

Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
January 27, 2005

Board of Park Commissioners:

Present: Kate Pflaumer, Chair
Jack Collins
Joanna Grist
Terry Holme

Excused: Angela Belbeck
Debbie Jackson

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff:

Ken Bounds, Superintendent
Sandy Brooks, Coordinator

Commissioner Chair Kate Pflaumer called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. **Commissioner Jack Collins moved and Commissioner Terry Holme seconded that the minutes and agenda be approved. The vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.**

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Bounds reported on the following:

Replacing the Seattle Center Skatepark: Parks staff members continue to work with King County regarding property on Elliott Avenue that may serve as the relocation site of the Seattle Center's skateboard park and basketball courts. The skatepark and courts are being relocated because of the Gates Foundation's selection of the Seattle Center property as a site for its new headquarters. The Elliott Avenue property, formerly the Blackstock Lumber site, has more recently been the construction site for the County's stormwater project and will become surplus this spring. All of the funding for building the new skatepark and courts will come from the Foundation/Seattle Center. The agreement with the County will be brought back before the Board of Park Commissioners.

Aquarium Director Retires: Bill Arntz, Director of the Aquarium since July 20, 2000, retired effective January 14. Under his leadership, the Aquarium celebrated its best ever attendance of 716,331 visitors in 2004. John Braden, former Aquarium Deputy Director, has been appointed Acting Director.

Occidental Square Park Improvements: Parks held a final community meeting on Tuesday, January 18, to share final designs for improvements to Occidental Square and Occidental Mall. The plan will go before City Council's Parks, Neighborhoods, and Education Committee next week.

There is overwhelming community support for the basic direction to enhance usability, increase safety, and make upgrades that support more activity in the park; however, a number of community members oppose changes to the existing design of the park — especially the removal of trees. These same opponents were vocal at a Parks briefing to the Pioneer Square Preservation Board on January 19.

NFL Awards Grant Award to Rainier Playfield: Seattle Parks and Recreation was notified that it has been granted \$25,000 from the National Football League (NFL) Grassroots Community Football Fields Program. Parks has partnered with HomeSight and Southeast Effective Development (SEED) to implement this Rainier Playfield project, estimated at \$50,000. The NFL grant will fund the purchase of new grandstand bleachers, portable sport panel fencing, a scoreboard, a paint sprayer, goal posts, and a storage equipment box.

2004 Volunteer Hours at the Aquarium: In 2004, a total of 62,145 hours was donated by 486 volunteers. The in-kind value of these hours is \$921,170!

Starbucks Expands Its Park Grant Program: Starbucks Coffee Company announced recently that it will increase its annual parks giving from \$100,000 to \$1 million. In the past, only parks in King County have been eligible for the grants. Under the new program, Pierce and Snohomish counties also will be eligible. Individual grants will increase from \$10,000 to \$15,000; signature special projects may be awarded as much as \$550,000.

Banner Advertising at Pools: Letters and marketing information about our indoor pools have been sent to over 100 companies, firms, and interested parties. Parks Contract staff members are working with Aquatics staff to follow up with prospective advertisers.

Boeing Donates \$5,000 to Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center: The Boeing Company donated \$5,000 to fund community performances of “I Dream a World”, directed by Langston Hughes staff. These performances will take place in various communities across the county. “I Dream a World” celebrates the accomplishments of prominent African American women.

Upcoming Events:

West Magnolia Playground Renovation: The community will have a dedication party on Saturday, January 29, at 10:00 a.m. to celebrate the completion of this Neighborhood Matching Fund renovation project. The project replaced all the playground equipment and sandbox, and a new path was installed around the play area. Mayor Nickels will attend.

Musical Production Scheduled for Magnuson Park: Civic Light Opera’s production of *Red, Hot and Cole* opens on Friday, January 28, in the auditorium.

Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Center: Celebrated artists Ernestine Anderson and Julian Priester will perform at “Illuminating Langston” on February 13. This annual fundraiser supports the Center’s ongoing arts programming and the 103rd birthday of African American poet laureate Langston Hughes.

Cascade Playground Dedication: The renovations at Cascade Playground will be celebrated on Wednesday, May 11.

Homer Harris Park: A community celebration is scheduled for Saturday, May 21, near the date of Dr. Harris’ birthday.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

The Chair explained that this portion of the agenda is reserved for topics that have not had, or are not scheduled for, a public hearing. Speakers are limited to three minutes each and will be timed. The Board's usual process is for 15 minutes of testimony to be heard at this time, with additional testimony heard after the regular agenda and just before Board of Park Commissioner's business. Five people signed up to testify.

