

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
October 22, 2015

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>
(Includes agendas and minutes from 2001-present)

Also, view Seattle Channel tapes of meetings, June 12, 2008-most current, at
<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/watchVideos.asp?program=Parks>

Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Antoinette Angulo
Marty Bluewater
Tom Byers
Bob Edmiston
Diana Kincaid
Tom Tierney, Chair

Excused:

Michael Padilla
William Lowe
Barbara Wright, Vice Chair

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Christopher Williams, Deputy Superintendent
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

This meeting is held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Tierney calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Commissioner Tierney asks for approval of the Consent Items, the September 10 meeting minutes and the Agenda for the meeting tonight. Commissioner Byers moves and Commissioner Edmiston seconds and the Consent Items are approved.

Superintendent's Report

Sister city honor - Mayor to reaffirm city's commitment with sister city, Perugia, Italy. SPR staff are making a presentation to him of possible locations for a dedication in recognition of the relationship. The symbol of Perugia is the griffin and they have a very rich Etruscan history. Orca Park in Perugia has artwork that recognizes our sister city relationship.

Donnie Chin naming – Deputy Superintendent Williams and Superintendent Aguirre met with members of the International District community to discuss naming something after Donnie Chin who was an important community leader in the International District. The community would like to rename the children's garden after Donnie Chin. SPR has a rule that a person has to be dead for 3 years which allows for a well thought out renaming process. It was a great meeting with Seattle Chinatown Preservation and Development Authority (PDA).

360° evaluation process – the entire executive team is going through an evaluation process. The idea is to create profile of strength and opportunities for growth. Employees have desire to participate in 360 for their managers also. No outside participants.

City Park Alliance – Deputy Superintendent Williams was invited to join the board of the National City Parks Alliance. Seattle is bidding to host the Greater Greener conference in 2021.

Japanese Garden – The Arboretum Foundation may be taking over management of the Japanese Garden at the Arboretum. The Japanese Garden Advisory Committee is on board. Associated Recreation Council has been managing it for years. The legislation regarding the transition will go to Council in the new year. The Arboretum Foundation embraces the sensitivity to the volunteers of the Japanese gardens.

Moorages – The Request for Proposals is ready to go for the Lakewood and Leschi moorages. It will be a 6-week process to respond.

All-staff conference – SPR is holding an All-Staff Conference on November 17 from 7am to 4pm. This will be an opportunity to bring employees together and hear from Jesus about where he wants to go. Deputy Superintendent Williams encourages the Commissioners to attend.

The Seattle Management Association held its annual award reception. Seattle Parks and Recreation had two winners and a handful of honorable mentions.

What makes a great urban parks system

Presented by Christopher Williams, Deputy Superintendent Seattle Parks and Recreation

Deputy Superintendent Williams espouses the benefits of a great park system. The qualities of a great park system are decided by how well they are maintained, social impact, crime, and design.

Historical context

Memorial Parks – The first parks were English deer parks, land set aside for hunting by royalty and the aristocracy in medieval times.

- They had walls or thick hedges around them to keep game animals (e.g., stags) in and people out.
- It was strictly forbidden for commoners to hunt animals in these deer parks.

Before 1831, America had no cemeteries.

- It is not that Americans did not bury their dead—just that large, modern graveyards did not exist.
- However, with the construction of Mount Auburn Cemetery, a large burial ground in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the movement to build cemeteries in America began ---for a time cemeteries were known as memorial parks.

Olmsted believed parks should be open to everyone. In 1859, Olmsted and 3000 volunteers built Central Park. Park development took off during the great depression. Parks served as a neutralizer in poor economic times.

Urban parks movement

- The Urban Parks Movement emerged and was founded on the social principal that creation of parks would replicate within the city the "good and wholesome" environments of the country.
- During the height of the great Urban Park Movement (from about 1890 through 1940's) great efforts were made to undertake park planning and to understand the relationship between local park and surrounding neighborhoods.
- As big cities, like Boston, Chicago, Buffalo, Portland, Seattle and Denver emerged into economic centers -- city leaders believed well designed and well-maintained parks systems were integral to the mission of successful cities.
- The field of urban parks research had taken off - during this period park planners were consumed with measuring things like size of parks, walking distances from residences to local parks, park design standards and materials.
- During this second era of city park development---The breadth and depth of a successful park system was determined by acreage, design standards, recreation facilities and budgets.

