

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
February 8, 2018

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

Present:

Andréa Akita  
Dennis Cook  
Marlon Herrera  
Evan Hundley  
Kelly McCaffrey  
Rachel Anne Williams

Excused:

Tom Byers, Chair  
William Lowe, Vice Chair  
Barbara Wright

**Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff**

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent  
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

The meeting is held at Cascade Bicycle Club in Magnuson Park. Commissioner Hundley calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Commissioner Hundley calls for approval of the Consent Items: the February 8 agenda, the December 14 and January 11 meeting minutes; Commissioner Cook moves, Commissioner Williams seconds and the Consent Items are approved unanimously.

**Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience**

Gabrielle Gerhardt – Chair of the Magnuson Park Advisory Council lets the Board know that there is an empty Park Board seat on MPAC.

Lynne Ferguson - President; Sand Point Naval Historic District thanks the Board for being at Magnuson.

Julianna Ross – Sand Point Arts and Cultural Exchange; She asks the Board to take time to study the spread of arts and athletics in the park; Building 18 and Building 2 are opportunities for arts.

## **Superintendent's Report**

*Presented by Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation*

Acting Superintendent Williams highlights happenings at Magnuson Park.

- A brew pub will be coming to Magnuson Park, next door to Cascade Bicycle Club. Cheryl pulled this together.
- EarthCorps signed a 20-year lease, they facilitate environmental education opportunity for youth.
- New housing opening March 2019 - 148 affordable housing units managed by Mercy Housing.
- 2018 – Special Olympics will host their games in Seattle this summer; many events will be taking place at Magnuson Park. They will be looking for volunteers.
- 18 months ago, Sail Sand Point came to this meeting about lead paint, the lead paint abatement has been completed. This is an example of something that was presented at the Park Board and SPR responded.

North Rainier Acquisition – City Council has given SPR the authority to negotiate for a piece of property – 6 lots transformed into openspace. In exchange for density and growth, focusing efforts for openspace will happen here.

Property donation from the Allbritton Family adjacent to the Burke-Gilman trail; SPR will work with Green Seattle Partnership to make a green buffer adjacent to the trail.

Working to relocate the skate park from Seattle Center; the skate park may be relocated to a close proximity to Seattle Center.

Olmsted Legacy Taskforce – strengthen, preserve and protect legacy of the Olmsted Plan with a task force. SDOT and SPU will be included. It will look at creative approaches to make more park land.

Need to develop policies regarding youth violence prevention and bullying. Provide safe space for young people is SPR core ... the department approach has been not to kick kids out but work with kids, revamping the approach to ensure consistent communications. Commissioner Hundley offers to help develop anti-bullying policy.

## **Partnership Spotlight: Cascade Bicycle Club**

*Presented by Richard Smith, Executive Director*

Richard moved here in 2014 and has worked at Cascade Bicycle Club for 5 months.

Background - Focus of the organization was advocacy but then they started putting on events like the Seattle-to-Portland

Major Taylor Project – They teach bicycling, advocacy and education to communities of color.

What Cascade Bicycle Club does and why?

- Advocacy and policy – working across all levels of government to identify bike plans to create safe riding.
- Education – introduce bicycling to all youth; create future stewards and bicycling advocates; massive health benefits; empower students with mobility, education and confidence.
- Cascade Bicycle Club organizes 6 of 10 largest riding events in Washington.
- Free group rides - encourage new riders, promote community, reinforce safe riding practices.
- SMART riding –
  - Stay Alert
  - Maintain Space
  - Act Safely and Predictably
  - Respect the rules of the road
  - Think ahead and Talk
- Development – raise money; partnerships with local foundations and businesses.
- Train advocates – Built coalition and assisted with fundraising efforts for the Wilburton trestle. In Olympia, CBC is advocating for legislation for regulating and standardizing e-bikes.
- Let's Go program with Seattle Public Schools – Train Physical Education teachers to teach bike riding. They take kids through the curriculum. 20,000 kids are getting access to bikes and learning to ride.
- Through the Major Taylor program 600 high school students have been introduced to bicycling. 60 of them rode the Seattle to Portland.
- Statewide Safe Routes to School – give them the tools to understand how to bike safely.

- Riding and maintenance classes

Cascade Annual Report – 23,000 riders participating in over 2600 organized rides.

In 2016, Cascade merged with Washington Bikes with the aspiration to be a statewide organization.

Major Taylor was the first African American to win a national cycling award.

The Commissioners ask Richard his thoughts on the bikeshare programs– There is an influx of people moving here and transportation needs are high. He feels it shows the value in bicycling. Electric bikes are exploding as a recreation.

How does the Cascade Bicycle Club interact with the community living in Magnuson Park? They are working to generate interest and collaboration.

The Commissioners ask about why they don't expand the partnership with Seattle Public Schools to middle schools; Richard says the curriculum and bikes are available; it's a case of money.

**Presentation: Strategic Business Plan for the Future of Seattle Public Golf Courses— Introduction, Briefing on scope**

*Kjristine Lund - Lund Consulting, Inc. and Cheryl Fraser, Enterprise & Partnership Division Director, Seattle Parks and Recreation*

**Written Briefing**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

**Date:** February 8, 2018

**To:** Park Board of Commissioners

**From:** Cheryl Fraser, Division Director, Enterprise and Partnerships in Community  
Kjristine Lund, Lund Consulting, Inc.

**Subject:** Strategic Business Plan of Seattle Public Golf Courses

**Requested Board Action:** – Introductory Informational Briefing with no board action required. Feedback from the Parks Board would be helpful on the study objectives, research questions within the identified issue papers, and stakeholders to be interviewed.

A second briefing will be scheduled for late May to brief Park Board of Commissioners on study findings and recommendations.

### **Project or Policy Description and Background**

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) has entered into an agreement with Lund Consulting, Inc to develop a Strategic Business Plan for the future of Seattle Public Golf Courses to guide the future of Seattle's public golf courses, driving ranges, mini golf, golf food services, and related programs to ensure an objective analysis for policy makers to consider in making decisions related to the City golf courses.

The City operates four golf facilities with a total of three 18-hole courses, three 9-hole short courses, three driving ranges and one mini-golf putting course. In addition, there are four clubhouses that provide food and beverage service, merchandise sales and general support for each course. The courses are located at Jefferson Park, Interbay, Jackson Park, and West Seattle. The golf courses are an important Part of Seattle Parks and Recreation's (SPR) programs and facilities. They provide recreational opportunities and as well as opportunities to enhance SPR's environmental stewardship ethic. Currently, the business operations of the four courses are handled through a contract with Premier Golf. The course maintenance and upkeep is performed by SPR staff. Originally, the golf program was set up to operate as an enterprise fund, where revenue would cover expenses, as well as contribute to the General Fund for other SPR programs. Unfortunately, in the last several years course revenues have been declining and have been insufficient to offset all golf related expenses for several reasons. These include such things as poor weather; rising labor costs; utilities; maintenance practice(s); escalating costs and cancellation or delay of capital improvements; use of vendors; operational practices; changing demographics and recreational interests, etc. This trend of declining revenue is projected to continue indefinitely until changes are made to the current golf operational model.

The project is structured to follow this approach to the work:

1. Documenting the City's goals and objectives for pursuing this study to ensure the final report and recommendations meet the City's decision needs.
2. Collecting and analyzing existing background information related to the City's golf courses including past City planning documents and studies; reports submitted by Premier, the City's golf course operator; budget documents; course condition reports; user surveys, and City decision documents. (Approximately 2009-2017)
3. Researching best practices and key policy issues identified by City staff and informed by preliminary research:
  - The role of municipal golf courses in serving the public including equity and access, health benefits, environmental and open space, youth, family, and schools;
  - Non-golf multi-objective strategies for use of golf course properties including conversion to other uses, closures for non-golf use, joint uses, including processes for closures;

- Relationship between course condition and revenue including deferred maintenance needs, factors affecting course rating, environmental issues associated with maintenance;
  - Programmatic innovations in the field including technology, partnerships, attracting a broader demographic, and
  - Alternative management models including the current model, full municipal management, full private sector management, private sector handles driving ranges and concessions, City handles course operations, and risk assessment for City under each scenario.
4. Analysis of financial position and development of alternatives for 10-year financial plan:
    - Developing a base-case template of current financial position including cost drivers, identification of fixed costs whether operated as golf courses or open space;
    - Development of three scenarios to be developed in coordination with City Parks and Recreation staff.
  5. Development of Action Plan.
  6. Final report.

Throughout the process, the consultant team will be meeting with Parks & Recreation staff to check-in on work progress and to discuss priorities for each stage in the process.

### **Public Involvement Process**

The scope of work includes a public involvement process that will incorporate feedback from key partners, informational interviews (up to 12), stakeholder workshops (10-12-individuals). The goals of these interviews and stakeholder workshops will be to:

- Engage and gather feedback from key community stakeholders and leaders.
- Collect anecdotal data that reflects people’s unique perspectives and experiences.
- Build insights around how Seattle’s public golf courses and programs are perceived by the community
- Input on opportunities to expand access and increase support for the courses.
- Feedback on business models that may be more sustainable

The feedback received from the public involvement process will be instrumental in identifying important issues to explore in the research and planning effort.

### **Park Board Feedback**

***Is there anything you see missing in the study objectives that should be included?***

***Do you have suggestions on individuals or organizations that should be included in the public outreach process?***

***Are there any questions you feel should be included in the stakeholder interviews or in the issue paper research that you do not see mentioned in this briefing paper?***

## **Budget**

The cost of implementing recommendations based on the study are unknown at this point and won't be known until the results of the study are presented (mid-May 2018), analyzed and decisions are made about the future of golf.

## **Schedule**

The project began in mid-November and the consultants work is scheduled to be complete by May 2018. Currently, 4 of 12 interviews have taken place. Issue papers will be completed in mid-February and will help to drive questions for the remaining interviews planned for late February - early March. A focus group is planned for March. Alternative financial scenarios will be explored in March and the draft report is due in mid-April.

## **Attachments:**

**Attachment 1** - Study Objectives

**Attachment 2** - Preliminary Feedback from Stakeholder Interviews and Market Research Findings

## Attachment 1: Study Objectives

1. Ensure the study process provides for check-in points with city staff prior to development of alternatives and at key milestones.
  - a. Check with city staff about assumptions that will inform the alternatives.
  - b. Schedule monthly briefings with staff group.
2. Provide alternatives and recommendations that align the role of Seattle's public golf courses with the mission of Seattle Parks & Recreation, including how golf promotes healthy people and a healthy environment.
3. Identify options for equitably enhancing access to golf course facilities and programs by the people of Seattle.
  - a. Provide a clear description of what we know about who uses the golf courses from existing data.
  - b. Better understand existing golf course clientele and potential new users.
  - c. Describe the pattern of use at the courses, including weather impacts.
  - d. Identify options to expand the utilization of public golf course properties by increasing multi-objective uses, expanding uses during off-peak golf time
  - e. Identify risks associated with multi-objectives uses such as course damage.
  - f. Address affordability of golf and low-income access.
4. Provide recommendations that demonstrate the best practices for sustainably managing Seattle's public golf courses as public assets.
  - a. Provide clarity around the financial situation: operating, capital, debt service, cost allocation.
  - b. Identify the cost drivers.
  - c. Clarify the relationship between number of rounds/revenue and course conditions.
  - d. Clarify how the current situation occurred.
  - e. Provide analysis to clarify the marginal cost of operating golf courses vs. open space.
  - f. Identify fixed costs.
  - g. Provide analysis to show options for operational savings.
  - h. Provide analysis of deferred maintenance costs.
  - i. Identify and analyze existing financial goals for golf, including revenue return. Propose new financial goals.
  - j. Identify areas of risk.
5. Analyze asset management issues.
  - a) Present information from park's staff about future asset management needs including equipment replacement.
  - b) Look at financial reporting system (SRI) for data collection opportunities.
6. Provide alternatives that reflect innovation and best practices.
  - a. Research innovations by other jurisdictions.
  - b. Research revenue opportunities and be creative about revenue sources.



- c. Research sponsorship options.
  - d. Align proposed alternatives with best practices.
  - e. Identify limitations on some innovations such as Initiative 42.
  - f. Consider operator innovations such as transition of Woodland Park Zoo and Aquarium to non-profit status.
7. Identify opportunities to expand partnerships and foster new collaborations.
  8. Include risk analysis with alternatives and recommendations.
  9. Use a ten-year planning horizon.
  10. Provide unbiased objective analysis.

## **Attachment 2: Preliminary Feedback from Stakeholder Interviews Conducted to Date and Market Research Findings**

Seattle's municipal golf courses provide benefits beyond the game golf.

- Public golf is misunderstood and stereo-typed in a way that is not consistent with the demographics of who plays at municipal public golf-courses. Nationally, 70% of all rounds nationally are played at public golf courses, not private clubs.
- Expanding access and creating new opportunities to experience golf and Seattle's public golf facilities is desired.
- There are opportunities to build partnerships and to use Seattle's municipal golf courses to meet the needs of the growing Seattle population who need open space and recreation opportunities within the City. (Seattle's population grew by 21,000 from July 1, 2015 - July 1, 2016)

The golf program is not meeting financial policy targets.

- The Golf Master Plan strategy has not been implemented as planned and has contributed to revenue challenges.
- Rising labor and utility expenses in the City were not anticipated in budget projections.

Preliminary Market Research Findings:

- A 2007 State golf economic analysis reported that of 280 courses in the state at that time, 219 were public, and 47 were municipally-owned.
- Nationally interest in golf is declining, especially among millennials; however, golf in Seattle and the State of Washington exceeds the national participation rate. (7% of total population nationally, 10-12% in Seattle.)
- Seattle golf participation rates are in the mid-range of popular recreational activities: walking, picnics, bike-riding are the most popular and rugby, surfboarding, lacrosse the least popular.
- The 2017 Parks and Recreation Study conducted by EMC found that 43 percent thought the City should spend less on golf, although the survey did not provided information on the revenue contributed by the golf courses to the City Parks and Recreation Budget.
  - Nationally, minority participation is about 20%, primarily among Hispanic and Latino Americans. Seattle has not tracked minority participation rates at its courses; however, the first African American and Asian American golf players clubs in the State were founded at Jefferson and are still active, and First Tee and Bogey Bear programs have successfully introduced the sport to diverse youth in Seattle.
- Seattle's female participation at its golf courses ranges between 10-17 percent while nationally the average is 23 percent.

### **Presentation and Discussion**

Cheryl introduces the Golf Consultant and the scope of the consultant's work. Operation costs are not covered by money coming in; SPR hired a consultant to look at what's happening regionally and nationally; assess what the department is doing and how they are doing it. Cheryl and Kjris will return to the Board after they finish their research.

Kjris Lund, Consultant – worked for King County Parks. She has done much planning for civic projects with various municipalities.

1. Contract Scope and Schedule – Background research and a clear narrative of the history of the finances and operations.
  - Background Research – December 2017 /January 2018
  - Best Practices and Innovation Issue Papers – January/February 2018
  - Public Attitudes, Outreach, & Opinions – November 2017 - March 2018
  - Financial Analysis and Alternatives Scenarios – March 2018
  - Action Steps and Draft Report – April 2018
2. Study Objectives –
  - Align with Parks & Recreation mission – public golf courses started as public access for the working class; now municipal courses are tasked with making money.
  - Identify options for greater access
  - Best management practices
  - Analyze asset management issues
  - Discover innovation
  - Identify partnerships and new collaborations to offset costs
  - Conduct risk analysis of alternatives
  - Use ten-year planning horizon
  - Provide unbiased objective analysis – ask if this is a relevant recreation option today? Look at innovation
3. Stakeholder Interviews
  - Interview Objectives: test awareness, probe issues, solicit creative thinking
    - 12 stakeholders identified with input from City
      - Staff: Experts on Seattle’s golf courses (4)
      - Golf Influencers: Community leaders who are involved with golf (2)
      - Civic/City Leaders: Role of golf in the community at large (2)
      - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Access and opportunities (2)
      - Regional Leaders: Partnerships (2)
    - Focus Group – 12 people
      - Test concepts, shape alternative scenarios
4. Issue Paper Research
  - Role of municipal golf courses
  - Non-golf public access – risks and liabilities of different activities on the course
  - Course condition and revenue
  - Innovation
  - Alternative management models
5. Financial Scenarios - What are the cost drivers? What are costs of having space in ownership of Seattle and marginal costs of operating as golf courses. Identify 3 alternatives for golf.
6. Feedback

Premier, the golf management company, did a survey that shows most people are very satisfied with the golf courses.

Seattle golf rates exceed national rates; more people play golf in Seattle than other places.

Goals, standards and objectives in terms of appealing to women and people of color.

Anecdotal information but no hard data on POC participation.

“Out of the Rough” a documentary is about Fir State club for African Americans at Jefferson.

Acting Superintendent Williams says the big policy question around whether SPR provide subsidy for golf – instead of golf providing revenue. Practice is not to subsidize programs that benefit an individual.

Board of Park Commissioners respond to the presentation.

Data will be collected by course and by operational side and city expenses.

Location of golf courses to see if that’s happening where there is growth.

Disc golf on radar? This could be an aspect of study and innovation.

SPR performed a study of disc golf course in natural areas, that should be around for Cheryl.

Commissioners suggest Kjrjris talk with Seattle Public Schools since they use SPR courses.

A lot of acreage in golf courses – the Commissioners wonder if this is the best use of all that space and want to ensure the consultant takes a balanced approach between different uses and the number of people who play golf versus other activities.

Environment, habitat, surface water management – need for openspace for population; this will be integrated into the issue papers.

Emphasis on increasing activities in golf where there isn’t an interest?

Healthy lifestyles is part of the SPR Mission; the focus is on getting people to recreate and do what they love.

Innovation – The Commissioners suggest opening it up to the public for non-golf purposes. They would like to see the types of programs for the spaces for non-golf uses and how it impacts the budget.

The Commissioners feel it shouldn't be system wide and Kjrj should take it as a course by course basis. Commissioner Hundley says his golfer friends are angry and feel the system has failed them. Ladies groups at Jefferson, Jackson and West Seattle – provide invaluable feedback and a good gesture for the public.

How big is the subsidy? What is the value of golf to the community? Junior golf community? Include participation of people of color – Fir State have their own statistics about membership.

### **Briefing and Discussion: New Approach to Magnuson Park Building 2 Redevelopment**

*Presented by Cheryl Fraser, Enterprise & Partnership Division Director and Kevin Bergsrud, Sr. Planner, Seattle Parks and Recreation*

Cheryl reviews the location and size of building 2. In 2008, DPD notified SPR of life and safety improvements that were required to keep it open would cost \$25-30million dollars.

In 2014, SPR published a Request for Proposal (RFP) – for private investment in the building and there were 2 proposals. They were both great proposals but the department was not comfortable with the financial aspects.

SPR is approaching the investment in a different way and it is not as strict as the Request for Proposal process.

- SPR is seeking proposals for redeveloping Building 2, and operating/managing recreation, arts, and cultural, or environmental programming open to the public.
- The lead entity or organization will be responsible for financing, design, construction, and operating/managing public programming.
- The selected proposal will result in a multi-year Concession Agreement.
- Proposals should address gaps in public recreational, arts and cultural, environmental programming and activities.

Criteria for evaluating –

- Clear demonstration of ability to finance and complete project
- Detailed timeline & cost estimates
- Project Development Team – Project Manager, Architect, Funding Raising Team
- Intent to develop building for recreation, arts and cultural, or environmental programming, staying within the guidelines of the National Park Service Use Covenant

- Alignment with SPR mission, Magnuson Park Master Plan, and Magnuson Park 2012 Strategic Plan
- Non-Profit Funded Projects
  - Developer must demonstrate 5% of project costs in liquid assets
- For Profit Funded Projects
  - Developer must demonstrate 10% of project costs in liquid assets

Schedule – The building is deteriorating and SPR is having trouble with break-ins. Birds are living there. It is hard to keep the building safe for much longer.

- SPR is actively looking for investors and potential partners
- Condition of Building 2 will determine if/when SPR considers mothballing the structure, rather than securing investment
  - Approx. cost of mothballing = \$2M - \$5M. This consists of boarding up windows, securing the doors, putting on a new roof so it does not leak.
  - Redevelopment Project potentially qualifies for Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits which may not be available after 2019.

Magnuson Park Advisory Committee – They have been tracking the project for a few years; they hope there is community interest because of the historic value.

Is there a way to use the mothballing money available for financing for a nonprofit?  
Need a financial commitment to show they have stake in the project.

Multiple nonprofits could coalesce around leasing these properties.

SPR is willing to be creative and flexible about financing as long as there is a baseline of financing available. Should there be a city match?

### **Old/New Business**

Kelly and Marlon wrote a memo about redundancy and the roles of the Board of Park Commissioners and the Park District Oversight Committee.

The Executive Committee will review it and talk about putting it on a future agenda.

PDOC retreat – PDOC discussed the overlap of the Park Board and PDOC. There is value having 2 bodies. It is unclear to the public who to approach for what.

Commissioner Hundley did a great job chairing the meeting today.

Marlon attended the David Rodgers Play Area Open House – It was a great experience to hear what people want in their parks.

**There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 8:30pm.**

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Tom Byers, Chair  
Board of Park Commissioners