Matt Houghton: He distributed a handout on property located near Riverview Playground known as Soundways West, including a location map and topographical map. This property is currently owned by the City's Fleets and Facilities Division, which plans to sell the property for housing purposes. He and the next speaker represent a group of neighbors who want to see this property acquired by Parks. Reasons given are that the seven acres include 25 species of native plants; 41 species of birds, including Cooper's Hawks and Pygmy owls; is a natural migratory bird pathway; only 4% of the parcel has invasive plant cover; local community groups are active in the area rehabilitating the native vegetation; 300 people signed a petition requesting the area be preserved and not developed; saving this parcel increases the ecological integrity of the Duwamish ecosystem; it meets the objectives of the Department's Urban Wildlife Management Plan; and it will cost the City nothing, as the parcel can be transferred without cost to Parks.

Alan Robertson: He urged that the Soundways West property be transferred to Parks and not developed. Parks has done a good job on the Riverview playground; however, there is currently no mature green area in the park. This parcel could fill that need. During construction of the West Seattle Bridge, the City stored construction materials at this site. The old road that is there now would make a great trail. He realizes this is a difficult budget time, but urged that this property remain as greenbelt and not be lost to development.

Discussion

The Superintendent explained that in Mayor Nickel's 2005-6 Capital Improvement Projects budget, one of the City's objectives is to surplus this property for housing. However, the community was given until September 2005 to raise \$1.5 million to buy the seven-acre property, which could accommodate 40 units of market rate housing.

Commissioner Grist asked if Mr. Houghton and Mr. Robertson have contacted the Cascade Land Conservancy for assistance and they answered yes. Chair Pflaumer asked what role the Board plays in this property. The Superintendent answered that the community is looking for advocates and is here tonight to make the Board aware of this land sale. Commissioner Holme asked which City Council committee is handling this and the Superintendent stated it is not clear at this time.

Three other citizens signed up to testify in regard to the Betty Bowen Viewpoint agenda item. The Chair asked that they hold their testimony until after the next agenda item.

John C. Little Award

Just prior to the Board of Park Commissioner's meeting, a celebration was held to honor the 2004 recipient of the Seattle Parks and Recreation winner of the John C. Little, Sr., Spirit Award.

Superintendent Bounds announced the winner as Dennis Cook, Senior Recreation Programs Coordinator. The following information was shared with the Commissioners before the presentation:

John C. Little, Sr. Spirit Award

*I am pleased to announce that **Dennis Cook** has been selected as the 2004 recipient of the John C. Little Spirit Award.*

This is the fourth year we have awarded the John C. Little, Sr. Spirit Award. Past recipients have been Pat Warberg, Elaine Dunn, and Don Ganchorre.

In addition to his countless honors and volunteer positions, John Little, Sr. served the community as a member of the Seattle Board of Park Commissioners from 1990-1997. In John's seven years on the Board of Park Commissioners, he is most remembered for his gentle judgment of how a proposed policy or new undertaking would be perceived by the people we serve, particularly by the young people. His sensitivity to the needs and the attitudes of youth was extraordinary. If the Board wanted a thoughtful, wise opinion on a subject, it turned to John.

John C. Little's motto was, "In order to improve the life of all people, you must improve the life of young people."

We created this award in his honor. To be eligible for nomination, the individual must demonstrate the following characteristics: mentoring our youth; providing leadership in the community; making a difference in young lives; and going above and beyond the call of duty.

In Dennis' nomination application, the following reasons were mentioned as to why Dennis should receive the award. "Dennis is selfless in his desire to create opportunities for youth, teens, and young adults to be successful. It is not just a matter of his work in the Department but that his work is an extension of his life. His passion and belief in young people is his mission. Whether through his church, his efforts to champion for young people, his volunteer efforts, or his work in big and small ways, Dennis makes the lives of young people better and helps them realize their own potential. The real result is, as the many people that Dennis has touched, helped, and encouraged become adults, they in turn reach out to young people as mentors, coaches, and caring adults. I believe this exemplifies the meaning of the John C. Little Spirit Award."

Dennis is always available and is often called for advice by many young men and women. He is like a father figure for many teens in the community.

Superintendent Bounds described Dennis' contributions to youth, thanked him for a job well done, and presented the award. Mr. Little's granddaughter, Stephanie Jones, thanked Dennis on behalf of the Little family and presented him with a family album and a boxed pen and pencil set. Dennis thanked the Little family, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and the award nominating committee.

The Commissioners added their congratulations and the award was followed by a hearty round of applause.

Discussion/Recommendation: Pike-Pine-Boren Park Off-leash Pilot Project

At its January 13, 2005, meeting the Board of Park Commissioners heard a briefing from Parks project manager Lynn Sullivan on the proposal to site an 18-month pilot off-leash area at Pike-Pine-Boren Park, immediately followed by a public hearing. (Minutes posted at <http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2005/01-13-05.pdf>) Tonight the Commissioners will discuss and vote on a recommendation to the Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation.

Discussion/Recommendation

Ms. Sullivan was present to answer any questions. Commissioner Collins stated that he was impressed with the Department's process, with the nice design by the Parks staff, and by the positive public testimony the Board received. **Commissioner Collins moved to recommend to the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation approval of the Pike-Pine-Boren Park 18-month pilot off-leash project. Commissioner Holme seconded.**

Commissioner Grist supports the off-leash area. Commissioner Holme stated that he is concerned with the fencing that separates the two areas as it sets the tone for the entire park and urges that, as the project is developed, the fencing selected will enhance the park. To ensure safety of the dogs, owners must practice safety. He urged Parks staff to post off-leash area rules and to determine a policy on operation hours. Commissioner Collins requested that Parks staff look into eco-blocks as an alternative to plain old concrete. (In the previous minutes, he did not mean to imply that the sidewalk surface should be gravel, but rather a solid surface that would also help with runoff.) The blocks are permeable and would help with runoff. He also commented that he is grumpy about, and critical of, turning parks into off-leash areas. Chair Pflaumer commented that the use of off-leash area for dogs bring additional people into the parks. Ms. Sullivan commented that staff will look into the fence and walkway suggestions; however, both are dependent upon the budget.

Chair Pflaumer called for the vote, which was unanimous in approval.

The Board thanked Ms. Sullivan.

Oral Communications – continued

Roger Belanich: He commented that there is lots of community support for this viewpoint restoration. He urged that the view be restored, as it has been at Kerry Viewpoint. Don't back down to the opposition, if opposition appears. Please follow through on Seattle Parks and Recreation staff's original plan and restore this magnificent view.

John Furtado: He has been a Queen Anne resident for 20 years. He wholeheartedly supports the work of Parks staff on this project. He is a professional landscape consultant and is very impressed with the thoroughness and detail of this study and cannot understand any opposition to the plan.

Murray Ferguson: He stated that in 1960 Mr. Marshall deeded this land over to the City. Many people walk here and many buses stop nearby. It would be a crime not to open this viewpoint back up.

Update Briefing: Betty Bowen Viewpoint Vegetation Management Plan

Eliza Davidson, Seattle Parks and Recreation Urban Forester, came before the Commissioners to give an update briefing on the Viewpoint Vegetation Management Plan and Restoration at Betty Bowen Park. The Commissioners received a written and verbal briefing. No action is requested at this time.

Written Briefing

Requested Board Action

This is an informational briefing and status report about an urban forestry project currently in development. No action is requested from the Commissioners at this time.

Introduction and Background

This project is the restoration of the Betty Bowen Viewpoint at Marshall Park on the southwest corner of Queen Anne hill (<http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/parkspaces/marshallpark.htm>) It will implement a vegetation management plan for this viewpoint, as outlined in the document "Vegetation Management for Seattle Parks Viewpoints" created by Parks Urban Forest Restoration Program in spring 2004.

Betty Bowen Viewpoint was identified as a top priority site for restoration among the 25 Department-managed viewpoints included in the plan. Priorities were based principally on the percentage of designated views obscured, as well as the level of visitation, quality of original view, and community partnership opportunities. Betty Bowen is the first viewpoint being restored under guidance of this multi-site Vegetation Management Plan.

The objectives of this project are, above all, to restore the lost vista as well as to rebuild healthy native forest, to remedy vegetation-related safety concerns, and to improve habitat quality. These objectives will be achieved by converting site vegetation to a primarily native, self-sustaining plant community low enough to prevent future view obstruction and vigorous enough to discourage re-establishment of invasive plants.

Site-specific restoration plans are being developed as a precursor to implementation at each individual viewpoint, with concurrent environmental review and public involvement process. Responding to down slope neighbors' concerns in late summer 2004, the Department contracted a geotechnical study of slope stability in relation to proposed changes. Findings were that restoration would not reduce, and could improve, slope stability.

Restoration is currently in design development in house, based on a preferred option that completes work in three phases over six-to-ten years. A project-level environmental checklist is being prepared. A detailed project timeline for this project and Viewpoints VMP adoption has been in place since last fall. Our hope and intention is to begin on-the-ground restoration by summer of this year.

Public Involvement

The first public information meeting was held on December 9, 2004, and provided the project background and presented three implementation options for comment. In addition, Urban Forestry staff had made presentations in June and July 2004 at two Queen Anne Community Council meetings to introduce and discuss the project. There have also been multiple meetings, e-mail exchanges, phone conversations, and two public disclosure requests involving individual and small neighborhood constituencies and Parks staff.

Sentiment has ranged from 100% for doing the full project immediately, to making no change at all (trees themselves are the view). The clear majority of meeting attendees on December 9 supported a phased restoration approach, with varying opinions on timeframe and certain specifics. A second public meeting for the project is slated to occur in April 2005, when plans and environmental review are substantially complete.

Schedule and Environmental Review

Restoration is currently in design development in house, based on a preferred option that completes work in three phases over six-to-ten years. Detailed restoration plans are to be completed by mid-February. A project-level environmental checklist is being prepared and will be published before the end of March.

As noted, a second public meeting will be held in April. We plan to begin implementation in May-June 2005 (if a SEPA appeal occurs, this could cause a slight delay). Completion depends on the level of funding and community support (volunteer and financial), as well as the need to insure slope protection during all phases of work.

Environmental review for the Department-wide Viewpoint Vegetation Management Plan is proceeding and should be completed in the next two-to-three months. Subsequent viewpoint restoration projects will proceed under the environmental review of the Department-wide document. However, as noted, we are doing a project specific review for Betty Bowen.

Budget

Money for this project comes from the Department's Cumulative Reserve Fund (CRF), through an ongoing Urban Forest Multiple Viewpoints Restoration project. 2005 funding is \$60,000 to be split between this and other top priority sites, with up to 50% of the total for the Betty Bowen project. Future restoration phases will tap this funding at two-to-three year intervals. The Urban Forest Plant Establishment program also may contribute to the project during the restoration period (part of \$50,000 or more annual funding). In-house tree crew and resource staff contributions will incur no direct cost. Significant leveraging via private match is anticipated through the Parks Foundation, as well as donated materials and volunteer labor.

Additional info

Eliza Davidson, Urban Forester, eliza.davidson@seattle.gov, (206) 233-5019.

Verbal Briefing

Ms. Davidson gave a powerpoint presentation describing the history of Betty Bowen Viewpoint and the proposed view restoration. It included many photos of the site’s current condition and enhanced photos showing how the site would look after implementation.

Commissioner Questions and Answers

Commissioner Collins asked why the work would be completed over ten years. Urban Forester Mark Mead answered that the work would be phased to allow plantings to get established. Commissioner Collins asked if all invasive plants would be removed at the beginning of the project. Mr. Mead answered that most ivy would be removed at the beginning and other invasive removal would be phased in as new plantings get established.

Commissioner Collins asked whether Queen Anne Community Council supports this plan. Mr. Mead stated that staff members are asking the Community Council’s Parks Committee for a formal recommendation. Ms. Davidson stated that the phased plans will be shown at the next community meeting. After the final public meeting, the project will be brought back to the Board of Park Commissioners. If there is divisiveness, a public hearing will be scheduled. Ms. Davidson commented that a great deal of progress has been made to defuse any division.

The Chair complimented the project and stated that Parks has responded well to community concerns. The Superintendent commented that Ms. Davidson and Mr. Mead have done an outstanding job on this project. Both are very talented and have a great deal of expertise. This knowledge can be used across the board as the Department applies the cumulative knowledge to other projects.

Commissioner Grist stated that she is impressed with and excited about this plan and asked if Seattle Parks Foundation is participating in the funding of the project. Ms. Davidson stated that at this point in the project, without a final approved plan, it is difficult to attempt fundraising. Mr. Mead stated that developing this plan has been very costly. Once a final plan is approved, fundraising attempts will begin. He believes that the definite aspect of opening this view again will garner excitement and possible donations to assist with the project. Commissioner Collins recommended that invasives and big trees be removed first to garner this interest. The Superintendent and Ms. Davidson stated that the public will notice a big difference right away, maybe by early summer.

The Chair requested that the Board be kept informed of progress and thanked Ms. Davidson and Mr. Mead for the presentation.

Briefing: Delridge Parks Improvement Project

David Goldberg, Seattle Parks and Recreation project manager, next briefed the Commissioners on the Delridge Parks Improvement Project (also known as Brandon Mini Park, Greg Davis Park, and Puget Boulevard Commons Development.) The Commissioners received both a written and verbal briefing, included in these minutes.

Written Briefing

Requested Board Action

No action is being requested of the Commissioners at this time.

Introduction and Background

Parks is working with Cascade Design Collaborative to design improvements to three park sites. The project is between schematic design and design development. This briefing will cover the design alternatives considered with the community and our direction for developing a final design.

This Pro Parks Levy project improves three adjacent park sites in the Delridge neighborhood of West Seattle.

Brandon Mini-Park: This project converts an existing underdeveloped land (1.1 acre) owned by the City into a neighborhood park that may feature recreational courts, a playground, and a picnic shelter.

Greg Davis Park: Complete development of the 1.3 acre park site, which is adjacent to Brandon Mini-Park, another 2000 Parks Levy site. Possible improvements include the development of plazas and additional landscaping.

Puget Boulevard Commons Development: This project improves a portion of a 1.9 acre site at Puget Boulevard, including potential expansion of the P-Patch at Puget Boulevard Commons.

The potential improvements were largely derived from Delridge Neighborhood Plan recommendations. The Pro Parks Levy provides \$564,697 for Brandon Mini Park, \$73,293 for Greg Davis Park, and \$679,296 for Puget Boulevard Commons.

Schematic Design Options

Cascade Design Collaborative (CDC) created an opportunities and constraints map and three discussion options to begin community engagements. Comments from the first public meeting on November 16, 2004, supported developing one option — the Arc. The options can be viewed at <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/proparks/projects/brandon.htm>.

Schematic Design

CDC refined the “Arc” to develop the Promenade schematic option. The key design intent is to create a loop walkway that embraces a series of active and passive spaces. The design respects the natural context and passive environment established by Longfellow Creek and Greg Davis Park while integrating more active uses appropriate to this growing urban neighborhood.

The programmatic elements include:

- ❖ the existing P-Patch with new raised beds to increase accessibility;
- ❖ a half-court basketball court;
- ❖ a rain-garden/detention area;
- ❖ an unstructured play area suitable for tot soccer or informal games;
- ❖ a small plaza with the potential for a maze incorporated into the plaza paving; and
- ❖ a children’s play area.

The alleys that currently run north/south through the boulevard will be terminated and “hammerheads” created to allow vehicles turning around. Proposed improvements to Greg Davis Park focus on deterring cars from entering the park.

Community members supported further refinements to this option at a meeting on December 16. CDC has been working with Parks since that point to address concerns about impacts from active elements, parking, vehicle traffic and specific needs for the P-Patch. The images on the next two pages serve as the basis for design development drawings. The consultant’s current work will be presented at the briefing.

Next Steps

Design Development workshop in Early February.
Construction in late spring 2005.

Verbal Briefing

Mr. Goldberg reviewed the information previously sent to the Board. He displayed a large map and pointed out the location of these three small parks located adjacent to each other and the proposed improvements at each.

Commissioner Questions & Answers

Commissioner Holme visited the site and commented that the edge of the park currently consists of gravel and asked if it can be paved or better defined. Mr. Goldberg answered that Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) maintain the streets. He agreed with Commissioner Holme that defining the edge with curbs and other barriers helps protect the park area from being driven on and damaged. Parks will put in some defining edges such as log barriers and some hard curbs (which are expensive.) Commissioner Holme urged that pressure be put on SDOT to pave Puget Boulevard. Mr. Goldberg answered that he has heard from several neighbors that they like the street unpaved and containing potholes, as they feel it discourages heavy traffic through the street.

Commissioner Collins commented that the old church located next to the parks might need rebuilding eventually and asked if any of the many utility poles will be relocated. Mr. Goldberg commented that the church was last updated in 1983 and the interior is fairly sound. Parks staff members are looking at relocating some of the utility poles.

Commissioner Collins asked Mr. Goldberg to send him a map of the Longhead Trail and Mr. Goldberg agreed to do so. The Chair asked Parks staff to keep the Board updated on new additions to this project and thanked Mr. Goldberg for the presentation.

Board of Park Commissioners' Business

None

New/Old Business

Commissioners were reminded of the February 2 retreat.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
Kate Pflaumer, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE _____