



Minutes

Board of Park Commissioners

100 Dexter Avenue North, Seattle 98109

Thursday, January 10, 2019

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 asks for a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Herrera moves, Commissioner Byers seconds and the minutes are approved unanimously. Commissioner Hundley moves to approve the agenda, Commissioner Cook seconds and the agenda is approved.

Public Comment

Margy Bresslour – She has come to the Board meeting to provide a Colman Park Project update. Margy provides background information for the project. A Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) has not been completed yet. GSP has taken over the project at the request of SPR, but they do not consider historical significance and have ignored numerous community groups that have offered input. The VMP will need to address the Olmsted legacy.

Interim Superintendent Williams responds that SPR has been working diligently to follow through with their promises. SPR established the Viewpoint Taskforce and are developing the VMP which is in the draft phase. SPR hired the same consultant the community hired. Staff will brief Interim Superintendent Williams on the VMP and then return to the community for input. It will call for gradual tree removal on the hillside to allow for view corridors and maintain slope stability. Slope instability and the Environmentally Critical Areas Ordinance are still concerns. He understands their frustration, but SPR is working hard to do as they promised. The draft VMP will come out for vetting very soon. Interim Superintendent Williams received a letter signed by Colman Park project community leaders. SPR staff will be responding and having a meeting with the community. The type of conifers planted are low growing and have a good record of holding the hillside together.

Evan Wright – Evan is a certified master forest steward. Among the plantings are Douglas Firs which grow very tall. 2 challenges – 1) How to come up with a responsible plan to resolve the slope? And 2) How to deal with a department that has inherent dysfunction? This is a distraction and a problem. There have been delays, miscommunication, lack of accountability, misinformation to the Board and no opportunity for follow-up.

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

Presentation: 2019 Outreach & Public Engagement Toolkit

Presented by Paula Hoff and Kathy Nyland, Strategic Advisors, Seattle Parks and Recreation

The Board of Park Commissioners is a resource the public should know about. This outreach and engagement effort is to make them more visible and make the connection easier between the Board and various communities. Relationships and partnerships are all about outreach and public engagement. The commissioners are not expected to be the expert on all things SPR. Community members are being asked to provide input on what their community wants and needs.

Kathy reviews the tools: contact card on how to access SPR on social media; postcards for community members to write comments/questions; Frequently Asked Questions tailored for different SPR events.

There will also be a questionnaire both digital and electronic for the board members to provide feedback on their experience.

SPR staff will send a Sign-Up Genius with locations all over the city at various dates/times. It will be incumbent on SPR to get the commissioners the toolkit for their outreach and pick it up.

To complete the feedback loop, once the postcards are delivered to SPR staff, they will bcc the appropriate board members in the response.

Kathy emphasizes that this is one step in the long game of activating our champions.

Commissioner Lowe says seniors are having a difficult time with the new registration system. Paula will investigate it and get back to him.

The Board will have the ability to get briefed by staff to have context on issues that may come up at their event.

The contact cards will have Parks_Info email address for the SPR correspondence Manager to follow up with community members.

Quarterly Communications Update

Presented by Rachel Schulkin, Communications Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Rachel reviews the 2018 top sites and top blog posts.

Website

Top pages in 2018

1. Discovery Park
2. Picnic reservations
3. Rainier Beach Pool Schedule
4. Ballard Pool Schedule

5. Toddler Indoor Play Areas

Top blog posts in 2018

1. Recreation Brochures
2. Bicycle Sunday
3. Moorage Update
4. Scholarship Information
5. Green Lake Open Water Swim

Social media – Twitter

She finds that Twitter is great for in the moment alerts that are closure-related or power outages.

Top Tweets of 2018

- Burke Gilman Trail reopened.
- Power outage impact on childcare
- Arbor day celebration
- [#OptOutside](#) day
- Free admission at the Volunteer Conservatory now until 2/28.

Facebook

Top Facebook Posts

1. GasWorks play area Opens (89K)
2. Volunteer Park Conservatory (23K)
3. Pathway of Lights (11K)
4. Seattle Conservation Corp Story (10K) - Ruth, the Conservation Corps manager, applied for and Washington State Department of Labor & Industries approved, the Conservation Corps as a pre-apprenticeship program; once Corps members graduate they can go into an apprenticeship program. This is a huge deal for these formerly homeless people because they can earn a livable wage. SPR communications staff and the Mayor's Office shopped the story to various news agencies to have an exclusive story published at Crosscut.
5. Work for SPR Recreation (7.9K)
6. Delridge CC and Seattle Muni Court Event (7.7K)

Facebook events – In the last year, SPR hosted or co-hosted 28 events, **reaching 828.9K people**, with 58.4K people responding as “going” or “interested”.

