



# Minutes|Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Zoom

Thursday, November 9, 2023

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

## Attendance

Present: Stafford Mays, Andrea Stuart-Lehalle, Pasqual Contreras, Lauren Lanham, Amy Brockhaus, Phillip Meng, Joshua Seyfried, Marlon Herrera (co-chair), Jessica Farmer

Absent: Justin Umagat (co-chair)

SPR Staff and Presenters: AP Diaz, Andy Sheffer, Paula Hoff, Ben Burtzos

## Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

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

Herrera 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.

Herrera introduces the consent items for approval: tonight's meeting agenda and the meeting minutes from the 9/28/23 BPRC meeting. Farmer moves to approve both items with no further debate; Brockhaus seconds. There is no objection. The motion passes by unanimous consent.

***Adopted: BPRC Meeting Agenda 11/9/23***

***Adopted: BPRC Meeting Minutes 9/28/23***

## Public Comment

Peter Breyfogle – Burke-Gilman Trail Maintenance Concerns – There was supposed to be some work done on the Burke-Gilman Trail this year, following our continued conversations with SPR and the Board, and some work has been done. The reason more hasn't happened is because between 7/17 and 10/17, SPR and SDOT could not coordinate a permit for the work. This is unacceptable; this issue is very personal to me, and we now have to put up with poor trail conditions during the wet winter months. The little bit of money that was allotted to this project was not spent. I have offered to ride along with SPR staff, and have received no offers; I have heard no comments from anyone at SPR. I find this Board to be a bit negligent; in the last 4-5 years, I do not remember the Burke-Gilman Trail ever being a topic of discussion for this group.

Stephanie Webb – Black Lives Memorial Garden – SPR notified Black Star Farmers on 10/4 about plans to destroy the BLMG in Cal Anderson Park. Speaking on behalf of the garden community, I believe this is unacceptable. The BLMG was founded by and for local community members during the protests against the police murder of George Floyd in 2020. Ever since, it has grown produce and herbal medicine for the community, as well as vital native plants. The garden has become a vital mutual aid hub and serves the needs of the most vulnerable in the community. I stand firmly in support of the BLMG staying in its current location. My toddlers love wandering the garden as well. SPR's decision to remove the garden for turf renovation is nonsensical; SPR has never wanted the garden or what it represents, and they are finally taking action to recolonize this area with non-native grasses. If any area of Cal Anderson needs turf renovation, it's the dog park, which is also an unpermitted use of park space.

Jennifer Beetem – Black Lives Memorial Garden – I am a 14-year resident of Capitol Hill, always within five blocks from Cal Anderson Park. However, SPR did not include me in the tiny radius for their 2020 survey regarding the BLMG. Like many of my neighbors, I am dismayed that SPR ordered the garden removed without consulting the full Capitol Hill community, the Cal Anderson Park Alliance, or the BPRC. I want the BLMG to stay, either in its current location or nearby, with significant design input from its community stewards and improved accessibility for seniors and disabled people. At this garden, people of all classes and backgrounds meet and grow community. The garden meets long unmet needs for informal public spaces. This garden has been more accessible than any experience I have had with the P-Patch program. Cal Anderson Park is only 20 years old and is still growing and evolving in its design. Many features in the park do not function as designed, including the wading pool, shelter house, and sun bowl, which is too muddy to use most of the year.

Caro Johnson – Black Lives Memorial Garden – As a volunteer with the Beacon Hill Food Forest and a public health professional, I know the benefits that a community garden can bring. I see so many parallels between the BLMG and the Beacon Hill Food Forest; the garden is an ecologically diverse and welcoming space to learn about urban farming and serves a diverse range of visitors. Children especially enjoy and benefit from this garden. This is a resource whose value cannot be quantified, but I challenge you to try. The BLMG should be celebrated or at least left alone. The BPRC has a letter of support for Black Lives Matter pinned to its website. Now is the time to put those words into action and keep this garden from being demolished.

Elisa Chavez – Black Lives Memorial Garden – I was surprised when I learned that SPR wanted to remove the garden in favor of turf. The garden could definitely use some improvements, but my priorities as a community member are 1) cleaner and more usable public restrooms, and 2) doing something with the wading pool, which is rarely usable. SPR should also take a page out of the BLMG's book and cultivate more indigenous plants. I do not believe the garden can or should be moved. To me, CHOP meant babies tear gassed in their cribs, my friends who faced long recovery from injuries inflicted by SPD, and the tragic deaths of young Black men. The BLM garden is a reminder that we can make something beautiful out of our shared pain. I urge you to preserve the garden and not destroy it.

Jeff Almgren – Burke-Gilman Trail Maintenance Concerns – Problems on this trail that have been reported over several years appear to have been ignored by SPR, as evidenced by little or no corrective action taken. I have ridden the trail for my commute and recreationally since the 1980s.

The pavement surface has continued to degrade for the past decade. Tree roots, pavement heaves, and speed bumps, some over 4" in height, cause dangerous conditions for trail users. You have already heard concerns that the trail is not covered in the current 6 year plan. Virtually no maintenance has been done this year and what has been done appears to be of poor quality. I'm really disappointed with the length of time it has taken to get even funded projects started. There is no coordinated response from the top to the bottom of SPR on these issues, which could create a liability problem for the City of Seattle. I've heard of serious injuries to trail users and even mention of a possible fatality that may have been associated with the deteriorated pavement conditions.

Maddie Price – Black Lives Memorial Garden – Because of the compounding crises of neighborhood food insecurity, pollinator habitat loss, and climate change, I am of the belief that cities need more community garden and less turf lawn. That is why I support the BLMG.

Shannon Waits – Rainier Beach Link2Lake – We are concerned about the decision to close access to Be'er Sheva Park and the Atlantic City Boat Ramp indefinitely. There are certain voices in the community who have not been considered, specifically those who use the park as their primary open space, and have limited waterfront access as is. Link2Lake has been working to create safe waterfront access at Be'er Sheva Park, activating the space, adding lights, and bringing a beach to Rainier Beach. The closure of this space goes against the core values that our group and neighborhood stand for – equitable access to the waterfront – and which we've heard SPR say you value, as well. You say you value community input and solutions, but your definition of "community" has been selective. Link2Lake was not considered or brought into the conversation before these decisions were made, despite working alongside SPR for the last 8 years on behalf of this community. Nor was Rainier Beach Action Coalition, which has been creating and implementing data-driving solutions for public safety in the neighborhood successfully for years. These actions are received differently in this neighborhood because of our history of having to fight for basic amenities. Displacement in Rainier Beach is high, and actions like these sow more discontent towards government institutions.

Ashlie Arthur – Black Lives Memorial Garden – The BLMG provides benefits to the community in ways that many public spaces fail to. The garden provides nourishment through food, medicine, fellowship, and education, with no barriers to access. It provides connection to the land for those who are disenfranchised. It is a space for healing that was born out of grief, and that grief should be honored by keeping the garden in place. I am an environmental professional and I know the importance of community in maintaining thriving green spaces. This is happening here. That input should not be disregarded. The community is telling SPR what they want in this space, and that is a garden with no barriers to participate.

Larry Hubbell – Friends of Arboretum Creek - The Headwaters Project will reconnect clean spring water into Arboretum Creek. It will intercept stormwater and protect the Japanese Garden from flooding. It will also clean the stormwater and protect salmon downstream in Lake Washington and Puget Sound. Why should the City of Seattle invest in this project, especially, given the concern for equitable investments in our parks? The Arboretum provides easy access to the healing power of nature for all Seattleites. A new survey, soon to be released, will show the Arboretum is utilized by citizens from every Seattle zip code. The Japanese Garden also benefits all Seattleites. It is free on the first Thursday of each month. It celebrates Japanese culture while increasing tourism from around

the world. Plus, it does this while covering its operational costs. The Headwaters Project has already secured more than \$1 million in funding, and has advisory approval from Seattle Parks & Recreation (SPR), the Arboretum Foundation, the UW Botanic Gardens, SPU, KC, SDOT, & support from the Seattle Parks Foundation for the current design. The Headwater Project is an opportunity for the City to secure more than \$4 million in value, to the benefit of all the citizens of Seattle, by investing a fraction of the total. County and State executives have stated that significant additional funding will be dependent on the City of Seattle participating in the funding process.

Matt Gleason – Black Lives Memorial Garden – I visit Cal Anderson Park about once a week as a social hub, and want to speak in favor of the Black Lives Memorial Garden. I don't really understand the motivation for Parks to remove this space. It seems to me exactly the kind of engagement with a park that any Parks Department should be thrilled about; this level of engagement is not something that most departments are capable of. When community takes ownership of a project, steering it and giving it direction, to me that's one of the greatest things that can happen, one of the best possible outcomes. I would urge SPR to reconsider what we have here, which is a beautiful community space where people are directly taking care of it and shaping it to their needs and the needs of their community.

Herrera thanks the commenters for their time and advocacy.

## Superintendent's Report

Anthony-Paul (AP) Diaz, Esq., Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, delivers the report.

**Role Model City!** We are very pleased to announce that the United Nations Environment Program has selected Seattle as a "role model city" for its Generation Restoration initiative -- one of 19 cities around the world chosen to share best practices to advance urban habitat restoration. Seattle is the only city in the United States participating. As a role model city, Seattle will highlight urban forest restoration efforts such as the Green Seattle Partnership as well as other initiatives to preserve natural areas and enhance ecosystem health throughout the city's nearly 500 parks. Ecosystem restoration is key to avoiding global climate catastrophe. These efforts also support climate mitigation, climate adaptation, economy, food security, water supplies, health, and biodiversity.

**Seattle Management Association Honors 4 SPR Leaders:** I am proud to report that 4 Seattle Parks and Recreation staff members recently won 2023 awards of excellence from the Seattle Management Association (SMA). The annual awards recognize leadership and accomplishments of City of Seattle employees in a number of categories. Congratulations to these stellar and exceptional SPR leaders!

- Jason Vining-Nakamura, Seattle Conservation Corps Supervisor, Felecia Caldwell Leadership in Equity Award. Jason is a passionate and humble champion of workforce equity, improving how we use and deploy technology to more equitably maintain parks across the city.
- Todd Burley, SPR Sustainability Strategic Advisor, Environmental Stewardship Award. Todd has taken leadership roles on workplan priorities such as phasing out gas-powered leaf blowers and the Role Model City selection (see above).

- Andy Sheffer, Deputy Superintendent, Community Service Award. Andy is a phenomenal servant leader known for his vision, humility and can-do attitude. He recently organized the 3-on-3 basketball tournament and pickleball tournament on downtown city streets.
- Morteza Behrooz, Project Manager, Planning & Project Management Award. Morteza has a keen focus on equity. One example of this: he created a unique community-based designer selection process for the Jose Rizal project that led with equity and promoted a diverse group of designers.

**Eager Beavers:** You may have heard in the news that a family of beavers have moved into Carkeek Park, building a series of dams along the mouth of Pipers Creek. The largest dam is causing water to spill onto a nearby walking trail. The dam also may present a challenge for chum salmon, which are set to return and spawn this month. It's not clear yet how the beaver dam will impact the spawn. In a natural environment — where a river flows consistently all the time — a beaver dam would be no problem for spawning salmon, but Pipers Creek, surrounded by a highly urbanized and concrete-laden watershed, is not a totally natural river. SPR is working with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to explore mitigation strategies to manage the beavers.

**GOOD NEWS TO REPORT:** This past weekend we observed that salmon were able to migrate up and over the beaver dam and more than 150 salmon were counted.

**Expansion of Community Center Hours:** Thanks to funding from the Seattle Park District, SPR recently announced a \$2.1 million investment to expand community center public hours at Delridge, Rainier Beach, Van Asselt, Miller, Northgate, Yesler, Bitter Lake, and Laurelhurst community centers. This investment increases facility availability for free drop-in activities, child care programs, recreation programming, community events, and building rentals. 104 weekly hours were added systemwide across these facilities to support increased public access, with a focus on expanding evening and weekend access in response to stated community preference. The expanded hours began in September.

**Trauma Informed Training:** Seattle Parks and Recreation, Associated Recreation Council, Seattle Parks Foundation, King County Play Equity Coalition, and the newly formed Seattle Alliance for Play Equity gathered in early October to explore ways to coordinate our joint commitment to equitable play. The Recreation Division will partner with King County Play Equity Coalition to send SPR Recreation employees and volunteers who coach youth to a trauma-informed training next month. The training is for coaches working with young people in any sport (or movement-based activity), led by experts at the Center for Healing and Justice Through Sports.

**Seattle Mentors:** The Recreation Division's Daisy Catague and Romell Witherspoon joined me recently to brief the Mayor's Executive Cabinet on the Seattle Mentors program. The presentation was well received, along with full support for SPR to lead the interdepartmental effort supported by a phased approach for rollout. A briefing to the Mayor is scheduled for mid-November.

**Swim Seattle Update:** SPR continues to remove financial barriers to aquatics activities, giving out 350 free swim lessons since Swim Seattle launched, plus 1,472 scholarships YTD specifically for our beginning swim lessons to address swim proficiency in our youth. SPR and the Aquatics team will be expanding our drowning prevention efforts with multiple opportunities to engage and provide

education to families who need water safety and swim lessons. In Q4 2023, two community workshops are planned to be held at Magnuson CC and Garfield Teen Life Center.

**SPR's Statement About the Cal Anderson BLMG:** You may have heard about our plans to remove the Black Lives Matter Garden at Cal Anderson Park. On Oct. 7, we posted our plans to remove the BLM Garden and reseed the area for turf restoration. Unfortunately, the BLM Garden is not appropriate for this section of the park because that area is one of few spaces that is appropriate to host gatherings and events (because of its intentional design as a natural amphitheater proximate to electrical and water hook-ups). The community engagement SPR conducted in the wake of the CHOP protests showed the community's desire to relocate the garden to another location within the park.

SPR has been in regular communication with Black Star Farmers since 2020 offering alternative locations for the garden within Cal Anderson Park and/or in other Seattle parks, including the space behind Rainier Community Center. Unfortunately, Black Star Farmers has not been interested in relocating the garden. We have contacted Black Star Farmers directly and posted a notice to give at least two weeks for the garden to be collected. Should Black Star Farmers be interested in creating a garden in a Seattle park we are open and willing to help them find an appropriate location.

**Seattle Conservation Corps:** We are proud of the work of the Seattle Conservation Corps, which is growing in enrollment and the work they are doing.

**Clean City:** Seattle Parks and Recreation crews continue the important work to clean up the city in downtown areas and other areas of Seattle that need it. In the last week of October (10/21/23 - 10/27/23) our crews collected:

- Encampment Needle Count: 319
- Locations: 138
- Tonnage: 52,500 lbs.

**TOUCHDOWN at Loyal Heights!** With the help of the Heavy Equipment Crew, district maintenance workers and truck drivers recently worked together to install football goal posts at Loyal Heights Playfield.

There's always a lot going on in our Planning & Capital Development Branch!

**Lake City Community Center Redevelopment:** Planning has begun for major improvements at Lake City Community Center. We held our first meeting with the Lake City Project Advisory Team on Oct. 31. The Office of Housing gave the team a briefing on the selection process for the affordable housing developer at the site. The RFP for the developer will be issued by the end of the year and the developer selection should be finalized by mid-2024. The Project Advisory Team is comprised of 15 community members representing the diversity of people and interests in the Lake City neighborhood.

**Community Facilities Reopen:** Earlier this fall, we re-opened the Rainier Community Center and the Discovery Park Environmental Learning & Visitor Center. Both centers were closed to remove barriers to accessibility. The Rainier Community Center project addressed approximately 100 barriers.

**KaBoom! Community Build, Oct. 26:** After months of collaboration between SPR, The CarMax Foundation, and KABOOM!, the renovated play area at Dr. Blanche LaVizzo Park was completed and reopened. SPR staff from all divisions came together to coordinate the planning, design, site preparation, and “community build day” on Oct. 26.

**Delridge Playfield** re-opened to the public on October 7. This project replaced the aging synthetic turf at Delridge Playfield. The project also improved access to exterior restrooms at Delridge Community Center. In other playfield projects, the synthetic surface at Magnuson Park’s Mickey Merriam Playfield #5 was also recently replaced.

**Conversion of Tennis Courts to Pickleball Courts in Lincoln Park:** Over the past few weeks, we have heard from many community members about our plan to resurface tennis courts in Lincoln Park to enable pickleball play. Some expressed concern about noise, lack of a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) analysis, assertions of tree removal and disruption to wildlife, while others expressed support adding more recreational opportunities in West Seattle. SPR is working hard to cultivate a park system that balances our varying points of view.

In response to some of these concerns:

1. There is no tree removal being done to support this project.
2. Consistent with other court resurfacing projects, SPR is not conducting a SEPA analysis as the existing court is being repurposed with already defined recreational uses.
3. SPR will not pursue lighting the courts at this time.
4. We will be pausing project construction for at least two weeks, to talk with experts on Seattle’s bird populations on how we can properly study the potential impact pickleball noise may have on wildlife. We welcome this dialogue and will share our plans more widely after that discussion as we strive to find a collective and beneficial approach to the stewardship and management of our parkland.

**Off Leash Area Study:** The new OLA study to plan and construct two new OLAs (one in West Seattle) and identify a third location for the future is well under way. Public engagement is complete and there have been over 5,000 responses. A draft recommendation is being prepared and the team plans to present to the BPRC in December.

