

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
MEETING MINUTES  
September 13, 2001

Present:

Bruce Bentley, Chair  
Karen Daubert  
James Fearn  
Susan Golub  
Kathleen Warren

Absent:

Yale Lewis

Staff:

Ken Bounds, Superintendent  
Michele Daly, Park Board Coordinator

Chair Bruce Bentley called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The Consent Items were approved as submitted including approval of the September 13 agenda, meeting minutes of August 23, and correspondence. Correspondence included: a letter from the Seattle Housing Authority regarding Yesler Community Center, Department reply to Ms. Westbrook regarding Mounger Pool schedule, "Making the Connection" brochure, Aquarium Invitation to Salmon Homecoming event, Seattle Golf Customer Satisfaction Report, letter from Jennifer Potter, Chair, Seattle Housing Authority Board regarding Yesler Community Center, letter from Jim Tyrell regarding Duwamish Greenbelt disclosure request, news releases for National Day of Prayer and Remembrance at Westlake Park and Flower Vigil at Seattle Center, Sand Point/Magnuson Park Public Meetings brochure and a copy of the Pro Parks "Opportunity Fund" Selection Criteria.

**Oral Requests and Communications from the Audience**

**John Fox, Seattle Displacement Coalition**, voiced objection to any community facilities redevelopment plan for Yesler Terrace, or anywhere else in Seattle, that would require the demolition of very low-income housing units. He stated the Board has a responsibility to prefer alternative sites and designs that fulfill the neighborhood needs for a new facility but without the loss of a precious scarce low-income housing resource. He also pointed out that if the Parks Department eventually favors a site that requires housing removal and then goes forward with such a plan, these actions would run directly counter to a host of longstanding city housing policies, embedded in the City's Comprehensive Plan and elsewhere, calling for no loss of very low income units. For over 15 years the City has called on voters to approve special housing levies...it would be unconscionable for one arm of the City to remove units while the other arm is trying to get more. The cost of replacing 21-36 units is in the range of \$3-5 million dollars. SHA has embarked on a series of Hope VI redevelopments. Together these projects will result in a net loss of over 1000 public housing units citywide. If any replacement units are provided they would be built using limited public funds that could have been used to expand the supply. He urged

the Board to look closely at the various alternatives that do not require removal of public housing. Mr. Fox distributed a copy of his letter to the Board members.

**Herold Eby, President, Yesler Terrace Community Council**, stated the Yesler Terrace Community Council does want a new community center. They are extremely concerned about the loss of 21 apartments for very poor people that will happen if the center is built at the proposed 10th and Yesler location. The Seattle Housing Authority says they will try to replace the apartments that are demolished. Currently, there is no firm plan and no money to do this. If there is money in Seattle to build new housing for very poor people, we want more apartments than the City has now, instead of replacements for demolished units. Mr. Eby further stated the Community Council would like Parks to postpone a final decision and to further consider other site and design possibilities, such as building on the current Broadway and Yesler location and/or building on more than one level that will not require tearing down people's homes.

**Kristin O'Donnell**, Yesler Terrace resident, wants a new community center and is excited about the proposed center. She is concerned that the supply of housing in Seattle for very low-income people is diminishing. There is no money at this point to replace housing. She thinks there are possibilities for siting the center or designing the center that will take less space than the current plan. Ms. O'Donnell further related if there were more very low income apartments there would be less people sleeping in the streets.

**Ann Byers, President, Yesler Community Center Advisory Council**, stated she is torn between two thorns. As a resident she is worried about the housing that would be lost and when and how it would be replaced. She also is looking forward to a new community center. She wants the center to stay in the community and wants to reach some sort of agreement that housing would not be lost. If housing is lost is it going to be replaced? She wants to reach an agreement that is going to be equitable to keep the community center in the community and keep the housing in the community. Ms. Byers further stated the community center is open to all Seattle citizens and not just the community residents.

**John McLaren**, housing architect and member of the Seattle Displacement Coalition, stated there are approximately 5,000 people on the waiting list for public housing in the city and a lot of those people are not finding homes as the Housing Authority tears down its public housing through Hope VI. The Coalition is looking into that now with the National Housing Law Program and Northwest Justice Project. He encouraged the Board to look at options. He supports the residents that are concerned about the tricky balance that has to be found between preserving housing and creating a good community center. G14 is a goal in the Comp Plan that says preserve existing low income housing particularly in urban centers and urban villages where redevelopment pressure will occur. H28 encourages the preservation of public housing. H30 states emphasis shall be placed on assisting households most in need due to very low income because of special needs. There is no money available to replace housing unless it would come from local sources that are needed to expand the stock in a time when we are losing housing due to Hope VI which is approximately 1,000 units, in a time when we are losing housing due Section 8, in a time when we facing widespread gentrification and rapidly rising rents, and where

people who are given Section 8 vouchers are not able to use them effectively or are being shipped out into outlying areas. We cannot afford to lose one unit of low income housing unit. Other alternatives must be considered.

**Pat Emerson**, Metropolitan Democratic Club, stated Yesler Terrace is considered a remarkable example of low income housing as a project, architecturally and in terms of it's stability. The loss of 21 units may seem like a very small amount but it is not when there is such a dearth of low income housing in Seattle. The community center will be a source of pride for Yesler Terrace but will it be a source of pride for the people who are forced to move and have to find another place or are put into another community? Ms. Emerson asked if the standard for community centers of 20,000 square foot with a 9,000 square foot gym is a legal standard or just a recommendation. Would a smaller center still serve the community? Has every area in the neighborhood been surveyed? Who will be served by this community center – just Yesler Terrace? How many young people will be served in the gym? There are many unanswered questions. She believes we have no business of even destroying one unit even if we have to take 10,000 square feet away from the community center. Does the project require an EIS? Toby Ressler, Project Manager, stated there will be a SEPA checklist and citizens will be able to respond. Ms. Emerson stated she will write a letter to the Board.

**Jean Arnott**, Metropolitan Democratic Club Board and Community Council member, stated we can all agree that the community center will be an asset to the community but the question is at what cost. She is concerned the price will be 21 low-income housing units. She took a survey and 93% agree that cost is far too high a price to pay for a community center. The survey included two questions: “The Seattle Housing Authority and Seattle Parks Department should make every effort to preserve low income housing in order to building a new community center at Yesler Terrace” and “saving low income housing is not important.” She asked if an Environmentalist had been consulted? Ms. Arnott presented the ballot slips to the Board.

## **2002 Budget Update**

Sarah Welch, Director of Finance, Budget & Administrative Services for the Parks and Recreation Department, distributed a briefing document showing budget impacts in 2002 and balancing the budget with adds, cuts and new fees. Sarah noted the budget is still under development and the Department is still waiting for final decisions. The Mayor presents his budget to the City Council on September 24. Public budget hearings will be scheduled.

This year was not a “big change budget” theoretically because a two-year budget was prepared last year. New expenditures included utility rate increases, new facilities opened and an I-722 permanent reduction. Sarah Welch reviewed new funding, reductions, new fees and delayed new facilities. Belltown was expected to open in January 2002 and will not. During the summer, the Department asked the City Council for new zoo and aquarium fees, which were approved. A fee for night use of ballfields is proposed. There

is a proposal of adding a charge to ARC for a portion of the utilities. Sarah also reviewed other changes including cost of living changes, new grant authority, new Special Events staff and other additional costs. The Department worked hard to preserve services and keep the programs moving ahead that were in place. The total budget is approximately \$106,000,000. The Superintendent reminded the audience that this proposed budget has not been submitted and there may be changes.

The Superintendent reported there is a current city hiring freeze and a \$3 million budget reduction requirement. The Parks and Recreation will have to reduce their budget by \$170,000.

Kathleen Warren inquired if the ballfield night use fee would be imposed on youth as well as adults. The fee would be charged for adult night use. The increased fees are necessary because of the increased utility costs. If the utility fees go down the fees would be adjusted. Kathleen would like to see a reduced sportsfield user fee charged for teams that clean up their garbage.

Susan Golub referenced the “Pack It In - Pack It Out” program which is intended to reduce the garbage left in parks. The sign at Woodland Park described the cost to the City for garbage removal at the parks. Susan wondered how widespread the program was and if it was being tried at sportsfields. The program is being tried at 12-18 sites citywide with mixed results.

### **Yesler Community Center Siting Study**

Superintendent Ken Bounds made introductory remarks. The Yesler Community Center is in dire need of replacement and expansion. The community deserves a new center and Parks is proud to have the funding come out of the levy package. The Department is also proud that SHA stepped forth and said they would provide the land. It is important to remember Parks is building the community center on SHA property which saves \$1-3 million.

Toby Ressler, Project Manager, briefed the Board on the Yesler Community Center site selection. A briefing memorandum was included in the Board’s packets. The memo recommends a development site for the new center and summarizes the chronology of decisions, analysis and community involvement in the site selection that lead to the recommendation. Toby displayed boards showing the alternative sites which were referenced during the briefing.

The Community Center Levy provides \$6.636 million for replacement of the existing Yesler Community Center with a 20,000 square-foot, full-service community center. The 20,000 square feet includes parking spaces and exterior pathways. At 4,700 square feet, the existing community center is woefully inadequate to serve the community in which it is located. A new center is necessary to provide space for much needed recreation activities, after school care, teen programs, activities for the elderly, classes, community meetings and celebrations. The project budget assumed one-story construction.

Additionally, the Levy provided no money for site acquisition and stipulated that the center would be built on suitable land provided by the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA).

Parks and Recreation has been working with SHA and the community for the past two years to select a development site in the Yesler Terrace community where the center could be built within the available budget. SHA and Parks have discussed at least seven distinct options. SHA suggested five potential sites for joint consideration. Most schemes would have extensive impacts to housing. Parks and Recreation and SHA agreed that they would jointly consider additional sites.

In late 2000 Parks and SHA began a second siting study. This study included the Site 1 alternative from the previous study, and two additional alternative locations along Yesler Way. SHA and Parks view these sites as the best options for meeting their respective objectives. A table was referenced showing the pros and cons for each option.

The SHA Board was briefed on the site selection process and staff's proposal on May 5 and on the staff's site recommendation August 14. Public input has been solicited at three public workshops held on April 4, May 2 and August 29. The first meeting focused on refining goals that would be used to evaluate the sites. The community was also asked to identify the issues that concerned them the most. These included access by car and parking, housing impacts, service provider impacts, outdoor recreation opportunities, and impacts on services needed by Yesler Terrace residents. The second meeting focused on presenting the results of the evaluation and soliciting comments. Attendees were asked to complete an evaluation form. Their evaluation indicated that Alternative 1 met most of the goals. The strongest concerns were housing and service displacement and parking. At the third meeting, on August 29, SHA and Parks presented the staff recommendation to locate the community center at the site considered in Alternative 1, along Yesler Way at the corner of 10th Avenue East. This site is preferred by SHA as well.

The main reasons for choosing Alternative 1 are as follows: the site avoids impacts to service providers, it preserves redevelopment options for SHA, it keeps the existing programs at the Yesler Community Center open while the new center is being built, it provides a relatively flat site for development, it is the civic focal point of the community, it provides more options for access and it provides the best options for locating parking.

The Yesler Terrace community wants the new community center sited at Yesler Terrace. Their first preference is to construct the new community center with no impacts to either service and community facilities or housing. However, community members also recognize that there are no sites at Yesler Terrace where this is possible. There is community support for Alternative 1, provided SHA can replace the lost housing. Parks and SHA are currently looking at ways to reduce housing impacts, and to address parking and the status of the existing center during the schematic design phase.

Al Levine, Deputy Director, Seattle Housing Authority, is pleased SHA and Parks are working together to plan for a new community center at Yesler Terrace. SHA and Parks

agree to pursue locating the center at the corner of Yesler Way & 10th Avenue South. The SHA Board has instructed SHA to develop a replacement-housing plan. Through the design process, SHA will explore the possibility of putting two stories of low-income housing (about 25-30 units) above the community space part of the community center. The site design and phasing plan will look at ways to keep the existing gym open as long as possible to minimize the time Yesler Terrace youth will be without a place for organized recreation. He thinks it will take a year or more for the construction of the new gym. The gym is a primary recreation facility for all the kids. It is more manageable to retain the old gym while the new gym is being constructed, tear it down, and use the area for interim parking. SHA and Parks will explore co-location of SHA's management office with the community center. The community center will have to be designed with the likelihood that the parking area serving the community center will have to be moved in the future when SHA redevelops Yesler Terrace. With housing units above, the community center will have to be designed and operated to minimize noise impacts on residents. In general SHA is willing to share costs of this joint effort. Several implementation issues remain to be discussed and resolved in the near future.

Ellen Kissman, SHA Project Manager, stated the Alternative 1 places the community center where it is accessible to the community and does not impact service providers. Those buildings house the functions and activities that are the heart of the community including Jobs Connection, Youth Tutoring, Neighborhood House offices, computer lab and Head Start. SHA does not have alternative space to locate these services on site. It is a real concern of SHA to make sure those services happen while all the change is happening with the community center. The area between 10th Avenue South and Broadway will have a strong community wide presence. Parking is a big issue. Alternative 1 provides access for a variety of users and modes of transportation. It has more access options being bordered by Yesler Way and 10th Avenue. The people who are in the 21 units that could potentially be affected will find a place in Yesler Terrace if they want to stay. SHA has already talked with most of the families there and most of the families do want to stay. As vacancies do occur, SHA will move them into another unit. There are a few families who have decided they want to move out of the community so they will receive a Section 8 voucher.

Al Levine stated Section 8 for a lot of people is really considered the "gold standard." People wait years on lists to receive a Section 8 voucher. SHA has 98% utilization of its Section 8 dollars. There are hardships any time a project like this is undertaken but it is done in a way that mitigates hardships as much as possible. SHA has relocated over 1,000 families now in Hope VI and has not received a single complaint.

The consultant concluded Alternative 1 appears to have the most opportunity for a strong identify, more options for access and the least impacts. It also provides an opportunity for a view corridor.

Susan Golub inquired if the 5,000 figure of people waiting on the list for housing was correct. Ellen Kissman stated the figure was low as it is 5,000 families. Al Levine stated the wait list is another complicated subject. There is definitely a lot of unmet demand.

Lisa Herbold, Assistant to Councilman Nick Licata, referenced the matrix and inquired how many housing units would be displaced. The Alternative would displace 14-21 units. She inquired if the 21 units figure was included in the materials when the residents voted on the Alternative. Lisa also inquired what the problems are with Alternative 2. Al Levine replied Alternative 2 takes the existing gym out for over a year, it constrains future development and is not a site that is acceptable to SHA.

Karen Daubert thinks moving ahead on the community center project is very important. The center is a home away from home. She is very concerned about the parking. There are good bus lines in the area. Al Levine stated it is a Residential Parking Zone (RPZ) now. Karen stated the thoroughfare is beautiful with tree-lined streets down to the Leschi/Madrona area.

Bruce Bentley inquired about the number of turnovers in Yesler Terrace and was informed the turnover is approximately 15%. There are 536 units and there will be no problem accommodating the 14-21 displaced families. Bruce inquired if SHA would need additional funding for housing units above the community center. Al Levine stated incorporating housing within the building is something they wanted to explore. SHA may or may not need additional funding for two floors of housing above the community center but that cannot be determined without further study. The footprint would have to expand as a separate entrance would be desired. The SHA Board has mandated that the lost housing units be replaced.

The Superintendent stated we are trying to end up with a project that the community can be proud of with no net loss of housing, and is in the heart of the community. There is no money for acquisition of another site in the area.

Kathleen Warren inquired if the service providers have been contacted and asked their opinions of the alternatives. Ellen Kissman stated the organizations have been consulted. SHA stated it is easier to find money for housing than for community space. SHA is donating the land and Kathleen inquired if SHA has the say where the center will be constructed. The Superintendent stated if SHA does not agree with where the Department wants the community center it will not be built. Al Levine thinks the new center will be a tremendous asset for the community. Kathleen is concerned about any housing loss in the central part of the city. Ellen Kissman stated SHA has been in the replacement housing business for three or four years. They are producing approximately 50 units every year.

Bruce Bentley inquired if there has been any thought to building a two-story community center as he assumes it would cut down on the impact. Toby Ressler stated it would be a budget impact. Ellen Kissman stated if the mixed-use facility with housing above works out then it is a moot point. If the facility does not work out then SHA would be interested in exploring a two-story community center to minimize the footprint and housing impact. The Superintendent prefers a one-story community center. You do not have significant differences in impacts on housing and a two-story community center costs more. We have not gotten to the point where we have figured how you might place a building on the site. It can be looked at in the context of the next step.

Karen Daubert moved the Board approve the direction of the siting of the Yesler Community Center Alternative I with the direction to look into the parking, the loss of housing issues and try to be as innovative as possible to address those concerns. The motion did not receive a second and failed.

Bruce Bentley stated the siting of the community center in the Yesler area makes good sense and is essential for the community. Bruce further stated he did not envision levy dollars dismantling public housing and wondered if a precedent is being set. Ellen Kissman stated there are plenty of other locations around the city where there is public housing near community centers but there really is no other situation in Seattle where the community center siting and public housing come together. Ellen further informed the Board members that last night at Yesler Terrace community meeting the notion of doing the mixed-use facility as a compromise received strong support as a concept.

Kathleen Warren moved the Board support Alternative I but with a recommendation that there be no net loss of public housing. Karen Daubert seconded the motion. James Fearn stated he is a SHA employee and therefore will not be voting on this issue. It was noted the Parks Department Public Involvement Policy and the Seattle Housing Authority public process were followed. The motion carried.

### **Superintendent's Report by Ken Bounds**

- **Smith Cove and Seward Park:** Legislation was forwarded to appropriate money for planning the acquisition of Smith Cove and for shoreline restoration at Seward Park.
- **Japanese Garden** – The Japanese Garden closed on September 9 to prepare for a shoreline renovation project that includes the installation of a water re-circulation system.
- **Sand Point/Magnuson** - Eddie Bauer volunteers will be working on various projects around the park on September 14.
- **Luna Park Seawall** – The seawall has been severely undermined by wave action. A large portion of the sidewalk on the northeast corner caved in on August 23. The Conservation Corps finished temporary repairs. Permanent repair design is underway with concepts due in 40 days.
- **Hitts Hill Celebration** – On September 8 a celebration was held at the newly acquired Hitts Hill open space located in Southeast Seattle.
- **Viewridge Playfield** – Dedication ceremony was held on September 9.
- **Green Lake** – 800 grass Carp were released into Green Lake last week. These fish eat milfoil and it is hoped it will reduce or even eliminate the milfoil in Green Lake.
- **South Lake Union** – A community meeting is being held tonight regarding the use of the Armory at South Lake Union for a severe weather shelter this winter.
- **Salmon Homecoming Celebration** – Some of the key elements of the Salmon Homecoming Celebration have been postponed until next month due to the horrific events that happened to our country earlier this week. The Forum and



Reception will be held in October. The pow wow, arts, crafts, and good booths, etc. will take place as scheduled over the next four days.

- **Zoo** – Visitors were grateful the Zoo was open after the national tragedy.
- **JAFDP Open House** - The first meeting was held on September 10 at Bitter Lake. The September 12 meeting has been postponed to September 25 at South Lake Union. The next meeting is September 20 at Jefferson. These meetings will be followed by a Parks Board briefing and hearing on the proposed program.
- **Artist in Residence** – Maureen Newby, Project Manager for the Seattle Arts Commission, is meeting with staff to plan for the Artist in Residence teen project.
- **Teen Leader Training** – The new community center PRO Parks teen development leaders and our existing leaders began a two week “boot camp.”

### **Items of Interest to the Board**

Karen Daubert informed the Board members that the Park Foundation office is up and running. She circulated a draft brochure for review. There will be an open house on Tuesday, September 25 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Karen referenced the recent edition of the “Watch Dog” and an article for an off-leash dog area under I-5.

Ken Bounds reported progress has been made to fill two Board vacancies.

**New/Old Business:** None

### **Future Agenda:**

September 15 – Central Division Tour, led by Herbye White, Director  
September 18 - Department Employee Gathering – Zoo North Meadow  
September 27 – Park Board Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

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