occupational skills to participants.

SCC earns about 75% of its annual budget through these projects. The remainder of the budget comes from a Community Services Block Grant from the State of Washington, General Fund support and Metropolitan Park District funding.

Typical Projects

- Trail building
- Landscape installation
- Rain Barrels - manufacturing, sales, and delivery
- Summer watering
- Board-ups & clean-ups
- Moves
- Delivery
- Cistern and Compost bin sales
- Mailing and customer service projects
- Tree planting
- Concrete projects
- Janitorial services
- Shoreline rehabilitation
- Building demolition
- Light construction

Presentation

Cathie Andersen – Manager of Conservation Corps – She started with the neighborhood cleanup project. The Conservation Corps has been around since 1986.

Revenue:

- Earn 75-80% of income through projects.
- The other 20-25% of their budgets comes through Community Service Block Grant, General Fund, and Metropolitan Park District.
- The program is \$200,000 in the black this year.
- 78% of projects come from Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and Community Development Block Grants.

SPR types of projects:

- Building demolitions
- Furniture and sign installation
- Tree planting and watering

- Light construction
- Trails

SPU partnership:

- Green Stormwater Infrastructure Projects
- Special Assistance Transfer Station coupons
- Property clean up
- Kitchen compost bucket delivery to apartment buildings

Park Upgrade Program – undertake improvement projects in low-income neighborhoods.

The Conservation Corps serves approximately 35-40 people at a time and about 80 people a year in the 1-year work program. 20-30 people in the direct placement program.

All people who get into the program are homeless with multiple barriers to employment; many have not had jobs and 99% have addiction issues. In order to participate they must document their homelessness, and be willing and able to work all year outside. They are required to take steps to address issues and be clean and sober.

The Conservation Corps has 2 hearts:

- 1) Work experience – exposed to many occupations; soft skills experience – coming to work every day, getting along with coworkers, and conflict resolution
- 2) Support services – provide case management – certificates for flagging/GED/defensive driving

Case management – help provide them with what they need to move forward – cover necessities; offer Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, relapse prevention support.

Direct Placement Pilot

- SCC provides short term paid job search to homeless adults with low barriers to employment
- Up to 60 hours of assisted paid job search with case management support
- SCC will serve 20-30 participants in this program in 2016

Outcomes –

- SCC served 84 people in 2015
- 49 New Enrollments and 35 Carry-ins
- 26 people completed the program and left with employment
- This is 65 % of all exits (65% of the people who start the program complete and leave with employment).
- 21 people who left with employment retained their jobs for 90 days (81%).
- 76 people were able to maintain stable housing.

Community Benefits-

- Increased child support payments and family reconciliation
- Reduced recidivism
- Increased payment of legal fees
- Reduced reliance on public assistance and housing subsidies
- Reduced use of shelter programs
- Increased payment of taxes
- Reduction in drug and alcohol abuse

Growing the costs - 75% budget is earned through projects; services must be more readily available.

Areas of possible growth?

- New stormwater infrastructure
- SDOT – Move Seattle Levy projects
- MPD projects
- SCC rain barrel sales

Michael Shiosaki, Director of Planning and Development Division of Seattle Parks and Recreation stands up to make some remarks about Cathie Andersen.

Cathie Andersen is the heart of the Conservation corps. She is passionate about what she does. She is a quiet leader so respected by her staff and human services hi

Cathie says the job is more fun than you can imagine.

Commissioner Byers says she has given a great service to the city. Take a hard look at economics of homelessness compared to looking at projects for the poor. He asks about the housing for the participants. Cathie says they usually find housing at Oxford Houses, which are sober housing for very low-income people. The biggest challenge is finding housing for a single man with kids.

Affordable Care Act made a difference for their participants. Yes, at least half have insurance now.

Challenges with organized labor – impediment to expansion?

Joint Crafts Agreement – leadership at shops has had an impact; they wind up in unions when they graduate.

Commissioner Byer's points out that so few people know about this program. Cathie feels staying under the radar helps them to continue doing their work. She emphasizes she wants to keep it sustainable.

Superintendent Aguirre thanks Cathie. She has done a remarkable job. The program is in a strong place. Moving how powerful it is for people's lives. Cathie is right that SPR wants to be thoughtful about growth. There is a great opportunity.

Commissioner Kincaid feels stability is very important for this program and this should be considered when thinking about program growth.

Presentation: Denny Park Improvement Plan

Presented by Chris Mueller, Planning and Development Division, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Briefing Paper

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Park Commissioners
FROM: Chris Mueller
DATE: March 18, 2016
SUBJECT: Denny Park Improvement Plan

Requested Board Action

No formal action is requested. This is an opportunity to inform the Commissioners of the improvements Seattle Parks and Recreation will be making to Denny Park.

Project or Policy Description

This is a Major Maintenance infrastructure replacement project. The project includes storm drainage, sanitary sewer, irrigation system, and pavement replacement. Enhancements to the central plaza will improve pedestrian & maintenance vehicle circulation, provide ADA accessibility and create a more functional community gathering space. Planting bed refinements will address maintenance concerns and facilitate design of a new irrigation system that meets long term needs. Minor modifications to the parking lot and entry drive will expand available parking and address overflow parking on park pathways. Other improvements include a new benches, café tables & chairs and drinking fountain replacement.

Public Involvement Process

In 2006 a comprehensive planning and public involvement process was conducted with development of the park's play area. In order to properly locate the playground, site planning for the entire park was undertaken. The public process included 3 well attended public meetings, 3 in-park open houses, children's workshops and partnerships with Real Change Newspaper vendors and other community groups. The 2006 process resulted in a preferred schematic plan for the park that centered on a theme of "remember and renew"

The current effort to complete major maintenance work, builds upon the 2006 plan and continues the theme of remember and renew. Staff held a public meeting in February 2016 to present project options and gain community feedback. An additional public meeting to present the preferred plan and gain input on proposed parking modifications is planned for April-May.

Schedule

Construction is anticipated to begin by mid-2016 with completion by early 2017.

Additional Information

Chris Mueller – email: chris.mueller@seattle.gov ; phone: (206) 684-0998

Presentation and Discussion

Major maintenance project – storm drainage, sanitary sewer, irrigation and pavement. The budget is \$1.75million. This allows opportunities to enhance and improve the park.

Maintain formal character and integrity
Enhance safety; more community space
Enhance plaza and modify parking
Keep symmetry of formal design
Create a stronger identity through more pronounced entry points.

Parking: At this time, 8-10 cars park along the path and occupies park space and SPR received comments from the public about this. SPR will reconfigure parking lot, which will net one new space. They will add an ADA compliant parking aisle. To assuage some of the parking concerns for those who work at Dexter, SPR staff will add 6 parallel parking stalls on the driveway. Not increasing impervious surfaces.

Plaza:

- Reversed curves to create more functional space and helps with maintenance access.
- Create seating areas outside of main traffic areas.
- Landscape beds on north and south side of plaza will be converted into lawns.
- They will remove three trees to widen the plaza.
- Plant new trees that will not create additional shade.
- Slopes are too steep to be ADA accessible, they will be graded.
- They will use paving detail in the plaza to maintain historical context.

Commissioner Byers asks how much of the budget will be going into creating additional parking. \$20,000 to add the parallel parking stalls. Commissioner Byers admits he has a bias against parking in parks; in a postage stamp park, he hates to see part of it chipped away by the automobile. Superintendent Aguirre points out that this is a park but it is also the administration building for Seattle Parks and Recreation. People are required to be here and take meetings all over town. There are an insufficient number of city vehicles for everyone and with all the new construction and businesses coming in this neighborhood there is a net loss of parking availability.

The playground is a draw but this park is under-loved. People gravitate in their daily routine to green spaces. There is potential to have it more utilized. Food truck along the edge would activate.

Vulcan is building a new 40-story tower and it will be situated in the northwest corner of ninth and John. This will have a definite impact. Commissioner Kincaid brings up the shade effects on building codes.

Commissioner Wright also expresses concern about the parking issue and using parkland for city employees to park. Sign says for authorized use only and it would stay that way. We have an agreement with the church across the street and they can use it on Sundays.

Commissioner Tierney points out that the location of the administration building makes it difficult to access transit.

Construction to start in July with completion by the end of the year.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

Loretta Vosk – Off-leash area at Denny Park – dogs activate space and keep people safe.

Old/New Business

Three of the retiring Park Board Commissioners also sit on the Park District Oversight Committee, so that Board is also losing colleagues.

SPR staff are working closely with the City Council and the Mayor to fill the empty seats on the Park Board. SPR staff are looking at the level of commitment for volunteers who are on both the Park Board and Oversight Committee. The overlap is critical, but requires a high level of commitment.

Commissioner Bluewater moves the meeting adjourn; Commissioner Cook seconds, and the motion carries. The meeting adjourns at 8:33 pm.

APPROVED: _____ DATE _____
Tom Byers, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners