



# Minutes

Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

Via WebEx

Thursday, September 23, 2021

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

## **Welcome and Introductions**

Kelly calls the meeting to order at 6:35pm. The Board members and SPR staff introduce themselves.

## **Public Comment**

Judy Tangen – Recent addition to the Associated Recreation Council Board. One of the big issues right now is hiring. There are not enough people to fill all the positions available.

Beth Purcell – Seattle Parks Foundation board member and former SPR employee. Occidental Park and parks in Pioneer Square – benefit from resources through a private/public partnership. Businesses are too scared to bring their employees back to be on the front lines of mental health crisis. Partnership need funding from security. Local businesses need support from city budget. Fund SPR to pay for maintenance, activation and programming.

Larry Hubbell – Friends of Arboretum Creek; reconnect clean spring water with Arboretum Creek and protect Japanese Garden from annual funding; received grant for engineering and design of this project. SPR funding for planning would allow for construction in 2025. They request \$4million in funding from SPR in upcoming strategic planning budgets.

Rebecca Bear – Seattle Parks Foundation Executive Director; SPR took a hit in budget in the last couple of years; SPR recovery was not prioritized by City Council despite their essential role during the pandemic. Funding is a critical issue that must be addressed with city leadership. SPR exhibits extraordinary heroics to provide funding and services to the community. She implores the Board to advocate for right-sizing the budget on behalf of SPR.

## **Deputy Superintendent's Report and Response to public comment**

Deputy Superintendent Williams thanks the public for their involvement and continued advocacy. He responds to the public testimony and says they are working to reimagine the Park Ranger program to address the public safety issues and appreciates their advocacy for future funding priorities. He agrees with Mr. Hubbell that SPR should be involved in the Arboretum Creek project.

## Deputy Superintendent's Report

### Parks and Recreation

- Mayor will present her budget on Monday
- Superintendent will brief City Council on budget on Oct. 1. We will brief Board Oct. 14
- Seattle Park District Board (City Council) will hold public hearing on the 2022 Park District Budget on Oct. 18, 5:30 p.m.
- NRPA in Nashville
  - Jesús will be on a panel discussing the concept of the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.
  - Brian Judd, our Manager of Magnuson Park, and Shanyanika McElroy will be leading a session on Anti-Racist Caucusing
  - B Hill will be discussing our department's Pathway to Equity
  - Shanyanika will be on another panel focusing on Practical Planning with Equity at the Center
- Mayor Durkan announced last week that City of Seattle COVID-19 testing sites created over the pandemic have administered one million tests since beginning operations in 2020.
- Best parks to see fall colors: Our Communications staff have posted a blog article on the best parks to view autumn leaves in the next few weeks.

### Parks & Environment Division

- Field prep for fall: lining fields, installing field goals, installing new soccer nets
- Staff cut back overgrown vegetation along the trail at Washington Park (example of daily work of crews!)
- Cleanup near and around encampments continues throughout city (more than 50 encampments in parks last week)

### Planning, Development & Maintenance

- Plumbers activated fountain at Cal Anderson Park
- Cascade Canyon Fountain at Freeway Park also running
- Maintenance workers prepped Jimi Hendrix Park for painting of PURPLE concrete ribbon
- SPR Safety Office is working on safety plans for reopening facilities
- The Seattle Conservation Corps received federal Community Development Block Grant funding to make improvements to parks that are heavily used by low-income people as part of the Parks Upgrade Projects program, including at Judkins Park.

### Recreation: Summer highlights

- 2021, focusing on:
  - Providing essential services to youth and communities
  - Developing COVID-safe ways to recreate (virtual, outdoor, and more)
  - Innovating how we provided programs during a unique time

- Rec’N the Streets
  - 3 teams running programs 5 days a week.
  - RNTS also ran a youth jobs training program, with 38 kids earning a stipend; unfortunately, one teen was killed by gun violence in the middle of the program; staff partnered with Therapeutic Health Services to provide mental health check-ins with the other participants, and provided a Healing Circle with youth and families.
- Big Day of Play
  - Continued to innovate our signature event, with COVID safety and equity in mind. In-person attendance of 1,500 and online attendance of 1,600 – more than 70% BIPOC according to participant surveys.
- Aquatics
  - Colman and Mounger, our outdoor summer pools, saw a total of 56,000 visits from swimmers – representing 76% of pre-pandemic levels for Colman, and 80% for Mounger.
  - Lifeguards at 8 swimming beaches kept watch for 143,000 visitors and provided 75 assists to swimmers, including 28 active rescues of people in distress.
  - SPR operated 11 wading pools for a collective 412 operating days, with more than 21,000 people "actively attending" (= in the water).
- Community Centers & Summer Childcare
  - Licensed childcare programs at 17 sites hosted an average of 350 kids per week.
  - Activity camps at 4 sites (Jefferson, High Point, Montlake, Loyal Heights) hosted an average of 232 kids per week (total of 1,121 unique kids). Between 20-30% of kids at each camp were 100% supported by scholarships, provided by the Sweetened Beverage Tax.
  - 5 community centers provided 3,296 showers to people experiencing homelessness.
- Youth Employment
  - Career Labs (a job readiness program) has wrapped up and 142 of the 175 young people have successfully completed the program.

#### Finance/Policy

- Mask guidance: Business Service Center and Event Scheduling staff are working to determine the best course of action with the Governor’s new mask mandate, which was issued in late August. Stay tuned.
- South Park business opportunities: SPR Contracts and Concession staff have been working with South Park community groups and the Office of Economic Development (OED) to create business opportunities for local business owners during the pre-construction planning phase at the land-banked South Park Plaza site. Two separate commercial use permits for community markets have been issued as well as two permits for BIPOC food business owners. Fees have been waived and extra assistance provided for regulatory requirements.
- Seeking Proposals for Healthy Food Vending Machines: SPR is seeking proposals from vendors to provide healthy food and beverage vending machine services at designated SPR

facilities. Request for Proposal (RFP) packets are available from our Contracts and Concessions staff and are due by Oct. 27.

- Woodland Park Zoo Agreement: The City Council's Public Assets and Native Communities Committee held a public hearing and received a briefing from SPR and the Woodland Park Zoo Society, on legislation authorizing SPR and WPZ to enter into a 20-year agreement for operations and management of the Zoo. A few Councilmembers were concerned about the limited role they have in animal care and welfare. A vote on this legislation is scheduled on December 7. We will be working with the Law Dept., Council and WPZ to address these concerns prior to the next meeting.

Follow-up on Gateway Park North: Commissioner Watts asked about maintenance at Gateway Park North. SPR will hold a mini-maintenance Jamboree at this park in October and have been visiting with frequency to maintain the park.

Commissioner Akita expresses her condolences for the SPR frontline staff who knew and work with the young person who was killed. She appreciates all the staff working with and in the community. Commissioner Akita congratulates SPR for their efforts toward becoming an anti-racist organization.

### **Presentation: Strategic Plan Community Engagement Update**

Selena Elmer and Danyal Lotfi, Strategic Advisors, Seattle Parks and Recreation

For more information and details please visit the Strategic Plan website [here](#).

Selena updates the Boards on the community engagement through online surveys, SPR staff engagement, Community Engagement Ambassadors, and listening sessions with Superintendent Aguirre.

Feedback they are receiving:

- Significant concern about the impacts of homelessness on parks
- Desire for access to outdoor programs, environmental education, fitness, and arts
- Desire for increased tree canopy (shade in hot weather, mitigate urban heat effect)
- Interest in recreation facility hours weekday mornings, evenings, and weekends
- Desire for improved wayfinding and signage in parks
- Hire more staff from within communities to lead culturally relevant programming
- Avoid duplication with partners/nonprofits by examining the service landscape and filling gaps
- Strong support for more community gardens, urban farms, and P-Patches
- Build capacity in neighborhoods by going to where communities are and building strong relationships

- Improved language access (programming, wayfinding) is essential for equity and access
- Interest in additional security staff or park rangers
- Desire for increased park and comfort station maintenance
- Improve pathways for community-prioritized projects to receive funding
- Redistribution of resources is required to truly invest with equity, which will require hard conversations
- Host/facilitate events in small parks relevant to different cultures and ethnicities
- Strong preference for online surveys as an engagement strategy

They are updating the Strategic Planning website – including the raw data and sending a bi-weekly newsletter.

Danyal updates the Board on their outreach listening sessions with other city Boards/Commissions. He appreciates the board members volunteering to attend and participate in these listening sessions.

Commissioner Farmer enjoyed meeting with the Urban Forestry Commission and thought SPR staff did a great job of capturing the ideas. Danyal says one takeaway was to lead with equity when decision-making.

Commissioner Akita and Commissioner Vu attended the Women’s Commission. Great ideas on how to use facilities and space to provide wayfinding to services or community-related amenities. Using signage as a way to illuminate use of sustainable materials and practices.

Upcoming Commission meetings:

- September 29 Youth Commission
- October 4 Renters Commission

## **Lake City Community Center Redevelopment Update**

There are not many community centers where the zoning allows multi-story family housing. Lake City neighborhood is full of multi-story housing and this environment lends itself to this type of project. SPR wants to create a partnership with the Office of Housing and an affordable housing developer to provide housing above a new Lake City Community Center.

Similar to Mercer Mega block, work with developer to build the core and shell, SPR would build out the interior.

Lake City programming would need to move to the next close location so community does not lose those services.

SPR is not giving up any ground so the I-42 issues are less of an issue because SPR is retaining the parks and recreation use. David says this is a workable strategy for this location because of underlying zoning and neighborhood context.

It will have a mix of affordable housing. Commissioner Akita suggests they approach it from a community development perspective as they plan for the housing piece. Ensure this becomes a source of housing for the mass displacement occurring in this neighborhood.

Andrea calls for a motion to pursue a Lake City Community Center redevelopment as a co-development with the Office of Housing. Commissioner McCaffrey moves, Commissioner Farmer seconds. The Board votes unanimously in support. The motion is approved.

## **Old/New Business**

Next Board meeting is October 14. Retreat date is November 16.

Retreat planning – In-person vs. remote; Paula asks for volunteers to be on the retreat planning committee.

Park District Public Hearing – There is an opportunity for the Board to provide comment at the October 18 Park District Public Hearing. They discuss timing of writing a letter and will discuss further at the Executive Committee meeting. The Board decides to wait until after the budget presentation to write the letter depending on how the budget decisions go.

Recruitment for new members – Please send out to your contacts and how to reach new people.

Commissioner Watts mentions an email from Licton Springs Community Council requesting updates on comfort station fire. Deputy Superintendent Williams says that staff are working on it and they followed up on email.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 8:20pm.