



# Minutes|Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Zoom

Thursday, April 24, 2025

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

## Attendance

Present: Haile-Leul, Baum (co-chair), Lerer, Flinn, Mays

Absent: Leonor, Chisholm Clare, Nakamura (co-chair), Meng, Diamond

SPR Staff and Presenters: Diaz, Hellier, Jainga-Hyllseth, Hoff, Burtzos

## Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

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

Commissioners and SPR staff introduce themselves.

Baum reads the land acknowledgement.

Baum tables consideration of the consent agenda and proceeds to public comment.

## Public Comment

Comments were heard related to the following topics:

- Park use and behavior at Denny Blaine Park;
- Advocacy for changes to the BPRC public comment process;
- Concerns related to proposed pickleball facility at Magnuson Park

Baum thanks commenters and notes that many others submitted comments via email.

## Superintendent's Report

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

## Department Updates & Upcoming Events

**South Park Plaza Opening:** The fences came down yesterday and we excited for the formal opening and community celebration on Saturday April 26th from noon – 2:00pm. The park has a play area, large plaza, seat walls, lighting, and landscaping. We worked with the community to include multi-cultural elements throughout the park including a large “South Park” sign made up of colorful 6-foot metal letters, multi-colored tile installations, and Indigenous plantings which all demonstrate the strong diverse community in the neighborhood. It is going to be a great park and I’m looking forward to the opening celebration. More information about the park and ribbon-cutting celebration can be found on our website.

Summer Hiring Event: On Saturday, April 26 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Miller Community Center (330 19th Ave. E, Seattle) we will be hosting a summer hiring event.

We are looking to hire:

- Summer Beach Lifeguards
- Outdoor Recreation Leaders
- Recreation Attendants
- And more!

This is an opportunity for the community to learn more about, and apply, for the various summer positions we are hiring for.

Queen Anne Community Center Open House: On Tues., April 29 from 5 – 7:00 pm, Seattle Parks and Recreation invites the community to an Open House to review the schematic design for the Queen Anne Community Center Renovation.

This event is an opportunity for the community to meet the design team, review the schematic design and provide feedback on the design. The goal of the renovation project is to provide infrastructure improvements and general cosmetic improvements while focusing on decarbonization/electrification of the building. You can find additional Earth Month events at the [Parkways Blog](#).

Summer Schedule for Bicycle Weekends on Lake Washington Boulevard: On scheduled weekends from May to September, a portion of Lake Washington Boulevard will be closed to motorized vehicles from 10 a.m. Saturday to 6 p.m. Sunday. We are inviting everyone to get outside and soak up some summer sunshine and big, job, or stroll along the boulevard between Seward Park and Mount Baker Park's beach. Parking lots are open and will be accessible from the nearest cross street. You can find more information on the dates and free parking online.

### **Parks and Recreational Services: Aquatics**

April Pools Day: Seattle Parks and recreation joined other public and private aquatic facilities throughout Washington to celebrate the annual April Pools Day on Saturday, April 19th. This is a great opportunity to learn important water safety skills, enjoy free swims, and play games and win prizes. There were several events at SPR pools last weekend, and we have an additional session at Ballard Pool on Sunday, April 27th from 1 – 2:00 pm. There were 101 participants in attendance at Rainier Beach CC!

### **Parks & Recreational Services: Recreation**

Spring Egg Hunts: Seattle Parks and Recreation offered variety of free spring egg hunts at our community center sites. We had great turnouts and a lot of happy children.

Summer Hiring Event: SPR is hosting a Summer Hiring Event on Saturday, April 26 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Miller Community Center. We are looking to hire summer beach lifeguards, outdoor recreation leaders, recreation attendants, and more. The community is invited to learn more about these opportunities and apply on the spot.

Summer Camp Registration: Due to overwhelming interest for Nature Play Day Camp (our nature-based preschool summer camp at Discovery Park) SPR & ARC approved the operation of a second classroom this summer, doubling the weekly capacity from 16 to 32 participants. Registration is currently averaging 22 participants/week.

## **Parks & Recreational Services: Recreation**

Nature Kids Preschool returned to Discovery Park on Monday, March 31st: We are excited to have our nature-based program back in the park, utilizing the annex classrooms while the Visitor Center remains closed. A huge thank you to Queen Anne Community Center for hosting the displaced preschool program for the past 3 months, without their support our program was at risk of closure.

## **Parks & Recreational Services: Parks and Environment Facilities**

It is always eye opening to get a glimpse of the breath and scope of the work our Facilities Division staff provide to keep our parks and facilities safe and welcoming. Here are two recent projects that demonstrate their expertise and dedication.

Green Lake: The Metal Shop received a work order to inspect the Green Lake outfall fish weir because the rotating screen seemed to have stopped working, causing the lake level to rise above normal. The mechanism is comprised of a motor driven tubular shaped screen that allows water to flow out while preventing fish from leaving the lake. If the rotation is stopped, organic debris from the lake will clog the screen restricting water flow. To access the mechanism the shop used their truck mounted crane to carefully lift the 800 lbs. unit out of its vault. Once removed it was discovered that the teeth from the 14-inch steel sprocket had been sheared off and the drive chain was bound tightly around the motor shaft. Our staff worked quickly to cut and remove the badly damaged sprocket and reinstall the screen and frame, which can now be operated manually, until replacement parts arrive. Great job on the quick response and clever problem solving to get an integral asset back in operation.

Beaver Management at Magnuson Park: At Magnuson Park wetlands the Natural Areas Crew reinforced a beaver notch exclusion fence to reduce the size of the gaps and prevent beavers from entering. This work is important to minimize damage after so much hard work has been put into the site.

## **Parks & Recreational Services: Parks and Environment**

Spring has sprung: The first signs of sun and fires on the beaches are already ramping up! At Discovery Park, Rangers Jones and Yurek discovered a large, unattended fire near the lighthouse. Our Park Rangers safely extinguished the fire with a big stick, ensured the area was secure and engaged with visitors who had started the unauthorized beach fire. This was a great opportunity to educate them on the park's fire regulations and designated fire pit locations.

Atlantic City Boat Ramp: Parks Security requested vehicle exclusion boulders at the parking lot. Southeast District Senior staff worked with Craig Chatburn Parks Senior Planning & Development specialist and the Heavy Equipment crew to create a natural vehicle exclusion barrier using logs stockpiled from storm damage. This solution creates habitat for insects and other wildlife by releasing nutrients into the soil as the logs decompose. Additionally, this acts as stormwater retention and carbon storage! Incorporating nurse log habitat into urban parks is an important tactic in reaching our net zero carbon emission by 2025. This is another example of how Parks & Environment is working smarter to ensure park lands contribute to climate solution.

## **Park Project Updates: Westlake Park & Don Armeni Boat Ramp**

Westlake Park Open House: On Wed., April 16, Seattle Parks Foundation in partnership with Seattle Parks and Recreation hosted a community public house to share the 30% design for the coming update to Westlake Park. About 100 people attended to share their thoughts about the future of the

park while also talking about what they love in the current park. The project is currently working towards construction fall 2025 with plans to be open in time for the World Cup in Seattle in summer 2026. To stay up to date on the project please visit the [Seattle Parks Foundation website](#).

**Don Armeni Boat Ramp Repairs:** The contractor has mobilized at Don Armeni Boat Ramp in West Seattle and is beginning repairs to the float system. We anticipate the work to be completed by the first week in May (weather permitting). SPR requested the fabricator open one side first, so we can restore partial service in April. The float system was removed in November 2024 because the hinges between the floats were failing and the concrete on the floats was spalling and cracking. Both docks should be open May 1st – thanks to the great weather we have had!

