

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
March 9, 2017

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>
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<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/watchVideos.asp?program=Parks>

Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Tom Byers, Chair
Marty Bluewater
Dennis Cook
Evan Hundley
Kelly McCaffrey
Barbara Wright

Excused:

Andrea Akita
William Lowe

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent
Susan Golub, Policy Unit Manager

The meeting was held at 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Byers called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. He reviewed the agenda and the Commissioners introduced themselves.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

There were none.

Superintendent's Report

Encampment Removal – The Mayor has activated the Emergency Operations Center on a daily basis to coordinate the city's response to homelessness.

CAPRA Accreditation: Beginning next year, Seattle Parks and Recreation will undertake the accreditation process of the Commission on the Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). Through this effort we will look at *everything* we do and show how we meet the 130 CAPRA standards. It will be a two-year process.

Green Seattle Partnership: So far this year the GSP has held 22 volunteer events, providing over 1,000 volunteer hours at 17 sites.

Earth Day: SPR is planning a month-long celebration of Earth Day, with a special event on April 22 at Pigeon Point Park.

Jefferson Park Golf Junior Clubhouse RFP: SPR recently issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a new junior clubhouse at the Jefferson Park Golf Course. We are open to a collaboration between partners, including Jefferson Park Lawn Bowling which currently operates out of a building at the golf course. SPR is not looking to displace lawn bowling, which some in the lawn bowling community fear.

Seattle Asian Art Museum Update (SAAM): SPR asked SAAM to pause the museum expansion project in order to respond to questions we had. The Museum responded adequately and we stopped the pause. Based on an opinion from the City's Law Department, Initiative 42 does not apply to the museum project, as a museum is a conforming park and recreation use.

Presentation: Tree Trimming Policy

Presented by Jon Jainga, SPR's Urban Forestry Manager

SPR is in the process of updating the department's Tree Trimming Policy. One change will be to transfer tree pruning standards out of the Policy and into a Procedure. The standards will follow the best management practices of the industry. The Board will consider the proposed Policy changes at a future meeting.

The Tree Trimming Policy includes standards for the care of trees at designated viewpoints. Currently there are 25 designated viewpoints on Parks and Recreation land. The current policy is to preserve views at these locations with tree and vegetation care as described in Vegetation Management Plans. With climate change and the impacts we are seeing in Seattle, staff will be working with communities to update the Vegetation Management Plans. One change may be planting more Shore Pines which have proven hardy in both drought and very wet conditions and can help stabilize hillsides.

Climate change has had a major impact on trees on Parks and Recreation land, with staff seeing considerably more failures over the past few years. The third tree crew, funded by the Seattle Park District, has been a significant help, and still staff are running hard to keep up with work orders for tree care and the desire to be pro-active and conduct preventive tree maintenance.

In response to a question about dead Madrone trees along Magnolia Boulevard, Mr. Jainga noted that the department's general position is to try and leave the dead trees in place on hillsides because the roots help stabilize the slope and prevent slides. Plus the dead trees provide habitat and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife

recommends leaving snags in place for eagle habitat. However, if leaving a dead tree in place creates a hazard, it will be removed.

Dead or fallen trees along a lake or Puget Sound shoreline create fish habitat and the City needs permission from Fish and Wildlife to remove them; permission to remove the tree is granted only if leaving the tree creates an unsafe condition.

Mr. Jainga presented a slide show with photos of the 25 designated viewpoints.

Presentation: Seattle Parks and Recreation Survey

Presented by Andrew Thibault, EMC Research

From Mid-November through mid-December 2016, EMC Research conducted a statistically valid survey on behalf of Seattle Parks and Recreation. The full survey report can be found online here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/documents/departments/parksandrecreation/policiesplanning/sprsurveysummaryreport.pdf>

The survey will become the baseline for follow-up surveys the department plans to do every 2-3 years.

The following describe the survey methodology:

- Multi-modal Address-Based Sampling (ABS) survey of Seattle households conducted online and by phone
- Households were randomly sampled from a list of all residential addresses in Seattle
- All sampled households were mailed a postcard with a unique survey ID code inviting them to take the survey online or by phone
- The survey was offered in English and Spanish
- Reminders were made via Interactive Voice Response (IVR) telephone calls
- Residents were offered the option to take the interview over the phone with a live interviewer by calling an 888 number
- The survey was conducted November 18th–December 16th, 2016
- 513 total weighted residents (704 unweighted); Weighted Margin of Error: +4.3 percentage points

- Responses were weighted by key household demographics to better reflect the most recent Census estimates for residential households in the City of Seattle

Here is a sampling of survey results:

- Quality of Life
Most residents rate Seattle's overall quality of life positively, although intensity (% "Excellent") is low. Almost all residents believe Seattle's parks and recreation system is important to their quality of life, with 1 in 7 saying the park system is "extremely important" to quality of life.
- Seattle Parks & Recreation Grades
Nearly 8-in-10 residents give SPR's overall system an A or B grade, with a 3.0 (B) average grade. There is some concern among residents about the safety of SPR facilities (2.6 / B-) and residents are not well informed about SPR spending.
- General funding Priorities
A majority feel all six priorities tested are important to fund. Improving existing parks/facilities (79%), improving maintenance (74%), and improving safety (71%) are the top funding priorities. Intensity (% "extremely important") is highest for improving safety.
- Relative Spending
A majority of residents support spending more on natural areas/green space and a plurality support spending more on neighborhood parks. Public golf courses are the only facility where there is a sizeable constituency for cutting spending.

Mr. Thibault summarized the survey findings by noting there are three key areas for SPR to work on which could have a quick impact for the public:

- 1) Safety issues, especially related to homeless encampments
- 2) Comfort station improvements
- 3) Additional trash removal, although this runs counter to the hope for increased recycling and a "pack it in, pack it out" approach

Briefing and Discussion: Code of Conduct Changes

Presented by Susan Golub, Policy Unit Manager at Seattle Parks and Recreation

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) is planning to propose revisions to the Code of Conduct this year. Tonight's briefing provides background information on the Code of Conduct and an early idea of the revisions being considered. The actual proposed Code changes will be presented to you at a future meeting.

In 2010 SPR first consolidated mostly already prohibited behaviors and some new ones in a Code of Conduct. At the time, the Park Board reviewed the proposed Code of Conduct, held a public hearing, made recommendations for revisions, and ultimately recommended adoption. Before the Code was adopted, behaviors not allowed in SPR facilities were in separate sections of the Park Code and listed in administrative rules.

- Newly prohibited behaviors in 2010 were:
 - Possession of glass containers at athletic fields, beaches, or children’s playgrounds;
 - Conduct that poses a risk of harm to any person or property;
 - Possession of explosives, acid, or any other article or material capable of causing serious harm to others
 - Smoking, chewing, or other tobacco use within 25 feet of other park patrons and or at play areas, beaches, playgrounds, and picnic areas

The most controversial of the newly prohibited behaviors was the ban on smoking within 25 feet of park patrons and in play areas and picnic areas. At the time, the department recommended a complete smoking ban, but the Park Board recommended, and the Superintendent concurred, on the limited ban. The Code of Conduct was updated in 2015, with the adoption of the complete ban on smoking in City parks.

This year we will be proposing additional changes to the Code of Conduct. Working with the Recreation Division, we have identified three behaviors to add to the prohibited list of behaviors indoors within our recreation facilities:

1. No use of bikes, skates, skateboards in parks and recreation facilities
2. No pets, except service animals, in parks and recreation facilities
3. No bathing, shampooing or washing clothes in restrooms, except those with designated shower or washing facilities

A 4th prohibition will be proposed prohibiting people from going out onto frozen ponds or lakes. While we were very fortunate this winter to not have any accidents at Green Lake when it was frozen, we had no rule for the police to cite when they responded to our requests to tell people to get off the Lake.

As staff work over the next several months to bring a specific proposal to you:

- Are there other revisions we should be considering?
- What are your thoughts about the revisions we are currently thinking of?
- What level of public review do you think these additions to the Code of Conduct warrant?

Commissioner Wright responded that she believed the prohibition on the use of restrooms was ill-timed, as there are few opportunities for the homeless to bathe and wash their clothes. Commissioner Wright suggested making the use of restrooms item informational, rather than a prohibited use in the Code of Conduct, noting it is not humane to exclude people from restroom use.

Old/New Business

The Commissioners discussed how they can best respond to the public when an issue is presented to them during the oral communications from the audience part of the meeting, but where there is no formal request for input from the department. The Board decided to have this issue be included on the agenda for their upcoming retreat.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

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