

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
July 24, 2014

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Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Diana Kincaid
Bob Edmiston
Brice Maryman
Tom Tierney, Chair

Excused:

Antoinette Angulo
Barbara Wright
Mazohra Thami
Yazmin Mehdi, Vice Chair

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

This meeting was held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Tierney calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. There being no quorum to approve the consent items the meeting moves ahead with the Agenda.

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

Kathy Colombo: Thanks the Commissioners for all their work. She addresses Acting Superintendent Williams and wants to clarify that the Board did not select Cheasty Greenspace for the pilot project. The Commissioners did some great work on this process; the questions and answers during the meetings were great. David Graves, SPR planner, came to the November meeting with specifics and answered questions. Commissioner Mehdi asked whether the tail was wagging the dog and Kathy found that an interesting insight. They came and brought evaluation criteria and a presentation for Cheasty only. The Commissioners asked about criteria for wildlife. Kathy has done extensive wildlife research and knows one only needs to pick a certain behavior of organisms and look for signs of their activities. She was disappointed that there was not follow through with those questions. She feels the Parks department was leading the Commissioners. Commissioner Keith asked about trails going through greenspace and it was pointed out that “uphillers” did not want the “downhillers” in their neighborhood. The neighbors never said that. She requests the record be corrected to show that her community is not racist. She encourages the Park Board to push harder in the future.

Mark Holland – He addresses the public process; goes through the chronological events and reviews the minutes from the North Beacon Hill council and the Park Board. On March 5, 2013 Rick Nishi told Friends of Cheasty that the bike park would not go through because of the Bicycle Use Policy. March 22, 2013 there was a lot of opposition to Opportunity Fund and the bike park didn’t go through. October 2013 Park Board meeting, there was a discussion to change the Bicycle Use Policy to allow bicycles in certain wooded areas. November

Park Board meeting there was a discussion to not change the Bicycle Use policy but instead create a pilot project to see the impact on the natural area.

Skip Knox – asks how many people were raised in built environment? He explains he was raised in a rural world where he could go without hearing a mechanical noise. He does not understand how a board that is charged with preserving, improving and maintaining other lands can go into a pilot project in a place that was to be preserved in perpetuity like the Olmsted's intended.

Mira Latoszek – Cheasty Bike Park is dividing their community. North Beacon Hill did not vote to support the project; individuals on the council who support it and those who do not. The group never came to a conclusion to give support to this project. Relook at this and take a look at what it's done to our community. She requests the Park Board question why it is going forward and asks them to step it back, what are other options for mountain biking in Seattle and look at all options. Ask the questions: What are the various ways forward? Weighs the pros/cons. This place has been picked without the correct public process. She asks the Commissioners to reverse their vote and thanks them for their time.

Darren Gill: Seattle Children Athletic and Arts Organization – provides services for youth football, cheer, band and other programs and they have been having problems gaining access to athletic fields. Parks policy and Seattle School District policy; both organizations have been operating under “a pattern of practice” that is discriminating against youth organizations. Priority is as follows: 1st school districts, department sponsored, non-department sponsored. His organization has put in for certain fields and has been declined. Fortunately, the school district has decided to allow them to have youth football back at memorial stadium for the first time in 32 years. He has met with an attorney because he feels Seattle Parks is in violation of Title 6 because the city has received funding from the Federal Government and community grants. He is prepared to file a major lawsuit if this situation is not rectified by tomorrow.

Superintendent's Report

Athletic Fields - Acting Superintendent Williams states he and Mr. Gill sat down and discussed supply and demand for athletic fields in SE Seattle; there is a huge demand for athletic fields and a very limited inventory. In the last 10 years, Parks has redeveloped fields from grass to synthetic turf and did that in locations where there were lights and it allowed for more playable hours. A number of teams fragmented and formed their own leagues- in the past there were 2 – 3 leagues and now there are 4-5 leagues competing for a finite number of fields.

Priority for field use is as follows: #1 historic use: a team that has played on a field has established a pattern of historic use and they get first priority for that field. Adult use – they have a tough time getting on fields- they usually don't get onto fields until after 8:30pm because youth have priority from 3 to 8pm. The other driver in how fields get scheduled is based on whether an activity is in season or out of season. Typically, youth football is played from August to early November. Mr. Gill requested access to Jefferson field in early July; the community has requested use for Jefferson to be youth soccer. Mr. Gill feels his football organization has priority use but Parks does not go by priority use when it is out of season. Another issue is block scheduling which is when an organization reserves massive number of fields whether they use them or not and prevents others from having the opportunity. He recognizes how frustrating this is to new groups who want to gain access to fields. Parks will work with school districts and the Joint Athletic Field Development Policy. Acting Superintendent Williams encourages Mr. Gill to join the JAFDP and to come out and give his valuable input.

Timeline: Preliminary meetings have begun with the school district; it will be a community rich process. Parks recognizes the need to go through this process but it will be a lengthy and contentious process. No fields were added to funding for Legacy plan. Commissioner Maryman asks if there is some quick administrative fixes – in

regards to the block scheduling – is there a penalty if teams don't show? Acting Superintendent Williams said they raised fees to discourage teams from holding fields they aren't using. Parks implemented software that allows users to go online and check field availability.

Commissioner Tierney asks that Parks keep the commissioners posted and perhaps a briefing from Susan as the work goes forward.

Cheasty Bike Park – Seattle Public Utilities and Department of Neighborhoods City Council committee meeting to look at a proposal for a large matching fund grant for the restoration and implementation of bike and pedestrian trails at Cheasty Greenspace. Councilmember Harrell abstained from voting. The vote was 1-0.

There were concerns by City Neighborhood Council (CNC) leadership about the Cheasty pedestrian and mountain bike trail. Some of the questions were: What's the timeline? What is the process for public input for design? They asked for an explanation of pilots and examples of successful pilots and next steps. Acting Superintendent Williams addresses some of those questions.

Timeline: Fall – implement Project Advisory Team (PAT), which is something Parks does for complex projects; important to have a group around the table to be impartial and lead the discussion. Parks will hire a very strong outside facilitator. Parks will send out a notice inviting people to self-nominate for the Cheasty pedestrian mountain bike pilot project. Parks will develop a charter and scope of work for this committee, outline number of meetings and have a 10-30% design level. Some of the confusion is because the proponents have a website where they have been posting their ideas for a trail. Parks will be the lead on this project and feel strongly that this should be a perimeter, multi-use trail.

These are the values Parks wants to see drive the process: the community ought to have a voice in the design, layout, orientation and mitigation. Parks will hold public hearings and use their feedback for an assessment and bring it back to the Park Board in December or January at 60% design. The project has to raise \$750,000.

Pilot Projects: Pilot projects are a way to test compatibility of new use in Seattle Parks. Many successful programs started as pilots: off-leash areas, dodge ball, skate parks. Pilots that weren't successful – off-leash area at volunteer park, rugby, and a skate park at the SW community center. The question has come up should we be doing these activities in natural area parks. Carkeek park – there is a 10k run there; Golden Gardens – trails there and an off-leash area; Kinnear is in a greenbelt and the community has a plan to build a multi-use trail to meet up with the Lake to Bay trail. Natural areas can be used for more than one thing.

City is becoming denser and more diverse; one pressure is to provide relevancy and meaningfulness for everyone and provide people the opportunity to experience nature. It is the mission.

Cheasty was selected because it had a stakeholder group; not going to take the idea to Schmitz Preserve or some other natural area where they do not have a stakeholder group.

Commissioner Kincaid asks about whether there will be testing done in terms of soil erosion – Acting Superintendent Williams responds that this project will have to complete the same technical review as any other project; at any point along the way this project could be canceled. Bob asks who is determining the user experience; who determines the alignment of routes and who it's being designed for? Acting Superintendent Williams states that the people who want the project will not be in the lead; Parks will frame what the project is or isn't. Parks is not thinking of jumps or excessive speed but a slow bike trail. Public will be asked to weigh in on metrics – how to measure this? What park rules? What behaviors will this type of park require?

Commissioner Tierney restates Ms Colombo's statement that this has really split the community and says he could feel it palpably at the City Council meeting. Acting Superintendent Williams states that Parks' job is to

bring communities together and foster community building. When Parks have ideas that create division; they work together to successfully overcome that over time. Skate parks and OLA have been divisive in the past and were able to come up with solutions that made it work. Parks have not closed the off-leash areas or skate parks to date.

Commissioner Tierney clarifies that he understood they were voting for a pilot project in Cheasty; he understood that it may not happen; the other members agree.

Acting Superintendent Williams sat down with the proponents and told them they needed to back off on the hyperbole on their website. Commissioner Maryman says he is glad Parks is taking a stronger reign on the conversation.

Magnuson – There was an article in the Seattle Times by Danny Westneat about a volunteer who was asked to not volunteer in the park. Acting Superintendent Williams passes out a letter that was sent to the volunteer that stated he was no longer allowed to volunteer as a steward in our parks.

Timeline of events: June of 2013; staff encountered a volunteer hacking down trees with an ax. He was confrontational with staff and they called the police. Acting Superintendent Williams stands by the staff's decision. Police showed up took statements from staff and Mr. Zwar. In July, he was seen hacking more vegetation in a developed area of the park; staff asked him to leave and he was combative. In August, Mr. Zwar had a confrontation with people kiteboarding who reported him to police and staff encountered him cutting vegetation again. In October, Acting Superintendent Williams sent him a letter advising Mr. Zwar that he was excluded from the park for 1 year. Parks is always reluctant to do this but it has been done before. The department staff had one communication with SPD during the investigation period. SPD forwarded the information to the City Attorney and Parks did not hear about any charges being filed until the article came out. Acting Superintendent Williams met with the law department, and then wrote a letter requesting the law department drop the charges and they agreed.