News/Media Inquiries

Top stories of 2018 – Top Stories of 2018

1. Is it safe to swim in Seattle's Green Lake?
2. Why don't police enforce laws against camping in Seattle parks?
3. Schmitz Preserve Park donation
4. Fairy tale with a soulful twist (Teen Summer Musical)
5. Seattle parks and greenbelts are too wonderful to be trashed

Facebook events and twitter are very well used and the most popular ways to access department news.

SPR relaunched their internal newsletter - highlighting great work from staff; a Question & Answer section which allows for more transparency; and, a survey for SPR staff feedback.

Successes

- Targeted media pitches: Conducted targeted media pitches, including a story on the Seattle Conservation Corps that was covered by Crosscut with a reach of 91k.
- New social media platforms:
 - Nextdoor: SPR began posting about events and activities on Nextdoor. Our analytics show Nextdoor posts have one of the greatest reaches of all our social outlets, averaging approximately 20K views.
 - Instagram: SPR re-dedicated its' efforts to promoting their Instagram page and are now regularly posting on this platform.
- Executive Report: SPR responded to a MO request to reformat the Mayor's Weekly report into a more succinct, high-level report. They received feedback that SPR's report is among one of the best formatted/edited reports!
- Public Benefits: SPR began promoting their partners and the public benefits they provide through the web, blog and social media platforms, with plans to refine and expand this effort in 2019.
- Interactive social media campaign: Launched a creative voting contest on social media to determine the images SPR will use on their new membership cards.

Commissioner Lowe asks Rachel to look into the Youth in Law forum, which brings together staff from the court system, youth advocates, and Seattle Police Department. It works to bridge the disconnect between youth and law enforcement.

Commissioner Byers asks if there are conversations about expanding the Conservation Corps. Interim Superintendent Williams replies he discusses with the Mayor's cabinet about opportunities to hire the corps and other departments have offered work for them. The department is thinking about it for the next Park District funding.

Superintendent's Report

Presented by Interim Superintendent Christopher Williams

Gary Gaffner, long-time park advocate and all-around nice person, passed away on December 18. He regularly and consistently attended these meetings. He will be missed.

Superintendent Search – The Mayor's Office has appointed Commissioner Hundley to the Superintendent Search committee as a representative from the Park Board.

Magnuson Park study – 400 new residents in Magnuson Park once Mercy Housing opens. SPR staff are thinking about what kind of partnerships to leverage for the stewardship of the park. Is there Public Development Authority potential with current residents or does SPR need to build that capacity?

Yesler Crescent Park – The budget added \$750,000 for Prefontaine and City Hall Park. These parks are so integral to how the other operates. There are many questions and challenges. SPR staff put together a scope and timeline to return to Councilmember Bagshaw in February. Staff are thinking about guiding principles to approach the redevelopment of the parks; the neighborhood ownership after 5pm is almost non-existent.

Commissioner Byers recalls that after Victoria presented to the Board; the Board wrote a letter to King County Superior Court suggesting the county invest some money for the park. King County replied that they already give money through the King County Levy and SPR should reprioritize other things to continue activation and programming in the park. SPR crews clean the park. The King County Levy is up for renewal in 2020.

Lake Union Ferry – The Mayor has formed an Inter-Departmental Team (IDT) from Finance and Administrative Services, SDOT, King County, King County Ferries, WSDOT Ferries, and SPR – to take an exhaustive look at on-land issues with having a ferry at South Lake Union Park. The Deputy Mayor wants SPR to pursue this, so the IDT is looking at what barriers there are to making this successful. Next month SPR will bring it to the Mayor's Office and then return to the Park Board.

Issues:

- I-42, which is a citizen-led initiative to ensure SPR property is only used for park and recreation purposes;
- SPR received grants from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, which contain restrictions on how the land is used.

Assuming this went forward, there will be on-land impacts and cost of additional foot traffic in the park. There would need to be new facility costs written into an agreement with the ferry operators.

Golf program revenues are up! SPR needs a plan to sustain where the program is and develop new revenue sources. SPR entered into a contract with top tracer, which provides screens that track the path and flight of the ball. Projected increase in revenue of \$175,000. The golf study continues to evolve, not ready to shutter doors on the golf program until more solutions have been tried. Interbay and Jefferson driving ranges will have the tracer.

The initial consultant report did not have anything that could be used or shared. It did not have concrete sustainable solutions to improve the financial situation.

Still negotiating on construction of clubhouse for First Tee.

High schools use the golf courses at no cost. SPR is looking at and exploring new partnerships.

Art Exhibit at South Lake Union Park. SPR staff met with representatives from Microsoft to discuss the installation of a climate change art project in Lake Union Park. It features the spine of a ship with a prow of a woman's bust; Microsoft will move it to Lake Union Park. The exhibit focuses on sea level rise; shows boats above the park because of climate change. It will be installed by June 8 which is World Ocean Day. SPR staff are working with the Aquarium and MOHAI. This exhibit hopes to raise awareness about climate change. The project cost is about \$1 million. SPR has thought about and will need to ensure the weight of the sculpture will not adversely impact the park.

Women of the World swim has been challenged by an individual as discrimination. It was originally a rental program, but it didn't seem right to continue. SPR worked with the Law Department to find a way to routinize it as a regular program offering as it responds to religious needs of the community. The individual says it violates his rights as a man, to swim. SPR is standing their ground. If a King County Superior Court judge tells them to change it, they will.

SPR Tree Crews. With the recent windstorms, SPR tree crews worked nonstop all weekend until Monday morning. There were nine significant tree incidents across the city.

Briefing: 2019 Department Work Plan

Presented by Interim Superintendent Christopher Williams

Interim Superintendent Williams reviews the 2019 Mayor expectations for Seattle Parks and Recreation.

1st sections – General expectations around service delivery; using data for transparency and accountability; race and social justice; organizational management; and personnel management.

2nd section – Aligned to 15 lines of business in the department and includes:

- Park Cleaning, Landscaping and Restoration
- Natural Resource Management
- Planning, Development and Acquisition
- Recreation Facilities and programming
- Swimming, Boating and Aquatics
- Environmental Learning and Programs
- Golf
- Woodland Park Zoo
- Seattle Aquarium
- Facility and Structure Maintenance
- Seattle Conservation Corps
- Policy Direction and Leadership
- Finance and Administration
- Judgment and Claims

3rd section – 16 discreet categories of projects the Mayor wants to include, such as:

- Development of the Park District Financial Plan
- Strategic plan
- Lake City Community Center development – the feasibility study includes a plan to build affordable housing
- Duwamish Waterway – SPR is working with Seattle Parks Foundation and the community to redevelop this park
- Freeway Park – wayfinding and other improvements
- Establish three new off-leash areas
- Permitting improvements to Magnuson Community Center
- Finalize golf program financial analysis

- Relocate homeless from park areas
- Continue working to improve City Hall Park
- Conclude work of Viewpoint Advisory Team and make recommendations
- Improve capital project delivery – working with City Council to audit capital project delivery program; this accountability is part of the Park District promises as expressed in the InterLocal Agreement.
- Complete implementation of ActivNet – the new registration program
- Onboarding new Superintendent

Commissioner Byers asks about the Olmsted task force; Interim Superintendent Williams says it will be in the editing process.

The Mayor wanted input on how the City will accommodate growth and this includes a park acquisition strategy to keep up with increased density.

The Commissioners wonder if the department receives more funding when new projects cost arise in the middle of a budget cycle. Interim Superintendent Williams states there are times when SPR gets asked to absorb costs. SPR's job is to prioritize the funding.

Conservation Futures Tax – SPR wants the CFT commission to loosen constraints for park acquisition in Seattle. King County wants the property to be 90% pervious surface which is unrealistic in Seattle. Many cities do not have a match requirement, but Seattle does have a match requirement and yet many neighborhoods should qualify without a match. The CFT Commission does not allow condemnation, but this is another barrier for acquisition in the City. Commissioner Byers asks who represents the City on the CFT committee? Interim Superintendent Williams doesn't know but he'll find out and let Commissioner Byers know.

Responding to the Mayor's concerns about acquisition, SPR considers land owned by other public entities.

Encampment cleanups- There was a plan to bill SDOT for obstructions in the right-of-way, up to \$1million to subsidize cleanups. SDOT has decided to allow other community partners to bid for the work. 15 SPR staff people have been taken out of grounds maintenance workforce to work on encampment cleanup. It's a source of morale tension for employees.

Old/New Business

The Park District Oversight Committee is writing a Cover Letter for the Mid-term Report for the Park District regarding their concerns to the Mayor and City Council. A group of folks worked over the holidays to create a letter that accurately states the concerns of the larger group. It was approved at the Park District Oversight Committee on Tuesday night.

Letter to Councilmember Juarez from the Park Board – The letter is in their packets and the Board reviews it. Commissioner Lowe asks for a motion to approve the letter. Commissioner Farmer requests adding the word 'expanding' to the 2nd bullet. Commissioner Farmer moves, Commissioner Byers seconds and the letter is approved.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 8:17pm.

APPROVED: _____ DATE _____
William Lowe, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners