

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
August 11, 2016

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

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Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Tom Byers, Chair
Dennis Cook
Evan Hundley
William Lowe
Michael Padilla
Marty Bluewater

Excused:

Kelly McCaffrey
Barbara Wright, Vice Chair

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

The meeting is held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North.
Commissioner Byers calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Commissioner Byers ask for approval of the consent items: June 23 and July 14 minutes, the Acknowledgment of Correspondence and the August 11, 2016 Agenda. Commissioner Lowe moves and Commissioner Cook seconds; the Consent Items are approved. Commissioner Byers reminds the audience each person has 2 minutes to speak and since a public hearing is scheduled to please refrain from talking about People, Dogs, and Parks Strategic Plan.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

Kathy Colombo – President of Friends of Cheasty and a Beacon Hill board member – She is an educator and is exasperated with Seattle Parks and Recreation. She feels the department is ignoring her community. SPR secured land to add wildlife and biodiversity; Friends of Cheasty had a good working relationship with the department until the greenspace was turned into a mountain bike park. City Hearing Examiner requested more time for further research and more transparency. Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance has

started creating a path. Mountain bikers sent threatening letters to her group. She feels ignored and not part of the process.

Superintendent Aguirre says SPR staff are working with the biking community to let them know threatening emails are unacceptable. Workers were out there as part of the study. There is no delegated staff person yet for this since it isn't a project yet.

Alisa Natal – Dog Master Plan is disappointing. There are not enough acres of dog parks for all the dogs that live in this community. In talking with her community, they are adamant for more off-leash space. Better socialized dogs are better neighbors. Wasteful to have parks in cold months and in off hours empty, should be used for off-leash areas. She feels the department will need less enforcement if dogs have space to roam.

Kris Hocking – Off-leash space builds community and dogs need socializing. She is the Steward at Lower Kinnear – this dog park is inadequate and goes frequently unused. It is not ADA accessible. The parking lot nearby no longer allows parking before 5pm. As a COLA member and a postal carrier, she knows this city and sees correlation between income and access to dog parks. If you don't have a yard or car, you are out of luck. Dog rate is growing exponentially and so is the need for parks with off-leash areas.

Karen Gustafson – North Seattle dog owner who works as a public outreach coordinator for the city of Redmond. She questions the efforts made to perform outreach by SPR staff. Many people have not heard about the Plan. Disappointed by OLA plan; no place in Southeast Seattle for dogs off leash. She thinks the master plan is flawed.

Sharon LeVine – First, she wants the parking at the Queen Anne Bowl Playfield to be marked so the adjacent property owners do not use those spaces. Also, the zoning forbids illuminated lighting but Aegis put in illuminated lighting. There are two huge signs. She has protested with the city; SPR needs to tell them they can't have signs in that zone. She was working with Don Harris to pursue using the 3rd Avenue Street end for an off-leash area once King County finishes using it for staging. She requests SPR staff let her know who the contact is so she can follow up.

Mark _____ – Average Seattle resident pays taxes. He feels the draft plan says non-dog owners don't have to pay more for taxes. This is a huge priority for dog owners. Discovery Park is really close to him but he has to drive cross country to get to a decent off-leash area.

David Bird – dog owners spend a lot of money on their dogs and taxes; a lot of revenue comes from dog owners.

Hanna Crowder – raised in Seattle. She finds it appalling how little off leash space there is. There are no leash laws in London. People live cooperatively with community. The status increases traffic by making people get in cars to travel to off-leash areas. Dog owners are limited to taking their dogs into disgusting areas that do not have capacity.

Presentation: Citizen's for Off-Leash Areas (COLA)

Commissioner Byers tees up this presentation by mentioning that having a partner organization speak at a Board of Park Commissioners meeting is an aberration and outside of how the Park Board operates. In this instance, it was clear from City Council and the Superintendent that this exploration be conducted in cooperation with COLA; thereby departing from usual procedures.

Ellen Escarcega provides a presentation on the background of Citizen's Off-Leash Areas (COLA)- thousands of volunteers are advocates and stewards of Seattle's off-leash areas who donate thousands of hours and resources to off-leash areas.

Ignoring the commercial aspect of this video, every dog owner finds himself in daily in Seattle in this dilemma -- walking a wild pup through a park in the pouring rain, knowing you are unable to satisfy their instinctual, animal need to run, play, and swim unless you unleash them. And when you do, it's as though the sun comes out and you are a caped superhero to your dog, hopefully inside a legal, designated off-leash area.

But in Seattle, this is a rare treat for many, or one done illegally (often in inappropriate parkland), causing shouting matches in our parks between human citizens on a daily basis. Dog owners are called all forms of names, most indicating entitlement with no care for their neighbors. It just isn't true. Though entitled people exist in all communities, no more so in dog owners than others. The simple fact is, we are lacking in legal land. With only one dog beach, one dog park with a grass as its surface, no off-leash trails, and only half of our dog parks one acre or larger, the State of Seattle's Dog Parks is one that truly is lacking in access and equity to all Seattle neighborhoods and citizens.

And with over HALF of our legal off-leash land located in two corners of our traffic-laden city, and over THREE-QUARTERS of it in only FOUR off-leash areas -- unless you own a car or have lots of excess time to use public transit across the city (it can take up to 2 hours for some), the experience of low-income people who own dogs is dramatically different than affluent people in this city. If you can't afford a yard (and who can in Seattle these days?), doggie daycare, dog walker, trainer, indoor private dog park, or other such services, the only option for the exercise and socialization your dog needs is public parks.

And lest you think that's fair, as dog ownership is a privilege not a right -- we want to be sure you recognize the benefits of urban dog ownership to many Seattle families. Doctors from no less than the CDC advise dog ownership for health reasons. People who are pet owners generally go to the doctor about 20 percent less often than other people. Their stress has been shown to be lowered, their blood pressure, and their dogs' need for exercise compliments their needs, driving us out of our houses to walk and participate in our community daily, even in this dark and rainy city.

Dog parks in fact have been shown to act as one of the last forms of public square still thriving in today's cities. Recent studies show that dog owners are more likely to meet people and make new friends, and to get to know people after moving into a new neighborhood. Do we want to take advantage of opportunities to bring people together and build community in Seattle Parks?

Beyond exercise, dogs provide us with safety and security in our homes and neighborhoods. Dog parks themselves have been shown to drive down crime and decline in underutilized parks for all citizens. And the Seattle police department advises break-in victims to get a dog. Crime studies have shown a dramatic decrease in burglaries in houses with dogs, nearly as large as the decrease shown when burglars think the home is currently occupied by humans, and dogs are much less expensive than cameras and alarm systems. We ask you, Should we continue to consider dogs a privilege reserved only for those affluent or those with yards?

So let's talk about the dogs of Seattle. As far back as 1994, published estimates have been that there are 150,000 dogs here. In all likelihood, there are far more than that. And what we're sure of is that the dog population will continue to grow and create an even greater demand. As we are packing more and more dogs into our 14 dog parks (again, only half of which are large enough to handle many dogs safely) -- Seattle and COLA volunteers have a challenge on their hands. Overcrowding merely increases the rowdy behavior of dogs inside our fences, driving more dog owners out of them due to discomfort with that environment, and leading inevitably to illegal off-leash activity.

When asked what Seattle Parks could do to manage the incoming population of dogs over the next 20 years, the answers shaped into a tag cloud show that overwhelmingly asked for more off-leash areas to use legally without ticketing. And when we remove "more off-leash areas" from the answer, they overwhelmingly demanded legal designated water or beach access for their dogs (which would be of course properly vetted for wildlife and environmental concerns).

Seattle dogs are ball chasers, hiking companions, running buddies, entertainers, dedicated swimmers. They go to work with us, are amazing retirement companions, they provide relief from stress. They perform acts of service for those in need, and supply comfort and emotional support following trauma. And dogs' acts of service to us elicit a bond like no other, though the closest word for it is family.

Deny it as you may, this sentiment is only increasing. Adults are waiting longer and longer to have children or opting out completely. And conversely, the age group most likely to get a dog is 18-24 year olds at 58% nationwide. But Seattle's parks system is designed for families with children. It includes 150 children's playgrounds -- not counting those on school properties -- and they have with expensive equipment for about 100,000 Seattle children (only HALF of which are playground age).

But for our 150,000 dogs and their human tax paying families we provide only 14 off-leash areas, half of which are very small and don't fully cover their own neighborhoods' needs. Would Seattle parents tolerate only a few large playgrounds, which they have to drive to across our traffic filled city? And should our parks system really be built for only one type of family?

Trust for Public Land put it this way in their recent press release announcing their 2015 City Park Facts:

Nationwide, there are now more households with dogs (43 million) than with kids (38 million). The ratio of dogs to children is the highest in the nation here in Seattle, with more dogs than San Francisco and tied with San Francisco for the lowest population of children of all major U.S. cities.

This ratio has prompted lots of national press attracting more dog lovers to our fair city. We are the #3 in the country for most pet friendly, and #2 in the country for most pet friendly rentals. Unfortunately, we also get press of a different tone, such as July 25th's New York Magazine calling Seattle the worst city in which to be a dog because of the lack of public land for dogs. Seattle is over 100 acres behind on average when compared to many other cities on the East and West Coast. We ask you, Is this the reputation we want for Seattle?

Next, we'd like to give you a virtual tour of Seattle's off-leash areas. In 1997, Seattle successfully piloted seven dog parks providing 18.6 acres of off-leash land. The OLAs from 1997 are:

Magnuson Park (9 acres in Sand Point). This largest dog park in Seattle makes up $\frac{1}{3}$ of the whole system. The nine acres are mostly at the entrance and majority surfaced in gravel, but following the single lane of traffic out to Lake Washington, you can access the **THE ONLY LEGAL DOG BEACH IN SEATTLE**, which is less than 50 yards across and not ADA accessible. And it is this busy all year round.

