



# Minutes | Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Webex

Thursday, February 23, 2022

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

## Attendance

Present: Watts, Meng, Contreras, Stuart-Lehalle, Mays, Umagat, Herrera, Farmer, Brockhaus

SPR Staff: Diaz, Sheffer, Grabowski, Hoff, Burtzos

Presenting: Stonecipher (Arboretum Foundation)

## Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

Co-chair Farmer calls the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and provides logistical instructions for in-person and remote attendees.

Farmer reads the land acknowledgement.

Seattle Parks and Recreation acknowledges and affirms the indigenous Coast Salish as the original caretakers of our waters and landscape, who nurtured and shaped today's parkland. We honor their legacy with gratitude and appreciation and will safeguard their knowledge and stewardship as enduring treasures to promote community welfare, cultivate inclusive expressions of nature and recreation, and commit to land acknowledgment for each ensuing generation.

Commissioners and SPR staff introduce themselves around the table.

Farmer introduces the consent items: meeting minutes from the 1/26/23 meeting, and the agenda for tonight's meeting. Umagat moves to approve both documents without revision, Mays seconds. There is no discussion. Farmer calls for a vote. The motion passes unanimously.

***Adopted: BPRC Meeting Minutes 1/26/23; BPRC Meeting Agenda 2/23/23***

## Public Comment

None of the registered public commenters being present at this time, Farmer emphasizes that equal weight is given to written public comment submitted in advance.

## Superintendent's Report

Interim Superintendent AP Diaz gives the report.

The Mayor gave his **2023 State of the City** report this week; if you haven't had a chance to see that speech, the recording of that event is now available online. The Parks and Recreation Department got a couple of shoutouts from the Mayor, for the expanded Ranger program and for some of our other ongoing projects. Mayor Harrell emphasized that there is a lot of hard work ahead but also a lot of optimism.

**Greater & Greener Fundraising:** Good news! Amazon donated \$250K to the 2024 Greater & Greener Conference, which will be held in Seattle next year. We also met with REI, Mithun Architects, and Evo; all 3 companies expressed interest in supporting the conference.

**Ballard Commons Park opening:** We are excited to join Councilmember Dan Strauss in announcing the Grand Reopening of Ballard Commons Park on Saturday and Sunday, March 11-12. This will be a community event with food, entertainment, and family activities. I want to recognize the incredible work of SPR staff to help restore the park to its glory. For the past few months our crews have been working hard to clean and improve the grounds and park amenities. The work has included pressure washing, mowing, litter and garbage removal, grouting of the skate bowl, graffiti removal and much more. We've also installed café lighting and developed a plan for engaging park activation.

**Teqball:** SPR will be receiving six new Teqball tables very soon! Teqball is a ball sport invented in Hungary that is played on a curved table, combining elements of soccer and table tennis. The tables are donated by the International Federation of Teqball. Tables will be placed at Alki Beach, Jefferson Community Center, and Ballard Commons Park. We have been partnering with staff from Teqball International in Budapest, Hungary and Teqball of Los Angeles to coordinate the donation of the tables.

SPR published its **2022 Thriving Environment Report** this week including highlights from last year. The dozen or so metrics and stories share our progress on environmental sustainability including park access, carbon reduction, environmental education, forest restoration, waste diversion, water conservation, and more. Read about it in our blog: [parkways.seattle.gov](https://parkways.seattle.gov). Thanks to SPR's Todd Burley!

**No Wrong Door Policy:** We are piloting a new customer service initiative at SPR to better address community inquiries.

**Special events return:** Beginning this winter and spring, many special events are returning in person after a few years hiatus during the pandemic, including the annual Loyal Heights Pancake Breakfast, a 40-year community tradition. The breakfast will be held at the Loyal Heights Community Center on March 11.

**Track and field:** Registration for spring sports has begun, including track and field. During the first week of registration earlier this month, we received more than 400 registration forms. Practices start in late March with meets beginning in mid-April. Scholarships are available.

**Performing Arts Initiative:** As part of the City's Welcome Back Seattle initiative, SPR is waiving fees for individuals or groups hosting performance-based art at the 17 Seattle parks with amphitheaters.

**Salmon released at Carkeek Park:** On Feb. 16, 30,000 salmon fry were released into Piper's Creek in Carkeek Park as part of our ongoing efforts in partnership with the community-based Carkeek Watershed Community Action Project to bring salmon back to Piper's Creek. In a few years a number of these baby salmon will return to the creek to spawn.

**New Park furniture at Tilikum Place:** Crews recently completed the installation of new tables, seats (including accessible seating), and concrete pads at Tilikum Place, a tiny park in the northwest corner of downtown Seattle that features a life-sized statue of Chief Sealth.

**Graffiti removal at Alki Playfield:** Each week we receive several dozen work orders to remove graffiti and abate 8,000 to 10,000 square feet of graffiti.

**Dr. Jose Rizal Park Renovation Design Opportunity:** As part of an initiative called “Elevate,” we are working directly with the community around Dr. Jose Rizal Park on Beacon Hill to help design park improvements. Six community submissions are now being reviewed. Each submission received a stipend and the submission selected will be included in the design for the next phase of the project later this year.

**Designs presented to Design Commission:** Staff and project consultants presented Garfield Superblock “concept review” and Bitter Lake Reservoir concept review to the Seattle Design Commission on Feb. 16.

The **Montlake Playfield Turf Replacement** project is going well and on schedule to be completed in late spring 2023.

Mays inquires about disposal of turf from Montlake Playfield. Sheffer explains that SPR aims to reuse or recycle as much of the turf as possible.

Stuart-Lehalle expresses appreciation for narrative presentation of work progress. From a communications perspective, it is vital to show progress, rather than just report on it.

Umagat highlights the need for improved customer service, especially regarding recreation services. The new No Wrong Door policy is a great step.

Meng inquires about the implementation and community outreach regarding Teqball. Sheffer explains that promotional programs and some outreach are included with the implementation of the tables.

Brockhaus appreciates the emphasis on Dr. Jose Rizal Park. This park is in need of significant attention and activation.

## Introduction of New Member

Andrea Stuart-Lehalle is new to the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners. Now that all members have joined the call, the Board takes another moment for introductions.

## State Route 520 and Washington Park Arboretum Property Transfer Agreement

Deputy Superintendent of Operations Andy Sheffer delivers the presentation.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the SR 520/Seattle Parks Arboretum mitigation funding and property transfer agreement for the upcoming Portage Bay Bridge & Roanoke Lid project.

First and foremost, we will be receiving a lump sum amount of 26 million dollars less the balance of our real estate transfers. I would like to preface this presentation by stating that it was only through the collaboration of the Arboretum partners that we were able to arrive at such a large sum of mitigation funding to develop the North Entry of the Arboretum.

For some brief context, WSDOT and SPR have been coordinating for over a decade and a half on the SR 520 reconstruction project. Over the past two years, we’ve been working diligently on the terms for that agreement. This agreement was critical to WSDOT’s ability to move forward with the advertisement of the Portage Bay Bridge & Roanoke Lid Project, which received \$400M this past legislative session to stay on schedule. We reached an agreement that we believe is mutually beneficial.

As you know, WSDOT has rebuilt the highway's Eastside segment between I-405 and Lake Washington, replaced the old floating bridge, and completed the first of two parallel west approach bridges over Union Bay.

They are now delivering the four projects that make up the “Rest of West” project, which include:

- The Montlake project, which is currently in construction and projected to end in early 2024.
- The I-5 Express Lanes project, also slated to end in early 2024.
- The Portage Bay Bridge & Roanoke Lid Project, slated to begin construction in 2024 and last approximately six years.
- The Montlake Cut Bascule Bridge Project.

As you're likely aware, the current Portage Bay Bridge is supported by hollow columns that are at risk of collapse if there is a severe earthquake. To make the bridge safer from earthquakes, we will be replacing the old bridge and building two, new parallel bridges built to modern seismic code.

In addition to the new bridges, the project has several other key features that are a result of over fifteen years of environmental collaboration and enhancements with the community, the Seattle Design Commission, and many other City partners and stakeholders:

- Creating three acres of accessible open space, located just south of Roanoke Park, on the Roanoke Lid, with four identified viewpoints, one of which includes relocation of Bagley viewpoint onto the lid.
- Extending the 14-foot-wide SR 520 Trail west over the Portage Bay Bridge the new Roanoke Lid and providing non-motorized connections to the city's multi-modal systems and parks such as the direct connection to E Montlake Playfield.
- Refining the non-motorized trails on the Roanoke lid and including connections to the city non-motorized network, both in the vicinity of the lid and on the eastside of Portage Bay.

Many of these improvements require acquisition of property or temporary easements of park property from Interlaken, Roanoke, and E Montlake Playfield parks and Bagley viewpoint.

In broad strokes, SR 520/Parks North Entry and Property Transfer agreement includes three key elements:

- First, property transfers associated with 4 parks, which include temporary construction easements, and permanent acquisitions from SPR to WSDOT construct the new Portage Bay Bridge & Roanoke Lid Project.
- Second, early transfer of the 27-acre WSDOT peninsula to SPR. In the transfer, WSDOT would retain temporary construction and staging easements to meet permitting requirements to re-establish disturbed shoreline plantings and continue to use a portion of the peninsula for staging area as we complete the Program.
- Third, a contribution from WSDOT to SPR for the north Arboretum entry project.

WSDOT advertised the RFP in January. Some property transfers needed to occur before the project was authorized for advertisement, which needed to occur in December. That is why it was so important for the agreement to be executed and property transfers to occur before then.

WSDOT will retain a temporary construction easement for construction staging through the duration of the Portage Bay Bridge Project, estimated to be done in 2030. WSDOT will also retain an additional temporary construction easement for riparian shoreline restoration, estimated to be done in 2028.

The North Arboretum entry project is estimated to cost \$26-28M. This project includes the cost of traffic and parking revisions, earthwork removal and reshaping, a new environmental interpretive center, and more. The settlement from WSDOT, less the value of the property transfers from SPR, is \$22.25M. Therefore, SPR is prioritizing the remaining \$5.75M in the next Metropolitan Park District funding cycle.

Stuart-Lehalle asks what the biggest benefit and concession(s) were to the negotiations. Sheffer highlights the opportunity to make the Arboretum a welcoming destination, rather than a pass-through. As far as concessions go, Sheffer notes that the year of property transfer was pushed back late in the negotiation process, but feels that this concession was balanced out by the securing of a lump-sum settlement.

Umagat asks about commencement of new construction projects. Sheffer anticipates that WSDOT will break ground on the new projects within 2023.

Herrera thanks Sheffer for his hard-nosed negotiations and expresses gratitude that SPR is continuing to work in the vision of the Olmstead brothers.

Contreras highlights the improved human and pedestrian access that will result from this project.

Stonecipher explains that significant community outreach is forthcoming for the Arboretum redesign. Sheffer notes that planning to date has operated from 2011-2012 plans as baseline.

Meng asks whether any SPR projects can commence while WSDOT construction is ongoing. Sheffer notes several smaller components, but it will be difficult to move quickly until the WSDOT projects are complete.

Farmer asks if the settlement funds can be reinvested while SPR waits to begin construction. Sheffer and Finnegan confirm that funds will accrue some minimal interest.

## Seattle Japanese Garden Agreement with the Arboretum Foundation

Donnie Grabowski, SPR Finance Division Director, gives the first part of the presentation.

Seattle Parks and Recreation is excited to bring to you for your information a new Seattle Japanese Garden Support and Development Agreement with the Arboretum Foundation. This agreement was reviewed by the City Council on January 4th, unanimously approved by the City Council's Public Assets and Homelessness committee, and signed by the Mayor on January 13th.

As you know, we have a unique set of partnerships at this site. The UW owns the plant collection, the City owns the land and operates, maintains, and manages the Japanese Garden including grounds, entry gatehouse, and buildings associated with the Garden. And, for the past 6 years, the Arboretum Foundation has closely collaborated with SPR to provide programming, events, fundraising, volunteers, marketing, and outreach support for the Garden. This partnership has resulted in stewarding this beautiful space that can be best enjoyed by the public.

With me today is Jane Stonecipher, Executive Director of the Arboretum Foundation, who will help present the details of this Agreement including a new public benefits section that is expected to yield \$2.65M in incremental value to the Garden and the community.

The Seattle Japanese Garden is a 3.5-acre, City-owned property located at the southern end of the Washington Park Arboretum. It was established in 1960 and is open to the public each year from March to November. SJPG is SPR's busiest drop-in admissions location with approximately 100,000 annual visitors, not

counting recent Covid years. During Covid, visitation dipped as the Garden was closed for a portion of 2020 including timed entry ticketing. 2021 Gatehouse Revenue was \$626,240.

Until 2015, the Associated Recreation Council was our primary support partner. In 2014, SPR and the Japanese Garden Society conducted an Optimal Operations Study that looked at the operating model and long-term interests of the Garden; it confirmed the need for a non-profit support partner model. Following this Study, the Arboretum Foundation was selected to provide capital fundraising, programming, outreach, and volunteer management. Our previous, 6-year agreement expired in December 2022.

The successes of our partnership with the Arboretum Foundation include a 40% increase in visitation, an annual Maple Festival, Free First Thursday and Family Saturday programming, and capital funding for a recent pond renovation.

SPR issued a Letter of Interest process in March 2022 to select the next Seattle Japanese Garden support partner. This process was suggested by the City's Law Department and supported by the Interim Superintendent. The requirements included being a non-profit entity, an entity with financial solvency, demonstrated capital fundraising and programming experience, volunteer management, and advocacy support. The Arboretum Foundation was the sole respondent from this process.

Next, I'll highlight key terms in the new proposed agreement and changes from the existing agreement.

The term is 10 years (until December 2032) with one 5-year extension option. SPR owns the land, operates the gatehouse (all cash handling), and provides gardeners and maintenance; the Arboretum Foundation provides supporting functions.

Both partners support accessibility in pricing; the City will set the admissions pricing after consulting with the Arboretum Foundation and community groups. The City will be receiving 10% of merchandise sales in this new agreement; in the previous agreement the Arboretum Foundation received 100% of the sales.

Reporting to the City will include a summary of annual public benefits offered and how these compare with annual planned benefits in this agreement. Arboretum Foundation annual reporting includes number of programs, number of volunteer hours, year-end financials, membership, donor participation, and public benefit metrics.

Revenue sharing is a carry-over from the previous agreement with revised base line budgets and percentages. The City receives a higher share of the initial base revenue in this Agreement. Total annual revenue collected in 2019 was about \$600K; we expect to earn \$700K due to the 2023 fee increases. Revenue is somewhat weather dependent but also based on annual public events.

With \$700K in expected revenue, the Arboretum Foundation would earn \$175K; over 10 years this would yield approximately \$2M. We anticipate that the Arboretum Foundation will provide \$4.65M in program and capital fundraising benefits over the 10-year agreement; this would then present a net expected incremental benefit of \$2.65M.

With that, I will now turn it over to Jane Stonecipher, Executive Director of the Arboretum Foundation, to present on the public benefits included in this agreement.

There are a number of signature programs the Arboretum Foundation will be operating to fulfill our public benefit commitments. The first is our Free 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday, which is modeled on the operations of many

museums. We really aim to highlight visual and performing arts, be that calligraphy or dance or other arts. Another program is Family Saturday, which often includes themed events and free admission for children. These programs are valued at about \$110k annually.

We have an active social media presence and promote our programs through a variety of means. We value our social media, marketing, and outreach at \$10k annually.

The Japanese Garden relies heavily on our dedicated group of volunteers for tours, sales, and events. Using the normal rate for volunteer time, these volunteer hours equate to \$45k per year.

Fundraising is another part of what we can bring to this partnership. Last year we raised \$750k for improvements to the Garden; we anticipate raising an additional \$3M over the course of the agreement.

We also look for ways to promote the garden on behalf of SPR. This includes building relationships with the local Japanese consulate and the Japan-America Society of the State of Washington, which is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2023, as well as partnering with other organizations for specific cultural events.

Overall, we think that the incremental benefit that the foundation will bring back to the community is \$2.65M over the term of the agreement.

Watts asks about the status of the Japanese Garden Pond relative to an ongoing Arboretum Creek project. Stonecipher gives a brief overview of the project, which is currently in the design phase. Currently, the goal is for construction to begin in 2025.

Herrera asks what the biggest challenges are to operations for the Garden, highlighting the rapid growth of the city and climate change as two variables. Stonecipher notes that the popularity of the Garden may actually work against its essential experience; the Garden is not designed or intended to be busy. Some of this challenge can be addressed by creative programming and scheduling. Grabowski adds that expanded operations capacity is a goal in progress.

## Old & New Business

Umagat shares details for the Associated Recreation Council (ARC) annual Fund the Fun fundraising event on April 20. Last year, this event raised sufficient funds for 196 youth and teens to participate in programs they otherwise couldn't afford. Visit [Fund the Fun](#) online for more details or to sign up.

Farmer shouts-out Interim Superintendent Diaz's recent appearance on Councilmember Lewis's podcast, [All Policy is Local](#).

There being no further business, Farmer adjourns the meeting at 8:11 pm.