Urban Decay and Neglect of Parks

Following World War II a weird thing happened in the world of urban or city park development---

- In the 1950's, 60's and 70's urban parks systems all over the country would languish and fall into disrepair.
- As veterans used their GI Bill to buy an affordable home for their families – many of these homes would be purchased in what would come to be known as the suburbs.

The Urban Park Renaissance

Now we enter the golden age of Great City Park Systems – this period began from roughly from the late 1970's through the current period.

- This is when the public in many cities would become fed-up with underperforming local parks in their communities.
- People were tired of crime, drug dealing, gang activity and other forms of anti-social behaviors that all seem to concentrate around neglected local parks.

The Public wanted public parks that worked and were successful.

- They wanted a way for park professionals to better understand and communicate what makes a park or park system great.
- The public is no longer willing to accept that because we followed our design principles, used the best materials, have the best-maintained shrub beds and the best staff that we have great parks.
- This is when public input started. Seattle started neighborhood matching fund grants; allowing residents to design what they want.
- The Public Expectation is that staff will not only be experts in park design, but have some basic nuts and bolts understanding around human behavior its contribution to park uses. Staff

are expected to understand the sociology and psychology groups and individual uses of our parks. Moreover, to use this to measure the success of our local park system.

Community, Economy and Environment

We know that our park and recreation system brings numerous benefits to the community, including:

- Economic benefits from being a livable city where business and employees want to locate;
- Enhanced revenues generated through increased tourism and property values;
- Respite from the urban environment;
- Community benefits from offering people places to gather, meet neighbors and build relationships;

Trust for Public Lands Economic Benefits report, 2011, report:

1. Effect of parks on residential property values, including tax revenue (properties within 500 feet of parks) = **\$1.7 billion**
2. Tourism value attributable to parks (profit to Seattle residents) = **\$35 million**
3. Direct use value (general park use, playgrounds, walking, sports facilities, gardens and fishing) = **\$ 448 million**

Could not be able to create our park system today and this was a gift that was born 130 years ago.

Magnuson Park

- In 1957, Magnuson Park was actively being used by the Navy as an airfield and training site.
- Seattle Parks and Recreation acquired the 350-acre site from the Federal government in 1972. AND the journey began....
- Since then, the site has developed into a community based regional gathering place with a unique combination of features and activities for the public to enjoy.
- Through creative partnerships at Magnuson Park, we were able to preserve a National Historic District and integrate homeless/low income housing into programming based around both the natural environment and active recreation.
- SPR constructed a new wetland; a former air base providing an environmental benefit and serves as outdoor classrooms.
- There are now 66 different tenant license/lease/concession agreements being managed, including artists, Profit and Non-Profit groups, and four major property owners within the site.
- The Link Marsh Ponds take the runoff from the parking lots and filters it before sending it to the wetlands and Lake Washington. \$2million dollars being saved in wastewater management.

Green Seattle Partnership

- The Green Seattle Partnership is a public-private effort to create sustainable urban forests on 2,500 acres of naturally maintained areas in Seattle's parkland.
- GSP takes a holistic approach to urban forestry both long term social and management goals in addition to ecological goals.
- The GSP has served as a model for restoration efforts in the region (there are now 5 other Green Cities programs) and we consistently receive requests for information from other cities.
- As of 2014, we have placed 1,230 acres into restoration.

- According to [an i-Tree Eco analysis of Seattle in 2012](#), Seattle’s naturally maintained areas sequester roughly **6.75 metric tons of CO2**.
- [Audubon Society bird surveys](#) in parks with significant portions of natural areas have found more than 232 species.
- Trust for Public Lands Air Quality Calculator for Seattle’s Park System in 2010, was a savings of **\$526,769 due to particulate matter, CO2, Sulfur O2, Nitrogen O2 removal**.
- Volunteers and partners host an average of more than 3 volunteer events a day, contributing more than **70,000 volunteer hours each year**.
- The Trust for Public Lands report estimates the Community Cohesion value of Seattle Parks to be over **\$9.5 million**.

Commissioner Angulo wonders what kind of questions Deputy Superintendent Williams received to this presentation. He responds that people are curious about partnerships. There are trade-offs with having commercial activities in facilities and there is tension around partnerships that generate revenue in a park setting. Seattle is on the leading edge of innovation and creativity; voters fund levies that allow SPR to experiment and try new things.

Open Public Meeting Act/Public Records Act

Presented by Gary Smith, Law

OPMA Applies to multi-member public state and local agencies, such as boards and commissions, as follows:

- Any county, city, school district, special purpose district, or other **municipal corporation** or political subdivision of Washington.
- Any **subagency of a public agency** which is created by or pursuant to statute, ordinance, or other legislative act, including but not limited to planning commissions, library or park boards, commissions, and agencies.

There are specific exceptions but if a majority body meets then it needs to be open to the public. Furthermore, if a subcommittee of the Park Board were making decisions and takes public testimony, then would be subject to these rules.

Physical presence is not required to constitute attending a meeting; meetings could take place over email. Passive receipt of email is okay as long as no one expresses an opinion or discusses park business. Commissioner Kincaid wonders how the Commissioners can collaborate more, feeling restricted by having only two meetings a month. Gary advises to avoid any attempt to come to a collective decision behind closed doors. Final action can never be taken during closed session. One may discuss an employee in closed session but then the final action needs to be done in public. Travel and gathering is acceptable as long as no business is discussed. Public comment is not required but people need to be treated fairly.

Executive session – the chair announces going in for a specific purpose for example:

- National security
- Real estate
 - Site selection or acquisition of real estate
 - Lease or purchase

- Public knowledge would likely increase price
- Sale or lease
 - Public knowledge would likely decrease price
 - Final action selling or leasing public property must be take at open meeting
- Publicly bid contracts
- Review negotiations on performance
- Public knowledge would like increase costs
- Evaluate qualifications of applicant for public employment
- Meet with legal counsel regarding enforcement actions, litigation or potential litigation
- Other purposes listed in RCW 42.30.110

Penalties for violating

- A court can impose a \$100 civil penalty against each member (personal liability)
- Court will award costs and attorney fees to a successful party seeking the remedy
- Action taken at meeting can be declared null and void

Commissioner Edmiston feels there must be a technological way to do this that is compliant but would enable the Board to consider more perspectives, and allow the Park Board to work at internet speed. What are some options to be a better board. This policy seems outdated.

Public Records Act

Originally, in an initiative passed in 1972. Many interpretations of Public Records Act; it is very litigated. All records are presumed open unless specific exemption applies and it must be "narrowly construed".

"Public record" means:

- any writing
- containing information
- relating to
- the conduct of government or
- the performance of any governmental or proprietary function
- prepared, owned, used, or retained
- by any state or local agency
- regardless of physical form or characteristics."

~ RCW 42.56.030

Including non-agency email accounts and cell phones. Gary suggests keeping those records segregated. If a record is exempt, one is still required to give an explanation and there is no general privacy exemption. The general rule is the agency withholds only the exempt information, and releases the rest.

Enforcement and penalty

- PRA enforced by courts for claims listed in PRA.
- A court can impose civil penalties. No proof of “damages” required.
- A court is to consider the factors in requiring an agency to pay a penalty:
- Plus, a court will award the requester’s attorneys’ fees and costs.
- Special penalty provisions and court procedures apply to lawsuits involving inmate requests

Gary says he has seen agencies assessed thousands of dollars for non-compliance with one request. The Seattle Police Department has paid out \$7million.

The commissioners all agree that Gary’s presentation was very helpful; Gary is available for follow up questions. If one member talks to another member, that’s okay. One on one communication is okay!

Budget 2016

Presented by Michele Finnegan, Director of Finance, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Annual Budget Process

- SPR submits budget issues to the City Budget Office in early April and a draft budget in early June
- Mayoral Review and budget refinements June - August
- Mayor submits budget to City Council in late September
- Council reviews the Mayor’s budget proposal from late September through mid-November
- Council adopts the budget in late November

2016 Budget Overview

- Total Operating Budget of \$5.1 billion and total Capital Budget of \$1 billion.
 - Total workforce of 11,739.23 FTE
- Total General Fund Budget of \$1.056 billion
 - 54% of the City’s General Fund is allocated to public safety functions (\$599.7m) and 8% allocated to Health and Human Services (\$83.3m)
 - SPR is approximately 9% of the General Fund
 - \$96.6 million in General Fund support
- Total Operating Budget of \$155.2 million(918.68 FTE)
 - General Fund \$96,589,513
 - Other Funding \$58,562,752
 - Seattle Park District \$13,613,159
- Total Capital Budget of \$54,218,000
 - Seattle Park District (\$34.2M)
 - Cumulative Reserve Sub-Fund
 - Real Estate Excise Taxes (\$14.3M) and Unrestricted (\$400K)
 - Central Waterfront Improvement Fund (\$2.2M)
 - King County Levy (\$1.66M)
 - Community Development Block Grant (\$808K)

Commissioner Byers asks whether there is language in the Memorandum of Understanding between the city and the Seattle Park District regarding Real Estate Excise Tax. Michele responds that the MOU is silent on REET with the Seattle Park District.

Biggest changes to 2016 budget

- Park District Services: SPR is a level 1 merchant and have to meet higher levels of compliance; must install some new technology
- Warmer weather = reallocating funds to bring on 2 new lifeguarded beaches starting Memorial Day weekend
- Changed geographic structure for community center operations.
- Moorages – new partner – SPR is handling interim operations
- Two new position in the Superintendent’s office to focus on school/parks partnership; equity work in and outside the department.
- New accounting system!

This is all good news! This is the first year SPR has not taken a budget cut.

Currently in the Council deliberative phase – issue identification today. They requested a Statements of Legislative Intent (SLI) regarding acquisition of surplus property; athletic field fees; hope for youth grants – non-profits that serve underserved communities to supplement and provide more access to youth. Questions about the new positions in the Superintendent’s Office.

Michele had briefed the Park District Oversight Committee at the beginning of the month. She explained in more detail how the initiatives matched all of these numbers. No supplanting of general fund and the general fund actually increases and keeping promises made to the votes regarding the initiatives.

The Commissioners agree that Michele is great.

Old/New Business

Communications Committee – King County Council approved changes to Metro transit. Metro is working with Sound Transit to provide better access to underserved areas. Capitol Hill light rail is opening soon – connect parks with link light rail with a direct frequent route. Commissioner Edmiston suggests writing a letter of thank you. Commissioner Kincaid says the Northeast Seattle communities will connect to parks and community centers very nicely; she notices people are really using the services. Commissioners Kincaid and Edmiston will write the letter. Commissioner Kincaid was impressed with King County Metro and their level of service. They understood how important it was to get access to parks.

The Communications Committee met with Deputy Superintendent Williams and Susan last week regarding how to expand their initial communications presentation at the next retreat. They are considering pilots for public interaction – more open forum style meetings to sit down and interact and talk with public and have more dialogue; use technology to experiment with different methods of communication; combine the work plan and explore different approaches to relating to the public;

A sad departure – Commissioner Angulo says she is leaving the Park Board. Her paid workload is going up and she will be leaving effective December 31. She says it has been an honor to work with the Board. She had been the Park Board representative to the Associated Recreation Council and there will need to be a replacement.

Executive Committee – The Executive Committee met to plan agendas; no action to be taken in November or December. Commissioner Tierney recommends the board take a break until the January 14 Board meeting.

Commissioner Byers would like to have discussions regarding the following topics:

1. Homelessness – role of SPR and the Conservation Corps – barriers to expansion and what the Corps is doing
2. Work with Neighborhood House related to how community centers can be adapted to serve a full range of community. Neighborhood House reporting findings to SPR and he would like to hear that.

Commissioner Edmiston requests a longer retreat – in order to workshop new communication ideas

Commissioner Kincaid moves the meeting adjourn; Commissioner Angulo seconds the motion and the motion carries. The meeting adjourns at 8:40 pm.

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