Why? Parks did not like the message it sent to other volunteers. Mr. Zwar was acting in a manner inconsistent to our relationship with volunteers. This is a one-off example of a volunteer who was doing his own thing in the park. He has maintained his commitment to stay out of the park and no action was needed. The article did not reflect the real situation but we decided to have a different response. Parks has written letters to all of the partners explaining the situation and advised them that we asked the City Attorney to drop the charges. Commissioner Tierney emphasizes the City Attorney is the person who makes these decision about pressing charges. Commissioner Maryman says he was surprised the Parks department did not get a warning this was coming down the pipeline. Commissioner Maryman suggests a change in their standard operating procedure – to notify department heads when a volunteer is criminally charged.

Acting Superintendent thanks Pete Holmes and Craig Sims for being collaborative and understanding and were good to work with towards a resolution.

Presentation and Discussion: Performance Measurement Work Plan

Presented by Joel Harte, Seattle Parks and Recreation

This work plan details the process for the department to create an outcome-based performance management system, the goal of which is to determine whether Parks' actions and outputs lead to the outcomes chosen. When the system is up and running, it will be an all-inclusive, cascading system based on Parks' four outcomes. One key point learned in the research was that a good performance measure is developed by and used by the staff actually doing the particular job being measured. Staff will not buy in if performance measures are seen as just another task to complete—data and measures need to help people to do their jobs better.

This work plan is structured to help staff develop and define the preferred outcomes for their division, program, or job, and then help them to develop usable measures that those staff will use to achieve more success in reaching those outcomes.

To implement the work plan, Parks will create a “Results Team” that will work under the Superintendent to develop the performance management system, work with staff to develop outcomes and measures, perform the initial baseline audit, and create the public report.

Performance management is a continuous, iterative process, so we’ve identified four phases in the performance measurement cycle: definition, development, data collection, and analysis. The results of the analysis are used to start the process over again.

- In the **Definition** phase, staff teams define the desired outcomes from their work, and work with the Results Team to categorize the outcomes under Parks’ four ultimate outcomes: Healthy People, Healthy Environment, Financial Sustainability, and Strong Communities.
- In the **Development** phase, staff work with the Results Team to develop measures of their chosen outcomes
- The **Data Collection** phase is self-explanatory, and
- In the **Analysis** phase, staff, stakeholders, Park Board, Park District Oversight Committee, and/or the public react to and provide input to the Results Team regarding outcomes, metrics, and performance targets. Work will be done to find out if actions taken actually led to the outcomes sought.

Administrators will use the results of the analysis to adjust management strategies. Staff will use the results to develop strategies to achieve their goals and develop the public report. Then, the process begins again.

So, over time, the Results Team will implement the process just described at the department level, the division level, the program, unit, and section level, and the employee/work unit level. Along with defining outcomes and developing measures, the initial work in 2015 will constitute a department-wide audit, and will result in a baseline data collection. This data will be used to set future performance targets for outcome measures.

At the department level, the Results Team will begin by working with division directors and upper-level staff to define community-wide indicators of Parks’ four outcomes: healthy people, healthy environment, financial sustainability, and strong communities. For example, indicators will use data to show whether people in Seattle are healthy (relatively or over time).

At the division level, the Results Team will work with division directors to create metrics for intermediate outcomes—division-level outcomes highly correlated with ultimate outcomes. Some divisions have overlapping goals, so an important step in developing outcomes and measures at the division level is to combine similar and overlapping outcomes. At this point, staff will be identified to act as “Results Team Liaisons” to help the process continue at the program, unit, and section level.

At the program, unit and section level, the Results Team will work with staff to audit their programs and to define the programs’ “short-term outcomes”—outcomes that significantly impact the intermediate outcomes. These measures do not need to use the same data as division level measures, and do not need to correspond horizontally across different units within a program (but could).¹ The Results Team Liaisons will be integral to this process because there will be more staff, the liaisons will help staff to fit the work they do into the outcome-based framework. They will engage staff in developing useful measures.

¹ Individual community centers, for example, could each have different desired outcomes.

At the final level: the employee/work unit level, the Results Team, mainly through Results Team Liaisons will work with staff to identify employee/work group contributions to higher-level outcomes and outputs, and to develop those measures. We have not yet identified a timeline for this level because it depends heavily on the progress made beforehand at the other levels.

Joel reviews how the system would work:

The system would allow staff to see how their progress is coming and seeing how their work fits in to a larger picture. A similar framework could easily be used for a public report.

Across the top row are indicators of Parks' four ultimate outcomes. Each box would be colored green, yellow, or red based on the indicator data collected. Each of these boxes would have an outcome associated with it, and would be colored the same way—green is good, yellow is average, and red means needs improvement—based on the results from data collected on the outcome measures. For example, beneath Healthy Environment, there are boxes showing the various Parks activities and programs that were determined to fall under the Healthy Environment outcome.

At this department-wide level, these boxes may encompass outcomes from more than one division—for example, Park Maintenance would use data from the Parks Division and Regional Parks and Strategic Outreach Division, both of which perform park maintenance activities. Part of the Results Team's job will be to determine how Park's myriad activities fit together.

If one wanted to learn more just about Park Maintenance, they would click on the Park Maintenance box, and up comes a more detailed view which shows the various components that together make up the Park Maintenance outcome measure. In this case, this view would combine data from multiple divisions.

During the initial auditing, outcome, and metric development process, beginning in 2015, the Results Team will submit a report for each level (department, division, etc.) to the Board of Park Commissioners for input. Each report will overview the process used for development and include the outcomes, measures, and goals chosen. Each year, the Results Team will compile an annual report that includes measures of progress toward Parks' high-level outcomes. The annual report will include indicators of ultimate outcomes, measures of division-level outcomes, and measures of important program, unit, and section-level outcomes if necessary.

Written Briefing by Joel Harte

Requested Board Action

No formal action is requested. This is an opportunity for the Commissioners to provide input and feedback to Parks' proposed performance management work plan.

Background

Seattle Parks and Recreation (Parks) will begin to develop a department-wide performance management system in 2015. Based on significant research, input from the Board of Park Commissioners, and the recent panel discussion, Parks created a draft work plan to guide the performance management system's development. The strategy detailed in the work plan is to create an outcome-based, cascading performance management system. The system will help staff do their jobs better through better information, help managers assess progress in projects and programs, and provide the public with the accurate, useful information needed to hold the Department accountable.

Next Steps

- Please return any feedback or edits to Susan Golub by August 11.

- Parks will submit a revised work plan based on Park Board review.

Discussion

Susan thanks Joel and expresses how much the department is really going to miss him. Susan has been the performance evaluation person for Parks but it was only reporting on different measures on which the mayor wanted us to report; typically, it was always the easiest thing to count such as, community centers income and people counters. These were useful and responding to the need on something quantifiable. The new performance management system will allow staff to see how their work affects the ultimate goals. It will be a continuous cycle so managers can see more clearly where things need to be changed to reach wanted outcomes. The language being used is deliberately positive to invoke positive responses from staff.

Acting Superintendent Williams states that at the Park Board retreat in a couple of weeks there will be talk about what may be included in a baselines audit. Performance measures need to be fluid enough to change over time.

Commissioner Edmiston feels the reasons behind the numbers are important because people will act as partners in communicating real reasons and help make it better. Acting Superintendent agrees, this would help the department ascertain whether there is a system problem vs people problem. Commissioner Edmiston gives the example that if there are all greens for one department and all reds in another it would beg the question of - do all staff feel good about being a park employee?

Commissioner Maryman asks who the audience is. Is the dashboard public facing? Joel answers that the results team job is to figure out where to draw the line on how far down into the organization public facing – they may decide it is not necessary to go to the staff level. The goal is to development measures that people can use themselves. Acting Superintendent Williams feels that this will empower employees.

Susan mentions various methods of measuring quality over quantity such as tracking youth and doing follow up interviews, hiring high school/college students to take surveys at the park – this type of data could be more meaningful for staff development.

Commissioner Maryman asks if there are NRPA resources available to use as comparison? What are keywords or indicators that allow you to see there is something worthwhile? In Joel's research, there is not a consensus and if there is they tend to be more quantitative. Acting Superintendent says SPR is not in this alone and it may be used and applied in a different way, but there is a wealth of information out there. There are challenges around the qualitative side; telling the stories of how people's lives have changed.

Tom thanks Joel for all the hard work he has done and says that we will do good work on his performance measurement work.

Old/New Business

Anecdote from Brice regarding greenways – his route takes him through Jefferson Park and the new Spokane street crossing is awesome!

Oral Communications from the Audience (cont'd)

Darren Gill: Acting Superintendent Williams mentioned other teams play in Nisqually. It is because there aren't enough teams in this area to play so we had to venture out. All teams that have requested fields for football have been denied; over the past 2 years there is a soccer organization that started out with 15 teams and thereafter they testified they have 96 teams and play 46 games per week. The issue is not as much the policy; but that the department needs to follow the policy. The kids who participate in football are African American – the other sports get year round scheduling – less than 1% of African Americans play soccer, rugby. The need in our community is for football fields.

Commissioner Edmiston moves the meeting adjourn; Commissioner Kincaid seconds the motion and the motion carries. The meeting adjourns at 8:08 pm.

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