Westcrest (4 acres opened in Highland Park in 1997). This is the flagship park for COLA in that its design has multiple surface types, a small dog area, and a great community. Together with Magnuson these two parks make up over half the dog park system in Seattle.

Genessee (2.5 acres in SE Seattle opened in 1997): A flat park made up of two acres of gravel and half an acre surround of grass, Genessee replaced a former waste dump. COLA has paid for gravel, grass, native plants, sand, chairs, benches, and dog clean-up bags since 1997. **THE ONLY DOG PARK IN SOUTHEAST SEATTLE**, serving users from Madison Park to Skyway.

Golden Gardens. (1 acre opened in Ballard in 1997). This OLA has had many slope erosion issues, abated only somewhat by supplies provided by COLA and Parks over the past few years.

Woodland. (1 acre opened near Greenlake in 1997). Woodland has gone from a muddy hill to a gold standard dog park thanks to the efforts of our amazing stewards and volunteers. This OLA is only one acre, but it is not unusual for fifty to a hundred dogs and their people to use it simultaneously since our war on mud began several years back, a density that creates a safety issue for both dogs and humans. The area has a huge population of dogs and many dog walkers for the working families in the area.

Northacres is a small rectangular park with a series of corridors fenced off to protect the trees inside. This park is very difficult to throw a ball in due to the fence structure, and is inappropriate for dog walkers due to its layout.

Blue Dog is located near the conjunction of MLK and I90. Designed as a gravel coated retention basin, so it receives its heaviest use in the summer months. At other times it's runoff issues make it virtually unusable. This park also has many issues with slopes, blackberries, and poisonous hemlock.

Four years later, we opened one more OLA with four acres of off-leash land, called Dr. Jose Rizal, on Beacon Hill, benefiting the neighborhood by helping to clear a run down area of crime and decline, all while stewarding land with a fabulous view of Seattle. Similar to Blue Dog and Golden Gardens, this park suffers from inadequate drainage problems. **HOWEVER, THIS IS THE ONLY GRASS COVERED DOG PARK IN ALL OF SEATTLE. LET'S REPEAT THAT:** this is the only place in all of Seattle that a dog owner can **LEGALLY** throw a ball for a dog on a grassy field as shown in our opening cartoon.

In the last 15 years, during Seattle's human population boom, we opened six dog parks, but they provide only 2.3 more acres for dog owners, most of which is in a 1.2 acre OLA under I5 that is extremely underutilized. None of the six OLAs added in the last 15 years includes any grass at all, two of which are basically unused, and five of which add up together to one acre.

Colonnade (1.2 acres opened in 2005). Design not conducive to safe exercise. This OLA sits under I5, and without parking and surface repair, is extremely underutilized and considered too secluded and unsafe. It is rare to see two dogs in the area at the same time. Intended to be gravel surfaced, many levels of the tiered park has ended up with large rocks that are difficult and unsafe for dogs or humans to walk on, let alone run. A ball cannot easily be thrown in the configuration as it stands, without losing the ball outside the chain link fencing.

A cement and gravel dog relief area in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood, this OLA has a strong community and reputation for stabilizing the area from crime and decline. This park is one of only three that are lighted for evening use in our dark and rainy city.

This OLA is a small gravel filled dog relief area on First Hill. It is one of only three OLAs with lights, and it has some great COLA-sponsored murals.

Denny Park OLA. This is a small gravel and chain link relief area behind Parks and Recreation administrative offices, though this is still a temporary OLA. Plans are underway to replace it at the Denny substation with a similarly tiny dog park (6000 sq ft) hoping to help a little the needs of the dog community of South Lake Union, the most booming apartment/condo community in Seattle and home to Amazon.com, where employees can take their dogs to work. Denny OLA gets sporadic usage due to its small footprint and surface, but would be much more used if larger and the surface were friendlier.

Magnolia Manor: This is a well loved and heavily used new OLA with split rail fencing, and a mix of wood chips and gravel as its surface. Located in close proximity to homes and apartments, this OLA took years to complete permanency and was controversial in many ways, and is currently being reduced by over 2000 square feet (13%) of its already small footprint. This OLA provides an underutilized small dog area, which badly needs a surfacing change.

Lower Kinnear. As opposed to the dream dog park shown left -- a grassy field pictured in the master plan labeled Kinnear Park -- that is actually an illegal off-leash dog enjoying the grassy field. The OLA in Kinnear (shown above) is actually a tiny fenced non-grass area in the lowest tier of multi-tiered Kinnear Park, down over 150 steps from rare street parking. Measuring only 5,400 sq feet, Kinnear's split rail fencing and wood chip surfacing gets minimal use. It is however the only legal space to take your dog off leash in all of Queen Anne, so expanding it, getting a parking strategy, and locating another off leash area in that neighborhood is a high priority for COLA. Can anyone imagine that 0.1 acres handles all of Queen Anne's dogs?

In sum, it is both unhealthy and untenable that dogs can live their entire lives tethered to a slower mammal. And not getting enough exercise and socialization can lead to destructive and inappropriate behavior, which becomes a problem for both their families and NON-dog owners in Seattle. And COLA asks that you meet the needs of non-dog owners as well -- because short of banning dogs in Seattle, non-dog owners deserve to feel that our urban livestock is managed with enough legal land, so that they can actually help peer-to-peer enforce adherence to reasonable laws.

Seattle's system fails our test, though all of our nearest cities do not -- San Francisco, Portland, Vancouver BC which have more than twice as many OLAs and five times as much land on average -- and all of them have far fewer dogs than Seattle.

In Seattle, dog families are one in four of our households, while sharing only 0.4% of our park land. Seattle dog owners do not feel supported by their city's leash laws.

Superintendent's Report

Presented by Superintendent Aguirre, Seattle Parks and Recreation

SPR is receiving an increase in requests to use drones the City is looking at this.

City Parks Alliance – The President of the CPA came to tour Seattle. SPR staff to host meetings here for the environmental work they are doing. At the end of September, SPR will hold a summit with other CPA directors to discuss how best to leverage funds and create meaningful partnerships.

Park District – Seattle channel is filming a series for the Park District. The 1st show will talk about maintaining parks and facilities and the 2nd show will highlight the departments programs for people. The first episode will air September 9.

Bobby Morris Playfield turf replacement is completed. SPR is trying a new infill which is a food grade plastic.

Sound Striders – A program for adults over 50 that walk twice a week. They just completed a program in which 27 walkers and walked 10 miles a day.

City Council Parks Committee approved the Downtown Services Association Agreement for continuing program work at Westlake and Occidental Parks. A Memorandum of Understanding between SPR and Friends of Waterfront Seattle was accepted for the rehabilitation of Piers 62/63. They will be contributing \$8million.

Big Day of Play at Rainier playfield – Seattle Summer Parkways and Get Moving provided grants to create exciting exercise opportunities in communities and these will be highlighted at the Big Day of Play.

Kudos and thanks to the crews in South Seattle who did a remarkable job getting ready for Seafair.

Presentation: Contracts and Administrative Services Audit

Presented by Joanne Orsucci, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Briefing Paper

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 11, 2016
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Joanne Orsucci, Interim Manager, Contracts and Administrative Support Office
Subject: Briefing on 2015 City Audit

Requested Board Action: This item is a briefing only; no action is requested.

Background: Seattle Parks and Recreation's (SPR) Contracts and Administrative Support Office (CASO) manages most leases, long-term and seasonal concessions (Magnuson agreements are managed separately by the staff on site). The CASO team also provides subject matter expertise on non-public works contracts and agreements.

The unit's 2016 expense budget is \$1.2 million and has a revenue expectation of approximately \$660,000. The five person team manages approximately 80 contracts, agreements and leases. Examples include:

1. **Green Lake Boat Rental and Food Concession:** Generates approximately \$25,000 in annual revenues to SPR and provides both food and healthy activity for hundreds of thousands of visitors to Green Lake Park.
2. **Southwest Youth and Family Services:** Housed in the "old" Delridge Community Center, this organization offsets any rent payable to SPR by providing much needed counseling, education and family support resources in Southwest Seattle.
3. **Seasonal Concessions:** Various food and fitness operators are solicited each spring to provide services in Seattle parks from May through September that offer healthy food options in parks as well as fitness activities. Seasonal concessions bid on space and payments to SPR depending on their various business models. A typical vendor pays 10-14% of their monthly gross sales to SPR.

Summary of Audit and Next Steps: In 2015, at the request of the City Council, the Office of City Auditor performed an audit of the department's lease and concession agreements. More specifically, they were asked to determine whether SPR is collecting the money and public benefits outlined in current agreements and to determine whether SPR has proper controls for handling lease and concession revenues.

The City Auditor released their findings and recommendations in December of 2015. While the overall results were positive, they did identify the following four findings:

- Parks' controls over the receipt and deposit of payments should be strengthened;
- Processes and controls to ensure that all rent owed Parks is paid on time should be improved;
- Parks could do more to monitor the provision of public benefits as required under its contracts;
- Parks should consider changing the contract payment basis and enhance the support provided to small businesses operating solely for the purpose of activating City parks.

The first two items were the original focus as CASO takes its cash management of public funds responsibility seriously and wanted to make improvements to tracking and security as soon as possible. As such these two items have been addressed by the CASO team through business process changes that have been reviewed and approved by the Office of City Auditor.

- Cash handling procedures have been updated to include dual control. Payments received are now opened and logged by one staff person from CASO and one staff person from the Business Service Center (BSC) simultaneously;
- A new spreadsheet has been developed that greatly improves CASO's ability to manage all aspects of a lease or contract on an ongoing basis; this includes accounts receivables, categorized by payment type due, but also important milestone dates like lease renewals, insurance expirations, reporting due dates, etc.

NOTE: CASO currently tracks its financials through manual systems. This makes management of accounts receivable and other contract-related deliverable tracking more challenging. The City is updating its accounting system in 2018 and SPR is fully engaged in this process. One area SPR believes this system may improve business processes is in the area of contract management and accounts receivable. SPR has identified these business requirements as part of that system upgrade and prototyping begins late this year.

The second two items are under development and a proposal should be completed by 4th quarter 2016 for implementation by mid-2017 if approved.

In conclusion, CASO staff agrees with audit findings and improvements needed and is working to implement business process changes by mid-2017.

Presentation

Joanne Orsucci manages the Contracts and Administrative Support Office who manage the leases, concessions, consultant contracts, agreements and partnerships for the department with the exception of Magnuson Park. There are 5 staff and 1 graduate student intern. They manage approximately 80 agreements.

There was an audit conducted in 2015 as requested from City Council who wanted to know whether SPR is collecting the money and public benefits outlined in current agreements and whether SPR has proper controls for handling lease and concession revenues. This presentation will show how CASO is responding to the audit.

Auditors pleased with changes made and controls implemented; on track for responding to findings by the end of the year.

Finding #1 Parks should improve controls over the receipt and deposit of payments made by tenants.

Recommendation

- Use FAS Treasury Cashiers to process payments
- Alternatively, improve internal controls at both sites

Response (Implemented)

- SPR has made procedure changes to implement dual control over cash/check handling and has improved reconciliation of payments made to customer account transactions

In response, SPR staff developed a spreadsheet to track each customer and agreement. Dual control – staff person gets payments and business service center also signs off on payments.

Finding #2 Parks should improve its processes and controls to ensure that all rent owed is paid in a timely manner, fees are assessed for late payments, and rent increases are implemented according to contract terms.

Recommendations

- Improve policies and procedures to monitor contracts and track payments
- Recommendation: Utilize a shared electronic accounting and tracking system

Response (Partially Implemented)

- CASO has developed an improved tracking spreadsheet – reviewed by the Auditor's Office
- New policy and procedures are being written to define the manner and timeline accounts are monitored
- City's new accounting system may provide systemized receivables tracking

Spreadsheet is sortable; manage any pieces of contract and make sure partners meet deadlines. Spreadsheet is developed and will be in use at the beginning of 2017. Summit accounting system will be usable for these purposes.

Finding #3 Parks could do more to monitor the provision of public benefits as required under contracts.

Recommendations

- Ensure all required public benefit reports are submitted and reviewed on time
- DPR Coordinators should meet with tenants annually
- Update webpage to reflect public benefits of tenants

Response (in development)

- New public benefit report being developed that will ask all public benefit partners for consistent data for reporting out
- Assessing approach for public benefit partners to market these opportunities through SPR website portal

Publicize what public benefit SPR receives as offset for less rent and the services available. SPR staff are creating a public benefit report – that will look the same for everyone so it is easy to compare and systematize.

Finding #4 Parks should consider changing the contract payment basis and enhance the support provided to small businesses operating in City parks for the purpose of activating the park.

Recommendation

- Changing the payment basis on contracts that generate \$15,000 or less to the City from percentage-based to a flat fee
- Change structure from concession agreement to use permit
- Include value of park activation in rent calculation

Response (in development)

- SPR is assessing the potential impacts of transitioning from percentage-based concession contract to a flat fee permit structure

Primarily for seasonal concessions for food and activities from May through September. Currently, vendors have to go through a Request for Proposal process, which is lengthy and complicated. Simplify the process and turn it into a flat fee use permit. Want to advertise and activate parks. Apply for flat fee permit. What would fair fees be? And look at it through a race and social justice lens to ensure SPR is breaking down barriers instead of building them.

Use permit – time specific? More individuals have more opportunity?

Need to do analysis on this but someone could obtain permits for certain days of the weeks or different parks.

What problems happened in the past to warrant these changes? Vendors put effort into getting a permit and they agree to giving a percentage. Turns out to not be a viable place to do business. They decide it isn't successful and they stop doing it early on in the season, which leaves parks unactivated. SPR staff need to make sure the locations are viable to do business.

The commissioners feel the upgrade from spreadsheets to databases would be good because it is nice to see that money being tracked.

These concessionaires usually exceed revenue budget by \$50-80,000.

Transition from RFP to use permit – something could get lost. It is a good idea to use the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) toolkit.

Joanne mentions there were no negative findings.

SPR has 80 contracts that generate \$600,000. These steps are headed in the right direction – may be a chance to open up economic opportunities for a lot of people. Natural partnering opportunity with the Office of Economic Development. Might be able to help with loan programs for disadvantaged and entrepreneurs.

The unit has partnered with them and Department of Neighborhoods on outreach for opportunities; such as the RFP for Golden Gardens concessions. These are opportunities for SPR staff to analyze and expand.

Superintendent Aguirre knows this team does great work! They are creating systems that make data and work easier. Soon they will have a consistent report on public benefit; be able to quantify the public benefit. They are working on a process to minimize how hard it is to get contracts, which he feels is a social equity opportunity. He adds it is important that Magnuson should implement the same changes.

Briefing and Discussion: Leadership in Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption

Presented by Joelle Hammerstad and Jon Jainga, Seattle Parks and Recreation;

Briefing Paper

M E M O R A N D U M

Date: August 4, 2016
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Joelle Hammerstad, Sustainable Operations Manager
Jon Jainga, Urban Forestry Operations Manager
Subject: Leadership in Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption

Requested Board Action

This is an informational briefing. While there are no decisions needed, staff request input from Park Board members on the issues listed below.

Project or Policy Description and Background

In our presentation, we will discuss the anticipated impacts of climate change, as well as mitigation and adaption. The City of Seattle, over the years, has been a leader on the issue of climate change. As a City department, Seattle Parks and Recreation strives to share our work on environmental issues with local communities, our vast network of SPR partners, and other park and recreation agencies.

SPR has taken many steps in the past eight years to become a leader on addressing the impacts of climate change on our forests, our trees, and the environment. The presentation will outline the challenges we are currently facing, what we are doing now to address those challenges, and our plans for the future.

SPR is helping to reduce carbon emissions through City of Seattle and community partner programs, policies and projects that guide our actions. These include:

- [The Climate Action Plan](#)
- [The Energy Benchmarking and Reporting Program](#)
- [The Next Generation Energy Efficiency Policy](#)
- [Drive Clean Seattle Initiative](#)
- [Food Action Plan](#)

- [Green Stormwater Infrastructure Best Management Practices](#)
- [Urban Forest Stewardship Plan](#)
- [Green Seattle Partnership](#)

SPR is taking steps to help us adapt to climate change, in consultation with the Office of Sustainability and the Environment (OSE), which has traditionally acted as the environmental policy guidance and implementation arm of the City.

OSE will soon release a draft of its “Preparing for Climate Change” report that examines the impacts of climate change on our region. It will also make specific recommendations on actions that each department can or should take to buttress our operations against the challenges presented by climate change. SPR has played a key role in providing information for the climate change report.

Public Involvement Process

All policies originating from OSE will go through a thorough public review process, and require City Council approval. Beginning in mid-August, the “Preparing for Climate Change” report will be available for public comment through the fall.

Issues for Discussion

After our presentation, we are seeking input from the Board of Park Commissioners on the questions below:

1. What are we doing already that works well?
2. What are we NOT doing that we could be doing, and what are the roadblocks to achieving those things?
3. Are we doing anything now that isn’t helping us to achieve our goals, and that we should consider stopping?
4. What partnership opportunities do you see that we aren’t taking advantage of, and what are the obstacles to taking advantage of those opportunities?

Additional Information

Joelle Hammerstad: Joelle.hammerstad@seattle.gov or 733-9704

Jon Jainga: jon.jainga@seattle.gov or 684-4113

Presentation

Joelle Hammerstad, Sustainable Operations Manager works at the Westbridge facility. Jon Jainga, the Urban forest manager, to talk about climate change impacts and mitigation. Climate change is a result of the large amounts of carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere as a result of human activity. The carbon dioxide thickens the atmosphere, trapping the sun’s heat here on earth, creating a greenhouse effect...hence the term greenhouse gasses. All scientific models indicate the climate is warming.

By 2050, there will be an additional 18 days above 85 degrees. For comparison sake, the long-term average is 10 days. In 2014, we had 22 days of temperatures above 85 degrees, which broke a record in that year. In 2016, we had 26 days, which broke the 2014 record. And now stands at the all-time record.

Best case scenario: Emissions rise until 2050 and then drop.

Worst case scenario: emissions increase through 2100.

There will be seasonal impacts:

- Summer – Longer, hotter, dryer summers
Average of 22% less precipitation by 2050
- Winter - Wetter fall, winter and spring
Relatively small increase in annual precipitation
Heavy rain events will be more intense and more frequent when and how we get precipitation will change.

Equity and the Environment

Extreme weather conditions will have a disproportionate impact on communities of color and low-income communities. They have fewer resources to rebound after extreme weather events.

Mayor's initiative has 4 goals: Healthy environment for all, Jobs for youth in local economy, equity in city government environmental programming, environmental narrative and community leadership. So far these are ambiguous global ambitions.

Last summer there was a draught. 76% of the department's water use is irrigation. Costs have gone up exponentially - 221% since 2007. SPU builds Combined Sewer Overflows and they are charging ratepayers.

Trees

Seeing some effects and impacts on trees from 2015 drought and stronger weather surges. SPR staff are seeing more biotic and abiotic tree disorders. There is also an aging urban forest, which is a natural part of "forest succession". 75% of tree failure caused by draught because they are more susceptible to disease – decay, bacteria, Dutch Elm Disease. Big leaf maples are dying more than others.

Tree translocation is the water movement in the tree's biological structure. Most trees that fell this year had a diffuse pore system in which water moves slowly from roots to leaves and back again to distribute water and minerals. Last year's draught caused stress and failure in trees with diffuse pore systems.

Hardwood tree species are short-lived and provide benefit. They die and introduce nitrogen back into soil. They create future environment for conifers.

Work orders are generated from neighborhood calls, other departments and SPR staff. 270 work order requests in 2010. Through June of 2016, 560 work orders, which could mean up to 1100 this year.

1 tree produces 260 pounds of oxygen per year; 2 mature trees provide oxygen for a family of 4. In SPR, there are over 3000 trees in parks and natural areas absorbing 14million pounds of carbon dioxide and they providing 78million pounds of oxygen yearly. It is important to do a better job caring for the trees since they provide a lot of fresh clean air.

Mitigation

City of Seattle and SPR are leaders in mitigation. In Seattle, 65% of our carbon comes from transportation. Seattle's electric utility is carbon neutral from renewable resources – hydro and wind. If Seattle can convert it's transportation to electric vehicles, that will go a long way to reduce the carbon emissions.

Seattle has an official goal to be carbon neutral by 2050 and to reduce energy consumption by 20% by 2020.

Retrofit projects on existing buildings – completed 128 projects and have received \$1.6million in utility rebates from Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle City Light for doing these projects.

The city tracks and monitors utility consumptions in buildings that are 10,000sq ft or larger. SPR has 54 properties that are tracked and the energy consumption is down by 18% in SPR facilities.

There are three solar panel arrays in SPR inventory. Solar is a real time energy source – batteries are difficult, costly, and "cargo ship container" big. SPR staff are working on four projects through grants. The Solar Resiliency Battery Project which provides \$2million to install an array of solar on a community center to allow for resiliency in the case of a natural disaster. It will power an electric vehicle and it will be usable if and when disaster strikes. Magnuson Brig – Office of Sustainability and Environment helped get a grant for solar there. Ravenna-Eckstein – Advisory council is paying for solar panels there.

Tesla is working on new battery technology but there is not a commercial version yet.

Drive Clean Seattle Initiative – changing city fleet to electric vehicles.

Accelerate Electric Vehicle Adoption – Enable and support the adoption of 15,000 electric vehicles by 2025. This goal represents a five-fold increase in the number of electric vehicles currently on the road. To help accelerate the pace of adoption, the City will launch several projects over the next year to triple the number of publicly available DC Fast Chargers throughout Seattle. Seattle City Light will also launch a pilot project to support residential charging stations in homes through innovative on-bill repayment and time-of-day pricing.

Improves air quality and keep fuel dollars at home. Costs to charge your car for 100 miles - \$5.00! SPR is installing EV charging stations and vehicles. SPR is talking with Seattle City Light to support private sector through implementing charging stations at parks, pools and community centers in 2017.

Adaption

- Equity: prioritize actions that reduce risk and enhance resilience for communities with disproportionate climate risk.
- Co-benefits: design and implement resilience strategies that advance community goals.
- Natural systems: use nature-based solutions that leverage ecosystem services and foster natural systems resilience.

Action Areas

- Property and Buildings - likely to see more of this in the winter; planning for cooling centers for employees and community members
- Pavement - 2nd largest owner of paved acreage in Seattle – pavement heats up and more intense winters means more degradation and weakening in summers which means more maintenance.
- Structures - Evaluate vulnerability of structures; identify key routes and more training for staff.

Trees & Vegetation

Tree policy update to industry standards

- SPR Tree Policy Update – Currently in Progress, Educate people that topping trees is not the answer
- Establishing a Preventative Maintenance & Assessment Plan
- Increase Native Drought Resistant Plant Palettes
- Community Involvement – Green Seattle & Arbor Day Events
 - GSP and SDOT – October 15 in Lake City – city arborists at Virgil Flaim Park.
 - Camp Long will host people in planting 40-60,000 native conifers throughout West Seattle on November 12.
- Public Awareness – Increase Mulching and Deep Root Water - teach homeowners how to care for their plants and gardens.
- Ask a Certified Arborist – ISA-Arbor.com

Living assets – parks are cooling centers throughout the city

- Reduce heat islands through tree planting and other natural systems solutions
- Evaluate options for using non-potable water for irrigation
- Evaluate increased use of technology to optimize irrigation

SPU says we have enough drinking water until 2060. Evaluate and increase the use of technology to optimize irrigation. Find more creative ways to use non-potable water for irrigation.

Joelle suggests using purple pipes – use reclaimed water; work more closely with partners like King County Wastewater division to do things like this.

Partner with SPU and drainage – Combined Sewer Overflow projects deal with water from big rain events. SPU is trying to manage more surface water in Green Lake – partner with SPU and build and manage an underground cistern and use the water to irrigate the park. Green Lake uses a lot of water.

The department is thinking for creative and non-traditional solutions for water use reduction.

Preparing For Climate Change – a plan drafted by the Office for Sustainability and Environment. The final draft will be sent out any day.

Joelle leaves the Board with this glimmer of hope. In the 1980's, there was a discussion about the hole in the ozone and Chlorofluorocarbons were made illegal. The hole didn't get smaller right away, but by 2010 the hole got smaller. Scientists now think the ozone can repair itself. By 2040, the hole in the ozone will be completely healed.

Joelle asks what the Board thinks the department can do better and what they do well?

The city has a tree replacement program – when a tree is removed, they replace them 2 to 1. Ordered trees for this fall and will be replanting several hundred trees. Work closely with senior gardeners, crew chiefs and landscape architects. Track all trees that fell or died with trees of same size 1-2" and 6-10ft.

What is the state of the madronas, willows, and evergreens?

Willows by the water are fine, but the ones in wetland areas are drying out.

Evergreens – working with a Department of Natural Resources forester and sharing information on Douglas Firs and Cedars from north California to Washington state – drought has had significant impact. SPR has sent DNR their data on failed trees. There are more disease and insects due to lack of water.

Madronas are a sensitive native tree and hard to transplant. Horticulture has had some success growing them from seed and hope to introduce them into native areas. They do not like to be moved.

Major landslide areas – do we put in trees with bigger root structures? Working with engineer for SPR – looking at slide zones to figure out the best solutions. Planting in sandy silt soils is challenging. In some areas there is water seepage in slide places and SPR uses stabilizers to control erosion and hold soil, making it more possible to plant trees that can further stabilize hillsides.

Commissioner requests a presentation on sustainability and climate change together.

Composting city-wide at SPR facilities – diverted 60,000 pounds of garbage.

Electric vehicle technology is in its infancy. The GM Bolt will get 200 mpg and will cost about \$30,000. There are no commercial or industrial vehicles yet. Hybrid trucks are working well; are not giving out emissions like the other trucks and use less energy.

Solar on community centers are not worth it because the battery technology is not there yet. Tesla gigafactory is trying to model t-size battery making; it will be the largest factory in the world. Batteries are not there yet. The solar panel technology has not changed much since the 1970's.

Cisterns to collect water? Unfortunately, the above ground cisterns are not big enough to collect enough to make it worthwhile.

Is Seattle leading other cities to develop this way? Bellevue? Intra-urban partnerships? OSE is doing some work with other cities but SPR could do more of that.

Could Seattle employees use more technology to meet instead of commuting? Absolutely. There is a lot more of that happening now than even 3 years ago.

Joelle and Jon did a fantastic job. The work the department is doing in these areas is a pretty well kept secret. Many people do not understand the depth of what SPR has accomplished and where the department is heading.

SPR is hosting a summit to figure out how to make a greater statement in the department's work and as advocates for the environment.

Commissioner Byers mentions that Magnuson Park has 1-million square feet of roof space could be used for a solar array and battery investment - a thought.

Old/New Business

Commissioner Bluewater is participating on the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Building 2 at Magnuson Park – a \$15-20million investment is part of this RFP. They are considering the final 2 proposals and meeting tomorrow morning. They will make a recommendation to the Superintendent. The final two proposals are: 1) A film studio/sound stage and community program; 2) An indoor lacrosse/archery place. The RFP committee have some questions for the bidders about where they are going to get the money.

People, Dogs, and Parks Strategic Plan – The plan has been published since June. SPR staff are compiling all of the comments. The department has been meeting with COLA; there will be amendments to the plan based on feedback.

Superintendent Aguirre says he does not disagree that there is a need for more off-leash areas. The challenge is struggling to figure out how to compromise on all the needs on public space. There are a lot of needs and only \$100,000 years in Park District funding. The Plan must be anchored in community to ensure the off-leash areas are in appropriate places. COLA has identified several sites throughout the city; the department is open to this process, they have to find money for development and maintenance costs. The department knows what it costs for crews to maintain current off-leash areas, but it is different for each park's amenities, size and topography. Entertaining dog parks next to existing parks or new sites? New sites are hard to come by, there are 14 land-banked sites - Myers Way Parcel is an opportunity.

COLA wants off-leash areas in unfenced parks. COLA uses New York City as an example of a city where unfenced off-leash areas work, but NYC has 400 enforcement officers.

In Seattle, off-leash dogs are the number one complaint received by Seattle Parks and Recreation.

This is Commissioner Padilla's last meeting with us. The department and the Commissioners thank him for all of his time and input. Superintendent Aguirre says it is great to see young people engaged and involved.

There being no other business, Commissioner Hundley moves the meeting adjourn; Commissioner Lowe seconds, and the motion carries. The meeting adjourns at 8:35 pm.

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