



Minutes

Joint Board of Park Commissioners/Park District Oversight Committee

Via WebEx

Thursday, February 25, 2021

6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting is called to order at 6:35pm and the Board members introduce themselves. Commissioner Farmer acknowledges that we reside and recreate on the traditional land of the Duwamish people. She asks for a motion to approve the consent items: January 14 Board of Park Commissioner meeting minutes and the February 25 agenda. Commissioner Hundley moves, Commissioner Herrera seconds and the consent items are approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Judy Tangen – Judy is attending the meeting to stay active with the board and wants the Board to remember the good work the Associated Recreation Council is doing to foster community and provide opportunities.

Mollie Means – She is a member of a volunteer group to make permanent Stay Healthy Street at Alki Point. Since May 2020, Alki Point has been closed to cars and it is the most used and enjoyed of all the Healthy Streets. They received over 1100 signatures on their petition to keep it permanent and it is endorsed by Alki Community Council, Councilmember Herbold, and the Mountains to Sound Greenway.

Loren Schwartz – Volunteer to make permanent Stay Healthy Street at Alki Point. It is very popular. The street was not safe because it was not designed to accommodate the level traffic and cars. This street is a narrow residential street but serves as a continuation of Alki despite the narrow sidewalk and no bike path. It adds recreational capacity at no additional cost.

Presentation: 2019 John C. Little Spirit Award Winner

Superintendent Aguirre says SPR has a tremendous team and John C. Little Award is a way to honor an outstanding employee. The award named to honor a former Board of Park Commissioner John C. Little who was a long-time public servant. Mr. Little was dedicated to serving community but specifically youth and youth development. He won many community awards and served on the Board of Park Commissioners.

Chukundi Salisbury is the 2019 winner and exemplifies these qualities. Superintendent Aguirre has enjoyed getting to know Chukundi. He is always looking to make the department better and improve his community. Chukundi created the Seattle Youth Green Corps providing youth mentorship, job skills and environmental education. He also partnered with Seattle high schools to create a program to work on Seattle Trails.

Chukundi appreciates working for SPR and enjoys a great working relationship with SPR leadership. He has worked for SPR for 24 years. He is grateful for the support and partnership of many SPR employees and local non-profits.

Stephanie Jones from the Little family is overjoyed that Chukundi won the award this year. He embodies the spirit of John C. Little. Chukundi cares about the whole community, not just the youth. Chukundi provides the youth with opportunities to grow and learn resilience. He bridges the gap between the youth and the older folks in the community. She is honored to speak on behalf of the Little family.

Conversation with Deputy Mayor Sixkiller

Superintendent Aguirre feels the homelessness and encampments issues need a citywide perspective; SPR staff requested DM Sixkiller to attend to address how the City and SPR are assisting with these issues. DM Sixkiller is incredibly supportive of SPR.

Thanks the Board for their service to SPR.

Deputy Mayor Sixkiller introduces himself. He grew up in Seattle and the parks were his refuge and first experience with the outdoors. The Seattle parks system is one of the greatest aspects of this city. He is Cherokee and *gadugi* is a Cherokee word that means working together for the good of the community. For the Cherokees, this is an important value and has been a driver for him in his work. The parks system is the great equalizer because it is for everyone.

Seattle's Covid Response

- First case in March 2020
- Seattle has the lowest rates of cases of any major city
- City employees switched focus to essential services to support critical community needs.
- Fast, city-wide testing, at no-cost to clients
- Critical supports
 - Immigrants/Refugee Assistance
 - Small Business Stabilization
 - Hospitality Worker Emergency Relief Fund
 - Grocery Worker Hazard Pay
 - Childcare, Teen Hubs, and Childcare Business supports
 - Food Assistance
 - Rental Assistance and Eviction Moratorium
 - Utility Discount/No Shut-offs
 - Support for Arts and Nonprofits
 - Stay Healthy Streets
 - Expanded Shelter and Hygiene Resources

Road to Recovery

- In 2021, we are still actively providing COVID response AND we are turning to recovery efforts

- Our Focus for Recovery:
 - Homelessness Response (Outreach and Shelter Surge)
 - Downtown Recovery
 - Vaccination efforts
 - Continued support for those most impacted by COVID-19 pandemic

Vaccination Efforts

- Current Status:
 - Vaccinating Phase 1A (health care workers) and Phase 1B – Tier 1 (People 65+ and 50+ living in multigenerational household)
 - As of 2/20 in King County:
 - 12.9% of people received their 1st dose
 - 6.0% of people are fully vaccinated

City of Seattle's Vaccine Objectives:

- Provide 1 million vaccines to residents and workers
- Slow hospitalizations and death of most disproportionately impacted populations

Update on City's Vaccination Efforts:

- Administered 6,095 vaccines to vulnerable residents and workers (as of 2/22)

Currently, standing up mass vaccination capacity for when supply increases.

