

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
June 12, 2014

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

Also, view Seattle Channel tapes of meetings, June 12, 2008-most current, at
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Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Diana Kincaid
Yazmin Mehdi, Vice Chair
Mazohra Thami
Bob Edmiston
Brice Maryman
Tom Tierney, Chair

Excused:

Antoinette Angulo
Barbara Wright

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Eric Friedli, Acting Deputy Superintendent
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

This meeting was held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Mehdi calls the meeting to order at 6:34pm. Commissioner Mehdi asks for approval of the Agenda; Commissioner Maryman moves to approve the consent items and Commissioner Thami seconds. The consent items are approved.

To hear and view the full meeting, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591331>

Cameron Justam – member of Friends of Cheasty asking the Board of Park Commissioners to reconsider their January 9 position to allow mountain bikers in Cheasty Greenspace. Cameron asks the Park Board for a deeper discussion and understanding. She feels the pilot project is a way to get around a policy change. The plants and animals cannot speak for themselves, she requests SPR to continue stewardship of Cheasty because it is an irreplaceable city treasure.

Connie Bown – lives on 25th Ave S – off Cheasty Boulevard, asks if there is a policy on pilot programs and requests a copy. She asks the Board of Park Commissioners to reconsider the vote of January 9. She then says the January 9 minutes did not clearly capture the vote.

Bob Minnott – represents Friends of Lakeview Park. Lakeview Park is an Olmsted Brothers park and it has been neglected due to budget constraints. Friends of Lakeview Park participated in a pilot project to clear an area with a small group of people and soon realized that it was too big a job for volunteers. The greenery has taken completely over the park. The sheltered area where people go to party used to be a beautiful vista. Bob requests direction from the Park Board. Deputy Superintendent Friedli says he will look into it.

Deputy Superintendent's Report

Cheasty Greenspace: No significant progress since the last meeting; parks is working on a plan for monitoring criteria. In response to Ms Bown's question, Parks does not have a policy on pilot projects; they use pilot projects to test a new usage. In regards to the January 9 vote, Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator will review the minutes and the video, make necessary changes and bring those back to the Board for approval. Commissioner Tierney says Parks and members of the Park Board have met with community members and they are planning more meetings.

Deputy Mayor Appointment: Mayor Murray asked Kate Joncas to be Deputy Mayor. She has been a great friend to Parks. Kate will deal with internal/operational issues.

Pianos in Parks: Parks coordinated with Arts and other departments to bring pianos to 15 Seattle parks. These will be installed by mid-July and allow residents the opportunities to have impromptu concerts.

Summer of Safety Initiative: In response to the public safety issues in SE Seattle, the Mayor has decreed a focus on safety; this summer city departments will collaborate to make the city a safer place. In response, Parks will create more activation and programming at SE Seattle parks and community centers with the following actions:

- Parks will increase staff levels at Rainier Beach Community Center.
- From 3 to 8pm, Parks will have staff and activities for kids at Othello, Rainier and John C. Little Parks.
- Maintenance staff has already gone through and pruned some trees to provide better sight lines.
- Replaced the comfort stations with Portland Loos that allow for better visibility and are easier to clean.

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO): Council agreed with the recommendation of Parks and SPU to put the CSO under the tennis courts at Seward Park and adopted the legislation. The agreement requires SPU to make improvements to the shoreline and for Parks to allow SPU access to the tennis courts.

Moorages: Councilmembers Godden and Clark toured the moorages today and saw the condition firsthand. Parks is working on a formal proposal and will bring that around in the coming weeks.

PI Globe: City departments are working together to find an appropriate sight for the PI Globe. The Sunny Jim site, which is situated along I-5 and owned by SDOT, is being reviewed as a possible location. There is not the same level of emotional connection at this site but it has good visibility. An anonymous donor is willing to help pay for the relocation and rehabilitation of the globe.

Partnerships in Urban Parks: City Parks Alliance hosted a forum regarding partnerships in urban park systems. Asking the question: what does it take to build a healthy park system? Deputy Superintendent Friedli thought the most valuable lesson he learned is that in creating partnerships the agreements and the structure is easy; but, the most important aspect of a successful partnership is that they share the same values, mission and vision.

Presentation and Discussion: Board Decision Process

Presented by Acting Deputy Superintendent Eric Friedli

Commissioner Tierney tees off the topic of decision drivers: Often organizations have these discussions on a retreat and spend days talking about how to make decisions; however, the Park Board wanted to have this conversation in public to work through some of the big challenges that the Board of Park Commissioners face and help the public understand their process. We live in the fastest growing city, how does that impact the way the Commissioners make decisions keeping in mind new demographics, older, and immigrant populations. The Commissioners thought it was a good idea to start this discussion now and know that they are going to have

many conversations about this ahead. Bringing this topic to the Park Board is driven by the need to flesh out how the changing world may change the decision-making processes. Deputy Superintendent sent the Commissioners the following briefing paper to assist them in their discussion.

Written Briefing by Deputy Superintendent Eric Friedli

Background

Recent discussions among the Commissioners has indicated a need for a broad discussion about what filters should the Board use when making recommendations to the Department and key decision makers or taking action on a particular topic. This brief background summary is intended to stimulate that discussion.

Seattle is fast growing, dynamic city. The Legacy Plan is intended to provide guidance on how Seattle Parks and Recreation will adjust to that growth. Recognizing that how we address our parks, open space and recreation will continue to evolve calls for a deeper discussion and understanding by the Commissioners about what is important to each Commissioner individually and as a group.

Guiding Principles

In 2013, the Board adopted a set of Guiding Principles stating that “Seattle’s Board of Park Commissioners should steward a long-term, comprehensive parks, recreation and open space vision for our city.” The Boards Principles envision strong strategic partnerships with public and private agencies, non-profits, the private sector and volunteers. The three guiding principles are listed below. Attachment 1 is the full Guiding Principles document.

- Actively participate in core functions
- Develop creative funding and programming partnerships
- Conduct Business in a professional manner.

Legacy Plan

The recently adopted Parks Legacy Plan highlights the Parks mission, values, outcomes and a basic services continuum. These are intended to provide guidance for our decisions and actions as we preserve the legacy of Seattle Parks and Recreation. The Legacy Plan also provides goal statements for each program and service area.

- Mission: Seattle Parks and Recreation provides welcoming and safe opportunities to play, learn, contemplate and build community, and promotes responsible stewardship of the land.
- Values: Access, Opportunity, Sustainability
- Key Outcomes: Healthy People, Healthy Environment, Financial Sustainability, Strong Communities.
- Basic Services Continuum: The basic services continuum outlines a means for identifying which services provide the most benefit to the community and which services provide benefit primarily to individuals.

Other Considerations

In various discussions, several other considerations and interesting questions have been raised.

- How does being the fastest growing city in the country influence decisions we need to make for parks and recreation facilities and services?
- Increasing density and increasing diversity change the demands for parks and recreation services:
 - How should we respond?

- How do we meet unmet needs?
- How do we measure use?
- How do we keep the focus on the system as a whole and not pit neighborhood against neighborhood, and one type of use against another?
- How should we be influenced by the concept of ‘new urbanism’ - constructing a built environment more focused on place making with attention to walkability, connectivity, mixed-use, mixed housing, urban design, traditional neighborhoods, increased density, smart transportation, sustainability and a renewed focus on quality of life.
- With changes in demographics and recreational interests, what does it mean to be a good neighbor?
- How do parks function as a social service agency in arenas like homelessness and educational services?
- What does it mean to address biodiversity, preserve green spaces, and maintain an environmental ethic in an increasingly dense environment?

Attachment 1

Park Board Guiding Principles

Seattle’s world-class parks, recreation and green space system is essential civic infrastructure, contributing to the physiological, ecological, social and aesthetic quality of our city. Recent research confirms that Seattle’s parks, recreation and green spaces are vital to our community’s public health, economic competitiveness, sense of community, environmental stewardship and social cohesion.

To continue these indispensable services into the next century, Seattle’s Board of Park Commissioners should steward a long-term, comprehensive parks, recreation and open space vision for our city. Transcending Seattle Parks Department-owned and managed properties, this long-range plan will need to be implemented through strong, strategic partnerships throughout the community, including other public agencies, non-profits, the private sector and volunteers.

The Board of Park Commissioners is an advisory body that provides a citywide, long-term perspective, grounded in the Board’s guiding principles below:

- Actively Participate in Core Functions
- Guide, oversee and steward a long-term parks, recreation and open space vision for the City.
- Actively seek out and engage the public regarding the management of the parks, recreation and open space system.
- Understand how the parks, recreation and open space system links to other critical city initiatives and goals.
- Work collaboratively with appropriate City agencies and entities to create and maintain a world-class parks, recreation and open space system.
- Seek and share information and ideas from national and international park, recreation and open space leaders to bring emerging best practices and innovations to Seattle’s parks, recreation and open space system.
- Educate the public, elected officials and other entities on the multiplicity of benefits that are afforded by Seattle’s parks, recreation and open space system, and the opportunities and threats to this system that require widespread support.
- Advocate for the parks, recreation and open space system.
- Protect park and open space assets for long-term, public parks, recreation and open space uses.

- Share the Parks and Recreation Department mission, vision and values.
- Develop Creative Funding and Programming Partnerships
- Strengthen existing partnerships with the Associated Recreation Council, the Seattle Parks Foundation, the Green Seattle Partnership and others.
- Advocate for stable system-wide City funding, augmented by creative funding partnerships.
- Seek partnerships with other agencies, non-profits and citizens groups that create, manage and maintain green infrastructure spaces throughout the city, or that provide access to our existing parks and recreation assets.
- Help foster creative and constructive working relationships with parks volunteers.
- Conduct Business in Professional Manner
- Conduct Park Board business in an open and transparent manner.
- Undergo training and orientation of the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative framework and apply its principles and tools in every policy, procedure and budget consideration to the park, recreation and open space system.
- Respect differing viewpoints and conduct discussion in a respectful manner.
- Offer well-reasoned and fully considered recommendations to the Mayor and Council that are rooted in the long-term vision for Seattle's parks, recreation and open space system.

Discussion

Deputy Superintendent Friedli states the original intent was to answer questions but feels that the discussion is as important as any conclusions from the Commissioners. Legacy plan goals and information – talked with staff about how to operationalize and implement the legacy plan; staff and department use it to help them prioritize. For Park Board, the Legacy Plan gives them words and a way to talk about how the decisions are values-based and can be used in defense of decisions. The briefing paper contains various tools the commissioners use to assist them in their decision-making. The City is changing and Seattle Parks is trying to figure out what it means to be a major urban parks system. With the system growing and becoming more diverse, the types of issues are also more diverse. In the past, there may have been one sport per season but now there are competing priorities for the same fields, courts and open spaces. A diversity of populations means a diversity of interests.

Commissioner Mehdi feels the creation of the Legacy Plan is a big help when trying to figure out how to make decisions. The idea of different facilities we have offer individual versus community benefit; staff really thought about this. Since Seattle is growing so quickly, is it better to err on the side of broader community benefit when making decisions. How does the Park Board want to contribute to bio-diversity, respond to needs of the community versus being leading edge? SPR should provide outlets for people especially as we become a denser city.

Commissioner Kincaid thinks there should be a caveat where the board is open for new information for example the discussion on the individual versus community benefit; she cites the example that having a café is an individual benefit but there was a University of Washington study done that said most community building happens at cafés.

Commissioner Maryman makes decisions in terms of values to the city (systemic, less than departmental); everything needs to be in line with the comprehensive plan. Access, Sustainability and Opportunity – SPU and SDOT have open spaces out there that could be put to good use. He sees a blind spot in Legacy Plan related to growth; not about the uses but the number of people using it. He gives the example of putting parks in neighborhoods where growth is happening and there is little access to outdoor space. Align our investments to lack of access and need. Where and how parks is investing related to where growth goes. 2008 Parks Levy put

in only 1 athletic field that was adjacent to a mass transit line. Why do people have to drive to athletic fields? How does one make sure people can have healthy lifestyles while taking public transit and aligning Parks' goals with those of other departments? There are a huge number of variables and Commissioner Maryman cautions regarding nailing down a framework. Commit to underlying values and commit to a spirit of adaptability, opportunism and thoughtfulness.

Commissioner Tierney agrees with Commissioner Maryman and feels that it is important to use resources and take advantage of opportunities to reflect an alignment with changing community values.

Commissioner Thami adds that it is important to challenge themselves to make every decision have multiple victories in order to create a more adaptable system. She feels they have the opportunity for more partnerships and synthesize information with other boards.

Commissioner Edmiston feels it is okay to try stuff and fail as long as you learn from it. Best type of experience is an experience someone already paid the price for; if Parks is thinking of doing a pilot project, instead of doing one, find out where else it has been done, talk to those people, and learn from their mistakes or successes.

Commissioner Thami says using available tools to have communities engaged with the board would provide a more instantaneous feedback loop.

Commissioner Kincaid adds that the growth pattern is unknown; having access to real beauty, sun and light changes mental health; helping the city stay mindful of having open sky.

Commissioner Tierney says tying decisions back to the city's comprehensive plan and invest where growth is planned and plan growth in ways that maximizes investment that is already there. City has been successful directing goals with urban villages and directing investments. Commissioner Maryman adds that the Mayor of Charlestown said "the best of the city should be left to everyone" and it is the Park Board's role to protect that legacy. When the Park Board addresses issues such as climate change and coal trains; all that speaks to providing a legacy.

Commissioner Tierney compliments Commissioner Maryman for bringing such a broad perspective to the meetings. There is no way to account for the population that will be here in 20 years. What process could the Board of Park Commissioners use that accounts for this? Commissioner Kincaid feels creating an adaptable system is key.

Deputy Superintendent Friedli says the types of recreational activities are so diverse; fields now have to accommodate cricket, futsal, soccer and other activities. Parks is more involved with the food systems; actively focusing on helping immigrants, who come from agrarian societies have access to places to garden and grow food. Marra Farms, in Auburn used to be a camp for kids and now Seattle Tilth has been using it for an agricultural program for recent immigrants. Deputy Superintendent Friedli questions if Parks should replicate this program in the city and mentions the p-patch programs and the community gardens at several of our community centers. Parks did not do any of these 20 years ago.

In response to changing needs and individual benefit, Commissioner Maryman mentions how the Chief Sealth Trail would be a perfect place for growing food because it cannot be developed for other uses, perhaps in lieu of using park space.

Commissioner Mehdi feels it is hard for people coming to us for one issue to understand where the commissioners are coming from when making decisions. Residents are usually more concerned about what is happening around their house as opposed to citywide; the Park Board have to look at the whole city's needs

when making decisions. Parks' constituencies have so many diverse interests. When districting happens, the Commissioners will have to defend their decisions with the public and their council representatives.

Commissioner Kincaid states she started with Parks as an activist; there were times when she was very angry and felt like decisions were not being made in a balanced way. There is fear of the unknown and the new. Regarding Cheasty, is there something the Park Board could have done so that people would not feel like the decision was coming from "on high"?

Commissioner Tierney says that conversing about how they, individually and as a board, come to decisions is very valuable. They can count on each other and have a better sense of their roles on the board in this changing environment. Deputy Superintendent Eric Friedli says that this might be worth bringing back and it may end up leading to a revising of the guiding principles. The Commissioners add that they need to hold each other responsible with how decisions will fit in the changing world and articulate what their thought processes are for making a decision; a statement that clearly defines what Commissioners think about when they make decisions.

Deputy Superintendent Friedli suggests staff be more clear about value-based recommendations. Commissioner Mehdi asks if the Commissioners should become more familiar with the Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Thami mentions an event on 6/24 at Seattle Center. Deputy Superintendent Friedli mentions that Parks has been very involved with the Comprehensive Plan and keeping the goals aligned. The new Comp Plan will have a much more developed classification of parks and include accessibility.

Commissioner Tierney mentions the performance measures and the Commissioners should carry these thoughts with them while they discuss that topic.

Richard Gelb from King County and Michelle Caulfield from Seattle's Office of Sustainability and Environment will participate in a panel discussion at the June 26 meeting. At the July 10 meeting Parks staff will come back with a plan and outline for performance measures and accountability. The panel will discuss how performance measures will be communicated to the public.

Discussion: Board Subcommittees

Presented by Acting Deputy Superintendent Eric Friedli

Written Briefing

Requested Board Action

Staff recommends the Board consider and adopt an updated committee structure. Once the structure is agreed upon, the Board Chair will solicit Commissioner interest in serving on the committees.

Background

Board of Park Commissioners serve on both internal and external committees. This paper first addresses internal committees and proposes a new committee organization for the Board to consider and then reviews external committee assignments.

In 2012 the Board adopted a committee structure with the following on-going committees and short-term work groups:

- Executive Committee;
- Funding Work Group;
- Guiding Principles Work Group;
- Strategic Planning Committee;
- Partnership Committee; and

- Community Engagement/Public Education/Communications Committee.

Attachment A describes the work assignments for these committees and work groups as written in 2012. Of these committees, the following have completed their work and are:

Recommended to be dissolved:

1. Funding Work Group: informed the work of staff and the Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee which led to the ballot measure;
2. Guiding Principles Work Group: developed guiding values paper approved by the Board in 2012;
3. Strategic Planning Committee: developed new mission statement for Parks and helped direct the Parks Legacy Strategic Plan.

To address current and anticipated future issues before the Board, staff propose the following committees and work assignments. The first three are:

Recommended to carry-over from the current committee structure:

1. Executive Committee: responsibilities include Board meeting agenda development; strategizing draft Board work plan, recommending Committee assignments for ratification by the Board.
2. Partnership Committee: The original description for this committee was: review best practices to develop guidelines and criteria for quality Parks Board partnerships. In 2012 and 2013 the Committee:
 - interviewed Parks' key partners;
 - reported to the Superintendent and Board the interview responses; and
 - co-hosted with Parks a partners luncheon meeting.

Staff recommend continuing a Partnership Committee to maintain the focus on Board relationships with key partners, review Parks existing Partnership Policy, and provide an on-going forum for reviewing proposed partnerships.

3. Community Engagement/Public Education/Communications Committee: The original assignment for this committee was: develop draft communication plan; recommend engagement and public education strategies for specific issues that emerge, in partnership with other interdepartmental efforts, when relevant. Staff recommend this committee continue with the same description; also, the issue of holding Board meetings away from 100 Dexter could be added to this committee work plan.

To respond to emerging issues, staff:

Recommend one new committee:

1. Accountability and Performance Measurement: Accountability and performance measurement is the subject of Phase 2 of the Parks Legacy Plan to be developed in fall/winter 2014, and performance measurement will continue to be an on-going focus for the department. Staff envision the full Board advising on the development of a performance measurement system, as well as on-going monitoring and reporting on performance. The proposed committee would help strategize with staff on accountability issues and how best to engage the full Board.

External Committee Assignments

Board member representation on external committees results from ordinances or policies calling for Board representation, from a request from the external committee or a request from the Superintendent. Board members currently serve on the:

- Park Naming Committee (was Jourdan – need to appoint someone; meets irregularly as needed);
- Associated Recreation Council (Antoinette; meets monthly);
- Arboretum Foundation Board (Brice; meets monthly);
- Magnuson Park Advisory Committee (Diana; meets monthly)
- Seattle Park Foundation Board (Brice; meets monthly); and
- 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy Oversight Committee (Jourdan who will continue until the Committee dissolves at the end of 2014; now meeting about every 2 months).

Also, if a park district is created, pursuant to the Interlocal Agreement adopted by the City Council, four Board members would be appointed to the 15-member Park District Community Oversight Committee.

Staff is recommending there be no change to the external committee structure.

Summary of Staff Recommendation

Dissolve:

- Funding Work Group;
- Guiding Principles Work Group;
- Strategic Planning Committee.

Board Committees would be:

- Executive;
- Partnership;
- Community Engagement/Public Education/Communications; and
- Accountability and Performance Measurement.

Additional Information

Susan Golub: susan.golub@seattle.gov

Discussion

The Board of Park Commissioners will decide where their interests are and how much time they want to commit to help them determine on which committees they would like to serve. Commissioner Kincaid compliments Susan for her great work on the sub-committees briefing paper.

Old/New Business

Deputy Superintendent Friedli invites the commissioners to attend a small workshop with Hal Williams, a performance measurement consultant. He also welcomes the commissioners’ thoughts on who might be interested in joining the Park Board to fill Jourdan’s spot.

News from the Parks Foundation: They are hosting a fundraiser to support Rainier Beach Farm and Wetland. South Park neighborhood is coming together; community participating in visioning exercises.

Magnuson Park Advisory Council: Archery and LaCrosse groups gave a presentation as part of their request to use Hangar 2. MPAC had a discussion of the circulation plan for pedestrians and cyclists.

Future Agenda: Brice asks for a budget meeting before the budget goes to City Council. This is a biennium budget.

Commissioner Mehdi moves the meeting adjourn; Commissioner Edmiston seconds the motion and the motion carries. The meeting adjourns at 8:30 pm.

APPROVED: _____

DATE _____

Tom Tierney, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners