



# Minutes

Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

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

Thursday, August 11, 2022

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

Board members present: Mays, Thomas, Herrera (co-chair), Farmer (co-chair), Brockhaus, Contreras, Watts  
Parks and Recreation Staff: Williams, Furuto, Bazinet, Hoff, Burtzos

## Welcome and Introductions

Herrera calls the meeting to order at 6:31 pm and gives an acknowledgement of the land. Board members and SPR staff introduce themselves.

## Public Comment

Don Loseff – Green Lake path usage – Disappointed that Green Lake path use was not on agenda for today. I am asking that the Board consider the resolution that I submitted this week during the “Old & New Business” agenda item today. [Reads resolution asking for path use restriction to be rescinded and for a path use study to begin.]

Lee-Lee Miao – Miller Park pickleball community – Miller Park has drop-in pickleball time. However, Miller does not have enough capacity to support the large pickleball community. SPR responded this week to my message, expressing concerns about overlap in the space with tennis courts, reservations, and others. We responded today with some other questions and clarifications. We would like to find a way to maximize pickleball use at Miller Park; 6 courts are needed, not 4.

Yash Lekhwani - Miller Park pickleball community – I am relatively new to pickleball. The community at Miller is very inclusive, and as pickleball grows in popularity, this expansion is reflected at Miller. I am disappointed to hear that the Parks and Recreation Board has decided against expanding from 4 to 6 courts at Miller, and I hope that you continue to reconsider.

Philip Anderson - Miller Park pickleball community – I first started playing pickleball 2.5 years ago and quickly got hooked on the sport. I find pickleball at Miller very welcoming, inclusive, and a great way to get a workout. We have players of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds at Miller. We are our own little community; we raised \$3500 to purchase our own nets; and have become good friends. This is truly a sport for all. The government needs to recognize that support for pickleball will continue to grow.

Michelle Zheng - Miller Park pickleball community – I recently moved to Seattle from Chicago, and Seattle is a hard city to make friends in. Fortunately, I found the pickleball community at Miller Park and dropping in to play. This system is very conducive to meeting new people, and I can always find a game with someone around my own skill level. I believe this game brings together people of diverse ages, backgrounds, and career aspirations. It’s a very social environment; we bring snacks, make t-shirts, and socialize. When even a single tennis court is reserved, it cuts down on the number of people who can partake in the game that we’re all passionate about. Expanding from 4 to 6 courts would greatly expand access for this community.

Joni Henry – Miller Park pickleball community – I have played pickleball at Miller for many years. We request that when SPR restripes the Miller courts, they paint 4 pickleball courts on tennis court B and 2 on court A. Santa Cruz’s Brommer Street County Park provides a good example of 4 pickleball courts functioning well. The courts at Miller Park are reserved for tennis use, on average, for 135 minutes per day. This is not heavy tennis use; the heavy tennis use is pickleball.

David Moehring – Ursula Judkins Viewpoint Park – Thank you to the Board for allocating funding in the Cycle 2 Park District proposal for viewpoint parks. Right now, there are plans to build mansions, a parking structure, and terraced steps below and leading up to Ursula Judkins Park. This puts the Park at risk of losing some of its character and contribution to the city. I did submit a paper on this for the Commissioners to consider.

William Yardley – Green Lake path usage – My son is an adaptive cyclist who knows Green Lake well. I support Don Loseff’s proposal to remove the restrictions on use from the inner path at Green Lake. These restrictions discriminate against people with disabilities who ride around Green Lake and cannot benefit from other trails. Generally, we want to see all wheeled uses restored, and for the Board to adopt Don’s resolution.

Karen Kiest – Ursula Judkins Viewpoint Park – I have been working with the community at Ursula Judkins since 2007 to develop a viewpoint. This was going well until the Navy sold the property below the viewpoint. As has been explained, this sale has brought uncertainty to the security of the viewpoint. I strongly support the proposal to add funding for planning and development for this viewpoint.

## Response to Public Comment – Acting Superintendent Christopher Williams

Thank you to the pickleballers who came to speak today; we feel your passion! I won’t say a lot about pickleball because it is the subject of a presentation tonight, so you will hear more about that.

We are planning to come back to the Board with three alternative recommendations for the Green Lake Path. We’ll provide some choices based on the presentation from the last meeting. You heard a lot of the same feedback, and we want to provide an opportunity for the Board to make a whole range of decisions and choices. That will be a meeting where we ask the Board to vote.

SPR owns the land on which Ursula Judkins Viewpoint Park sits; however, a seafood company was issued a permit to construct on the land below the park. SPR asked the director at the Office of Construction and Permitting and asked him to re-open the public comment period regarding this permit process. We typically don’t interfere with other departments’ processes, but we did ask for this process to be extended to allow for greater feedback.

## Superintendent’s Report

### **Seafair Weekend**

You’ll hear much more about our Maintenance Surge from Joey Furuto a little later in this meeting, but one great example of this work is the massive cleanup efforts by our crews over Seafair weekend. They worked hundreds of hours to clean restrooms and help Seafair workers pick up and dispose of mountains of trash in the parks and public spaces along Lake Washington. So a big shout out to our great staff in many park districts who contributed to this effort!

### **Summer Programs Winding up**

We will soon start winding up summer programs and transitioning to fall. Wading pools will begin closing later this month. Spray parks and summer beaches will close just after Labor Day. This month our parks are packed with activities and people. Overall, we've had a busy and successful summer.

### **Registration for Fall Programs Now Open**

Registration for fall programming is now open including preschool, childcare, recreation programs and fall sports including youth flag football and volleyball. Go to [www.seattle.gov/parks](http://www.seattle.gov/parks) for more info.

### **Big Day of Play**

Another reminder that our annual Big Day of Play event will be held at Aug. 20 at the Rainier Playfield.

### **Specialized Programs**

Specialized Programs Youth Camp, for ages 4-21, is serving 90 individuals with disabilities this summer. SPR Specialized Programs has hosted 27-32 campers each week at Camp Long and Ravenna Park. The camps provide 20 hours of care and fun recreation activities for ages 6-18. Some of the highlights include field games, naturalist activities, music, art, and karaoke.

### **Life jacket fitting and giveaway**

The Beach Lifeguard Program, in partnership with Seattle Children's Hospital, fitted and gave away several hundred life jackets at Pritchard Island Beach over the past few weekends.

### **Google volunteer project**

SPR hosted Google corporation volunteers last month in Woodland Park. These volunteers picked up litter and spread 15 yards of tree chip mulch around two historic trees and shrub beds near the entrance to the park. For the past couple of months SPR crews have been working hard to restore the park and its amenities.

### **Lakeridge Playfield and Play Area Completed**

Join us on Saturday, Aug. 13 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. to celebrate the opening of the newly renovated Lakeridge Playfield & Play Area in southeast Seattle! The park features a new play area with slides, swings, and climbing opportunities. The multi-sports court offers futsal and basketball plus there are new pickleball courts. Brad Evans, Sounders FC Brand Ambassador, and the RAVE Foundation will be giving away soccer balls. This is beautiful and long-awaited improvement for the neighborhood and the city of Seattle. The park is located at 10145 Rainier Ave. S, near the southern city border.

### **Arboretum Waterfront Trail Reopens**

SPR worked with a contractor, Global Diving, to repair a partially submerged section of the Washington Park Arboretum Waterfront Trail and the trail is now open.

### **Washington Park Synthetic Turf Replacement Project Begins**

Construction began in early August to replace the synthetic turf at Washington Park Playfield in the Arboretum. During construction the playfield will be closed, however, the play area and restrooms will remain open to the public.

2 other synthetic turf fields are now under construction: Miller Playfield and Georgetown Playfield.

### **Draft 2021 Park District Annual Report**

A head's up that the draft report is nearly done, and David Takami will send it to you for your review within the next week or two. The report will include results and highlights from last year's programs, projects and activities funded by the Seattle Park District.

Farmer thanks Superintendent Williams for the report and highlights the work done during the recent maintenance surge. Farmer is excited to hear updates from Furuto later in the meeting.

Watts asks for clarification regarding Council's town hall dates. Superintendent Williams outlines upcoming Council and Mayor's Office review dates.

Herrera thanks maintenance crews for their hard work and asks for clarification that the September BPRC agenda will include Green Lake path use recommendations, and a discussion and vote on the updated tree policy. Williams confirms; it will be a busy September meeting.

### **Outdoor Pickleball Construction Briefing and Update**

Williams introduces the discussion and provides context.

I wanted to acknowledge and thank the many pickleball players who have been passionately advocating for their sport to Seattle Parks and Recreation staff and leaders over the past few years. We especially appreciate your participation in the recent pickleball study. Welcome to those of you who showed up at tonight's meeting.

The growth and popularity of pickleball in Seattle and the country is truly amazing, and as I understand it, the sport is growing among people of all ages and backgrounds. We are eager to continuing the conversation with the pickleball community and coming up with solutions to meet the growing demand for courts and playing time while balancing those needs with the many and diverse uses of our courts, fields, and facilities.

This is an ongoing discussion, and we are still in the beginning stages of our approach. Oliver will talk about the pickleball study, and I wanted to remind everyone that this is not the same thing as a plan or a decision. We are still at the stage of gathering information on what the community wants and needs.

Oliver Bazinet, Senior Planning and Development Specialist, leads the presentation.

Pickleball was invented in 1965 on Bainbridge Island and has been rapidly expanding in popularity. The sport is easy to pick up and start playing, and is very social in nature. Locations with multiple courts naturally become drop-in sites, and the sport is often very inclusive as a result.

At SPR, we had very few courts until 2017, At that time we started expanding outreach and a pilot program to expand dual striping on tennis courts. We are now at 77 courts system-wide and will be at 89 courts by the end of the summer.

The 2021-22 pickleball study built on earlier study, documented growth of the sport, refined locations and standards for dual striping, and identified potential locations for dedicated outdoor courts. We also engaged with both the pickleball and tennis community. This engagement included 1:1 interviews, an advisory committee, an online survey, and two public meetings.

Both pickleball and tennis players are generally dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of available courts in Seattle. Priorities for pickleball facilities were consistent across different respondent types, and included: excellent court surface conditions, proximity to home or work, sheltered courts, and nearby restrooms. No clear preference was expressed regarding dual-striped courts vs. dedicated pickleball facilities.

Three different approaches for outdoor courts:

1. Dual striping – Would not add to tennis facilities that support USTA tournaments, such as Amy Yee Tennis Center or Lower Woodland Park. SPR’s current standard is to paint two pickleball courts per one tennis court. Users or SPR provide nets. This approach is the quickest way to add courts and is relatively inexpensive, but also adds clutter to court and decreases tennis court asset availability.
2. Convert existing facilities to pickleball only – This allows increase of pickleball courts by higher density, since there would only be one set of lines on the court. The best value of conversion would be any single tennis court assets, especially those that are oriented in an east-west direction. This also decreases tennis court infrastructure, so community engagement would be undertaken before renovation of courts.

Both dual striping and site conversion would be done with full consideration of geographic and equitable access, locations of existing court infrastructure, and other location-specific information. Current recommended sites and other information can be found on the project website.

3. Construct new facilities – Ideally, these sites would be lit and include other amenities. These sites would have no negative impact on tennis; however, constructing new facilities could reduce access to open space, is the most expensive option, and has the longest timeline.

With community feedback, SPR identified 16 potential sites for dedicated pickleball facilities, which were examined for feasibility. The goal is to have one dedicated site in the north, and one in the south. Based on all the feedback, the most promising sites are:

North – Magnuson Park E3 Parking Lot, Bitter Lake Reservoir

South – Genesee Park (East of Rainier CC), Georgetown Playfield, Hiawatha Playfield T-ball field

This effort has not yet included engagement from the non-pickleball local communities. Additionally, the budget for development is likely higher than anticipated, and will require updating the deliverables insofar as what we can promise to provide. Given what we’ve learned, we believe we can provide one dedicated facility with lights.

Next steps will include a racial equity toolkit, 2022 dual striping program, and further investigation regarding potential dedicated sites.

Farmer asks if SPR has investigated whether other businesses or public organizations are also expanding pickleball court inventory to help meet the growing demand. Oliver replies the SPS has explored lining some of their tennis courts for pickleball. One of the largest constraints for private businesses is simply finding the space to build this sort of facility. Several SCL, FAS, and SPU properties were considered, but were not large enough for the type of program in mind (8+ courts).

Brockhaus thanks Bazinet and the PDM team for their hard work. Brockhaus also suggests Upper Woodland Park as a potential site for pickleball courts, to activate that park with a positive usage.

Thomas recalls Brommer Street County Park from his days living in Santa Cruz and appreciates the advocacy of the Miller Park pickleball community.

Mays asks the volume of use at Georgetown Park. Bazinet responds that he believes an 8-court dedicated facility at Georgetown would probably have less direct neighborhood use but would probably have people traveling to play.

Watts asks what work is being done to anticipate travel to dedicated sites, including parking impacts and accessibility. Bazinet acknowledges that this is the type of inquiry that will be done in the local community engagement but has not been done yet.

Contreras thanks Bazinet for the thorough presentation.

Herrera asks whether the quality of court surface for pickleball and tennis are identical. Bazinet clarifies that the assumption was that, at least at Magnuson, much of the existing parking lot would need to be demolished and replaced with tension concrete. In the next phase, SPR will investigate whether a court overlay is a possibility.

Herrera points out that Seattle has another great contribution to the world of non-tennis games that nonetheless started on tennis courts: bike polo.

## Maintenance Surge Update

Williams introduces the discussion and provides context.

As many of you know, the Pandemic has had a significant and unexpected impact on one of our key public services over the past few years: the routine maintenance of our parks and green spaces. We have always taken great pride in the tremendous work of our grounds maintenance staff who have helped make our parks and recreation system one of the best in the nation.

During the pandemic, staffing was reduced, especially temporary workers, and many of the remaining staff were diverted to important roles in providing “mission essential services” to help Seattle cope with COVID-related challenges. These duties included supporting shelters for people experiencing homelessness, showers, enhanced cleaning, emergency food and more. Now that we are on the road to recovery it’s time to get back to our pre-pandemic standards and expectations from the public.

Joey Furuto, Parks and Environment Division Director, leads the presentation.

The Parks and Environment Division has 8 maintenance teams broken out by geographic region. These regions are designed to be responsible for roughly the same amount of acreage, assets, and so on. The full team is about 230 members strong. During the last couple of years, we had 83 vacancies, which were left unfilled to offset the financial impacts of the pandemic. By July 1 of this year, we had filled 50 positions, and our hiring surge continues. Of those 50, 48 are front-line staff.

During the pandemic, we fell behind in maintenance. Coupled with a very rainy May and June, the parks looked a little bit rough at the beginning of summer, and we were hearing a lot of complaints, especially on

social media. In response, we created this summer's maintenance surge, which just wrapped up two weeks ago.

The maintenance surge sought to address 4 main priorities to keep our parks looking clean and inviting for everyone:

1. Turf maintenance – mowing, edging, line trimming 650 acres of developed parks
  - a. 3,383 surge hours
  - b. These numbers are in addition to routine maintenance
2. Comfort station cleaning
  - a. Some sites are cleaned 2-4 times per day, depending on volume of use
  - b. 1,964 surge hours
  - c. Staff also inspecting assets and calling in work orders
3. Graffiti removal – pressure washing, painting, color matching
  - a. 5,388 YTD hours (688 surge hours)
  - b. SPR paint shop helped with this project quite a bit
4. Trash removal – litter pickup, emptying receptacles, tipping dumpsters
  - a. 32,747 YTD hours (4,965 surge hours)
  - b. 4,005 YTD tonnage (330 surge tonnage)

In addition to the surge priorities, the maintenance teams continued other projects including pressure washing, planting and weeding annuals beds, irrigation repair, shrub bed trimming, and the beach fire program.

Since many of the concerns were communicated via social media, we prioritized communication regarding the surge on those platforms and received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

We now feel like our park maintenance is more under control, but we know we still have work to do. We have a [volunteer park inspection program](#), which helps us identify emerging problems and even emergencies that are going on in our parks. If you're interested, we have three park inspections coming up soon.

Our park restoration plan balances equity in restoration, post-encampments. Coordination occurs with SPR staff, including the Seattle Conservation Corps. In many cases, the goal is to make the park better and more usable than it was before.

Mays asks why not just pressure wash comfort stations more frequently to save time. Furuto explains that, while pressure washing is very effective at cleaning, it can damage assets and decrease the life expectancy of paint and fixtures within comfort stations.

Furuto highlights Brockhaus's earlier comment about Upper Woodland Park; this is a great example of the park restoration process in action.

Thomas commends Furuto and the maintenance team for their hard work during the surge, and asks for clarification regarding the park inspection program, particularly regarding whether the distribution of inspections meets SPR's equity standards. Furuto explains that the parks to be inspected are chosen randomly. However, due to the nature of the work, many of the volunteers are retired or otherwise in a

position to spend large amounts of time volunteering on weekdays. Furuto acknowledges that this could be more representative, and efforts are being made to recruit more diverse park inspectors.

Thomas inquires how SPR's maintenance strategy differs season by season. Furuto gives brief overview of maintenance foci during fall ("leaf season"), winter, spring, and summer.

Williams highlights the work of the custodial and facilities teams in conjunction with the grounds maintenance teams. This work is not limited to one team or division; it is a department-wide effort.

Furuto thanks the Board and reminds everyone that the maintenance workers do not have the option to complete their work remotely. These team members are on the front lines every day, in the 105° heat or a freezing blizzard.

Farmer also highlights the work of the Human Resources team, who have onboarded over 50 employees into the Parks & Environment team over the last few months.

Herrera shares his positive experience doing park inspections and invites the Board to try to find a time to volunteer for an inspection.

Herrera points out that these maintenance jobs are family-wage, union jobs.

## Old & New Business

Farmer clarifies date for September meeting. There will be no meeting the second Thursday of September due to the Labor Day holiday; the next meeting will be September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Farmer also asks about possible retreat date. Hoff confirms that this will happen in the fall and will follow up with more details.

Farmer reiterates invitations to the Board for Lakeridge Playfield dedication and park inspections. Thomas shares constituent concern regarding bench placement at Cowen Park. Two of the benches at Cowen Park are facing the road, rather than the park. Thomas asks that SPR looks into this; there may be a good reason for the benches to be oriented this way, but if not, it makes sense to face the benches toward the park.

Herrera asks for motion to approve agenda for 8/11/22 meeting and 7/14/22 meeting minutes. Farmer moves; Brockhaus seconds. There is no discussion. The votes are 7 in favor, none opposed, none abstaining. The motion passes.

***Adopted: August 11, 2022, Meeting Agenda; July 14, 2022, Meeting Minutes***

There being no further business, Commissioner Herrera adjourns the meeting at 8:18 pm.