

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
September 28, 2017

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>
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Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Andréa Akita
Dennis Cook
Marlon Herrera
Evan Hundley
William Lowe, Vice Chair
Kelly McCaffrey
Rachel Anne Williams

Excused:

Tom Byers, Chair
Barbara Wright

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Christopher Williams, Deputy Superintendent
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

The meeting is held at 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Lowe calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Commissioner Lowe calls for approval of the Consent Items: the September 28 agenda and September 14 meeting minutes; Commissioner Hundley moves, Commissioner Herrera seconds and the Consent Items are approved unanimously.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

Jennifer Reese – President of Friends of Seattle Olmsted’s Park (FSOP) came to show their support for restoring viewpoints as the Olmsted plan envisioned. She describes Olmsted’s philosophy on views and parks – essential to urban living to find respite for robust living. The Olmsted’s emphasized access for all. They preserved views in their plan.

Doug Luetjen – FSOP President-Elect; he heard, in conversations with SPR and volunteers from Colman Park there needed to be historical context for Colman Park Vista. He prepared a document to provide that historical context. The Vegetation

Management Plan (VMP) must have historical context and be consistent with the historical context. He agree to be a resource for this Board and to educate community on Olmsted parks and advocate for the Olmsted parks.

Gerry Bresslour – Colman Park Vista, Superintendent met with the volunteers to provide a preview. He asks the Board to not make a recommendation until they have reviewed what the Friends of Colman have given them. The DON grant expires tomorrow and the volunteers asked for an extension but it was declined because SPR has taken over the VMP for the park. He asks the Board to recommend extending the grant to pay a consultant to work on the project. The volunteers would like to hire Eliza Davidson to assist with a plan to perform restoration of steep slopes.

Kim Freeman – Neighbor in Colman Park - She misses the views from her house. She is upset that these trees are there and the neighbors feel neglected. She would like the Park Board to take some action.

Linda Finney – attempted to work collaboratively with spr; provides background information regarding the park. They wanted to create an Olmsted vision for the park. SPR staff encouraged to continue through the process for the park.

Florence Peterschmidt – The community group participated in a grant-funded public process to shape the outcome of this project to ensure it was fair, transparent and legitimate; SPR staff canceled meetings and has not been responsive. There is a lot of neglect in that forest. They feel undermined instead of empowered. SPR continues to obstruct the project.

Eve McClure – Listened to the Board when they asked the community for areas of agreement; SPR has not been supportive or responsive to the wishes of the community. SPR says they want to collaborate but the volunteers do not feel this is so. Now, SPR took the VMP away from the community. Eliza Davidson should oversee the completion of this project. She sees a way to move forward while maintaining environmentally critical areas and being true to the Olmsted legacy.

Evan Wright – This is not a transparent process; the VMP was taken away from the community. He questions where the guarantee is that the plan will honor the community intent and honor the vista. He is extremely frustrated by the process and they would like the partnership, support and advocacy of the Board.

Margy Bresslour – Colman Park Project – The community has attempted to restore the park within and outside the community. There has been a lack of accountability, misrepresentation and direction change, inconsistencies throughout this process with the department. Many people in the community came to provide their feedback. SPR has taken the project away from the community. SPR will only allow 2 narrow

windowed view corridors. SPR has mismanaged this park for years. They request the department hire their consultant to influence the VMP.

Adrienne Caver-Hall – She is here as a Seattle resident. She grew up across the street from Colman Park. Her parents and neighbors loved the view; SPR has ignored them and their beloved view. She and her neighbors are tired of the lack of respect related to this issue. The view played a big part in her life when she was growing up. She states this is an obvious sign of institutional and structural racism.

John Wright – Colman Park Vista Restoration Project; he says this could be the poster child for partnership between a community group and city government. This project has so much community support, SPR should try to find ways to say yes. This community has worked so hard on this project and they deserve an explanation for why they can't get to yes.

Jonathan Mark – Strategic Planning for Facilities – He requests the department include all recreation in the surveys. The recreation demand study omitted museums, the zoo and aquarium. He asks for clarification about the parking situation at Volunteer Park and whether the Seattle Asian Art Museum expansion will open the lower loop road to cars. He is concerned because parking is full many days.

Elise Wright – Supports the Colman Park Restoration project – there was a beautiful view called Scenic View Drive 3; she does not live in the neighborhood but she has family in the neighborhood. One day before the DON grant is withdrawn, SPR pulled the rug out from under the community.

Fred Hayes – The Board of Park Commissioners brought the Olmsted brothers out to Seattle to create the original plan. Since his childhood the community liked to survey the views. Benefits from beautiful views are physical and emotional.

Adam O'Sullivan – Supports Colman Park Vista Project; he is a forest steward. He is in the park frequently and he is disappointed in how neglected it is. It is not inviting and poses a public safety issue. There is evidence of encampments. SPR staff caught shoveling invasive species into the steep slope of the park.

Update: Colman Park Restoration Project

Deputy Superintendent Williams acknowledges the view experience is part of the Seattle experience. Superintendent Aguirre met with the community to provide clarity and prescribe a pathway forward.

Principles laid out:

- There will be a gradual removal of trees with views restored over a period of time.

- They will modify the VMP to support gradual removal of trees. SPR is uncomfortable cutting many trees all at once.
- SPR will work with Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) and neighbors to restore the native vegetation, remove, and replant trees on the hillside.
- The department supports creating view corridors instead of sweeping vistas. The percentage of views to be restored is to be determined.
- SPR will establish an oversight committee to review progress over a period of time.
- The Superintendent is making a difficult decision without a Board recommendation.

SPR supports the volunteers in our system. Volunteers donated over 400,000 hours throughout the year. SPR is grateful to them.

Superintendent Aguirre supports views at formal viewpoints; especially when it doesn't destabilize steep slopes. The Environmentally Critical Areas Ordinance is designed to protect hillsides with steep slopes.

Superintendent Aguirre is uncomfortable asking for an exception for Colman Park Vista, instead emphasize he would like to practice stewardship. SPR recognizes the Olmsted vision and will continue to provide view corridors.

They support tree canopy thinning through removal and pruning and replacing with other trees and native vegetation over 5-8 years.

They are exploring funding for restoring views.

Challenge is maintaining views after they are restored. There is no plan to maintain views and they will be looking at that in the next round of Park District funding.

The department will assign staff to work with the community on the VMP, that incorporates edits.

SPR supports maintaining and preserving urban forests. The best practices have changed for formal views in the last several years because of increased value forests play in the city in terms of slope stability and ecological value.

He feels they can come up with a compromised outcome community can live with and SPR can support.

They will set up a system so the community is engaged with oversight and implementation.

Deputy Superintendent Williams says SPR owns much of the frustration because of the lack of decision-making by the department and how slow the process is going.

Board Discussion

SPR staff met with staff from Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection – the Big Leaf Maple tree stumps have a massive ecological function through holding up the hillside. They can be removed as other plants get established.

DON grant expiration – In order for the DON grant to move forward, SPR would have to say they support the VMP as written, and SPR does not support the way in which the volunteers want to move forward.

DON extension – The Board mentions they are concerned the matching grant value would not be recognized or achieved. They are disappointed by the generalities about landslides and views without concerns about the community. They are concerned about the lack of specificity around the percentage of views the department is willing to create.

Deputy Superintendent Williams provides more detail regarding the timeline for the project moving forward:

Timeline:

Planning Phase: Complete the VMP

October 2017 – July 2018 – Create VMP for Colman Park with GSP consistent with Forest Restoration Best Management Practices; and relevant city codes for environmentally critical areas.

Phase 1: Invasive Plant Removal

August 2018 – December 2019

Phase 1: Invasive removal - including pruning; removing invasive plant material; and improving hedge. Progress reports with site photos will be submitted after completion.

Phase 2: Native Plant Installation

October 2019 to March 2020 – Follow-up invasive plant removal; planting native trees, shrubs and groundcovers.

Phase 3: Plant Establishment

March 2020-March 2021

Invasive plant removal, with a focus on plant establishment; weeding, mulching and watering.

Phase 4: Long-term Stewardship and Maintenance

July 2021- December 2024

Final phase to restore areas looking for new invasive plants and social impacts; gsp will only move into phase 4 after goals and views are recovered.

Deputy Superintendent Williams acknowledges there is a lot of work to do to move forward.

The Commissioners recognize that research and best management practices are at conflict with the needs/wants of the community, not to mention the liability as a land management agency with the steep slopes.

The Commissioners request SPR compromise on percentages of views to allow as much vista as possible, while maintaining the stability of the hillside. They also suggest SPR consult with Eliza Davidson, who the community feel is a good resource.

This will be implemented with a lot of community input and compromise. Views are iterative and subject to editing and change.

Lessons learned – communicate with the group early on to engage and maintaining a realistic approach.

It took time for SPR to get to a set of decisions; there is a trust issue. Deferred maintenance is an issue for this department all over the city, but Deputy Superintendent Williams acknowledges certain areas of the city have received more attention than others due to past inequity.

SPR will look at many criteria for slope stability.

Possibly shift funds over to view maintenance so this does not continue to happen.

SPR staff will return to the Board at the beginning of 2018 with a more detailed scope and schedule. Between now and January SPR staff developing the implementation plan.

When will Colman Park volunteers get some relief? Deputy Superintendent Williams responds that if planning goes well, the community could some work started in the 2nd quarter 2018 for removal of some plants and planting in the fall.

The Board tells Deputy Superintendent Williams that this community has spent much time, energy and emotion on this project; and they deserve to have some answers and some satisfaction.

Presentation: Facilities and Programming Plan 2040

Presented by Kevin Bergsrud, Planner, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Written Briefing

Date: September 28, 2017
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Kevin Bergsrud, Senior Planning and Development Specialist
Subject: Recreation Facilities and Programming Strategic Plan 2040

Requested Board Action

This briefing paper provides an overview of the *Recreation Facilities and Programming Strategic Plan 2040* (temporary title). We anticipate that the planning process will begin within the next two to three months, after conclusion of the consultant selection process.

At this time, no action from the Board is requested; however, we anticipate involvement from the Park Board throughout the planning process.

Project or Policy Description and Background

This briefing paper focuses on the background for developing the *Recreation Facilities and Programming Strategic Plan 2040* and highlighting related policy issues.

The *Recreation Facilities and Programming Strategic Plan 2040* has its origins in the *Community Center Strategic Plan 2016* where it was stated that:

“SPR will undertake a comprehensive long-term planning process in 2017-2018 for the entire Parks and Recreation system. This system-level plan will consider how SPR can best use all of its assets, including community centers, pools, parks, and trails to serve the Seattle community.”

“The outcome will be a comprehensive 20- to 30-year program master plan that will inform all capital and programmatic investments system-wide. As part of this effort, SPR will establish a funding strategy to best meet system-wide operations and facility needs, including significant capital needs that have been identified in our community centers. This will inform the next round of funding through the Seattle Park District and consider other options to best address our significant needs.”

Earlier this year, SPR staff began researching best practices for developing a long-term strategic plan. The focus was to find plans which addressed the provision of recreational programming and facility needs. It was found that many park systems throughout the United States have recently completed similar plans. Examples include: Montgomery County (MD) Vision 2030 Strategic Plan, Toronto (ON) Recreation Service Plan 2013-2017, and Denver (CO) Parks and Recreation’s Game Plan Update 2017. From this research a scope of work was developed and distributed for review and comments within SPR. This led to developing the RFP for *Recreation Facilities and Programming Strategic Plan 2040* which was released on September 5, 2017.

We anticipate the work will include five major elements:

- A. Inventory: Programming, Facilities, Planning Contexts, Recreation Trends**
Planning Section staff are currently coordinating with other SPR divisions to collect facility and programming information. It is anticipated that the consultant will identify benchmark cities and national leisure and health trends for comparison.
- B. Public Involvement**
The consultant will be directed to conduct an in-depth, statistically valid resident survey to identify SPR program and programming use and frequency, program quality, and participation. This survey will be structured so questions may be used in future resident surveys.
- C. Analysis**
The analysis will identify opportunities and service needs for programming and facilities, as well as opportunities for future revenue sources and budgets.
- D. Identify Future Facility Needs and Desired Programming**
Three scenarios will be developed which will identify facility needs to meet resident’s desired future programs and programming. The Plan may include strategies for repurposing facilities based on future recreation trends and/or capital needs.

The Plan will consist of four planning documents:

1. Recreational Facility and Programming Strategic Plan 2018-2024 to guide the upcoming Park District funding cycle;

2. Recreation Facility and Programming Strategic Plan 2040 to guide facility development to the year 2040;
3. Prioritization and Funding Plan to guide priorities and funding for both the short term and long-term; and the
4. Joint Athletic Facilities Development Plan 2018.

Public Involvement Process

SPR will be working with the consultant to develop a comprehensive outreach strategy. We will utilize a wide array of mechanisms to gather feedback from City residents, historically underrepresented communities, partner organizations, and service providers. A goal of the outreach is to identify existing recreation program participation and future program demands. The RFP specifically asks for unique approaches for engaging underserved communities, a variety of age groups, and new residents.

Key Issues

Over the course of this project key questions and issues will be brought before the Board.

Budget

The budget for this plan comes from the Planning and Development Division’s operating budget.

Project Schedule

RFP Consultant Selection	Sep-Nov 2017
Consultant Contract Execution	Dec 2017- Jan 2018
Consultant Work: including public involvement; facility inventory and assessment; data analysis; etc.	Jan-Mar 2018
Develop Action Steps	Jun-Jul 2018
Develop Prioritization & Finance Plan	Jun-Jul 2018
Publish Draft Plan for Public Review	Sep-2018
Board of Park Commissioners Final Presentation	Oct-Nov 2018

Additional Information

Kevin Bergsrud, Project Manager
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Project Information can be found at:
 Project webpage: <https://www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/do-business-with-us/current-opportunities/strategic-plan-2018-2040-rfp>

For Comments and Questions, please e-mail:
facilityprogramming2040@seattle.gov

Discussion

This facilities plan was identified in the Community Center Strategic Plan that was put together earlier this year to identify parks facilities related to programs and how much programming goes on in facilities.

This is a long-term plan to look at recreation trends, which will include public involvement and resident surveys about what people want to see in the future and establish what residents want in their facilities.

An update to the Joint Athletic Field Development Plan will be included to follow up on the Joint Use Agreement SPR has with Seattle Public Schools. SPR will work with public schools to inventory private schools/athletic facilities in Seattle.

SPR anticipates the process finishing by December 2018 and it will be used to inform the spending plan for the next 6-year cycle of the Park District.

Kevin reviews the different ways other cities gathered and shared their data.

Toronto looked at all programs in the city – nonprofit, city and commercial to find gaps in service and to see how people are recreating.

Boulder – Used a resident survey to find out their priority for programming; more drop in use is more of a priority.

SPR staff are working on a Request for Proposals to find a consultant with experience to perform the following:

- Develop plan to meet Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) Standards for National Accreditation.
- Develop and conduct in-depth, statistically valid resident surveys.
- Conduct public outreach to underserved populations, new residents, populations by generations (e.g., Millennials, Boomers, etc.).
- Conduct focus groups with SPR staff, recreation groups and non-parks organizations.
- Develop future recreation program and programming, and facility scenarios.
- Develop short and long-term prioritization and financing plans

Concepts

- Inward looking plan emphasizing program & facility data, in-depth resident survey data and recreation trends analyses.
- Public involvement focus on reporting survey and analysis findings, program and facility scenarios.
- Does the Park Board have contexts and priorities for the plan?

