



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. The Board introduces themselves.

Commissioner Hundley asks whether he can see the consultant report for the Amy Yee Tennis Center.

Commissioner Lowe asks for approval of the consent items: the September 27 Agenda and the September 13 minutes. Commissioner Lowe notices errors in the attendance on the September 13 minutes and asks to let the minutes reflect that Commissioners Herrera and Byers were in attendance at the September 13 meeting. Commissioner Williams was marked present at the meeting and her term expired at the end of August. Commissioner Ochoa is our new Get Engaged member. Commissioner Hundley moves to accept as amended, Commissioner Byers seconds. The consent items are approved.

Public Comment

David Dougherty – Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks member. A member of the Viewpoint Taskforce – the viewpoints identified and designated through Seattle Parks and Recreation have no historical Olmsted connection. He is a member of the Magnolia Community Council; many years ago, the community worked with SPR to create a Vegetation Management Plan. This is a great pride to the community. The VMP needs to be updated. Ursula Judkins Viewpoint is the designated viewpoint but it is not accessible. The Magnolia Community Council would like to request to not put money into that park/viewpoint, and switch to the view corridors that are further along Magnolia Boulevard. He requests SPR work with the community to shift gears slightly to maintain views elsewhere.

Margie Bresslour – Colman Park Vista project, a community project heavily engaged by many in community. She would like to create a park aligning with Olmsted’s vision. She provides background information about their project. They had received grant funding from Department of Neighborhoods, hired a Geotech Consultant and an arborist. SPR has taken over the project and they no longer have the grant funding. She is delighted the task forces are happening. She encourages the Board to keep Colman in mind because it is badly neglected. She implores the Board to Expand consideration of historic Olmsted parks in viewpoints.

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

Evan Wright – Washington State Native Plant Society Masters student and part of the Colman Park Vista Project. He attended a task force meeting for viewpoints and noted that SPR staff limiting to existing designated viewpoint. A viewpoint is a park SPR has already committed to maintain in perpetuity. The process to select viewpoints was arbitrary and capricious. He feels the task force should have the ability to consider additional viewpoints. There are parks managed for views that are not designated viewpoints.

Superintendent's Report

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

Budget – The main goal in establishing the Park District was to protect SPR programming and maintenance. The department is committed to becoming a leaner organization, but the Park District insulates the department against budget swings. The InterLocal Agreement ensures a level of General Fund consistent with the rate of inflation.

Budget strategy divided into 4 categories -

- Equity Investments
 - SPR creating a dedicated Race and Social Justice support position
 - Additional funding for new parks/infrastructure
 - Late night programming
 - Recreation scholarships – access to opportunity
- Fee increases – across the board to cover labor costs
- Operating efficiencies – 11 vacant positions eliminated
 - Planning and Development Division - staffing efficiencies by reallocating staff working on capital projects salaries from General Fund to Park District.
 - Position budgeting change – Most positions within the organization increase incrementally over time. Instead of funding these positions at the highest level, SPR will move to fund to mid-step position. Finance will reevaluate after 18 months to determine if more funding will be needed. This takes into consideration not all employees stay in their position for the full time needed to reach the highest level.
 - Golf – The golf program was established as an enterprise function with the expectation that 5% returns to basic SPR operating needs. SPR will only be taking 2% moving forward resulting in \$400,000 being reinvested in the Golf program.
- Park District realignment
 - Interim Superintendent Williams explains the General Fund shift in this budget process. This amount grows with the rate of inflation bringing City contribution up to \$115 million. Working with the Mayor and City Budget Office, they moved \$10 million out of General Fund into the Park District and received \$10 million in REET funding. SPR didn't lose or gain anything in capital or operations side. The department lost flexibility in how the \$10 million can be spent because REET can only be used for capital spending.

- Capital investments
 - North Rainier landbanked site – \$1.3 million to develop this site
 - ADA compliance – SPR received many citations and they need to be corrected.
 - South Park – site plan and working with private partners on this donation.
 - Bitter Lake play area – replaces play area
 - Yesler crescent parks – City Hall and Prefontaine Park – planning and design
 - Lake City Community Center - \$3 million addition. SPR is conducting a feasibility study of building affordable housing on top of the community center. SPR will share the results with the Mayor and will be setting up a Project Advisory Team for the community center redesign.
 - Green Lake - \$1 million for schematic design; work with park planner and architect
 - Athletic field replacement and conversions – CBO will fund half and SPR will fund half.

- Other Capital
 - Administrative staffing relocation – move from RDA building to 6th and wall – reallocation of Park District earnings.

Belltown Community Center is closing – It is the lowest used with the lowest program registration. The lease is expiring at the end of 2018. The department is looking at other opportunities for public recreation in Belltown.

Volunteer program coordination reduction – Staff will continue to support volunteers with a focus on background checks. SPR will be structuring the system differently.

Myers Way Cleanup – Patrick is the onsite manager of encampment cleanup. Over 60 staff cleaned up over 90 tons of debris; created roads into the greenbelt to get access. Staff did this on a steep hillside with a variety of risks. Patrick and his team did a fantastic job.

October 11 Joint meeting – Ben Noble will brief the Boards on the budget trend for the City and how it will impact SPR and the Park District.

What impact will the reduction to service level have for people in their parks?

Parks are used more by more people so the type of work staff does will change. With more use and more demand – people will be asked to do more basic cleaning functions which detracts from the landscaping and horticultural aspects.

The tighter budget and the \$10 million in REET funding results in a loss of flexibility to respond to certain types of problems.

What form does the commitment to continue to provide \$10mil in REET funding take so it can be enforced? Interim Superintendent Williams says the public will need to pay attention and that's a good question for Ben Noble.

Commissioner Hundley asks if the city touched the Fund Balance? SPR responds the Rainy-day fund is gone.

Commissioner Akita points out that the midstep could be a tough fill if the General Fund isn't doing better.

Interim Superintendent harkens back to years past when the department had to cut hundreds of positions due to budget constraints. He emphasizes the Park District has protected the department against hemorrhaging employees.

Maintenance is important – the public trust erodes when a land stewardship responsibility erodes over a period.

Golf report – SPR has a structural/financial problem with golf. The consultant report is almost done. There are questions to answer. Does the department subsidize golf? If so, and at what level? Consultant completed the recommendations, but there is more staff work to do to develop a 5-7 year plan. Reassess where SPR is going with golf. Other uses for golf courses, other revenues for golf courses – special events, cross country? There are four public golf courses and two are not sustainable. The Board will want to ensure the policy makers view golf courses as park land. The department could use some support from this body. There is an opportunity for this group to play a role in keeping park land used for parks.

All golf courses have advisory boards and they've been consulted during this process. Would it be advantageous to have all the advisory teams under one umbrella – any model that cracks the funding/revenue problem should be considered.

Yesler crescent – Commissioner Herrera suggests Sound Transit may need space when they do their 5th avenue construction. Interim Superintendent Williams is open to ideas; SPR does permits and requires fee and mitigation – to offset redevelopment costs.

SPR has historically received funding for all the encampment cleanup, but there is none in the upcoming budget.

Conservation Corps – Any effort to ramp up funding for Conservation Corps to help with this? Interim Superintendent Williams has been speaking with leadership about this.

Is anyone keeping track of where the homeless end up when the encampments are removed? Unless programming and activation is part of cleanup the the homeless will return. Green Seattle Partnership restoration efforts, off-leash area are ideas being discussed for Myers Way.

The Board thanks Interim Superintendent Williams and staff for their time and efforts.

Partnership Spotlight: Downtown Seattle Association

Presented by Jennifer Casillas, VP Public Space Operations & Events, Downtown Seattle Association

Downtown Seattle Association is a nonprofit organization that has a strong partnership with SPR.

- Long time interest in Downtown's urban spaces
- Membership based organization; manages Downtown's BIA, the Metropolitan Improvement District (MID)
- Lead role in partnering with the City of Seattle to take on greater management role in Westlake and Occidental Parks

Seattle has been top 5 fastest growing cities for past 5+ years –urban park space is increasingly critical

- Increasing need for a new public-nonprofit partnership model Seattle's urban public spaces
- DSA, in partnership with the Alliance for Pioneer Square, Friends of Waterfront Seattle and the Seattle Parks Foundation, devised a strategy to turn these underutilized public spaces into vibrant urban parks
- On the horizon, Waterfront Park –a 26-block public park in Downtown Seattle

In 2014, DSA launched pilot partnership to manage Westlake and Occidental Parks. There is a five-year agreement and they are in their third year.

Friends of Waterfront – They are working with other nonprofits to provide information, success, and failures to inform their work as they move to become stewards of the new Waterfront Park.

DSA works closely with Seattle Police Department and other government agencies, and community groups.

Why did they start this? Increasing need for public/private partnerships; devise a strategy to turn these

Develop the plan – taking what has worked in other parts of the country – learned from those who have done it before.

Activation Goals

- Increase the overall number of park visitors;
- Seek a more even balance between men and women park visitors;
- Improve the overall attractiveness of the parks;
- Reduce the amount of observed illegal activity occurring in the parks;
- Establish sustainable financial model to support park activation efforts;
- Provide outreach and support to park visitors in need; and
- Explore the benefits that a community approach to park activation and management can offer.

Activation strategy

- Leverage public dollars for significant private investment
- Establish regular, daily programming
- Provide daily staffing and security
- Invest in new, colorful amenities and park beautification
- Outreach to individuals in need and work to connect with services

Experimental – personalities of the different parks has come out.

Leverage the holidays; carousel in Westlake and horse drawn carriages at Occidental

Created urban parks art program – providing small grants to artists

Staff – 7 days a week with overnight security

Funding – every dollar raised is reinvested in park activation; funding sources –

Key findings – gender balance tracked daily – which is shown to be a key gauge of health and safety. Counts and surveys (2x a year)

This information informs staffing and activation.

What's next?

- Continue to work with SPR and partners to provide programming and activation at Westlake and Occidental.
- Continue work on Waterfront and assist program expansion to other downtown neighborhoods.

Interim Superintendent Williams says the partnership seems to be going really well. Victoria Schoenburg is the Downtown Parks Manager and part of that is managing all downtown partnerships and she does a really good job.

Briefing: City Hall Park Activation

Victoria Schoenburg, Center City Parks Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Victoria attends a courthouse vicinity improvement committee that is run by the county. City, and county representatives and community stakeholders sit on this committee. They are looking for strategies to address criminal and negative activity. Interim Superintendent Williams asked SPR staff to put together an action plan for the short-term.

The Action Plan included improvements to lighting; tree pruning; put festival lighting between the Courthouse and the Park. Center City Parks brought in baseline efforts in the beginning of August with concierge, buskers, food trucks, games; cannot tackle the whole park but there is Seattle Police Department support their daily.

The regulars in the park are appreciative of the music and new amenities.

The Adirondack chairs allow the homeless people places to sit. King County employees are using the food trucks.

The Northwest corner is still problematic but overall it has been great.

The funding for activation runs out in November. There is \$500,000 for long-term planning for yesler crescent in the new budget to redesign the park.

Center City unit was established in 2006 to provide activation in downtown parks. The County has not given support to this beyond storage space. The County has been clear they do not have the funding to reorient their front door.

Commissioner Lowe says the streets being cleaned and the lighting helped in a great way. The fountain needs to have water in it. The SPD presence has been a great deterrent.

SPR staff are great and they develop relationships with the park regulars.

Public Hearing and Possible Vote: Riverview Playfield Change in Hours

Patrick Merriam, Parks Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Written Briefing

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 21, 2018
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Patrick Merriam, Manager, Park Resources
Subject: Change in Park Hours for Riverview Playfield

Requested Board Action

In response to concerns regarding illegal behaviors occurring at the Riverview Playfield and complaints from people with homes adjacent to the park, Parks would like to change the operating hours of the park from 4:00 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.

Based on Seattle Municipal Code Section 18.12.245, the Superintendent, in conjunction with the Board of Park Commissioners, holds a public hearing and the Board makes a recommendation on whether to make the change in hours. This decision is based on staff evaluation and public testimony. The Board's vote can occur the same day as the presentation of the evaluation or at a later date should the Commissioners require additional information to make a decision.

Staff Recommendation

Riverview Playfield meets the established criteria to permanently change the operating hours. Staff recommend approval of changing the operating hours to 6:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. This adjustment in hours will reduce the illegal behaviors and reduced the number of complaints and negative impacts on the Riverview neighborhood.

Park Description and Location

Riverview Playfield, located at 7226 12th Avenue SW, Seattle, WA, 98106 is categorized as a Neighborhood Park. The park has a playground, multiple sports areas, and pedestrian paths running throughout the park.

Issues

At this site, there have been continuous complaints about illegal behavior occurring at the park. Drinking and vandalism occur in the evening hours and people congregate at all hours. Neighbors and Parks staff cite four specific reasons for requesting the change in hours:

- 1) Maintenance workers are burdened with cleaning beer cans, broken glass, and laden trash. The park benches were often found damaged.
- 2) Tagging is pervasive especially late at night and after the park has closed. At sites with similar issues, changing the closing time to 10:00 p.m. enabled SPD to do a sweep through the park and enforce the closure time.
- 3) Neighbors frequently call 911 because of the late night activities which often include loud and boisterous behavior, in addition to illegal activity.
- 4) Community members do not feel safe confronting those who loiter in the park after hours and the earlier closure time enables the police to enforce the rules.

Additional Information




Patrick Merriam: Patrick.Merriam@Seattle.gov

Attachments

Map

Riverview Playfield

7226 12th Ave. SW

-  Park Boundary
-  Parcel Boundary
-  Right of Way



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Map Date: 8/1/2010



**Seattle
Parks & Recreation**
healthy people healthy environment strong communities



Presentation and Discussion

Riverview Playfield experienced a high volume of vandalism and late at night Seattle Police Department calls due to loud noises and vandalism. SPR, with the support of SPD and the Community, issued a temporary change in hours. Restroom was lit on fire and caused much damage.

Commissioner Hundley's school uses the park; it seems people moved to Myers Way instead of further into the park. Patrick mentions closing at 10pm has reduced the amount of clean up for staff.

Barb Biondo – Resident of Riverview - She does crime prevention with Seattle Police Department. She is strongly in support of changed hours; she appreciates the closing gates at 10pm. Webster Avenue runs next to the park and she sees people hanging out there now and there's a problem with RV's. The space needs activation and increased guardianship of that area; it absorbs a lot of the illegal behavior. She suggests an improved connectivity between the Duwamish Trails and Riverview playfield.

In the past, the parks closed at Dusk, but this caused enforcement issues with Seattle Police so the department went through a process and changed parks hours to 4:30am-11pm. The department felt these hours were reasonable to neighborhoods and communities. Today, more communities are requesting shorter hours and SPR tries to accommodate those. Some lighted fields stay on later.

Commissioner Byers moves to approve the recommendation to change the hours, Commissioner Hundley seconds, and the Board approves unanimously the motion to change the hours at Riverview Playfield from 4:30 a.m. - 11 p.m.

The public doesn't receive notification except that the rainbow sign changes.

Public Comment – cont'd.

Skip Knox – Came to talk with the Board about the Cheasty Natural Area. He is interested in the process/progress of the mountain bike trail at Cheasty Greenspace. If they are considering putting a bicycle trail through the natural area, he asks the Board that it doesn't happen. He is aware of all the arguments for/against. He thinks SPR should initiate a designation of natural areas; the ecosystem is under tremendous strain and people are cooking it to death.

He also asks why Steinbreuck Park is not considered a viewpoint?

Presentation: Viewpoint Advisor Team

Kathy Nyland, Strategic Advisor and Jon Jainga, Natural Resources Unit Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Written Briefing

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 27, 2018

To: Board of Park Commissioners

From: Jon Jainga, SPR Natural Resources Manager and Kathy Nyland, SPR

Subject: Viewpoint Advisory Team

The purpose of the memo is to describe the process to engage research and community in creating a plan to better serve our viewpoint parks. This includes convening of a Viewpoint Advisory Team, consisting of internal and external stakeholders and technical experts. This document also includes information about the history of these designated viewpoints, and the objectives and desired outcomes of this approach.

The September 27 meeting will serve as an informational briefing and we hope to return to the Board of Park Commissioners in early November with a report out from the Viewpoint Advisory Team and share the options we are exploring as next steps.

Project Process and Background

As part of our 2018 work plan, SPR has committed to reviewing and updating our viewpoint park policies. This includes designation, criteria, examining current practices, as well as developing sustainable maintenance strategies, policies and funding.

Context:

Seattle is known for its natural beauty. Our parks and open space contribute to making this region a destination. There's a reason why Seattle often ranks as one of the most livable cities. We are surrounded by classic icons such as Mount Rainier, the Cascades, and the Space Needle. We offer park spaces to take in these iconic views to locals and tourists alike.

Many of these viewpoints were designated several decades ago. Since then criteria, policies and regulations have changed, including environmental standards and best practices associated with maintenance. Any recommendations about proposed work that pertain to viewpoints must be consistent with Best Management Practices, as well as local, state, and federal regulations, e.g., Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) or Shorelines.

Objectives:

To develop a reliable, consistent and sustainable system that maintains our designated public viewpoints.

Process:

The process includes an emphasis on data collection and research as well as a thorough assessment of our current practices and conditions of the viewpoint parks. This process will involve:

- **Technical Team** is a multi-disciplinary effort, consisting of SPR staff, SDCI, and other Subject Matter Experts (SME) who collect data, research other jurisdictions, identify best practices, and identify issues for development of options. Works closely with and is responsive to the Advisory Team. The

Technical Team will conduct: site evaluations, inventory critical areas, document conditions (including views, vegetation, and any significant features such as slope/topography). The group will also look at national standards and best practices that have been identified over recent years.

- **Advisory Team** consisting of representatives of SPR, Board of Park Commissioners, and community members. Meet up to four times to receive presentations and needed information to help formulate options. SPR anticipates that the research and analysis will result in identification of a range of options for changes in how services are provided throughout our viewpoint parks, including the possibility of funding needs. The Advisory Team will also help SPR identify options to include to the Superintendent and Park Board, including pros and cons of each possibility.
- **Superintendent** will review the options presented, deliberate and ultimately make his recommendation based on the information presented.
- **Demonstration sites**, or pilot parks, to implement ideas and recommendations. This will allow us to “course correct” as necessary before implementation across all designations.
 - Proposed demonstration sites include:
 - Admiral Way Viewpoint
 - Dr. Jose Rizal Park
 - Hamilton Park
 - Sunset Hill Park

Advisory Team Details

In order to do this, the Advisory Team working group will:

- Hold meetings that are open to the public, with times and locations being announced on SPR’s website with advanced notification
- Receive briefings and presentations on relevant research and analysis, and provide feedback that guides further work
- Become familiar with the designation process, and those parks currently/officially deemed as such
- Become familiar with the conditions at the determined (pilot) parks
- Become familiar with the current operations of our maintenance staff
- Become familiar with other alternative service delivery models used by other jurisdictions
- Receive input from the general public and internal stakeholders
- Generate ideas and possible options for operations
- Provide feedback on draft materials provided by SPR
- Think BIG picture on city-wide needs

The members are expected to:

- Attend four meetings of the Advisory Team, plus other public meetings if needed
- Read the materials provided prior to the meetings, and come prepared for discussions
- Follow up on agreed group norms
- Be a valued contributor whose efforts and interests are appreciated

The members are not expected to:

- Open up the process for future designations
- Bypass regulatory standards and fair labor practices
- Focus on neighborhood specific wants

The Advisory Team will begin considerations in September, and will continue deliberations and discussions through October, with the expectations of a final presentation of options to occur in late October.