**Lowman Beach Indigenous Signage:** SPR worked closely with the City’s Office of Intergovernmental Relations to involve the Muckleshoot and Suquamish Tribes to add the Indigenous place name in Lushootseed and English to the Lowman Beach Park rainbow sign. We are striving to remind folks of the people and thriving societies that were here before we got here. This is the first of more to come as many of our parks include areas that have Indigenous place names.

**City Budget:** Council deliberations are almost done on the City’s 2023 Budget. The second of two City Council public budget hearings will be held on Monday, Nov. 13 at 5 p.m. and written comments are still being accepted by Councilmembers. A final vote is scheduled for Nov. 21. For more information, visit [seattle.gov/council](http://seattle.gov/council)

As part of the 2024 budget process, the City Council will convene as the Park District Board on Nov. 20 to formally adopt the Park District portion of SPR’s budget. The 2024 Park District budget is \$118M, and is consistent with the Cycle 2 financial plan that many of you worked on last year. Additionally,

we'll be giving a bit of a report on all our work to ramp up programs and services thanks to Park District funds. This is a public meeting that will be broadcast by the Seattle Channel.

**National Gay Bowl:** The National Gay Bowl was held at Magnuson Park on October 6-8. It was a huge success with approximately 5,000 attendees from across the U.S. & Canada. Several SPR divisions helped support this event with efforts from Event Scheduling staff, Grounds Crew Maintenance, and Planning & Capital Development.

**Picnic Availability:** The Event Scheduling team is working closely with SPR's Business Systems & Customer Service Unit to provide online viewing access of picnic availability at over 400 SPR venues. This will allow the public to check for table and shelter availability prior to submitting an application.

**Golden Gardens concessions:** Four proposals were received for the Golden Gardens concession contract which is expected to span 5 years with the possibility of a 5-year extension. The proposals will be reviewed by committee before awarding the contract with the City Council's authorization.

## **Upcoming Events**

### **Nov. 4 – Dec. 3: Carkeek Park Salmon Stewards Weekends**

On weekends throughout the month of November and into early December, nearly 40 community volunteers will welcome you from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Piper's Creek in Carkeek Park. The salmon stewards will provide information about the annual return of spawning chum salmon.

### **Nov. 28 to Dec. 19: Merry Movie Matinees at City Hall Park**

As part of the activation of downtown, this holiday season, stop by City Hall Park for a lunchtime screening of a classic holiday movie, with free coffee and cocoa to warm you up. Every Tuesday at noon between Thanksgiving and Christmas:

- November 28 – Annie (2014)
- December 5 – Elf
- December 12 – National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation
- December 19 – The Polar Express

All movies start at 12 noon and are shown at City Hall Park, 4509 3rd Ave, Seattle, WA 98104.

### **November/December: Open Houses at SPR Community Centers**

Our community centers continue to host Welcoming Events & Open Houses to re-introduce programs, new classes, drop-in activities, and family events throughout the year. (Photo above from Rainier Beach CC Open House)

## **Remaining events**

**Dec. 6: Denny Awards Ceremony** to honor extraordinary volunteer service to the city's parks and recreation system. A recognition ceremony to be held from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Seattle Asian Art Museum



**Dec. 9:** On Saturday, Dec. 9, 4:30 to 7:30 p.m., the annual **Green Lake Pathway of Lights** returns to the paved path around Green Lake, which will be lit by luminaria. Join the thousands of people who come down to the lake for this annual Seattle tradition.

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

Seyfried asks for some clarification about the logistics of the Clean Seattle program, particularly regarding coordination with SDOT and cleaning in rights-of-way. Sheffer clarifies that SPR provides litter removal services as part of the Unified Care Team (UCT) for the north part of the city, while SDOT provides these services on the south end of the city. This change is recent, aimed to increase efficiency and move towards seven day per week coverage.

Stuart-Lehalle asks if SPR partners with anyone for City Hall Park movie night programs. Sheffer confirms that these events are hosted by SPR's in-house activation team, and the rights are procured by SPR. Partnerships are offered for food providers and buskers.

Stuart-Lehalle also asks what the broader strategy is for SPR open houses, and whether all Community Centers will eventually host an event or if these locations were strategically chosen, and if so what that strategy is. Sheffer notes that the goal is for geographic accessibility to all communities; Diaz affirms that the goal of these open houses is informational and community-building, including highlighting any expanded hours, and will report back on any future meeting announcements.

Farmer notes the high volume of public correspondence relating to the Black Lives Memorial Garden and thanks SPR for their willingness to try to find an alternate location within Cal Anderson Park for that garden. Farmer also advises that visitors to Carkeek Park to see beavers are in for an interesting visit, but wear your rainboots, as the paths are waterlogged!

Brockhaus reflects that SPR's offer to relocate the BLMG within Cal Anderson Park is a notable step towards a compromise solution, while reaffirming empathy and understanding of the garden's supporters and the ideas that led to its creation. Brockhaus thanks SPR for updates on Seattle Conservation Corps, Clean Seattle, indigenous language signage, and pickleball, noting especially the conversion of an existing concrete slab into courts at Lincoln Park instead of new pavement.

Mays expresses appreciation for the announcement of the SMA winners. In tough times, good leadership is needed.

Contreras acknowledges the passion of the debate surrounding the BLMG at Cal Anderson Park, and expresses gratitude to the SPR staff who are working to find a path forward on this and many difficult issues around the city.

Meng notes the volume of correspondence regarding the BLMG, and thanks SPR staff for organizing correspondence from the community and the department so that the Board could be kept well-informed on the issue.

Herrera thanks commenters and staff in the room and on the call for the discussion, and notes that he himself is a longtime Capitol Hill resident. Herrera also notes that the park is named for Cal Anderson, Washington State's first openly queer state legislator, and abuts the AIDS Memorial

Pathway. The park has a long history of association with civil rights, and what we are seeing is democracy in action.

Herrera asks if there has been any discussion or consideration regarding earlier conversations about the budget failing to meet the inflationary rate in the interlocal agreement. Diaz does not have the details on this question but believes that this issue has been avoided for 2024. However, there will be some reductions in the real estate excise tax (REET) funding coming into the budget, and that shortfall may affect the timing of some capital projects.

## Denny Blaine Park Proposed Play Area

Diaz introduces the presentation.

Next on the agenda is a proposal for improvements to Denny Blaine Park located on the Lake Washington shoreline. The department was recently contacted about an interesting donation opportunity that Deputy Superintendent Andy Sheffer will describe and talk about potential next steps. He will walk you through the proposal and get your initial thoughts.

Andy Sheffer, SPR Operations Branch Director and Deputy Superintendent, gives the presentation.

We have a proposed play area project at Denny Blaine Park. We have identified a need to optimize allocation of play areas, specific to this area of town, and a need to enhance public access to the shoreline in this area. There is an opportunity because we have received a donation to cover all costs, design and construction, and we have an opportunity to partner with the Seattle Parks Foundation (SPF) to receive the money to complete the project. The process at this point is to move forward and validate the need through a public engagement process. Once that validation has been made, we can go ahead and seek the permit for this small play area. That would be a comprehensive shoreline permit.

The play area gap analysis shows one of the most significant gaps in the system at this location; it is a 15 minute walk or greater to any play area. Most of the other gaps in the city are explained by the University of Washington, the Arboretum, Interbay, and greenbelts. If you look at the priority improvement areas largely associated with underserved areas of the city, you can see a real barrier along the shoreline. There is kind of a pinchpoint right at Denny Blaine Park, where medium priority designation is actually pretty close to the shoreline, and historically there was more use of shoreline parks by residents of the interior of the city.

From a planning context:

- We have available funding;
- We have identified a gap;
- The project supports the youth initiative;
- The project addresses the nature deficit if we construct a more nature-focused play area, which will be more in keeping with the comprehensive shoreline permit; and
- The project will increase accessibility to the shoreline by making the park ADA compliant

Conversely,

- The site is currently being used as a nudist beach;

- The current design is an historic Olmsted Park;
  - Many Olmsted Parks do have play areas in them
- This location is within the Shoreline Conservation Zone (200' of shore)
  - This use is in keeping with that designation.

Seattle Parks and Recreation has jurisdiction over the property including the circular roadway, the enclosed median, the 13-stall parking area, and the three-tiered section that we all recognize as the park. All the walls are granite; the third tier was created when the lake was lowered. The Classical design forms are reminiscent of Olmsted design. We did look at locating a play area in the median, but that is neither particularly safe nor easy to build on due to its grade.

We want to emphasize natural materials in the Shoreline Conservation Zone, including the use of natural construction materials. ADA improvements, including an accessible route of travel from the parking to the beach, is a necessity, as there is no such path now. Bridging nature with historic symmetry, employing natural materials, and keeping a simple design by focusing on a single element of play are other design priorities. The location most conducive to locating this play area would be on the first tier below the parking area, on the north end of the park.

The next steps will be to finalize the agreements between the donor and SPF, and between SPR and SPF. These are two separate agreements. We will immediately start the public engagement process. The donor will fund design and construction; if the project is terminated for any reason prior to construction, SPF will reimburse the donor and SPR will receive the design package.

Sheffer opens the floor for questions from the Board.

Farmer asks for clarification regarding the timing of public engagement regarding this project. The current use of the beach, while not sanctioned, is one that will presumably be impacted by the installation of a play area, and there are likely to be diverse opinions as to the impact of this project. Herrera notes that “sanctioned” and “unsanctioned” are not the most accurate terms for this discussion, as public nudity is not prohibited by the Parks Code or Seattle Municipal Code. Farmer also asks if alternative locations within the gap area were or could be considered.

Sheffer notes that shoreline access in the city is a limited resource, particularly in the south end. Sheffer clarifies that there are likely other locations available to site a play area, and SPR is developing a natural-material play area at Madrona Beach. However, there are few developed parks in the immediate vicinity.

Contreras asks for clarification regarding the ongoing use of Denny Blaine Park as a nudist park, which Sheffer confirms. Contreras asks for confirmation that the previous presentation was about co-locating a children’s play area in the park. Diaz clarifies that the park and beach are not designated by SPR as nudist locations; there are nude uses that occur there. Contreras urges sensitivity and consideration for the park visitors currently using the park.

Seyfried asks if the assumption is correct that this donation is tied to an enhancement at this specific location. Sheffer confirms that this donation is tied to this location.

Herrera notes that while the location in question is identified as having low or medium equity need, the shorefront parks serve regional purposes and are not strictly used by their neighborhoods, even less so than most parks. Sheffer agrees with this characterization.

Farmer asks if SPR will conduct direct outreach with park users. Sheffer affirms that the public engagement process will begin immediately, and he expects responses to be fulsome. Hybrid (in person/online) opportunities to engage will be prioritized.

## SPR Recommendation on Park Hours: Golden Gardens, Alki Beach, Atlantic City Boat Ramp, and Stan Sayres Memorial Park

Diaz introduces the presentation.

Andy Sheffer will continue our presentations with proposals for two sets of changes to hours of operation.

The first set focuses on Golden Gardens Park and Alki Beach. At these two locations we made temporary changes in the summer hours to close beaches early in order to control beach fires; we would now like to make those seasonal changes ongoing.

The second set concerns two boat ramps on Lake Washington: the Atlantic City Boat Ramp and Stan Sayres Memorial Park. At these locations we revised hours this summer, closing the facilities early, under the Superintendent's emergency rule-making authority. We are proposing to continue these revised hours as a pilot project subject to assessment after the pilot period ends.

Sheffer gives the presentation.

At Alki Beach and Golden Gardens, we have been operating a pilot program for the last couple of summers to create a safer opportunity for beach fires. We've adjusted the closure time from 9:30 pm to 10:00, and what we are looking at now is a permanent 10:30 pm closing time. It takes a lot of work to close the park; each year this has gotten better as people have gotten used to the closure.

We are proposing summer hours of operation 4:00 am to 10:30 pm from the 4th Sunday in May to the 4th Monday in September. Generally, this proposal aligns with Fire Pit program.

Operations includes:

- Don Armeni parking lot (Alki) and Golden Gardens parking lot gates closed at 10:30 pm
- Park users notified at 10:00 pm of imminent closure of parking lots
- All beach fires must be extinguished by 10:00 pm
  - As active as our crews are, there are always fires outside of the fire pits

Winter hours of operation will remain the standard 4:00 am to 11:30 pm.

The purpose of the beach hour pilot was to assess viability of shortening park hours during summer months to increase health and safety of the public.

- Maintain Peace – A lot of illegal activity was occurring that negatively impacted the safety of park users

- Limit Alcohol and Drug Use – Mainly through limiting the duration of consumption; SPR is not policing behavior
- Mitigate Litter – Gives crews additional time to remove litter from beaches daily
- Control Noise – Limit noise disturbance from parties and amplified sound
- Drowning Prevention – Lessens drowning risk, especially in context of alcohol and drug use
- Control of Fires – Gives staff additional time to ensure fires are extinguished

Is it time for a permanent change? Sheffer walks through SPR's Beach Hour SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis:

- Strengths:
  - Decrease in public safety issues and illegal activity including:
    - Acts of violence including shootings
    - Excessive noise violations
    - Illegal fires
    - Illegal parking (i.e., blocked emergency access)
    - Unpermitted events
- Weaknesses
  - Requires additional labor and equipment (i.e., LED light arrays, Portable Changeable Message Signs (PCMS))
  - Requires contracting with SPD for additional support over the weekends (\$100-150k per year)
  - Complaints about having to put out fires and ending summer fun by 9:30 pm
- Opportunities
  - Consider a year-round park hour change instead of seasonal (also complaints during the winter months)
  - Do not allow cars to enter parking lot after 9:00 pm
  - Hand out flyers identifying other great locations for enjoying evenings in parks
  - Scanning social media for planned, unpermitted events with amplified sound
- Threats
  - Dispersing disorderly or threatening crowds
  - Advertisement of "Raves" or other parties on social media
  - SPD are often unable to provide full complement of officers due to summer vacations

During the pilot we have crews out ther seven days a week.

- Seasonal "Ambassadors" hired to help guide patrons
- SPR District Crews start late in the afternoon preparing for each evening and performing enhanced maintenance.
- SPR District staff arrive every morning by 7am for trash mitigation and to put out remnant fires.
- SPD provides staff contingent upon availability.

I believe we are on target with this program. End of May thru end of September is the most impactful duration for reduction of illegal activity. We have finessed the timeframe each year and have arrived at 10:30pm closure being the most optimal for SPD officers. There has been a direct reduction of

illegal activity and corresponding decrease in complaints. The new static crew is engaged in maintenance projects and keeping the site looking sharp. Enhanced maintenance is key to crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).

Are there any questions?

Stuart-Lehalle thanks Sheffer for the presentation, noting especially the use of data and pilot programs to arrive at a decision. Stuart-Lehalle asks if there has ever been consideration of expanding the beach fires program to any locations south of Alki Beach Park. Sheffer confirms that there have been some discussions; all the beach fires are located on the Sound, and there may be some opportunities for expanding the program. Diaz asks for clarification – was Stuart-Lehalle asking about beach locations on Lake Washington? Stuart-Lehalle confirms that east-side parks, including Seward Park, were what she had in mind, but acknowledges that she hadn't considered that Golden Gardens and Alki both abut Puget Sound, and isn't sure if that makes a difference for the policy. Sheffer notes that desire and open space are the key components for this program, and that SPR has great familiarity with fire pits at this point. SPR would entertain any proposals.

Farmer notes that closing the beaches 10:30 pm seems sensible, as sunset is late during the summertime and an earlier closure time might be harder for park users to accept. Farmer reminds the Board that May 2023 was unusually warm, and some beach fires occurred before the fire pits were installed. Has there been any consideration from the pilot program regarding the start dates for the fire pits – perhaps installing them before the fourth week of May? Sheffer acknowledges Farmer's logic; the big obstacle to this is budgetary, as monitoring the beaches takes additional staff and staffing hours. Diaz notes that he has asked staff to monitor trends in park use relevant to climate change, including at beaches, pools, and elsewhere, to plan for any changes in budget necessitated by an extended warmer season.

Herrera agrees that the 10:30 pm closing time is sensible. Herrera agrees that the program allows SPR some aid in addressing safety concerns and egregious behavior, but asks for clarification that an incidental visitor to these parks after the new closing time (i.e., someone riding their bike through the park on their way home) would not be subject to penalty. Sheffer confirms that this person would not be subject to criminal trespass or any other penalty. Herrera thanks Sheffer for the clarification.

Sheffer notes that a public hearing and Board vote will have to occur prior to the implementation of any permanent hours change.

## **Operational Hours Change – A Pilot: Atlantic City and Stan Sayers Boat Ramps**

Seattle Parks and Recreation operates 7 motorized boat ramps. Three boat ramps are South of the I-90 Lid and have large parking lots; all 7 have some kind of access control in the immediate vicinity. Atlantic City Boat Ramp and Stan Sayers Boat Ramp have recently had a change in operating hours to mitigate illegal activities including gun shots and amplified sound.

The operating hours for the Atlantic City Boat Ramp were changed in July as part of a pilot program in response to shootings that occurred on July 20. The temporary change in hours is pursuant to the authority under SMC 18.12.040 and in accordance with the emergency action procedure set forth in SMC 3.02.050. This parking lot and associated boat ramp close 1½ hours earlier than standard park closure and open 2 hours later than standard park opening (6:00 am – 10:00 pm). That initial pilot

ended in September and was extended using the same emergency rule, adding Stan Sayers Boat Ramp to the same operating hours. We are here now to share a proposal to extend both of those pilots for another 270 days.

It is important to know that parking lots are more likely settings for violent crime than all other real estate except residential throughout the nation, and we see that here as well. Here is some data showing the elevated crime data at Atlantic City Boat Ramp and the parking lot:

| ONVIEW/DISPACHED                 | YTD 2023   | YTD 2022   | Amt Change (%)     |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| Dispatched (Community Generated) | 91         | 70         | +21 (30%)          |
| Onview (Officer Generated)       | 156        | 47         | +109 (231%)        |
| <b>Grand Total</b>               | <b>247</b> | <b>117</b> | <b>+130 (111%)</b> |

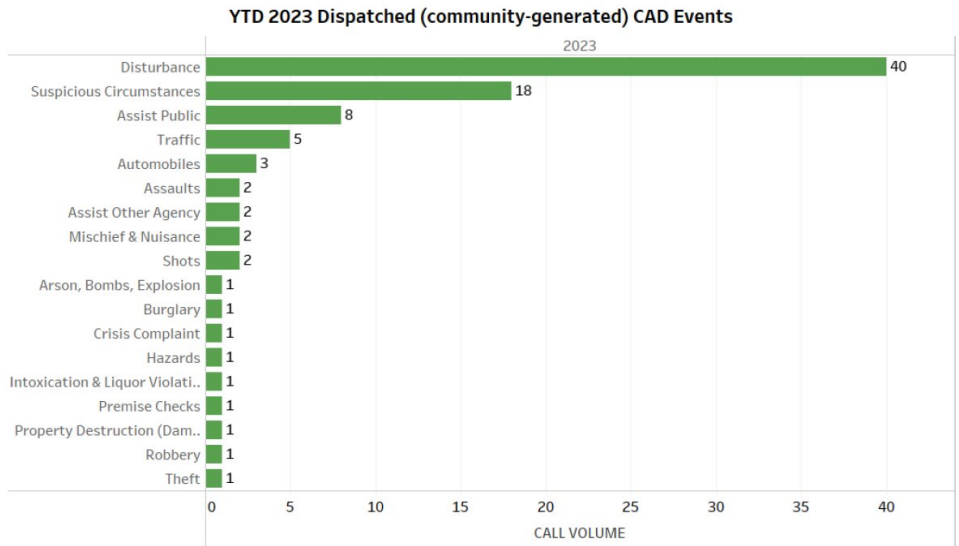
  

|                                  | 2023     |          |          |          |           |           |           |           |           |          | Grand..    |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|
|                                  | Jan      | Feb      | Mar      | Apr      | May       | Jun       | Jul       | Aug       | Sep       | Oct      |            |
| Dispatched (Community Generated) | 2        | 3        | 2        | 4        | 13        | 13        | 17        | 23        | 13        | 1        | 91         |
| Onview (Officer Generated)       | 5        | 2        | 4        | 3        | 16        | 36        | 33        | 43        | 10        | 4        | 156        |
| <b>Grand Total</b>               | <b>7</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>29</b> | <b>49</b> | <b>50</b> | <b>66</b> | <b>23</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>247</b> |

Here is a comment from one of the SPD officers who was in the parking lot when the 7/20/23 shooting occurred, or shortly thereafter: "Anecdotally, I was present when at least one of the two "shots" incidents. I recall speaking with a woman whose car had been parked on the north side of the ACB parking lot and had several rounds go through the car. This is the same incident where a person sustained a gun shot wound to her leg (This victim was in the parking lot by the water and the restrooms.)"

Change of park hours associated with violent crime has also occurred in the SW District at Don Armeni Park and in the NW District at Golden Gardens and NE District at Magnuson Park. On occasion, SPD will close a park when a large party is advertised on social media (recently at Seward Park) or associated with a shooting. This protocol is implemented on a case-by-case basis.

Here is the 2023 year-to-date data for Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) Events at Atlantic City Boat Ramp:



Throughout this process, the City has been considering CPTED for these areas, including:

- Activation
  - Alternative Temporary Uses
  - Concierge Presence
- Collaborate with Community
  - Action coalitions
  - Peer influence and mentoring
- Eyes on the park
  - Coordination with neighbors
  - Open sightlines
- Circulation
  - Open circulation to broader uses
  - Manage circulation with controls
- Access Control
  - Close parking lots at times of low activity/darkness
  - Control access with an automated entry

Comparing CAD events to 2022, we see elevated incident numbers throughout the summer in both years. In 2023, we see a dropoff in events between August and September; in 2022, that dropoff occurred between July and August.

The next steps are to further implement the 270 pilot program. We have been meeting with Rainier Beach Action Coalition and will continue to do so to do everything possible to support the community, and we will return to the BPRC before the pilot expires (Aug. 2024) with a proposal for next steps.

Diaz notes that this proposal has no impact for public safety operations (i.e., Harbor Patrol) or tribal rights to access Lake Washington. Sheffer adds that if SPR's public safety or tribal partners were to request access, the department could work something out, and that has been shared with those groups.

Sheffer opens the floor for questions.

Farmer asks what feedback SPR has received from the Rainier Beach Action Coalition. Sheffer answers that there has been a lot of concern regarding the change in hours and how the community could support a safer environment. Additionally, SPR has employed private security to assist in clearing and securing the [Atlantic City Boat Launch] parking lot; after some negative reports regarding the way one company approached this community, we switched to a different company, which is why it's better if our staff handles this. We're more sensitive to people-first customer service.

Meng thanks Sheffer for the presentation and his commitment to public service and safety. Looking at the data presented, the data on calls especially in August and September looks quite jarring. How localized is this data? Is this data only from this boat ramp, or is this showing information from the whole neighborhood? Sheffer responds that "it" [the problem of violent and property crime] is all across the city, but is not sure whether the incidence of crime reporting is higher in any specific areas.



Diaz notes that per Sheffer's presentation, the locations highlighted are particular problem areas. With warmer weather and lighter nights, there are unfortunately higher rates of incidents and calls. It's also very important for Council and the community to know that we are using data to make these decisions; we would love to not have to make any hours changes, but we have to use the data that we have to make an impact and make a reasonable decision. We know that this is not the ideal scenario; many people want to use these spaces for things that are perfectly acceptable and welcome uses. We also need to consider the impact this might have on the fishing community; it seems that the impact of these hour changes will be minimal to that community. Sheffer notes that an earlier park opening time would probably be workable.

Sheffer reminds the Board that Seattle has had an increase in violent crime associated with rapid population growth and the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that the violent crime happens predominantly in parking lots; this is a parking lot problem more than a community problem or anything else. The other unfortunate thing is that many people cannot walk to look at the water, they have to drive, and we want to balance that need, too.

Herrera acknowledges that SPR is between a rock and a hard place with this discussion, but notes that the discussion pains his heart. He cautions the Board to take with a grain of salt the data showing an increase in "disturbances"; Herrera notes that this might belong in a different discussion than violent crime or gun violence. Herrera challenges the City to think bigger regarding public safety. This proposed type of remedy might successfully reduce crime in the target areas by simply "displacing" illegal behavior to other parts of the community, and in so doing, cause harm to the same communities that it is intended to help; this is systemic racism in action. Herrera acknowledges that no one claims to have the answer here.

Waits (Rainier Beach Link2Lake) asks for and receives permission to contribute to the discussion outside of designated public comment time [request occurs off-camera].

Waits points out that in the data presented, the majority of calls were for "disturbance", and only about 2 were for violent crime.<sup>1</sup> What you are missing from the data that was shared with us [unclear – community or Link2Lake] is the map of where these calls are coming from; it's a very large swath around the boat ramp, so that the boat ramp is being targeted is a question. I also think it's important that in August, the part of the park that people normally hang out in was closed for construction, and more people were in the parking lot than usual. There is a lot of variables that go into that spike in incidents, and to blame it all on crime when the data doesn't actually show that is misguided by Parks. And using that quote about the woman whose car was shot through – you know, she is not in support of the park being closed as an answer. Her car was shot through and she does not believe that gating the park will solve that. The shootings you mentioned happened around Rainier Beach, not in Atlantic City Boat Ramp. And I wanted to point out, the systemic racism – Atlantic City and Stan Sayers are two Black and brown parks that are now being surveilled by police. And I just wonder how that aligns with the City's goals for equity in open space. So I think the data and how it's being used is not actually showing the whole picture.

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<sup>1</sup> Per the [2022 SPD Crime Report](#), 4 categories of crime are considered "violent": homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. The presented chart showing YTD CAD incidents lists 2 calls for assault and 1 for robbery.

Sheffer acknowledges Waits's comments and affirms the necessity of using data carefully. Herrera affirms that the data are consistent that parking lots are consistently sites of violent and property crime, and that dependence on cars as a means of transportation is a legacy that we have to live with; there is no easy answer here.

Seyfried commends SPR for working with the available data and trying to find a solution to the problem. So much contributes to the origins of violent crime that are outside of SPR's control. In the design, and use, and activation of parks, we see extremely varied uses from different communities and cultures. Seattle is growing, and some areas have seen conflict specifically surrounding open spaces and their use. Seyfried will be curious to see how this issue evolves through the ongoing election cycle and beyond.

Sheffer notes that the goal is for this pilot program to be temporary, and for other methods of crime prevention to take its place that do not require park closure. Herrera clarifies that everyone is still talking about just closing the gates to the parking lots; Sheffer confirms.

Waits asks why additional lights in the locations are not being considered, when data supports the efficacy of improved lighting? Sheffer responds that SPR considered lighting first, but it is very expensive. Waits asks how much the department is paying private security companies to patrol. Sheffer reiterates the expense and difficulty that lighting the area presents; solar light standards are very expensive, and extending power to these areas requires trenching and running line, which is also very expensive and time-consuming.

Stuart-Lehalle agrees with and highlights previous comments that the problem of violent and property crime are much more widespread than just the areas in question here, and that some of the solutions offered seem very micro when compared to the scale of the issue. Stuart-Lehalle notes that SPR and BPRC often do well making decisions based on data, but cautions the group in this case to read deeper into the data, as this situation seems primed for observers to jump to conclusions based on data. She also affirms the need for continued community engagement.

## Old & New Business

Herrera notes that the meeting is running long, and calls for very brief reports out from representatives of the BPRC subcommittees to preview more fulsome discussions in December.

Farmer reports that the Park Naming subcommittee is working with SPR and the department's tribal partners to research some of the submissions from the recent outreach process. The subcommittee plans to present recommendations to Superintendent Diaz by the end of the year. SPR will advertise outreach concerning sites that did not yield strong suggestions and new park sites in the coming year.

Meng reports that the Park Oversight subcommittee met to orient the mission and purpose of the group, and to begin gaining familiarity with the responsibilities of the group. In the next meeting, the subcommittee will be working on a written work plan and incorporating stakeholder oversight priorities.

Co-chair Umagat (absent) will provide a report on the Parks CommUNITY Fund subcommittee at the December meeting.

Herrera shares that the Office of Arts and Culture (OAC) has an Arts in Parks program, for which Herrera will be serving on the review panel.

Farmer reminds the Board that as the fourth Thursday of November is Thanksgiving Day, the regularly-scheduled BPRC meeting that day is canceled.

Beetem asks for and receives permission to contribute to the discussion outside of designated public comment time.

Beetem pushes back on the assertion that the Sun Bowl is rendered unusable for public events by the presence of the Black Lives Memorial Garden in Cal Anderson Park. Events have taken place in this area over the past several years and have had an interactive element with the beauty of the garden. Beetem also notes that the history of the BLMG is also the history of the park itself, and that other locations in Cal Anderson have electrical hookups. Beetem emphasizes that the garden's specific location is based on the social distancing circles that were mown into the grass in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, and admonishes the department not to be performative in its commitment to advocacy for racial justice or for indigenous plants.

Herrera thanks Beetem for her comments and encourages additional written submissions.

There being no further business, Herrera adjourns the meeting at 8:42 pm.