Elements

- Inventory: Programs, Facilities, Planning Contexts, Recreation Trends
- Public Involvement
- Identify Future Facility Needs and Desired Programming

Inventory: Programming, Facilities, Planning Contexts, Recreation Trends

- Assess SPR facilities relative to existing and future program capacities.

- Planning Section staff coordinating with other SPR divisions to collect facility and program information.
- Utilize data and recommendations from existing SPR plans, e.g. 2017 Open Space Plan, etc.
- Identify benchmark cities.
- Identify national recreation, leisure and health trends.

Define consultant-led public involvement tasks. May include:

- Statistically valid survey to identify existing participation & future recreation program needs
- Open houses to introduce project, present findings & solicit comments on scenarios

Kevin asks the Board how they would like to participate in the planning process.

Identify future needs:

- Three scenarios will be developed which will identify facility needs to meet resident’s desired future programs and programming
- Anticipated that scenarios based on a variety of factors, economic, population growth, climate change, housing affordability and quantity
- What can SPR learn from other high tech cities with limited land area, high cost of housing, etc.?

Utah – Provided the public with options that related dollars spent to population and types amenities provided for each scenario. This was helpful in showing the community varying levels of needs/wants versus dollars spent.

Deliverables: 4 documents that fold into 1.

- Recreational Facility and Programming Strategic Plan 2018-2024 to guide the upcoming MPD funding cycle;
- Recreation Facility and Programming Strategic Plan 2040 to guide facility development to the year 2040;
- Prioritization and Funding Plan to guide priorities and funding for both the short term and long-term; and
- Joint Athletic Facilities Development Plan 2018.

Proposed project schedule:

RFP Consultant Selection	Sep-Nov 2017
Consultant Contract Execution	Dec 2017- Jan 2018
SPR Facility Inventory & Assessment	Jan-Mar 2018
Conduct User/Resident Survey	Feb-Mar 2018
Conduct Focus Group Meetings	Feb-Mar 2018

Synthesize Facility & Programming Data	Apr-May 2018
Develop Action Steps	Jun-Jul 2018
Develop Prioritization & Finance Plan	Jun-Jul 2018
Publish Draft Plan for Public Review	Sep-2018
Board of Park Commissioners Final Presentation	Oct-Nov 2018

Deputy Superintendent Williams mentions returning to the Board in the beginning to receive Board insight prior to starting the planning process.

The Commissioners agree the public involvement is crucial; important to hear the voices that are not heard.

The Board likes the idea of framing the questions in a different way.

The Commissioners express confusion about all of the plans out there and their relationship to one another. The Board requests a list of plans and how they relate to one another.

This will be Legacy Plan 2.0 with a greater level of detail.

The survey will repeat questions from previous EMC survey to determine how the department has been doing.

Planning doesn't need to wait for a funded initiative to make it happen.

Deputy Superintendent Williams offers to have Strategic Advisor, David Graves to present the Board with an inventory of studies and plans that have been done.

Kathy Nyland briefed the Board regarding the outreach and public involvement process Department of Neighborhoods is doing and the commissioners request they involve the community engagement commission.

Commissioner Herrera reminds Kevin to refer to the 2035 Citywide Comprehensive Plan.

Old/New Business

Park District Oversight Committee - The Boards would like to have more of a relationship and a stronger connection. SPR staff will organize a joint meeting with PDOC.

Commissioner McCaffrey mentions that at the Park District Oversight Committee, Commissioner Byers suggested a letter to the incoming Mayor to demonstrate our commitment to parks and recreation.

Rachel tells the Board she and Paula are working with the Department of Neighborhood to make their outreach to communities more meaningful and expand their reach to new populations. The Commissioners are interested, especially if it is on a Thursday night.

Margy Bresslour asks from the audience about the Colman Park Restoration Project Department of Neighborhoods grant, Deputy Superintendent Williams says he will talk with her after the meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 8:26pm.

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