This working group will meet at the Dexter Board Room on the following dates:

- September 12
- September 26
- October 10
- October 24

Goals

Both working groups are important and needed to develop a comprehensive data-driven analysis of various options for the future of our viewpoint parks. The efforts described will help determine a maintenance strategy, policies and budget to achieve desired results.

The final deliverable will be a report to the Superintendent which will include:

- The options developed
- The process for option development
- Data collected and analyzed
- Public outreach and input

Additional Information

<http://www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/special-initiatives-and-programs/viewpoint-advisory-team>

Contact

Kathy Nyland

Phone: 206.684.7046

Email: kathy.nyland@seattle.gov

Attachments

- Item A. Geographic Map- Shows all (16) designated viewpoint parks.
- Item B. Matrix of elements within viewpoint parks
- Item C. Designation process, DPP 060-P 2.17

The Viewpoint Advisory Team is charged with developing a set of recommendations to create a reliable system to maintain the 16 designated viewpoints with an emphasis on data collection and research. The process is underway.

The Viewpoint team has met twice. They have learned the history, discussed criteria, challenges, and the opportunities.

There is not enough time for SPR to maintain every single tree in the system and priorities have to be made.

Public safety and health are the two main goals.

Jon Jainga says the group is starting with the 16 designated viewpoints, which were created in 2001.

Some of the sites are on steep slopes, some are in poor condition.

Within the job of viewpoints maintenance, general grounds maintenance takes up 80% of crew time. This leaves 20% of their time to address all the other needs of a viewpoint.

SPR Tree management overview –

Historic maintenance practices are not sustainable

Past practices – do not have capacity to follow up with these practices;

Most of the time the tree crews are being reactive instead of proactive. Trying to plan better because, due to climate change Seattle is experiencing multiple wind events each year.

unsustainable –

Environmentally Critical Areas Ordinance

There is the potential to expand to other views in the future

Better management could include –

remove some large trees

restore slopes with lower growing native shrubs

manage for pollinators, slope stability and views

create pollination pathways

The team developed a matrix – that describes amenities, important facts, accessibility, whether there are ECAs, etc...

There is a column for viewpoints with slopes greater than 40% because they require special skilled arborists who repel down the slopes.

They will be compiling a report with recommendations and options and return to the Board for recommendations.

This exercise will be about management and policies.

They will have 4 demonstration sites

No new viewpoints will be a part of this process.

Interim Superintendent Williams adds the case the Colman Park people are trying to make is that the viewpoint they are trying to recreate is not a designated viewpoint. Similar to Steinbrueck and Magnolia. The designation creates an expectation of maintenance. This is going to become a bigger issue as maintenance dollars disappear.

Commissioner Byers says the purpose of this taskforce should be to create a natural route that people can take to protect the views they cherish. The City Council would have to fund it as they fund new parks. There are limits on the view taskforce, he suggests they make an addendum to the report to create a process for viewpoint designation.

Off-Leash Areas have an criteria and process for designation; could there be a similar process for designating a viewpoint?

Maybe create a list of public viewpoints the public want to have.

Jessica commends the teams commitment to preserving the trees. She agrees SPR does not want to continue bad practices. She questions how the department will maintain all of these viewpoints.

There is much conflict with how funding is spent and there is only so much funding to go around. SPR is looking for a sustainability model; there is a right number of viewpoints that the department can maintain.

The Commissioners ask how the department decides funding priorities? Interim Superintendent Williams responds that people pay a fee to use an athletic field and expect it to be maintained. The department prioritizes safety and health issues.

Old/New Business

Executive Committee – Commissioner McCaffrey states the need to resurrect the letter to Councilmember Juarez.

King County and Yesler crescent parks – the Board would like to advocate to the King County Council, Dow Constantine, and city elected officials asking for County allocation to continue the work Victoria and her team have done so well. This should take place soon. Interim Superintendent Williams suggests Victoria draft the letter; the Board approves.

Commissioner Hundley moves and Commissioner Farmer seconds, the meeting adjourns at 8:43 p.m.

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

APPROVED: _____ DATE _____
William Lowe, Chair

Board of Park Commissioners