



# Minutes|Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Webex

Thursday, April 27, 2022

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

## Attendance

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

SPR Staff and Presenters: Diaz, Finnegan, Baldwin, Shah, Reischl, Lindemuth, Chatburn, Hoff, Burtzos

## Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

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

Commissioners and SPR staff introduce themselves around the table.

Umagat 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.

Umagat introduces the consent agenda: the agenda for tonight's meeting, and the minutes for the March 9 and March 23 meetings. Meng moves to adopt the consent agenda; Mays seconds. There is no discussion. Umagat calls for a vote. The vote is unanimous in favor. The motion passes.

***Adopted: BPRC Meeting Agenda 4/27/23; BPRC Meeting Minutes 3/9/23, 3/23/23***

## Public Comment

Terrence Dai – Advisory committee member for International District Community Center – Advocating for increased hours at Green Lake Community Center for table tennis. GLCC cut off-hours table tennis in 2021. We are hoping to work with SPR to find a solution to provide more hours for this community. Table tennis is a world-wide sport with great diversity. We are asking that Parks management and our elected officials step in to help restore our weekend hours.

## Superintendent's Report

SPR Superintendent AP Diaz delivers the report.

**Confirmed!** I was thrilled to be unanimously confirmed by the City Council earlier this month to become Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation. It is an honor of a lifetime. Though I've been hard at work for more than six months, I am excited to remove the "Interim" label and roll up my sleeves to continue our work in the months and years ahead.

**Swim Seattle:** You may have heard that the program to provide free swim instruction to Seattle area youth launched at Rainier Beach Pool last Saturday on April 22. Mayor Harrell and I and a host of community partners were excited to announce our first steps to offering comprehensive, free swim lessons for Seattle children. Swim Seattle is an initiative promoting basic swimming and water safety skills. Youth of color are far more likely to die from a swim-related death than their white peers and are far less likely to have the opportunity to have engaging, accessible, and effective swim instruction. These disparities have existed for far too long, and it's time to take a bold step forward in our collective efforts to ensure swim safety for all. Swim Seattle will partner with No More Under, the YMCA, regional recreation partners, Children's Hospital, University of Washington, the Drowning Prevention Network, and water safety advocates. Beginning in May 2023, the pilot program will start with a cohort of 250 low-income youth with the hope that we can expand citywide, and across the region!

**Downtown Activation Plan:** Earlier this month, the Mayor announced the City's Downtown Activation Plan to revitalize downtown Seattle with measures to improve public health, safety, small business activity and maintenance. One of the key elements of the plan is to reopen City Hall Park on June 15 with new programming, safety and lighting enhancements, security, and activities.

**Lake City CC fire:** You may have heard that the Lake City Community Center was set on fire a week ago Monday night, causing extensive, significant damage. Fortunately, no injuries were reported but nonetheless, this was a tremendous loss for the community who rely on our center to provide recreational opportunities, and for our staff who work at the center. SPR responded by boarding up entries, installing fencing, and shutting off power and water. The building is now closed and we are working to relocate programming. I'm in discussion with SPD, SFD, City Council, the Library and the Mayor's Office to assess next steps.

**Pollinator Habitat webinar:** On April 11, SPR hosted a webinar on supporting pollinator habitat in people's homes, featuring experts from our own department and a representative from the Xerces Society. After a brief presentation on pollinator habitat elements and how SPR is incorporating these practices into our parks, I facilitated a panel discussion with our experts and took questions from participants. The webinar was recorded and will soon be available on our [Thriving Environment webpage](#).

[Slide show: some examples of recent work by our crews out in the field.]

**Cheasty Blvd Trail:** Here are before and after photos of trail renovation project on the Cheasty Boulevard Trail.

**Tree Crew:** Our Tree Crew perform heroic, highly skilled work every day. This photo shows crew member Henry Arends in a bucket to top off this elm tree in Fred Hutchinson Park which had been infected with Dutch Elm Disease. The tree was in declining health and the tree was cut down to prevent the spread of the disease to nearby elm trees.

**Eager Beavers!** Staff at Carkeek Park report sightings of two beavers in the park. They have taken down two trees in the wetlands area of the park. Beavers are vegetarians and eat the wood and may be building a dam. Park visitors can watch beavers from the wetlands trail. It's fine to observe the beavers from the trail but please don't go off trail to approach them.

Summer Camp registration started April 18 and the 2023 summer camp brochure is now available! Browse a wide range of exciting activities for participants, from preschool and school age care camps to nature camps, to camps for youth with disabilities. Outlined within are descriptions, dates, and

locations of Seattle. Registration instructions and methods are on page 1 of the brochure. Please visit our website for more details: [www.seattle.gov/parks](http://www.seattle.gov/parks)

**Summer of Safety Plan for 2023:** We are working with the Mayor's Office to finalize our Summer of Safety program for the summer of 2023 to promote positive engagement, learning and employment for young people in our community. The plan will include our regularly scheduled programs such as day and activity camps, free lunches, Late Night Recreation, Community Learning Centers, the Teen Summer Musical, and youth employment programs. Plus, specific Summer of Safety programs for kids age 11 to 15 at selected community centers.

**Be'er Sheva Park Improvements:** Construction is under way for much-anticipated improvements at Be'er Sheva Park in the Rainier Beach neighborhood of Seattle. We've worked closely with the community for six years on the planning and design of park improvements which will include improved beach access, a concrete boardwalk, covered gathering spaces, lighted walking paths, BBQs and picnic tables, a cultural performance stage, and salmon habitat improvements. Pictured is a mural on a restroom in the park completed by youth in June of last year. Construction will be completed in two phases: this spring and in-water work this fall.

**Victor Steinbrueck Park construction update:** Last Sunday, April 23, the totem poles at Victor Steinbrueck Park were temporarily removed as construction continues for the park renovation. Improvements include upgrading the features and drainage and replacing the failing waterproof membrane between the park and the parking garage located below the park. We expect construction to be completed this fall.

**Recent legislation passed at City Council included:**

**Seattle Mariners Partnership:** An ordinance authorizing the department and Seattle Mariners to enter into an agreement to fund substantial improvements to 2 baseball/softball fields at Rainier Playfield in SE Seattle.

**Jackson Park Property Exchange:** An ordinance authorizing a property exchange between SPR and the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) in Jackson Park. This will allow for street improvements along NE 145th St. and provide SPR a larger nearby property on NE 130th St.

**Performance Dashboard:** Our new Financial and Performance Dashboard is now up on our website with the purpose of increasing transparency by providing system-wide financial and organizational performance data. Check it out by visiting our website [www.seattle.gov/parks](http://www.seattle.gov/parks) and navigating to the About Us tab.

**Bicycle Weekends** are back and will take place over the course of several weekends this summer, from Saturday morning to Sunday evening, from May to September. A portion of Lake Washington Boulevard will be closed to motorized vehicles from 10 a.m. Saturday to 6 p.m. Sunday.

The 2023 event dates are:

- May: 20-21; 27-28
- June: 17-18; 24-25
- July: 1-2; 15-16
- August: 19-20; 26-27
- September: 2-3; 16-17

**One Seattle Day of Service:** Earlier this month, Mayor Harrell announced that registration has opened for the second One Seattle Day of Service volunteer event, which will be held in neighborhoods across the city on May 20, 2023. Registration is available for over 3,000 volunteer shifts at over 110 events throughout Seattle including at dozens of Seattle parks, including Bell St., Bitter Lake, Delridge, Kinnear, and Hutchinson Playground. Volunteer opportunities include a variety of options for people across ages, abilities, and interests. Visit [www.seattle.gov/mayor](http://www.seattle.gov/mayor) to sign up.

**National pickleball tournament:** We're excited to announce that the Professional Pickleball Association, a national pickleball organization, will be holding one of its tournaments at our Amy Yee Tennis Center outdoor courts on July 27. They will be converting our outdoor courts temporarily to pickleball courts, and then after the tournament, converting the courts back to tennis. They anticipate 800-1,200 spectators and amateur competitors in addition to the professional players. The benefit for SPR is that the AYTC outdoor courts will be resurfaced.

I'd be glad to answer any questions Board members may have.

Stuart-Lehalle asks if SPR is open to partnerships for messaging and programming for Summer of Safety. Diaz shares that part of the goal of the program is to forge community connections in exactly this way; Hoff can connect Board members with SPR contacts.

Umagat recognizes the variety of partnerships that SPR is engaging in currently, including with the Mayor's Office, the Seattle Mariners, and other organizations.

## Pathways Park: Design, Accessibility & Naming Process

Kim Baldwin, SPR Deputy Director of Planning, Development, and Maintenance, introduces the presentation. Baldwin introduces Roma Shah, SPR project manager, and Paige Reischl, community project organizer.

Reischl provides background for park renovation and naming project. The project began with a small community dedicated to creating an inclusive park space. A teen advisory team from Magnuson Community Center helped guide the planning of the park design from the beginning, with the goal of serving people who are furthest from justice. Planning continued in a grassroots way, expanding from individuals up to organizations. The guiding question was, "What would it take to create a space where we all belong?"

Shah shares feedback from public meetings and outreach. Much of the feedback received was to make the park space accessible and inclusive to all, both physically and emotionally. Accessibility is essential to participation; inclusion supports diversity of participants. Shah provides an overview of a variety of park design features, highlighting their accessibility and inclusivity.

Reischl elaborates on a few specific park design features and asset choices, such as park landscape elements and accessible playground equipment, can translate into a safer, more accessible, and more inclusive experience for park users both with and without disabilities. These are just a few examples of how community feedback helped inform the design of this park and play space.

Reischl and Shah describe the unconventional naming process that eventually led to the selection of "Pathways Park". When a park design has concluded, which includes extensive community outreach, SPR puts a call out for naming suggestions. This entails reaching out to the broader community through newsletters, community papers, social media and neighborhood organizations. On this project, we had the bonus of Paige and the project community group. Their willingness to do extensive

outreach, including to local tribal organizations, and compile these naming suggestions was impressive. Once all the suggestions were gathered, the Park Naming Committee reviewed the suggestions and formally recommended Pathways Park to the Superintendent for approval. The new rainbow sign that will go in at the park entrance will read Pathways Park in both English and in the Southern Lushootseed translation.

Baldwin wraps up the presentation by touching on the funding for the park renovation. To support this project from design to construction, we have a total project budget of \$6.6M. Public Funding was \$4.4M, which includes \$2.5M in grants and \$1.9M from Seattle Parks and Recreation. Private Funding totaled \$2.4M. Construction for this park renovation began just a few weeks ago on April 17th! We are very excited to be working with Bayshore Construction as the prime contractor. We anticipate construction completion in spring of 2024.

Contreras thanks the presenters for the information, and shares that he is impressed with the care put into the naming process.

Start-Lehalle echoes Contreras's appreciation, and notes that working for equity can be difficult when many interests are at work. Stuart-Lehalle asks for clarity regarding "soft barriers" on perimeter of park. Shah explains that this term refers to features such as trees, boulders, artwork, and other objects that delineate park boundaries without creating an impermeable barrier on the perimeter of the property.

Herrera adds that it is exciting to see a space designed so intentionally for folks with diverse abilities.

## Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation in Urban Park Landscapes

Amy Lindemuth, SPR Sr. Landscape Architect, and Craig Chatburn, SPR Sr. Planning & Development Specialist, deliver the presentation.

At every park, we want to see the indicators of healthy landscapes and ecosystems. It's an unfortunate reality that each year we're seeing the effects of climate change in many of our parks. SPR's respective branches continue to implement approaches in our designs, operations & maintenance to mitigate issues arising from climate change & build resilience in our park landscapes for anticipated future climate conditions. I have a couple highlights to share from the Planning & Capital Development branch focused on our design and technical standards before I hand it over to Craig to discuss approaches in the Operations branch.

The most comprehensive design guideline currently in place to support sustainable, resilient landscapes is the Landscape Planting Design Standard. This standard outlines a methodology to guide development of appropriate planting plans for new parks and renovation projects. It provides sustainable landscape design guidance for all aspects of planting design including tree, vegetation & soil protection, soil health, species selection, site considerations, water management design, & plant establishment & warranty periods. It utilizes a collaborative Design team approach that brings together different SPR subject matter experts at key points in the design process to assess whether SPR's goals will be met by the landscape design.

This policy is governed and informed by federal, state, and local regulations and requirements, the Sustainable SITES initiative, SPR Policies and standards. These include our Native Plant Policy, Park Classification System, Tree Management Policy, Design Details & Technical Specifications, Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Landscape Horticulture & Forestry, and Vegetation Management Plans (VMPs) for specific parks, boulevards & viewpoints.

As you've heard, more of our trees in Seattle are dying due to changes in our climate. We're experiencing hotter, drier summers that native and non-native species are struggling to survive. One approach we're taking is to expand our definition of native trees to include all species within the Cascadia Bioregion. This update will be added to Landscape Planting Design Standard, and it will allow designers more options for selecting species that will have the best chance of survival in our changing climate conditions.

In general, we're planting more trees to combat heat islands. We are currently aligning our design standards and specifications to the requirements set forth in the mayor's recent Executive Order 2023-03 (One Seattle Tree Plan). This includes implementing 3:1 tree replacement for healthy site-appropriate trees removed. And on-going this year, we are working with our Parks Engineer, SPR Urban Forestry & Purchasing and Contracting to align our plant establishment & warranty requirements to support newly planted trees for their first 5 years of establishment per the Mayor's Executive Order.

Another way that we ensure our landscapes will be healthy and sustainable is through our water management design. Our objective is to be as efficient as possible with our water use while still meeting the needs of our landscapes. We meet this objective by using the right amount of water that plants need based on their evapotranspiration rates. Our irrigation central control systems help us meet this need. Our specifications require central control systems that are climate adaptive and resource conserving with weather-based scheduling and leak detection. Approximately 75% of Parks irrigation is managed by these central control systems.

We have a long-standing standard of using pressure regulating heads to conserve water, and in general, our irrigation materials have an extremely long operating life, requiring fewer resource inputs and reducing materials entering the waste stream.

And finally, as we update our standard details and specifications, we continue to work with our partners in other city departments through our Parks Engineer to codify these standards into the City's standard plans and specifications for municipal construction. As these examples illustrate, we operate within a culture of continuous improvement.

One last example of this approach I want to share is the Design for Climate Change study that our Planning Unit is leading with an outside consultant team. This study will review our landscape design standards, details, and specifications to identify opportunities to strengthen our climate resiliency.

Now I'll hand it over to Craig for discussion of the great work happening within the Operations Branch.

We are running out of time to meet challenging targets to avoid the worst outcome of climate change. A recognizable future depends on meeting greenhouse reductions worldwide. We are on track to reduce emissions 3%, not the 45% below the 1990 levels by 2030 needed to avoid the worst outcome of climate change.

We are training crews to maintain urban landscapes so they function more like a forest by working with nature. So, landscapes don't require as much artificial life support to survive and thrive, and landscapes are part of the climate solution. We are reducing hauling costs, reducing carbon miles by reducing organic matter extraction, reducing workloads while creating more naturally fertile soils with increased water holding capacity and drought resilience by leaving plant residue where it belongs: on the ground.

We need to import habitat assets that help support the ecosystem and lighten our work loads, including:

- Carbon storage:
  - Organic practices to reduce water usage and runoff
  - Leave the leaves, branches & logs on the ground
  - Nurse log leaf dams to maintain leaves under tree groves
- Water conservation:
  - Expand mulching radius around trees or groves
  - Future climate tolerant plants
  - Salmon/Flood protection
  - Focusing on evergreen tree installation to decrease maintenance and increase water retention
- Tree protecting pollinator habitat:
  - Natural height turf under trees to reduce damage to trees and retain water and mulch
  - Mow at maximum height feasible
  - Overseed with drought resistant wildflowers, such as clover
- Equitable cooling shade:
  - Plans for future climate tolerant tree groves

Umagat thanks Lindemuth and Chatburn for the informative and enlightening presentation and asks what the previous tree replacement ratio was. Lindemuth clarifies that the previous replacement policy was 2:1, and that plan still applies for trees that are invasive or removed for disease.

Seyfried asks how investment in tree canopy improvements is being met in traditionally less-advantaged neighborhoods. Lindemuth has not heard any negative comments, and shares that feedback has been fairly positive. Seyfried asks if SPR has prioritized new investment in tree planting, and if so, where do these neighborhoods fall on the prioritization schedule? Seyfried compares Seattle's policy to New York City, which has explicitly stated policy of de-prioritizing planting in wealthier areas while focusing on less affluent boroughs and neighborhoods. Finnegan shares that the Green Seattle Partnership works in close coordination with communities through a robust community outreach initiative. Finnegan suggests that Stephanie Shelton, SPR Urban Forestry Manager, might be a good resource on this point.

Seyfried asks if any conversation and coordination is ongoing between SPR and SDOT regarding plant and tree selection, particularly as SPR expands the recommendations for plantings to include the whole Cascadia bioregion. Chatburn shares that the Urban Tree Commission has members from a wide range of City agencies, and he assumes that is where this conversation is occurring. Finnegan notes that the Office of Sustainability and Environment has an urban forestry group, but acknowledges that she does not have any details about policy and standards coordination. Lindemuth notes that interdepartmental coordination occurs on a project level, such as the Waterfront Park reactivation project, but those discussions do not reach the policy level. Seyfried notes that parks departments tend to have more progressive standards than departments of transportation, and he would like to see an increase in interdepartmental communication. Lindemuth notes that SDOT has unique challenges to address (i.e., restricted space in medians, traffic, etc.) that create some limitations for that department.

Contreras observes that historically affluent neighborhoods ("streetcar suburbs") often had established canopy trees prior to the installation of utility lines, whereas newly-planted street trees

must often be chosen specifically with a maximum height in mind to avoid obstruction of utility lines. This consideration decreases options for biodiversity and perpetuates inequities in shade cover even if the trees survive their establishment period, which many do not. Contreras notes that unless street trees are compared in type as well as number (“crabapples-to-crabapples” comparison), the metric of simply counting trees fails to capture the full picture. In addition, during severe heat waves, many newly established trees do not survive. Staff note that Park District Cycle 2 funding has provided for a dedicated tree establishment crew to provide support for the first five years of newly-planted trees’ establishment.

Contreras asks if there is any sort of an adopt-a-tree program for community members and acknowledges that this may be more of a can of worms than the department wants to open up right now in terms of staffing and programming.

Seyfried asks if and how SPR is planning and adapting to rising sea levels due to climate change, and the impact that rising sea levels will have on trees and plants in coastal parks. Chatburn directs BPRC to the department’s Climate Adaptation Plan, which addresses some of these topics, including the potentiality of relocating some waterfront trails.

Herrera thanks Chatburn for the discussion, particularly the attention to the citywide design specification and the focus on the efficacy of the whole urban canopy, rather than just pockets or individual trees.

## Seattle Park District Ramp-Up Update

Diaz introduces Deputy Superintendent Michele Finnegan to deliver the presentation. This is a version of the reporting presentation that was given to City Council acting as the Park District Oversight Board at the end of March. Resolution 51, which adopted the Cycle 2 funding proposal, gave specific instructions for reporting progress at the detailed line of business level to Council.

As we work to implement Park District services, we are focused on our commitment to delivering services to the public, clearly articulating our expectations for service delivery, and keeping ourselves accountable. One of the pieces of that accountability is regular reporting out to this body, and we may be looking to you all for ideas as to how best to report to you.

You have in the packet in front of you the Reporting Plan, Ramp Up Plan, and a few appendices. These plans are broken down at the detailed line of business level.

[Finnegan walks Board members through their packets of materials. This information is available to the public on the [Seattle Park District dashboard](#)].

Finnegan notes that Park District funding does account for an expansion in Community Center hours beginning in the fall; Finnegan had a chance to speak with public commenter before he left for the evening to discuss this. Highlights from the report include an anticipated 8% increase in community center hours, 80% of park inspections meeting maintenance goals, an 8-year decrease in the life cycle of comfort stations systemwide, and 300 trees planted in developed parks each year. SPR will report on Cycle 2 progress and line of business metrics through annual reports, financial and performance dashboards, and on the SPR website and various social media accounts.

The ramp up plan overview is broken down much the same way, along the same lines of business. However, in this section more detail is provided regarding specifics of how we are going to get to full



delivery of each project, as well as milestones. Highlights include the expansion of the Park Ranger program and the vandalism response team operational by Q3 of 2023.

The appendices to the packet provide more details regarding reporting procedures, capital delivery strategy, and next steps.

Meng asks about the frequency and automation of data tracking. Finnegan confirms that all data is tracked and collated by hand; some reports can be generated automatically, but the reporting is all manual.

Umagat recommends that a brief walkthrough of the reporting dashboard at a future meeting would be helpful for the Board's understanding of how to read the data.

## **Old & New Business**

No business is raised.

There being no further business, Umagat adjourns the meeting at 8:30 pm.