



Minutes

Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom, 100 Dexter Ave. N/remote via WebEx

Thursday, October 10, 2022

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

Present: Mays, Umagat, Herrera, Farmer, Brockhaus, Meng, Thomas

SPR staff: Williams, Diaz, José, Burley, Hoff, Burtzos

Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Herrera calls meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

Land Recognition

Every community owes its existence to generations past who contributed to making the history that led to this very moment. We recognize that our parks and recreation facilities are on the traditional, ancestral and unceded land of the Coast Salish peoples, specifically: the sovereign Duwamish, Suquamish and Muckleshoot tribes. We express gratitude for their stewardship of this land – today and tomorrow, since time immemorial. We acknowledge the oppression and dispossession of Indigenous communities and remain committed to racial, social and environmental justice as we reflect on the past. We honor the resilience of the First Peoples and the land itself.

Public Comment

Max – Excited to see funds allocated for improvements to restrooms in parks included in 2023-2024 budget. Would like to see additional coordination and funding so that all restrooms can be open year-round. Also concerned about proposed increase in rental rates for community centers; this creates a barrier for use.

Peter Breyfogle – Burke-Gilman trail maintenance concerns – The BG trail is a great way to access a variety of locations in NE Seattle and is one of the only all-ability, all-mode trails in the city. However, it has become narrowed and damaged in places. I've entered numerous Find It/Fix It requests and asked for records of these improvements through Freedom of Information Act requests. Little of this work has gotten done. In my opinion, SPR and the BPRC are guilty of neglect that borders on negligence for ignoring repeated requests to fix the trail.

Trip Allen – Just returned from walking around Green Lake, imagining what it will look like with wheels returned. There is plenty of space. I thank all of you, and I look forward to hearing what Todd has to present tonight. Thank you.

Don Loseff – I've talked to the Board many times about the Green Lake many times about the Green Lake inner loop, and I didn't get the chance to thank the Board after last time. I'm glad everyone is on the same page about bringing wheels back. I also want to thank Todd Burley for his efforts in outreach and communication with the community.

Herrera thanks the speakers and begins introductions of the Board.

Hoff introduces Phillip Meng, the newest member of the Board. Phillip is taking the Get Engaged seat on the Board.

The commissioners introduce themselves.

Superintendent's Report

Acting Superintendent Christopher Williams gives the report.

I want to take a minute to follow up on the public testimony we just heard.

The first speaker talked about opening up restrooms. As you know, this is a funded initiative in the park district. We have 129 restrooms across the system. About 60 of them are routinely closed for winterization, and our goal is to get the engineering in place to have them open year-round. It also includes an emphasis on keeping them clean year-round, so it's not just the engineering.

The other comment concerned rental fee increases. We have created a fee stabilization fund. About a third of the department's budget is generated through fees, and we are hypersensitive to the level of funding that we have as an organization. We still need that funding, but we have transferred, for the next six years, fee increases to the park district. Those fees are going to be stabilized. We are also looking at some logical approach for increasing fee waivers.

I also want to make sure that we connect Peter with a member of our Planning & Development Division regarding the Burke-Gilman Trail. SPR does not own the contiguous trail; we would be interested in finding out if the elements he is talking about belong to us, fixing them if they do, and if they don't, connecting him with the appropriate people.

I also want to give a shout out to Todd Burley for his work on the inner loop trail and acknowledge Trip Allen and Don Loseff for calling out the Board, and with that I'll get into the Superintendent's report.

New Superintendent Appointed

In late September, Mayor Harrell announced his appointment of Anthony-Paul (AP) Diaz as interim Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation. Some of you met AP at events that were held to introduce him to the community. AP currently serves as the Executive Officer and Assistant General Manager for the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. He oversees all day-to-day operations, including financial services, capital projects, special operations, recreation, maintenance, HR and risk reductions matters, governance and leadership matters while assisting the General Manager in all governance, legal, support and policy matters related to City's Park's Commission, the City Council, the City Attorney's Offices and the Mayor's Offices and the LA Park Foundation. The Seattle City Council will conduct a confirmation process this fall. We are very excited to welcome AP to Seattle and Seattle Parks and Recreation!

Interim Superintendent Diaz speaks to the Board.

Thank you so much, Commissioners, members of the public, and Parks staff. Christopher spoke to some of my responsibilities in Los Angeles, and there is great correlation between the work going on in Seattle and what's happening in many large cities in America, and it's fundamentally about parks. I'm passionate about parks and the work we do together, especially as we came through the pandemic, we realized the importance of parks. Parks served as the beacon of respite and wellness.

My colleagues have heard me say this, and it's important to say it here tonight, that I firmly believe it's time for us to amplify the narrative of our parks and what they provide to our citizens. They are, to me, just as essential infrastructure as bridges, roads, and highways. We have a unique time in our history to make use of that precious resource. Thanks again to the commissioners and members of the public for their hard work on the Park District project.

It is an exciting time for our department and our city. Parks are an equitable space that require no special status. There are many great things to do in the years ahead; it's very hard to say no to a city that is shining brightly. I'm looking forward to our work in the years ahead. Thank you so much.

Park District Financial Plan Approved

On Tuesday, Sept. 27, the City Council, acting as the Seattle Park District Board, passed the Seattle Park District 2023-2028 financial plan. The financial plan will invest hundreds of millions of dollars to keep parks clean, open, and accessible to all. The plan was passed following months of community and stakeholder engagement and takes important steps to improve safety, combat climate change, support youth, and advance equity.

The Mayor and City Council process validates the great work of the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners this spring. Thank you again for your time and effort – which has paid off big time for the residents and communities of Seattle. My thanks too to the many Parks and Recreation staff members who contributed to this effort.

Highlights include:

- Opening 12 new park sites totaling more than 10 acres.
- Making major community center renovations at Queen Anne, Lake City, Green Lake/Evans Pool and Loyal Heights.
- Making all 129 public restrooms available for year-round use by the end of 2028.
- Reestablishing a robust Park Ranger program, adding 26 Park Rangers (for a total of 28) to enhance safety and promote voluntary compliance of park rules.
- Adding a new staff team of 5 employees to respond quickly to graffiti and vandalism.
- Planting and establishing more than 600 additional trees in developed parks to increase urban tree canopy and mitigate heat islands and restoring funds to the Green Seattle Partnership.
- Decarbonizing at least an additional 6 community centers and other SPR facilities with a goal of having half our community centers carbon free by 2028 (pending additional funding), contributing to the One Seattle “resilience hub” strategy to combat growing impacts of climate change.
- Doubling Community Engagement Ambassador hours from 3,000 to 6,000 hours in up to 15 languages.
- More than doubling the size of the new Equity Grant Fund to support community-driven park improvement projects in under-resourced neighborhoods.
- Funding 20,000 hours of youth employment opportunities per year serving 80 youth.
- Creating two new Off Leash Areas (OLAs), and funding to plan for a third OLA.

Mayor's Proposed Budget

The Mayor also released his proposed budget in late September. Most items in our 2023-24 Proposed Budget relate to adopting the Mayor's Cycle 2 Park District plan, mentioned earlier. The following is a summary of other changes in the proposed budget:

- \$5.3 million toward staff to maintain clean and safe accessible parks
- \$12 million (across 2023 and 2024) toward major maintenance, community center rehabilitation, and Zoo major maintenance
- \$1 million to support rehabilitation of restrooms in parks
- Increase fees for community center rentals, aquatics programs, specialty garden admissions, and special event facilities to strengthen revenue collection and offset inflationary costs.

Over the next two months, the City Council will review the Mayor’s proposed budget. Final adoption of the budget is expected on Nov. 22. More information can be found at www.seattle.gov/budget. 3 public hearings will be held on the budget. One was held earlier this week; the other two hearings are as follows:

- Tuesday, Nov. 8 at 9:30 a.m.
- Tuesday, Nov. 15 at 5 p.m.

2021 Park District Annual Report

Board members should have received a copy of the 2021 Park District Annual Report, which is hot off the presses. The report includes results and highlights of Park District-funded projects, programs and other activities. The results are impressive considering last year was still one of transition out of the pandemic.

Thanks and kudos to Michele Finnegan and her staff, especially to David Takami with Seattle Parks and Recreation Policy Unit, who coordinated the report, and Hazel Bhang-Barnett, who gathered performance results. A link to the report is now posted on our website.

Increase in Community Center Hours

As we return to pre-pandemic levels of service, we will be expanding community center hours. The idea is to extend hours on evenings and weekends so this shouldn’t displace current usage, but supplement what we’re already doing. We will be reengaging the community regarding community center hours and programming before the end of the year.

Our staff in the field continue their excellent work.

- Staff on our Central West crews worked to remove graffiti at West Magnolia Park.
- There was recently some illegal dumping at the north parking lot of Westcrest Park. Our packer driver Nicolas Martinez and seasonable laborer Ernesto Salinas swung by and quickly took care of it.
- Earlier this month we received a request from police to come to block off the Don Armeni boat ramp in West Seattle with cones. Apparently, this vehicle and its trailer and boat backed into the water – and ended up completely in the water!

New Lake City Landbank Park Opened Oct. 8

- Last Saturday, Oct. 8, SPR and the community celebrated the opening of a new park in Seattle’s Lake City neighborhood at 12510 33rd Ave. NE. The park includes a large dome play structure with netted climbing features, climbing wall, half-basketball court, accessible pathways, new benches and picnic tables, open lawn, P-Patch garden plots, and bike racks.
- SPR purchased this property in 2010 to provide additional open space for the Lake City community. The department is now seeking ideas for a name for the new park. If you have any suggestions please email Paula Hoff at paula.hoff@seattle.gov

New Park on Capitol Hill in Design Phase

- This Saturday, Oct. 15, SPR invites the community to review the early design for a new park on Capitol Hill, located at 1125 Harvard Ave E.
- This is the 1.6-acre park generously donated to the City of Seattle by Kay Bullitt, who passed away a couple of years ago.
- Thank you to everyone who has participated to date.

Green Lake Park path detour

- The inner path at Green Lake near the Small Craft Center is being detoured for the construction of the new Green Lake Community Boathouse. The parking lot behind the Aqua Theater will be closed and used for construction staging. We are working with the construction contractor to minimize the impact to the path during construction.
- We anticipate the new 10,800 square foot boathouse will open in fall 2023.

Mays asks if the Lake City park is currently open, even though it is not yet named. Williams explains that the park is indeed open; Paula Hoff is on the Parks naming committee, which will bring recommended names forward later in the process. Sometimes it can be hard to visualize a name for a park before it is finished, hence the process followed here.

Farmer echoes Williams' excitement for the Lake City park opening, and for the 50th anniversary of Discovery Park. These were fantastic celebrations.

Umagat asks about proposed location of OLA in West Seattle. Williams clarifies that funding has been identified for two OLAs: one in West Seattle, and one elsewhere in the city. The next step will be to identify potential locations through a community engagement process.

Brockhaus congratulates Williams and the department for all the good work.

Meng asks about the provisional timeline for the new park on Harvard Avenue. Williams clarifies that the timeline is not solidified yet, but this is on the agenda to discuss with Diaz in the coming weeks. One of the issues to get ahead of is potential cost escalation in capital projects, including this park development. Update will follow. Williams also takes a moment to welcome Meng to the Board.

Herrera congratulates Diaz, Williams, and the Board for the hard work that led to Council passing 95% of the Park District Budget intact that was recommended from the BPRC. Herrera also thanks and congratulates Finnegan, Takami, and Bhang-Barnett for their work on the Park District Annual Report. Herrera admires the portrait of Williams in the report.

Green Lake Inner Path Policy Update: Implementation Plan

Williams introduces the discussion by revisiting the purpose of tonight's discussion. We want to implement the new policy by 11/1/2022. The transition will not be perfect, but we hope that it will be as smooth as possible under the implementation plan.

Todd Burley, SPR Sustainability Advisor, leads the discussion.

Burley briefly recaps the history of historical use and pandemic usage restrictions on the Green Lake inner path. At the last meeting, the BPRC directed SPR to return to the historic use of the path by 11/1 pending presentation of the implementation plan.

Implementation plan:

- Short-term plan
 - Inventory existing signs and markings
 - Overlay historic regulations on green signs
 - Add 25-50 temporary lawn signs
 - Clean pavement inlays
 - Email interested parties and individuals
 - Connect to neighborhood groups and businesses
 - Update courtesy code to clarify non-motorized use on path
- Longer-term plan
 - Update pavement markings (replace old stencils and add more)
 - Regrade gravel path
 - Update kiosk signs
 - Develop maintenance schedule

Herrera thanks Burley for his hard work.

Brockhaus echoes the thanks for Burley and voices appreciation for the actions already taken towards returning Green Lake to its historic use. The plan seems well thought-out and clear.

Burley adds that the overarching messages heard in outreach is to be kind and stay in the proper lane.

The Board has no further questions for Burley. General support for the implementation plan.

Greater & Greener Conference Presentation

Williams introduces the conversation. In 2024, the City Park Alliance will bring the Greater & Greener conference to Seattle. This conference brings together stakeholders and partners from all over the country and the world. This summer we attended the conference in Philadelphia, and the experience was tremendous – Philadelphia set a high bar. There will be a lot of work to do.

Jasmine José, SPR Organizational Development Advisor, leads the discussion.

José thanks Williams for his introduction of the Greater & Greener conference and reiterates the basic program information. She shares some screengrabs and images from the City Parks Alliance website and encourages the Board to look at the website to get a sense of what past conferences have included.

Promotional video for Seattle G&G 2024: [Greater Greener 2024 PATCHED DATE v1 \(vimeo.com\)](#)

José thanks Hoff and David Takami for their work on the promotional video.

José explains that Greater & Greener is an experiential conference, and often incorporates tours and volunteer opportunities for visitors and conference participants. There are networking opportunities and VIP speakers, including US Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland at this year's conference. José discusses the

work that has already gone into preparations, including coordination with the mayor's office and other partners.

City Park Alliance is currently hearing proposals for workshops and other events, as well as fundraising. They are also working out conference themes. There will also be local fundraising opportunities, and the Commissioners may be asked to help with networking.

Williams thanks José for her presentation and emphasizes that the Commissioners will be asked to help co-host at some receptions.

Diaz thanks José, Hoff, Williams, and Takami. Diaz has attended several CPA conferences and is excited for the opportunity to help host the event in 2024. These events really do attract the best and brightest in the industry. This is Seattle's time to shine. One of the things I like most about these conferences is the opportunities for service, so there will likely be a site chosen somewhere in Seattle where we can all build a playground together. Don't worry, they check our work when we're done. Very thankful for all the work that has been done to get us this far. This is going to be the best CPA conference yet.

Herrera thanks Diaz, Williams, and José.

Farmer asks for clarification of the conference dates. Greater & Greener 2024 will take place from June 21-25, 2024.

Umagat asks where the conference will take place. José clarifies that the conference will take place at the downtown Hilton hotel.

Hoff asks the Commissioners to forward ideas for partners, tours, etc.

Williams emphasizes that the best time to ask a potential partner for support is early, rather than the day before the event.

Herrera asks if there is a central communications point person or at least a list of talking points for making connections with potential partner organizations. Hoff volunteers to serve as contact person for the BPRC. Umagat asks if there is a list of partner organizations, or if that can be created in MS Teams, so that the Commissioners do not unintentionally repeat an inquiry. Hoff replies that this can be created.

Mays asks about feasibility of asking corporate partners to move their volunteer clean-up days to earlier in the year to prepare for 2024 conference. Williams agrees that this is a great idea.

Hoff inquires if anyone can control the weather so that it is sunny and dry for the conference dates.

Herrera points out that the American Public Transportation Association is currently hosting its conference in Seattle, as well. Seattle is having a moment to show off its public infrastructure.

BPRC 2022 Retreat Planning Update

Paula Hoff, SPR Strategic Advisor, leads the discussion.

The BPRC will meet in retreat on 10/27 in lieu of its regularly scheduled meeting.

The agenda will include:

- Icebreaker activity
- Dinner

- Vacancies on the Board and how best to fill them
- What 2023 work will encompass, in addition to MPD oversight
- Direction of Board business and operations for 2023

Umagat asks how application and appointment numbers are looking for the BPRC. Hoff answers that the department has received some applications, but that it is important to consider what perspectives and views are absent from the Board in addition to performing due diligence on interviews. Additionally, council redistricting may affect Board seat allocation. Burtzos asks when the vote on redistricting will occur. That date is not set yet but will be soon.

Herrera expresses excitement for Diaz and Meng, along with all the new members of the Board, to join on their first retreat.

Old & New Business

Herrera acknowledges with sadness the resignation of Commissioner Deepa Sivarajan from the Board. Sivarajan was a champion for equity, and the Board is grateful for Deepa's work.

Brockhaus and Herrera remind the Board of a reception by the Seattle Parks Foundation to welcome Diaz and to celebrate the passage of the Park District budget.

There being no further business, Commissioner Herrera adjourns the meeting at 7:58 pm.