

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
MEETING MINUTES  
August 9, 2001

Present:

Bruce Bentley, Chair  
Susan Golub  
Yale Lewis  
Kathleen Warren

Absent:

Karen Daubert  
James Fearn

Staff:

Patricia McInturff, Deputy Superintendent  
Michele Daly, Park Board Coordinator

Chair Bruce Bentley called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. The Consent Items were approved as submitted, including approval of the August 9 agenda, meeting minutes of July 26, and correspondence. Correspondence received included a letter from Bonnie Miller regarding an espresso cart at Sand Point/Magnuson Park, Department response to Laurelhurst Community Club regarding espresso cart at Magnuson Park, letter from Hawthorne Hills Community Council to Mayor/City Council regarding public involvement at Sand Point/Magnuson Park, and a letter from Laurelhurst Community Club to the University of Washington regarding the Radford Court Apartments and other issues at Sand Point/Magnuson Park.

### **Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience**

**Denise Derr** – In order to serve the public interest the Park Board must do their part to balance the conflicts that arise from the Joint Athletic Facilities Development Program. On one side there is the sports/league demands for more paid scheduled playfield use and the Department's desire to reduce maintenance, labor and costs. On the other hand there is a public interest to preserve free drop-in use of maintainable, multipurpose attributes of a natural grass playfield surface and preserve the sustainability of neighborhoods. Because the Seattle Park Department is invested in a particular outcome, Denise believes the ability to protect much of the public's interest is in peril. In accordance with the Seattle Municipal Code Section 3.26.030 E. "A major objective of the Board shall be to develop public interest in the activities of the Park and Recreation Department and to solicit, to the fullest extent, participation of community groups, the general public, and public and private agencies." To delegate this duty to a department that has a vested interest in a particular outcome undermines the Board's advisory capacity. The failure of the Park Department to post signs at sites...weakens the public's voice for which the Board's advice should be based. Denise stated it would be helpful to be specific when speaking three frequently used words: 1) community – the Comp Plan clearly distinguishes a community created by a shared geography and a community created by a

shared interest, 2) playfield users – should be identified as documented paying scheduled users or undocumented free drop-in users, and 3) kids – kids can be part of an organized team or not organized. There are many kids that do not have the funds or competitive inclination to be part of an organized sports organization.

**Renee Barton**, Seattle Residents for Fair Field Lighting, stated Astroturf and lights add to a lot of changes in neighborhoods. Neighbors are coming too late into the process and there is a few simple things she thinks could be done: signs need to be posted on every side of the field as soon as we start thinking about doing anything to the field and notices need to be mailed to everybody within a half of mile of the field. Usually what happens is active users get together, decide what they want at the field, and the neighbors who live around the field are left out of the preliminary discussions. We need to have the people who live around the field involved in the planning meetings. We need to have meaningful meetings once those meetings start so that the needs of all the stakeholders are met.

Kathleen Warren asked Denise Derr if there were fields in particular where she thinks signs should have gone up that were not up. Denise stated fields at Magnolia and Queen Anne. The long-term goal of changing what is now a greenbelt of natural grass through the center of Magnolia to artificial surface will have far-reaching ramifications to many people and people need to be notified immediately. Also the plans for additional lighting need to be published.

Signs are a good way to communicate to a group of people that do not go to the community centers or belong to an organized sports league. Kathleen stated the new Public Involvement Policy is intended to notify citizens early on when a project is being proposed.

### **2001-2001 Joint Athletic Facilities Development Program Update**

Alix Ogden, Superintendent's Staff Assistant, briefed the Board on the draft 2001-2002 Joint Athletic Facilities Development Program (JAFDP) Update. The JAFDP was originally developed in 1977 and proposed to improve athletic facilities on Seattle Park and School District-owned sites in order to increase the number and quality of safe athletic facilities throughout the city. The goal of the 2001-2002 update is to take note of the accomplishments of the 19987 program and propose additional measures that will further increase the inventory of quality fields that can be scheduled for youth and adult play.

All of the playfields are located in neighborhoods and there is increased attention to the development of athletic facilities by surrounding communities. Spill and glare from lights, increased traffic from increased field use, parking problems, noise, and occasional problems with player behavior are some of the concerns expressed by neighborhoods. Synthetic and all-weather fields with lights, many of which are recommended in the JAFDP update, generate significantly more use than other types of fields and have been the focus of concern for some communities. Another related issue is community access to unprogrammed open space on playfields if there is no other available park space in the area. These issues will be addressed in the updated JAFDP in a general manner as each

site has specific considerations that will need to be addressed through a public involvement process once there is funding available.

Currently the athletic facility system is scheduled to capacity on evenings and most weekends. In an effort to better understand how much demand for scheduled time on field exists among user groups, a survey was sent out to all organizations that schedule through the Department. A 23% return was received on the survey and there was interest in access to significantly more field time that we currently provide, particularly for practices. The Department does not believe that we should meet the huge demand demonstrated by the surveys but believes we should make strides towards a reasonable accommodation of additional field time, particularly for youth.

Because of the high cost and lack of undeveloped land in the city, it is far more cost effective to convert existing fields to a surface that allows for increased use, than to try to acquire and develop new field sites. All-weather and synthetic surfaces provide increased use (year-round) in the Northwest climate. Because of topography, size and location not all grass playfields are candidates to conversion.

Development costs for synthetic field surfaces are higher than for natural grass surfaces. However, the maintenance costs for synthetic field surfaces are low since they do not require the daily attention needed for all weather or grass surfaces. Generally, it does not make sense to install either all weather or synthetic surface without lighting to achieve evening and fall-winter use. Conversely, it does not make sense to light natural grass surfaces, other than selected baseball or softball fields, because of the limited scheduling capacity on natural grass (closed November-March to restore field).

In order to access the current condition of field lighting and to develop lighting standards, the Department commissioned a Ballfield Lighting Study in 2001 with the engineering firm of MacGowan Broz. The results of this study show that most of the existing field lighting (18) sites requires replacement. This situation is the result of several factors. The great majority of field lights are located on wooden poles that twist over time, resulting in poorly aimed lights that affect field users as well as increasing spill and glare problems for surrounding communities. Current electrical systems that support field lights cannot handle the increased load necessary to improve the uniformity lighting on most fields. And, spill and glare that affect neighborhoods can only be mitigated with additional equipment on the tops of poles. However, the existing poles cannot safely handle the additional wind load created by this equipment. The City's existing lighted fields generally do not meet the desired safety requirements for users and often have negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. There are high costs associated with completely new lighting systems.

The consultant firm was also asked to develop criteria for the placement of new athletic facility lighting. These criteria will include technical considerations, performance standards, site considerations (parking, etc.) scheduling needs, and the ability to mitigate impacts on surrounding communities.

The Department continues to schedule most of its lighted fields until 11:00 p.m. in order to accommodate adult play. To limit field use to an earlier time would effectively eliminate the last game time of the day and greatly reduce the number of hours available to adults year round. Scheduling until 11:00 p.m. is only possible on lighted fields and is a concern for some communities near playfields.

We are committed to a broad public involvement process and will take input on all parts of the draft JAFDP update. Twelve citizens were invited (six field users and six community members involved in field issues) to participate in a Working Group this spring and were asked for feedback to improve the staff draft in preparation for the public review process. During the four Working Group meetings, staff presented information about scheduling policies, trends in demand and use of fields, field lighting, fielding scheduling impacts, goals and guiding principles, and the proposed projects. This group was very helpful in their comments and the draft JAFDP changed considerably based on their feedback.

The public review draft of the JAFDP will be available for review on August 25th at community centers, neighborhood service centers, 100 Dexter and on the web. A copy of the Ballfield Lighting Study will also be available at 100 Dexter for public review. We will take comment by phone, fax and e-mail until October 5th. After incorporating public comment into the draft, staff will present the updated version to the Park Board and ask the Board if a public hearing should be scheduled on the document prior to the submission to City Council. It is hoped to submit the updated JAFDP to the City Council in early 2002. The schedule of upcoming public open houses is listed below and will include a brief introduction and overview with the majority of the time dedicated to public circulation at tables relating to a specific topic (scheduling, lights, etc.) with easels and worksheets for comments. The workshops will be advertised in the Department of Neighborhoods newsletter and other publications.

Monday, September 10 at Bitter Lake Community Center 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, September 12 at Miller Community Center 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, September 20 at Jefferson Community Center, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Kathleen Warren inquired if the cost savings of not using pesticides on grass fields could be factored in and Alix stated the Department has not found a way to quantify the savings to date. There are some other bonuses to synthetic fields that are not financial. Synthetic fields do not attract geese. Kathleen would like the bonuses to be listed. Kathleen stated if there were enough fields people would not have to play until 11:00 p.m. at night. If you could get to a point where you had enough fields maybe you could compromise and leave fields unscheduled to accommodate the idea of unstructured, drop in use.

Bruce Bentley stated his concern is unscheduled use and community access. Yale Lewis related if there were more fields then the pressure for synthetic fields would go down as they would be more time to maintain grass and let it rest. It was pointed out the cost of synthetic fields is cheaper over time. It will not be recommended to convert all grass fields to synthetic. Another concern is the amount of driving people are doing to get to

fields. Kathleen would like the traffic issues noted in the list of intangibles. There are benefits to a community when more people are healthy for a longer period of time because they are active. Susan Golub noted Ballard's 13-year old girls home soccer field was in the county and there was not a community sense nor could the soccer fans attend the games because of the distance. There is also a concern about the facilities in the city not being as good as other facilities. Yale Lewis stated the parking issues need to be addressed. Kathleen stated in some cases people are parking on the street because the parking lots are further away from the fields and they are not lighted. At the Working Group meetings site maps with parking locations indicated were suggested. Another item of concern is the Code of Conduct. There have been problems with alcohol, litter, swearing, and lewd conduct. Patti Petesch stated if the Sports Participation Policy is violated field scheduling could be taken away from that sports group.

Denise Derr is curious if the city were to schedule for pay use every playfield in the city, would they be "public" playfields. In essence a free public amenity in the neighborhoods is being taken away. Chair Bruce Bentley indicated the Board does not want to get into that discussion this evening but there will be plenty of time for input. The Board will be scheduling a public hearing on the draft JAFDP Update at a later date.

### **Zoo Long Range Plan – Parking/Traffic Briefing**

Mike Waller, Zoo Director, and Jim Maxwell, Project Manger, reported on the two recently held workshops regarding the Woodland Park Zoo's Long-Range Plan. The workshops were held on Saturday, July 28 from 9 a.m. to noon and Tuesday, July 31, from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. Park Board members Kathleen Warren, Yale Lewis and James Fearn participated in the workshops. Approximately 55 people attended the workshops. The community was invited to help the Zoo create parking solutions at and within close proximity of the Zoo. These sessions followed a public review and comment period for the update of the Long-Range Plan, particularly the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The Zoo received or heard comments on the Draft EIS and wanted to inform the public about the proposed alternatives and gather input on the pros and cons. A team of consultants specializing in traffic management, environmental impacts, engineering, architecture, and planning and design were on hand to address revisions of the EIS.

The Long-Range Plan is a 20-year physical development roadmap. The original Plan pioneered state of the art zoo exhibitry while the updated plan aims to revolutionize how people use these exhibits as well as the rest of the Zoo. It will adapt to changing conditions and needs unforeseen in the 1970s, placing more emphasis on achieving a broadened public education mission on wildlife conservation and visitor services, including expanded on-site visitor parking. The Plan also aims to complete what was not fulfilled in the 1970s vision: long-needed new exhibits for jaguars, wild dogs and tigers. The region's growth over the past 20 years has impacted the Zoo's neighborhood. The updated Plan improves infrastructure to accommodate this growth while keeping the Zoo's unique character, design philosophy and ecological emphasis.

The workshops went very well with the neighbors being pleased that their concerns were addressed and some efforts made to mitigate the traffic and parking issues around the Zoo. Zoo staff will now begin incorporating the information into the Final Environmental Impact Statement which they hope to have ready for submission to the Mayor and City Council some time in September following the Park Board's recommendation to the Superintendent. The Board tentatively scheduled their discussion and recommendation for September 27.

The Way to Go program began the weekend of July 28. For the rest of the summer through September 2 each person who rides the bus or bicycles to the zoo or to Zoo tunes concerts Wednesday nights will receive \$2 in Zoo Bucks. There will be secure bike corrals at the concerts.

### **Superintendent's Report by Patricia McInturff**

- Several Park Board members recently attended the Urban Park Institute in New York City.
- Karen Daubert is resigning from the Park Board as she accepted the position of Executive Director of the Seattle Parks Foundation. A youth is actively being sought for one Park Board vacancy and Karen's position will hopefully be filled by the end of September.
- **People's Lodge at Discovery Park** –A press conference was recently held. A creative redesign has been accomplished. The architect, Johnpaul Jones' divided the project into three buildings and what was once to be 148,000 square feet has been reduced to 90,000 square feet spread over a 350 seat performing arts theater, Hall of Ancestors and a Potlatch House for 1,000 people. Potential traffic impacts will be addressed.
- **Seattle Music Festival** has been canceled. The event was highly publicized by the organizer and was not coordinated through the appropriate City Special Event permit process, thus no city permits were ever issued. The main concerns were public safety, traffic and crowd control, emergency response and parking.
- **Severe Weather Shelter at South Lake Union** – It is proposed to allow the Salvation Army to operate a shelter from October 1, 2001 through March 31, 2002 at the Department's South Lake Union facility under severe weather conditions. Susan Golub noted the low temperature is too low and consideration should be made to raise the low temperature requirement.
- **Pro Parks Levy Acquisition** – The Mayer Property legislation has been introduced to the Seattle City Council and referred to the Culture, Arts and Parks Committee.
- **Project Lift Off** – The new "After School Schedule" planned to pilot this fall will be tested with the summer YES Program youth in August. The purpose of the after school program is to encourage youth to be more intentional about how they use their leisure time.
- The National Humane Society has offered to help the Department in the adding of Canadian Geese eggs program.

**Items of Interest to the Board**

Kathleen Warren referenced a citizen's e-mail regarding a Magnolia Pool swim time limit of 50 minutes. The pool is one of two outdoor pools in the city and is to be used citywide. Patricia McInturff will have staff respond.

Reminder: CAP/Park Board Brown Bag is scheduled for Tuesday, August 14, 11:30 a.m. in the Park Board Room.

The School Board/Park Board Subcommittee meeting went well and another one will be held to discuss items of mutual concern.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bruce Bentley, Chair