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CO-CHAIR

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Dear Community Members,

Just like you, we are sad, furious and broken. At a loss for words. That said, your Board of Park Commissioners will not stand silent. Black Lives Matter.

Amid a raging COVID-19 pandemic, we are grappling with our nation's multigenerational legacy of racism. In both, our public spaces are playing a critical part in our community's response. In this light, we condemn the use of chemical weapons and projectiles by police in Seattle parks. We proudly welcome Seattleites to our parks to demand something long overdue: justice.

We acknowledge that this movement is not just about the tragic murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. This is also about Charleena Lyles, whose life was taken by Seattle Police in Magnuson Park in front of her four children. We cannot forget about Tommy Le, Che Taylor, Sean Fuhr, and countless other Black & Brown lives lost to a racist criminal justice system here in Seattle. We admit that our institution is complicit in that system, and we know we can do better. We must.

We also know that all fights for equity are inextricably linked - there is no justice for anyone until there is justice for all:

- It is Pride month, which all started with queer and trans activists fighting against violence and oppression, all sparked by New Yorkers standing up against police brutality. As we celebrate love, let us remember how far our LGBTQ+ neighbors have come since the Stonewall Riots, and how much farther we have left to go.
- Any discussion about racism and oppression is inappropriate without mentioning that the Seattle City Council's very first action was to violently exclude the Duwamish peoples from the city limits. We honor the resiliency of the Duwamish, Suquamish and all Coast Salish Tribes. Our parks and recreation system rests on their cultural, ancestral and unceded land.

Your Park Board stands in solidarity with all calling for justice. We know that this statement is meaningless without action, which is why we are reaffirming our commitment to anti-racism and dismantling white supremacy culture.

Our role in dismantling racism.

Together with our colleagues in Seattle Parks & Recreation, we are custodians of one of our nation's most democratic institutions: for our parks, sports fields, and community centers are Seattle's common ground. The Olmsted legacy is part of our DNA, where we exist as an anchor of egalitarianism and community.

Together with our colleagues in Seattle Parks & Recreation, as well as other community partners, our resolute task is to narrow racial and social disparities between the current reality and our common vision of healthy people, healthy environment, and strong communities. There are many questions that we will need to answer. Among them:

- What can be done to address the inequitable distribution of our parks across the City?
- How can we eliminate barriers to our recreation programs?
- What improvements can be made in our employment practices to better advance diversity, equity and inclusion?
- How do we reimagine public safety so every Seattleite can feel safe and welcome in our parks and recreation facilities?
- How can we best invest our dollars to support equity, justice and inclusion?
- Our 2020-2032 Strategic Plan is embedded in Pathways to Equity and dismantling white supremacy culture. How can we ensure this is operationalized throughout the agency?

Our commitment to the people of Seattle is to continue to search for the answers to such questions and take action when we have found them. We can't do this alone. We only ask that you hold us accountable.

We hope there are brighter days ahead of us. Until then, we invite you to our 485 parks to grieve, to make yourself heard, or to find a moment of peace.

In solidarity,
Seattle Board of Park Commissioners