



# Minutes|Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Zoom

Thursday, February 22, 2024

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

## Attendance

Present: Phillip Meng, Amy Brockhaus, Justin Umagat (co-chair), Marlon Herrera (co-chair), Stafford Mays, Lauren Lanham, Pasqual Contreras, Jessica Farmer

Absent: Joshua Seyfried

SPR Staff and Presenters: Christopher Williams, Danyal Lotfi, Colin Campbell, David Bader, Kevin Bergsrud, Shaquan Smith, Rachel Banner, David Takami, Benjamin 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 item for approval: tonight's meeting agenda. Brockhaus moves to approve both items; Meng seconds. The motion passes by unanimous consent.

### ***Adopted: 2/22/24 BPRC Meeting Agenda***

## Public Comment

Patrick Doherty – Good evening, Commissioners. I have three issues I want to speak to you about briefly, and I sent in a memo about these issues to you, as well. The first is about Green Lake water quality. This past year we had one of the worst periods of water quality in Green Lake's history. As a frequent user of the lake's paths, I've noticed that there are hundreds of dogs per day, and maybe thousands per week, going around the lake with their owners. I believe it would be better if signage encouraged dog owners to curb, or let the dogs relieve themselves, on the upland side, and not the water side. Although most people scoop, they may not scoop everything, and urine does not get scooped. I have to imagine that all those dogs contribute to the poor water quality of the lake, as do the geese and the persistent feeding of waterfowl, which is signposted against and should not happen. So that's something to study. Another issue is the public viewpoints. We have lost some

very important public viewpoints in the city to encroaching trees. This is an issue of equity; most of us do not have the privilege of living in “view homes” and we need to our lovely public parks for viewpoints. Probably the worst example is Belvedere Viewpoint Park in West Seattle. That used to be one of the city’s most panoramic viewpoints, now entirely overtaken by trees; in the winter, you can get a little bit of a view. It’s just not really fair, first of all, to those of us who do not have views from our homes, that the few places that these character-defining views of our city are provided are not available to us, so please study that, and consider that a few big trees are not worth saving to allow for the views. And the last statement is about our greenbelts, especially on West and East Queen Anne and West Capitol Hill, the greenbelts are essentially gone; yes, there’s some trees left, but mostly it’s just choked with vines. I have a very detailed proposal in [memo provided] about public-private partnerships for development of low-income housing on select locations in those greenbelts that could then allow the City to leverage the power of those developers to restore, preserve, and protect the greenbelt areas around them. So that’s three issues that I think are worth studying.

Sharon LeVine – It’s time again for SPR to revise its public process procedures. Without an inclusive community process, Parks said NO to Trolley Hill Park, [David] Rodgers Park, the East Queen Anne Greenbelt, Upper Kinnear Park, Rodgers Park again, during the 20+ years Queen Anne Community Council (QACC) members wrote multiple letters and submitted petitions requesting a planner to facilitate an upper Queen Anne off-leash area. Parks did say yes to former City Councilmember Herbold’s request to fund a new West Seattle OLA without a transparent public process. There is now only money to create one more OLA this 6-year funding cycle. Several years ago, SPR created the [People, Dogs, & Parks Plan](#) establishing rules for creating new dog parks. Close to two years ago, Queen Anne followed the rules and submitted an application for creating one or more OLAs at suggested locations. Although QACC members met with Parks reps about the preferred site at East Queen Anne Playfield, no further action was taken by Parks to address the legitimate applications. Parks kept deferring action and then, most egregiously, changed the entire process for creating OLAs by instituting a citywide study of possible sites and now coming to recommend where one other site should be this funding cycle. Parks should follow its own rules and act on pending applications before creating new procedures for creating OLAs. Before any other new park is instituted, Parks should host a full community process atop Queen Anne Hill to negotiate the creation of a dog park that’s been requested for over 20 years.

Larry Hubbell – My name is Larry Hubbell, I’m with Friends of Arboretum Creek. I’ve talked to you before, but I want to invite you to come and visit our Headwaters Project in the Arboretum. The project has two big benefits: one, it would protect the Japanese Garden from flooding again, and from the pollution that comes from the road runoff into the pond, and it would also help by reconnecting springs that are year-round flow into Arboretum Creek. We as Friends of Arboretum Creek are working to restore the ecosystem. We have monthly work parties; we have open monthly nature walks – this month, we saw a Wilson’s Snipe in the creek for the first time, just incredible – and you’re all welcome to come to those. But in particular, I’d like to invite you to come and have a tour of the Headwaters project site. We will work to fit your schedule, as I’m sure you’re busy, Commissioners and Parks employees, either one. The information has been sent to you via email. We’re just about to get to 60% design and we’re about to transition the project to management by SPR, so they’ll be taking over the design process from here. We have all the funding for design, and as we move onto

construction we will be raising additional funds. I just wanted to make sure that each of you had a chance to come and see this project. I think I heard AP Diaz say that the Arboretum is the jewel of the Seattle Parks system; I believe that it is, and I believe that the creek is the centerpiece of that jewel. As we help the ecosystem come back to life – oh, I also saw a northwestern salamander in the creek! – we will even start to get fish in the stream down the road, and then fish-eating birds. I promise, you will enjoy every moment of it. It will refresh you just like the park refreshes everybody who comes.

Pamela Adams – I live in West Seattle and I follow beavers in different areas of the Pacific Northwest. I'm a new resident here in West Seattle but I've been following beaver quite extensively in Longfellow Creek. I wanted to tell SPR to review their SEPA guidelines to check the beaver box, as beaver are moving into our urban waterways in big numbers, especially over the last 20 years. They are doing a lot of good riparian work on their own. They are ecosystem engineers; we are seeing at Longfellow Creek their dams that are new are holding water during the low season and providing pools for baby fish – Coho salmon, right now. I just want to make sure that these beaver are understood; I work with nonprofits like Beavers NW, who make sure that in any development, they are considered, for the work that they are doing, and that they can't be removed that easily, because once there's waterways, they'll be trapped out and then they'll probably move back in. So just that management consideration to be scrutinized a little bit more.

Theresa Huey - The 2024 draft plan, lists the top participation rates for recreation in Seattle/King County, with walking, nature viewing, and hanging out in parks listed as the most popular activities. This data is attributed to the Washington Assessment of Outdoor Recreation Demand Report. The Demand Report, however, lists Scenic Driving as a top activity that is even more popular than "hanging out in parks". Scenic driving isn't mentioned once in the Seattle Parks draft plan despite it being consistently in the top four most popular activities for every demographic: young and old, male/female, and all races and income levels. It's ranked overall at #4 in the Demand Report compared to cycling which comes in at only #17. Co-Exist Lake Washington is a coalition of over 1,000 Seattle residents and businesses concerned about decisions the city is making regarding Lake Washington Boulevard. For many seniors, disabled, and those leading busy lives, the drive along the Boulevard is the only way they enjoy a park experience. We ask the Parks Department to acknowledge Scenic Driving as a top rated activity in its draft report, and, consider when making decisions that impact Lake Washington Boulevard, that Scenic Driving not only beats "hanging out in parks", but the majority who use and enjoy it form a diverse population, many of whom are unable to participate in other recreational activities.

## Superintendent's Report

Christopher Williams, Senior Deputy Superintendent, delivers the report.

Thank you, Commissioners, and members of the public. I first want to respond to some of the commenters that we just heard. First, Patrick Doherty – hi, Patrick – talked about better maintenance in our greenbelts and providing better maintenance of our public viewpoints. We will plan a briefing for the Board on the status of our Green Seattle Partnership, which is intended to address the maintenance and recovery of our greenbelts and natural areas.

I also wanted to respond to Sharon LeVine, whom I've known almost as long as I've been at the Parks Department. Sharon mentioned the need to revise the public engagement process. We've probably had the same public engagement process for 20 years; it's probably always a good idea to go back and reassess how we're communicating with the public. I think that could be a great thing to go back and refresh, even just to refresh the Board's memories on how we have public engagement. This is a tough one, because as long as I have been here, 31 years, we have struggled with this, so maybe there have emerged new best practices that we need to take a look at.

I want to thank Larry Hubbell, who commented on the Arboretum Creek. Larry, thank you for that work; that work has kind of been a vision for the last 20 years, and thank you for actually working on it.

And then Pamela Adams, who mentioned beavers in our parks; we've had a lot of experience with beavers, and I think it's no secret to anyone that in an urban environment, where we have creeks and flowing bodies of water, beavers can do a lot to enrich the environment. But they can also create a lot of unintended consequences, as well, and we are developing a plan for managing beavers. We have a beaver dam at Carkeek Park, and it is also the site of a boutique salmon run; figuring out how the beaver creek can be compatible with the salmon run is a really delicate balance. Salmon runs, like the one in Carkeek Park, are very dependent on how fast the water flows through the creek on a cubic feet per second basis. If you dam that up, you don't get enough flow, you don't get enough scouring of the creek bed to make a good habitat for salmon. We'll continue to work on that.

And Theresa Huey, our last commenter, mentioned scenic driving as the #4 park activity that people want to engage in. I just want to remind everyone and acknowledge Ms. Huey that in 1903, the Olmsted plan built out Lake Washington Boulevard. That was basically created for this new gadget called the "automobile." It's our plan to preserve some compatibility between cars and [other uses], and we are frequently thinking about how to do that. So that's our plan to continue – Lake Washington Boulevard for that joint use; we're going to have that go forward in as safe a way as possible.

So with that, I'll get into the Superintendent's Report.

**City Budget and Hiring Freeze:** As you may have heard, Mayor Harrell recently announced that the City is facing a significant fiscal gap forecasted in 2025 – currently projected at over \$229 million. City departments are implementing a partial hiring freeze. This is necessary to address the 2025 budget deficit as well as 2024 budget challenges. This does not mean people are being laid off however; the immediate impact will be that vacant positions may not be filled in the manner with which they normally would.

**Southwest Pool Shooting aftermath:** We are still dealing with the aftermath of the recent shooting and resulting trauma at Southwest Pool and Teen Life Center. The Ranger Unit has made it a priority to visit the facility occasionally to spread more positivity and help create a safe environment for all. On a recent visit, the Rangers encountered former Seahawks Linebacker K.J. Wright who was very much aware of the recent incident and expressed full support for the community while hosting his "Level Up Camp." As part of an increased emphasis on public safety, we are installing security cameras at the building.

**Newly elected Councilmember and our new Committee Chair, Joy Hollingsworth:** The Superintendent, SPR Division Directors, and Council Relations staff and myself recently met with our new City Council Committee Chair Joy Hollingsworth. She has a lot of history with and knowledge of Seattle Parks and Recreation (her father and brother both worked for SPR) and we are excited to work with her and her staff. She was born and raised in Seattle's Central District, where her family has called home since the 1940's.

**Denny Blaine Park Guidelines:** SPR is working with the community, and the newly established Friends of Denny Blaine Park group, on use guidelines for summer. These will come to BPRC this spring. On Tuesday evening this week, Deputy superintendents Andy Sheffer and Daisy Catague, Parks and Environment Division Director Markeith Blackshire, and policy advisor Justin Hellier met with a new group, the friends of Denny Blaine, made up of users of Danny Blaine. The goal of our engagement with this group is to rebuild trust with the queer community and Denny Blaine users, and as part of that effort, we are planning some small scale park improvements, as well as the development of some signage, a code of conduct, and supplemental use guidelines. Our goal is to acknowledge the historic use of the space as a clothing-optional beach, while also reducing negative impacts on the neighborhood, to keep this a sustainable use for the community.

**BPRC Recruitment:** We have been interviewing candidates for the open, and soon to be open, BPRC positions. There have been some great applicants and we hope to have most of the positions filled by the end of March. Planning for a thank you celebration for Andrea, Jessica, and Marlon is underway. We will send you more information once the date is confirmed.

**SPR New Organizational Structure:** AP mentioned the departmental organizational changes at the last meeting, and I wanted to share a chart reflecting the organizational structure.

**Cal Anderson Park:** Crews have been working on removing graffiti throughout the park. District staff are monitoring the fence and Park Rangers will continue to provide closing support. Staff is working hard to keep up with the large amounts of graffiti throughout our park system.

**Spring is right around the corner:** SPR staff have been taking advantage of the good weather to prepare tennis courts, ballfields and shrub beds for spring use!

**Kubota Garden Visit:** The Superintendent continues his efforts to see more parks and engage with staff and volunteers. AP spent a recent rainy afternoon at Kubota Garden and was very impressed by the amazing grounds, beauty and abundant love of this special place displayed by our specialty garden crew members Michael Helms, Hannah Gunther, and Giles Morrish, and the volunteers and Kubota Garden Foundation members who guided AP around this amazing park asset.

**Celebrating Inclusion at Magnuson Park Hangar:** On January 20, more than 100 community members participated in [Celebrating Inclusion in Community: 50 Years of the Rehabilitation Act](#), hosted by the ADA Title II Compliance Team (FAS) and Specialized Programs (SPR) at the Magnuson Park hangar! AP was there to help celebrate and the keynote address presented by Dr. Anjali J. Forber-Pratt, a disability activist and 2-time Paralympic medalist, emphasized the significance [Section 504](#) and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

We welcome folks to the **Discovery Park Visitor Center** Tuesday through Saturday, from 8:30am to 5pm, to check recently hatched baby salmon. In partnership with Carkeek Watershed Community

Action Project, Discovery Park are raising 220 chum salmon, from eggs, now through May. They recently hatched and the public is welcome to stop by and watch the babies grow and cheer them on this spring when they will be released at Carkeek Park.

### **Be'er Sheva Park Opens:**

- SPR and our partners Rainier Link2Lake and Seattle Parks Foundation are happy to announce Be'er Sheva Park, located in the Rainier Beach neighborhood, re-opened to the community on January 31.
- The project is a multi-phased approach. The most recently completed "Upland" renovation work includes improved waterfront with a hand-carried boat launch, a concrete boardwalk, covered gathering spaces, lighted walking paths, BBQs and picnic tables, a cultural performance stage and artistic signage.
- A community ribbon-cutting celebration is planned for April 13.
- The next phase will be the "In-Water" work project which will provide habitat enhancement for the Be'er Sheva Park shoreline to be completed by the end of 2024.
- The final phase will include installation of fitness equipment and renovation of the play area.

### **Bitter Lake Reservoir Park:**

- SPR is collaborating with SPU on the design of the reservoir. SPU is building a new drinking water reservoir. This new 21-million-gallon reservoir will replace the existing reservoir that is reaching the end of its service life. The new reservoir will be partially buried and contain the same amount of water as the existing one but with a smaller footprint. This will open up approximately 6 acres of open space for development as a park.
- SPU will complete construction in 2028-2029 and SPR will start construction of the park on the coattails of the reservoir project.
- SPR is engaging with the community to develop schematic design.

**Camp Long Gate Dedication:** On Feb. 10, more than 75 community members came out to celebrate and cut the ribbon for the new entrance gate on the south side of Camp Long. The new gate is located at the west entrance of the park and provides a more attractive and inviting entrance for all visitors to the park. The project includes an interpretive map placed at the Camp Long trail entrance. The project is the result of a pedestrian study done by Seattle Parks and Recreation and Seattle Department of Transportation in 2019.

### **Upcoming Events**

Starting **February 23**, free teen swim nights begin on Fridays 7 PM – 8 PM at Evans Pool in Green Lake Park. The teen room will also be open.

**Feb. 25:** Black Forest in Seattle event at Powell Park. This Sunday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Ekene Ijeoma and Poetic Justice Group, in collaboration with GSP, Trees for Seattle, The Dirt Corps and Seattle Parks Foundation invite you to plant trees at Powell Barnett Park. Black Forest is a nationwide living monument and archive for Black lives lost to racial inequalities and injustices.

**Feb. 25, March 3, 10:** Pier 62 Fire Pit, 3 to 6 p.m. (approximately)

**Feb/March** outdoor volunteer opportunities: lots of volunteer events are going on in our parks every weekend under almost any weather condition. Please visit <http://www.greenseattle.org> for more info.

**March 1:** Seattle Japanese Garden re-opens with first viewing on March 2.

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

Herrera notes that he has observed the ongoing maintenance and invasives removal along Lake Washington, and commends SPR for this work. Additionally, Herrera calls out the long-needed improvements to Be'er Sheva Park, noting that this park serves a large and diverse population including many immigrant and refugee groups.

Meng notes that the BPRC has heard about improvements to Be'er Sheva Park for some time, and it's great to see these plans come to fruition. Meng also notes, in response to Hubbell's public comment, that he is looking forward to having a new spot to visit at the Arboretum.

Mays asks for clarification regarding a public safety meeting at Chief Sealth HS; Williams clarifies that the meeting will be on March 19.

## Parks & Open Space Plan Public Hearing

Williams provides an introduction and context for the public hearing.

We will now conduct a public hearing on the draft 2024 Parks and Open Space Plan (POSP). Kevin Bergsrud presented the plan at the January 25th Board meeting, and Board review and recommendation are scheduled for the March 14th meeting. Public hearing comments are part of the public comment period on the plan, which began on Feb. 9 and will end on March 9.

An electronic copy of the draft plan is available on our website at [seattle.gov/parks](http://seattle.gov/parks) on the projects page.

Sandy Shettler – My name is Sandy Shettler, and I'm with Tree Action Seattle. I'm asking you to please include plans to preserve and plant more trees in this draft. They're barely referred to and not even mentioned in the SEPA under B4, but for many people, forests in parks are the only forests they have access to. Our last tree canopy assessment in Seattle showed that Parks' natural areas, not developed parks, contribute 15% of Seattle's total tree canopy while occupying only 4% of the land. Trees and groves in parks are Seattle's heritage, essential climate infrastructure, and only intact connection we have to the Pacific Northwest ecosystem and history. Protecting and growing these forests needs to be our greatest priority. Thank you.

Burtzos reiterates that additional written comments can be submitted to the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners by emailing [benjamin.burtzos@seattle.gov](mailto:benjamin.burtzos@seattle.gov).

Herrera urges BPRC to thoroughly review the draft POSP, emphasizing that the plan concerns the fiscal future of the department and the City as a whole.

## Off-Leash Area (OLA) Plan Briefing

Williams introduces the briefing.

We are pleased that the current cycle of the Seattle Park District provides funding for the construction of 2 new dog off-leash areas in Seattle, as well as the design of a third OLA, and tonight we're excited to share the recommendations of this study with Board and members of the public. We want to thank the many people who participated in our online survey and engaged with staff in-person at farmers markets across the city. As a reminder, today we have a presentation from staff and they will return for the March 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board to hear public comment. At that meeting, Board members will also review the recommendations and take action.

Danyal Lotfi, SPR Community Engagement Advisor, presents the briefing. Subject matter experts David Bader and Colin Campbell provide support.

Good evening and thank you for having us. My name is Danyal Lotfi, and along with my colleagues Colin and David, I am here to present the results and recommendations from the Off-Leash Area Expansion Study. We are excited to share the findings of this study for the first time with you.

We began this study with 32 possible sites that were taken through site selection criteria and SPR internal ProView review. 9 sites were determined to meet SPR basic OLA criteria. In June 2023, we presented these preliminary findings to the BPRC, and launched our public information and survey campaign. In July and August, we attended 3 farmers markets throughout the city to engage with park users and push response to our engagement survey. Finally, from September through November, we synthesized 4753 survey responses and prepared recommendations for the first 3 new OLA sites.

Our first recommendation is for the West Seattle Stadium. One of the requirements for this project's funding was that one of the two fully-funded OLAs be sited in West Seattle, so this is the space that we are recommending. In response to this site,

- 1976 people responded, with 1720 (87%) in support and 256 (13%) opposed
- Top supporting comments: density of surrounding area, walkability/transit access, current use as parking
- Top opposing comments: concerns with parking at the site, safety of driveway and entrance from 35<sup>th</sup> Ave SW

Our second recommendation is at Othello Park in southeast Seattle, just off of Martin Luther King Way, near the light rail station there. With regards to this site,

- 711 people responded, with 518 (73%) in support and 193 (27%) opposed
- Top supporting comments: Park is within an urban village with increasing density, close to transit/light rail, ~3 miles from nearest current OLA
- Top opposing comments: Parts of the park host regular events, no dedicated off-street parking

For the third site, which has funding to get us through the design process, we are recommending Ravenna Park. This is a space just north of NE 55<sup>th</sup> St and west of 25<sup>th</sup> Ave NE.

- 1058 people responded to this site, with 648 (61%) in support and 410 (39%) opposed
- Top supporting comments: area already experiencing unsanctioned off leash activity, park adjacent to 2 urban villages with increasing density, no immediately bordering uses
- Top opposing comments: limited parking, natural character of the park



Campbell presents findings on the six remaining study sites.

Additional sites recommended for future OLAs:

- Brighton Playfield
  - An alternative location in the park needs to be identified for sand volleyball court
- East Queen Anne Playfield
  - Further discussions with the community are needed regarding athletic field scheduling capacity

Sites that should be removed from consideration for future OLAs:

- Discovery Park
  - Concerns about environmental impacts
  - Community uses at the study site
- Powell-Barnett Park
  - Community uses of the site
- View Ridge Playfield
  - Potential disruption of existing playfield activities due to close proximity
  - Low priority area due to nearby Magnuson OLA
- Lincoln Park
  - Community prefers passive activation at site

Lotfi presents the next steps.

Today we are presenting and sharing for the first time to the Board and members of the public the recommendations of the OLA Expansion Study. We will be returning on March 14 at the next BPRC meeting to hear public comment, as well as review and approval from the commissioners. If and when our recommendations are approved by the BPRC, the next step would be for the SPR Superintendent to approve those recommendations.

After approval of recommendations:

- Engage with local area for selected sites in Summer 2024
- Begin preliminary OLA Design/Review for selected sites
  - Begin design for West Seattle & Othello Park in Summer/Fall 2024
  - Funding for full design and construction available in 2025-26
  - Develop design of Ravenna Park site in 2027-28
  - Current MPD budget only includes funding for design of 3<sup>rd</sup> OLA

We also want to leave with some suggestions around future expansion of our OLA system. We want to recognize that this study did not identify any Parks sites in some of our increasingly dense neighborhoods, including Capitol Hill, Ballard, and Northgate. There is a need to discuss creative solutions and close some of the service gaps in those neighborhoods. We also will be focusing on dense, walkable neighborhood sites, rather than large-scale destinations. We recommend exploring partnerships within the city and with other public agencies to expand possible sites (such as the Georgetown Flume OLA site, currently in design). We also recommend exploring any policy changes

that allow for expanded access to OLAs. Finally, we also recognize that with an expanding OLA system, expanded enforcement of leash laws is needed.

We look forward to returning on March 14 to hear comments and hopefully approval from the Board.

Farmer thanks Lotfi, Campbell, and Bader for the presentation, and emphasizes the focus on remaining gaps in service. Some neighborhoods, especially in the north end, have high density, some are high equity priority, and the Board has heard from some park users who have shared frustrations regarding pet waste issues in their neighborhood parks; these are good areas of focus for the future. Farmer also notes the wisdom in partnering with other landowners to find creative solutions moving forward.

Herrera thanks the team for the presentation.

## Park CommUNITY Fund Subcommittee Update

Commissioner Umagat shares an update on the work of the Park CommUNITY Fund Subcommittee. SPR Strategic Advisors Shaquan Smith and Rachel Banner provide support.

The subcommittee made its initial input into program process in November 2023 and began folding in adjustments into the existing program. This went through several iterations. Approval of the program process occurred in early February.

The Park CommUNITY Fund program advances equity in Seattle through community-led funding process, in three ways:

1. Expanding access to clean and safe parks;
2. Closing gaps in access to quality parks and facilities;
3. Centering efforts in partnerships and transparency

Overall, this serves to bring community into the process and aims to give the public better access to the parks and recreation facilities and assets that they are seeking.

The focus of the program is on front-line communities, particularly those most affected by racism, oppression, and colonization. These communities generally experience high displacement risks, disproportionate exposure to environmental harm, a history of disinvestment, and lack of access to green spaces.

So how does the funding work? The funding invests in large and small capital projects using participatory budgeting and equitable grant making practices. The MPD has allotted \$14.8M for this fund to invest in communities between 2023 and 2028. The first cycle of this is for 2024-25, and will be awarding \$5.2M out of that total amount. This will be split into two tiers of awards: small projects (up to \$150k) and large projects (\$150k-\$1.5M).

To get access to these funds, communities work alongside SPR in a project selection process. This process has three phases:

1. Idea collection: Community members submit ideas for improvements, either in-person or online;

2. Project development: Ideas are developed into full-on proposals, reviewed for priority, and narrowed down to a shortlist of final proposals;
3. Final selection process: Community members have a chance to weigh in, the BPRC advances recommendations, and the Superintendent gives final approval.

After this process has completed, recommended projects are advanced to SPR planning and development, who begin the process of implementing the proposals into active projects. Finally, following the project selection process, the program will conclude with an evaluation and workshop series with communities to garner feedback on improving the program. So, we talked about how this first cycle will only allocate \$5.2M of the total \$14.8M, and then we're going to stop and ask and reflect on how we can be better going forward, to help the impact of the program match the intent.

The next steps for the subcommittee include participating in idea collection, starting next month, and then we'll start reviewing those projects once ideas start coming in.

Mays thanks Smith and Banner for their hard work in assembling and assisting with the program. Williams adds his thanks and notes the improvements over earlier versions of similar programs.

Farmer thanks SPR staff and subcommittee members for the time and effort given to get this program up and running; this is a heavy lift and a lot of work, but represents a great stride towards equity. Farmer asks how \$1.5M was established as the maximum value for grants, and what happens if a community asks for a larger value than that? Smith explains that this figure was arrived at through a number of rationales, including historical project funds through the Department of Neighborhoods using similar figures and earlier Council allocations. Additionally, limiting project funds to a large but not massive number helps ensure that projects will actually show material progress and/or complete work within 6-year cycle timeline, so assessment and reflection is possible. Smith also notes that the same project may apply for funding in multiple phases to meet higher project costs. Banner adds that some limitations were necessary in order to fund several projects in each cycle of review, and the goal of the program is to fund approximately 80% of each project. Williams notes that the CommUNITY Fund replaces an earlier Major Project Challenge Fund, which had a minimum funding limit of \$1.6M, and which rarely if ever found matching funding from communities and resulted in large underspends. Smith adds that small projects are also needed; sometimes, a community just needs a barbecue replaced, for instance, and previous programs could not address projects of that scale. Umagat notes that this was a question that came up in the subcommittee. Umagat also adds that match funding to the CommUNITY Fund is also available, so creative funding on top of this \$1.5M amount is certainly possible.

Herrera thanks staff and commissioners again, and thanks the subcommittee for building in a formal review stage into the process.

## Old & New Business

Burtzos notes that the next meeting will be a public hearing on the OLA Plan, and might require a change of venue. If that occurs, an announcement will go out as soon as possible.

There being no other business, Herrera adjourns the meeting at 7:52 PM.