



# Minutes

Board of Park Commissioners

100 Dexter Avenue North, Seattle 98109

Thursday, September 13, 2018

6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

## Commissioners:

Andréa Akita, Vice Chair

Dennis Cook

Marlon Herrera

William Lowe, Chair

José Ochoa

Tom Byers

Jessica Farmer

Evan Hundley

Kelly McCaffrey

## Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Lowe calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. He welcomes the new Get Engaged Commissioner José Ochoa. The commissioners introduce themselves.

Commissioner Farmer moves to approve the August 23 meeting minutes and it is seconded by Commissioner Herrera. Commissioner McCaffrey abstains. The minutes are approved. Commissioner Herrera moves to approve the agenda and Commissioner Farmer seconds, the Board approves the agenda.

## Superintendent's Report

Presented by Christopher Williams, Interim Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Park District Mid-term Report – The Mid-term report reviews the 3-yr performance of the Park District. Michele facilitated conversations with staff and the Park District Oversight Committee. SPR submitted the report to the Mayor's Office. Interim Superintendent Williams says the department will use this to engage communities about future investments.

Highlights: There is a demand for renovating and upgrading community centers. People want more flexibility with how SPR manages the tax rate to take advantage of increased assessed values. SPR capital projects are not competing well with large construction projects and results in no bids or extremely high bids. This means projects are costing more than they would in a different construction market. The department is trying to move from a project management approach to a system that manages lifecycle cost – the Asset Management Work Order system should help with this. Deferred major maintenance costs increased.

SPR staff launched the Viewpoint Advisory Team last night. This is as a result of the Colman Park Vista conversation. The focus is on management of current viewpoints and not creating a path to add new ones, the department does not want to take on new viewpoint because it is difficult to manage the ones we have. Interim Superintendent Williams reviews the process for new policies and procedures. SPR committed to maintain the views which is difficult during hard budget years. This committee will examine how to maintain the 16 existing viewpoints.

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>

Associated Recreation Council Presidents meeting – ARC functions as SPR’s agent for delivering programs to communities. There are 37 Advisory Council Presidents; ARC is a \$16 million organization. The funds from the advisory committees go into one pot to be distributed to the community center with the largest need. Commissioner Byers asks if the shared revenue system is well supported across the city. Interim Superintendent Williams says it is getting better but some communities are having difficulty. People who can pay subsidize for people who cannot. Expectations by the public and the staff that participation is subsidized for those who cannot afford it. Commissioner Cook mentions there’s an equity grant for people to apply for up to \$170,000. Leadership at ARC makes it clear that it’s the right thing to do. Commissioner Lowe mentions that during his time on the ARC Board, they worked hard to educate the communities about sharing resources.

Yesler Park Grand Opening – 300-400 people attended; it was a great event. SPR had \$3.8 million to build a park at Yesler. Seattle Housing Authority came to SPR and donated the land for a park and kicked in another \$1.1 million. Seattle Parks Foundation negotiated a lot of donations for this park. Ken Bounds, former SPR Superintendent worked behind the scenes to secure funding for this project. Many hands involved in bringing this park to light. The design and structures are so inviting.

Amy Yee Tennis Center – The Amy Yee Tennis Center did not receive the large project challenge fund because they didn’t get a match from the US Tennis Association. SPR hired a 3rd party consultant and their report showed a much larger cost to the project. The building would need to be substantially renovated or rebuilt. SPR will do some small capital projects to keep the doors open. It could cost up to \$25million to rebuild, \$12-15million to renovate. There is a feasibility study happening and depending on the results of that study will determine the next course of action. The Park District funds set aside for this project will be held until there is more information. The Advisory Council will need to be the lead to fundraise; SPR will lead the contracting efforts. SPR is putting the commitment in writing and set up a Project Advisory Team.

Interim Superintendent Williams mentions that the Park District Oversight Committee will need to make conditional awards if matches are dependent on grants.

Park Exclusion Ordinance – People are asking the Interim Superintendent to exclude people from the park due to bad behavior. In the past, the Public Defenders Association disagreed with this, so currently, people can only be excluded for 1 day. Seattle Police Department would like the exclusion to last longer than 1 day. This will come up at a future meeting after the department receives the Mayor’s direction.

Budget update – September 24, the Mayor will make her budget announcements. Ben Noble will come and talk about impacts to the department at the October 11 joint Park Board/Oversight Committee meeting. There is a \$50 million budget problem in the city due to fewer revenues from construction; a \$1 billion pension problem, the homeless crisis. There will be a discussion after the October meeting about impacts from the budget discussion.

Legislation – The Seattle City Council passed the following legislation for Seattle Parks and Recreation:

- Bush Hotel Easement – Bush Hotel will give SPR condo space to convert to a restroom for the public, a concierge area, and storage space.

- Jefferson Park Lawn Bowling – A lease agreement with Jefferson Park Lawn Bowling Club to continue using the facilities at Jefferson Park. Kudos to SPR staff on the work for this contract. The public benefits for this section will become the standard for contracts citywide.

PDD moving to 6th and Wall – SPR lease expires at the RDA building at the end of 2018. The owner is not willing to make improvements. SPR is working with the new building owner to develop space for approximately 144 people with capacity for growth. Many SPR staff are working in offices that need maintenance. City University will still be there.

## **Presentation: Waterfront Plan**

Presented by Joshua Curtis, Office of the Waterfront, and Heidi Hughes, Friends of Waterfront Seattle

Heidi and Joshua introduce themselves to the Board. Partnerships are the underlying foundation for this project.

The Waterfront Plan is a \$4.7 billion project. The tunnel will open later this year or early next year; the viaduct team will demolish the bridge, and the Office of the Waterfront will build up.

Colman Dock is doing a major renovation and will be done around the same time as the Waterfront Project.

Seattle Aquarium is planning a major expansion of their facilities.

The surface road will be rebuilt. The Office of the Waterfront will start working on the east-west connections and the adjacent parks and openspaces. The east-west connections will interface with many downtown neighborhoods.

\$300 million is privately funded from the \$700 million project total.

Joshua shows a map of the different areas of the project and discusses different aspects of the plan.

- Railroad Way will provide strong pedestrian connections to the stadiums
- The Promenade will include habitat beach, transit hub, historic piers and tourism.
- Pier 62/63 is currently being constructed and Waterfront Park redesigned. This is scheduled to be opened in 2019.
- Seawall is the foundation of this project. The walkway which will be part of the promenade, sits above the water, constructed of glass blocks, it allows cantilevered light to penetrate and provide light and food to the juvenile salmon.

Joshua shows before and after pictures of the waterfront. Promenade is the largest public arts project ever done and it includes natural landscaping, and a protected bike lane.

On the eastern side of the viaduct, there will be widened sidewalks and new storefronts. Heidi is working with local businesses to reorient towards the new park.

The design encompasses areas for social gathering.

The Promenade boardwalk is a 2-block section which will be a mixture of native and non-native plants and provide Green Stormwater Infrastructure and increases urban habitat.

The east-west connections will be improved and opened up, providing accessibility features such as elevators and signalized intersections.

#### Central public space

Overlook walk at Pike Street with a bridge that will bring you over the surface road and onto the top of the expanded Seattle Aquarium. During the public process, many people talked about how they were going to miss the views from the viaduct and this area will provide the same view. There will be integrated play areas built into the landscaping and the steps will form a natural amphitheater.

Commissioner Cook asks about the floating pool. Heidi says the permitting agencies did not want all the overwater coverage. It's in the parking lot for now.

Commissioner Akita thinks the project is quite spectacular. She asks how far north the waterfront project goes on Alaskan Way. The project follows the viaduct's path and turns off the waterfront. "Friends of" groups and Seattle Parks Foundation are looking to figure out connecting an urban pathway to the Olympic Sculpture Park. The seawall on that end will need to be replaced eventually. There are things that can be done to make it more pedestrian friendly.

The whole project will be done by 2023.

Commissioner Lowe inquires about ferry access and how they plan to address the homeless situation.

They will do a pilot program for piers 62/63 to see what programming works. The key is to have year-round activation that brings Seattleites to the Waterfront all year long.

#### Strategic plan 2012

Engaged broader business/philanthropic community in "how we get it done". Brought a framework to design, build, and operate a waterfront. Long-term stewardship carried out through a non-profit to raise funds and act as stewards. They established a public/private funding plan using state and city funding, philanthropy and a Property Owner Assessment (LID).

Researched best practices for different cities and different parks - found having nonprofit conservancy to leverage public/private funds was the best option with the most flexibility.

This relationship was memorialized in a resolution passed by City Council. Friends of Waterfront Seattle will manage permitting, planning events, and SPR will be there as concierge.

They have a 2-year agreement for management starting with piers 62/63 but will expand once more of the project is complete. Alaskan Way will be a park boulevard.

## **Friends of Waterfront Seattle**

Consistent, dedicated Parks team created to provide long-term, quality maintenance; funded by the City via Seattle Park District

- City maintains oversight of First Amendment (free speech events); delegates non-First Amendment permitting and concessions to Friends (similar to Westlake and Occidental)
- Friends provides programming (educational, cultural, recreational), safety and outreach, community partnerships; funded by Friends
- All revenue generated by Friends in parks and opens spaces is reinvested in the same spaces
- Friends provides annual report

Outreach fundraising and park programming

Integrated plan to hire an operations director to work hand and glove with the SPR team. Friends exists for no other reason than to create this public benefit.

Education and advocacy – There were over 400 public meetings and Friends received 10,000 public comments. Their goal is to restore access to the waterfront and expand the Olmsted Legacy of connecting parks and park boulevards.

The Friends group have been providing and will continue to provide programming for the waterfront, reaching out to diverse audiences through translating materials into different languages and advertising through ethnic media outlets. They emphasize inclusivity in their programming and their outreach and engagement.

University of Washington worked with the City on the seawall project. It is the largest incorporation of habitat features in a seawall in the world.

Friends would like to provide economic opportunities to low-income business owners through a partnership with Ventures which equips business owners with training and financial support.

The commissioners ask about how they will deal with the homeless situation. Heidi says they meet people where they are: Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion – bike team pairs with social service workers that builds relationships with the homeless people on the Waterfront. 31 participants in the 1st year and they are building infrastructure to help those who need help.

Challenges–

- Getting the Local Improvement District in place; getting it the right size and making it feasible. Projects get bigger as they go on, fortunately, there's a healthy reserve.
- Get people to use the park is challenging
- Bathrooms are a challenge now, but the porta-potties are very well maintained.

Friends is part of the Highline Network, they've been able to share and learn.

Commissioner Ochoa asks whether there will be Native American representation in the new waterfront plan. Heidi mentions two of the artists are Native artists and there will be other opportunities for Native American influence throughout the project.

The Commissioners are impressed with the thoughtfulness and very interested in getting an update as the project moves forward.

## **Briefing: Quarterly Communications Update**

Rachel Schulkin, Communications Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Rachel Schulkin introduces herself and provides an overview of what her team does. They handle the media, social media, answer the phones and emails, blog posts, newsletters (both internal and external), speaking points for Interim Superintendent Williams, and reports for the Mayor and elected officials.

SPR website has approximately 70-100k site visits each month.

Most people access the website from mobile devices, this is more stark with communities of color who rely more on their phones since they may not have desktop computers.

The websites are getting less and less traffic because of Google. SPR owns the Google business pages and can change them to keep the information accurate.

### **Social Media**

Twitter – 28,000 followers; Mayor Durkan has 10,000 and Seattle Police Department has 500,000+

Social media is the internet's town hall. People call government out and SPR staff need to be responsive; it is very transparent.

Facebook – 40+ pages; main page has over 7,000 followers. The most popular posts are job announcements and events.

Her team is starting on Nextdoor which will allow them to push content out that is neighborhood specific.

Instagram is very hip right now. They have over 1,000 followers and it's growing.

Her staff also answer the main phone line, receiving between 1300-1400 calls per month. Most calls are regarding park maintenance questions and event reservations.

They answer between 180-230 emails per month. Top email inquiries are regarding illegal camping or service requests.

They receive approximately 2-4 media inquiries a day. Top stories of the summer were about the multi-use trail pilot project, City Hall Park Activation, Homelessness, and the cannon removal at Woodland Park Zoo.

Overwhelmingly, people love Seattle Parks and Recreation.

Over the summer, they promoted events and reached large audiences through their social media campaigns.

What are the concerns?

- Illegal camping
- Off-leash dogs
- Broken equipment
- Trash
- Noisy events
- Goose poop
- Bad information

Her team is responsive. The community can reach out to SPR via phone, email, social media and the Find It Fix It App.

What's next?

- Reviving the internal newsletter
- Working closely with the Office for Immigrant and Refugee Affairs – translating press releases
- SurveyMonkey CX – Using it for event scheduling
- Sharepoint (internal employee hub)
- Focus more on Instagram and NextDoor
- Using more video
- Providing more engaging content
- Promoting good news stories to the media

The Communications Team is composed of 5 people, including Rachel. The Board is impressed with Rachel and her team. They do a lot of work.

Commissioner Byers asks about the internal communication and how the communications team gets information out. Rachel says it is tough to communicate with people who don't sit in front of a computer all day. One way Rachel quieted the noise, is to reduce the amount of communications coming out of the Superintendent's Office to one all staff email per day. They are working on how to get people to pay attention.

Interim Superintendent Williams adds there is a generational gap and some people are not as comfortable with technology.

This item is on the agenda for the Expanded Executive Team meeting to reinforce the idea with directors that information gets down to the ground level.

The Mayor's Office wants SPR to pilot a chat bot that could help people with easier inquiries.

## **Old/New Business**

Commissioner Herrera may be representing this Board on the Woodland Park Zoo Board of Directors starting in January 2019.

**There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 8:40pm.**

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
William Lowe, Chair  
Board of Park Commissioners