Homelessness Response: Strategies and Investments

Winter Storm Response

- Four Severe Weather Shelter Sites
 - Including Bitter Lake and Garfield CCs
- Operated over 6 days
- 24-hour operations
- 90% occupancy (Peak: 216 occupied beds)
- Meals provided
- Showers at three of four sites
- COVID-19 safety precautions at all sites

Winter Weather – HOPE Team Response

- 380 welfare checks
- Shared info with 310 individuals about temporary shelter
- Provided 277 individuals with winter supplies (hats, gloves, hand warmers, etc.)
- Provided basic needs supplies (water, snacks, etc.) to 237 people
- Transported 42 individuals to temporary shelter
- More than 80 individuals accepted shelter or hotel offerings

HOPE Team

- A new team within the Human Services Department that coordinates the City's response to homelessness in partnership with contracted outreach providers and City departments

Our goals:

- Through outreach providers expand our ability to work with encampment occupants to accept shelter

- Streamline shelter referral process for better coordination between City's contracted outreach and shelter service providers
- Clearly communicate outreach priorities in partnership with providers
- Support provider partners in the field, such as site assessment and coordinating property storage and debris removal with Parks and Rec staff
- Collect and report data better understand community needs, measure progress, and improve our homelessness strategies.

HSD in coordination role and city Partners doing outreach and engagement.

King County Regional Homelessness Authority – this will give greater ability to fund, strategize at the regional level.

- Will oversee policy and funding for homelessness services countywide.
- This humanitarian crisis requires a regional response that allows individuals to access services in the communities where they lose housing.
 - *Most persons receiving homelessness services from the City became homeless outside of Seattle.*
- City needs a CEO who is deeply invested in leading the region in a joint approach to truly make progress on the homelessness crisis.
 - Region's leaders are committed to finding the right person with the skills needed to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable members of our community.
- Councilmembers and Mayor on Governing Board
- Master Services Agreement that will require certain services to come back to Seattle in exchange for financial support ~ \$110million

Street to Housing

- Currently, the city funds over 2,000 shelter spaces
- 2021 Shelter Addition Progress
 - Kings Inn — 66 rooms
 - Executive Hotel Pacific — 155 rooms
 - U-District Tiny House Village — 40 units
 - North Seattle Village — 40 units
 - Women's Shelter at First Presbyterian Church — Serves 60
 - Funding for another Tiny House Village in 2021
- Hotel coupled with permanent housing options such as Rapid Rehousing and new Permanent Supportive Housing due to come on-line in 2021
- Affordable Housing is the solution to homelessness —with more than 4,600 affordable housing units opening in the next 3 years.

Clean City Initiative – part of homelessness response and recovery efforts. Does not remove encampments.

- Additional Litter Routes
- Weekly Park & Neighborhood Focuses
- Increased trash pick-up from encampments and RVs
- Additional needle collection efforts
- Funds to BIAs and business districts to support cleaning

Seattle has always had a problem with illegal dumping. Clean City Teams are addressing deferred maintenance and illegal dumping.

Clean Teams - The teams provide a coordinated surge effort to address trash collection, graffiti abatement, needle collection, and deferred maintenance needs through parks and public rights of way.

- Last Week's Numbers:
 - 1,344 needles collected
 - 75,003 lbs. of trash collected
 - 31 blocks of litter pick up
 - 5 abandoned tents removed
 - Focused on 51 sites

SPR Supports Seattle's Recovery

- New Shelter centers to come online in March or April; developing an approach now to support efforts to get homeless out of parks and into housing.
- Continue pandemic response efforts
 - Host testing sites
 - Host vaccination efforts
 - Childcare, teen hubs
 - Food assistance
- Clean City initiative
 - Volunteer opportunities restarting soon – SPR has lost thousands of hours of volunteer time; Seattle residents are ready to help keep parks clean.
- Recovery Planning
 - Safely reopen activities
 - Support city-wide recovery and reopening

Board Discussion

Commissioner Sivarajan asks if the City's policy on encampment removals changed since the sweeps on Cal Anderson in December? The City has altered its' approach; however, Cal Anderson was a unique situation. The City was able to get 60 people inside because of focused outreach to Cal Anderson.

Clean Cities: How are SPR and City ensuring encampment belongings are not being thrown away? Staff are very careful when putting together Clean Cities Teams – Field Coordinators play an important role to ensure each team is following rules regarding respect for personal property and engaging with homeless folks to clean up what they want/need cleaned up. There may be other efforts to clean up encampments, not associated with the City, with less respect for personal property.

Commissioner Sivarajan states if the current policy is not resulting in significant number of folks going into shelter space, then the City encampment policy should be reconsidered.

Commissioner Sivarajan, as the member of the LGBTQ Commission, asks the City to engage with them regarding Cal Anderson.

CM Lewis' "It Takes a Village" plan supported by Deputy Mayor Sixkiller. City Council approved \$4.2million to the budget, adding 3 new tiny home villages. 2 of 3 new villages found locations – North Seattle and the University District. The City is working with potential funders to expand tiny home village program. The

biggest hindrance to creating more tiny home villages is the ability to site a tiny home village – State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) approval takes at least six months to get through the process. Tiny home villages are hard to site because there are a myriad criterion that are important to consider to ensure that the homeless are connected to services and bus lines.

With the 2 new additional tiny home villages, there is one in each councilmember district. Geographic distribution allows people to stay in a community. The contracted outreach providers determine which shelter asset will be most compatible with the individual. As the program scales up, it allows them to be more flexible with locations.

Many of the outreach individuals are formerly homeless individuals who are making living wages and in a better position to understand the needs of those still unhoused.

The Conservation Corps is structured as a cohort of formerly homeless individuals who work on various city projects with case management.

Last year, City staff cleaned and removed encampments from Ballard Commons, were able to get some people in shelter units, but did not have a plan for keeping homeless from returning to camp there. Cal Anderson is maintaining a “no camping” policy.

There are not many vacancies in the shelter system. In 2020, due to the pandemic, there was a slowing of permanent housing construction. In 2021, Seattle will see over 600 new permanent housing units open. City is considering how to get people out of temporary housing and moving them into permanent housing. Currently, there are less than 10 shelter beds in the entire system.

Is funding disappearing in March for clean-up? The funding for the Clean Cities Initiative is short-term and will stop in April or May. At that point, the maintenance will go back to being part of each departments’ budgets. The idea was the City could “play catch up” on cleanup and maintenance, then maintain with city budgets moving forward. Otherwise, the City will need to work with City Council to secure additional funding.

The scope of the problem versus the amount of resources is challenging. There are many constraints tackling this issue. Operators/Partners have a capacity limitation. Chief Seattle Club and Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) are two of the partners in the tiny home villages/shelters. They have a lot of success running these programs and getting the tenants into permanent housing. DM Sixkiller says the capacity isn’t insurmountable if the City can continue to learn the challenges/barriers to inform solutions.

Commissioner Herrera says that the Boards/Commissions would like to be part of the ongoing conversation about these issues.

The Commissioners have many questions about using hotels or vacant business spaces in downtown office buildings. DM Sixkiller says Human Services Division is looking at all options. They are being very entrepreneurial. Seattle needs more permanent housing space. The City is looking at every option. This is a community effort.

Commissioner Potter asks about how the candidate for the King County Regional Homelessness Authority CEO declining the position will impact the work. The Governing Committee will decide whether to move on to the 2nd candidate or start the process over again. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor are supportive of the 2nd candidate.

The City has hundreds of contracts with local agencies and they are set to transition in June. Human Services Department down to 13 staff members as they are waiting for hiring direction from the new CEO.

The Office of Housing is working with the development community to see where there are opportunities with developers who want to off-load projects and partnering with non-profit housing developers.

Seattle is partnering with King County for permanent supportive housing .01% sales tax, which will include Seattle. This is beyond the 600+ units of affordable housing that should be available in 2021.

Commissioner Watts mentions the City of Mercer Island passing a policy to push out homeless and criminalize homelessness and wonders if there are statistics about where the homeless population are from.

Homeless Management Information System, a database used to track homeless individuals, is required by Housing and Urban Development for federal funds and grants. DM Sixkiller says that 60% of homeless individuals receiving services in Seattle did not identify as last being housed in the city, most are from South King County or outside the state of Washington.

The Plaintiff for the most recent court case regarding Cal Anderson was last housed outside of Washington. DM Sixkiller mentions this to emphasize the need for supporting a regional approach. Seattle wants to contribute and meet the needs through a more regional effort to better serve those experiencing unsheltered homelessness throughout the region.

Old/New Business

The Boards decide to receive the Superintendent's Report in writing.

Commissioner McCaffrey asks about where to send comments about the Alki Stay Healthy street? SPR staff will send a link.

Next meeting is a joint meeting on March 11. Commissioner Farmer reminds everyone that the Boards are hoping to continue the conversation about Board consolidation. She encourages people to review the January 25 meeting notes to refresh their memories about initial thoughts/feelings about a board consolidation. Paula is waiting to speak with Law before confirming whether staff can be ready for the March 11 meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting is called to adjourn at 8:39pm.