### **Volunteer Puget Park Trail Project**

**Earth Day Month:** Green Seattle Partnership has 20 volunteer projects scheduled, in addition to events hosted by SPR and our partners. Earth Month is an opportunity to lift some weight off the shoulders of our hard-working ecology team. It is not too late to volunteer. Volunteer opportunities can be found on the Green Seattle Partnership website.

**Volunteer Trail Project at Puget Park:** The Trails Crew teamed up with Forest Stewards and 12 dedicated volunteers to prepare for a volunteer work party at Puget Park. The crew installed check steps and out-slope logs to stabilize and level the trail, reducing the risk of erosion over time. Following this, the team hosted a volunteer work session where they resurfaced 170 feet of trail, utilizing 7 yards of crushed rock to create a more durable and accessible path.

Diaz pauses for questions from the Board.

Baum notes appreciation for the update on maintenance and facilities crews and emphasizes the importance of repairs to the Don Armeni Boat Ramp.

Diaz notes that Flinn joined the Bitter Lake restroom dedication this past Tuesday. Flinn notes that this event was a great success.

### **Partnership Spotlight: Associated Recreation Council (ARC)**

Jackie Jainga-Hyllseth, Executive Director: Associated Recreation Council, gives the presentation.

Jainga-Hyllseth provides brief history of ARC and the partnership between ARC and SPR. ARC has supported recreation and childcare in partnership with SPR since 1975. The partnership is governed by a Master Services Agreement (MSA), signed in 2008 and renewed in 2019. Presently, ARC is focused on financial sustainability and expanding services offered.

**Who is ARC?** ARC is a non-profit enriching Seattle Parks and Recreation through culturally relevant and responsive Childcare, Healthy Recreation, Lifelong Learning programs and management of the Volunteer Advisory Councils. “SPARC” is the partnership between ARC as an independent 501c3 and the Recreation Division of Seattle Parks and Recreation; the acronym is a combination of the two organizations. SPR provides the facilities and public mission. ARC delivers programs, staffing, financial support and volunteer community engagement. Together, the groups ensure accessible, equitable, and sustainable healthy recreation and childcare services across Seattle.

Flinn asks if the staff at any given Community Center a mix of ARC and SPR staff. Jainga-Hyllseth confirms, and notes that part of the goal is to make the experience seamless for the Community Center visitor.

What is the Master Services Agreement? The Master Services Agreement (MSA) provides the policy outline for the partnership. It is a renewable contract first signed in 2008, last signed in 2019. The MSA is the “constitution” of the relationship between SPR and ARC that spells out how both organizations work together and details the role that each agency plays in SPR programs, Advisory Councils, marketing, financial management and more.

#### ARC’s Key Roles

- Childcare & Program Management
- Financial Stewardship
- Advisory Council Management
- Development & Marketing support
- Human Resources
- Compliance & Reporting

ARC provides and facilitates vital programs in recreation, childcare, youth employment, lifelong learning, special populations, four fiscally sponsored programs, 3 Small craft centers and Amy Yee Tennis Center and community advisory councils.

Jainga-Hyllseth shares a recap of recent ARC programs and events, highlighting successful partnership moments between SPR and ARC.

Looking ahead, ARC is preparing for the next renewal of the MSA in 2028 and is readying and adapting to meet Seattle’s emerging and diverse needs. Thank you.

Jainga-Hyllseth pauses for questions from the Board.

Mays asks what ages are eligible for ARC childcare programs. Jainga-Hyllseth clarifies that the program is for children ages 5-12, and the preschool program serves children ages 3-5. Mays asks if the programs are at full capacity. Jainga-Hyllseth notes that enrollment is close to full, but not quite full yet.

Flinn commends the Youth Advisory Council, both for purposes of relevant feedback and also for development of youth service.

Flinn asks if the ARC budget and SPR budget are combined or kept separate. Hellier clarifies that these organizations are kept financially separate, although program fees from ARC programs do help supplement SPR revenue. Flinn encourages SPR and ARC to coordinate more at the budget planning phase to best use the strengths of each group to the advantage of both.

Hellier adds that ARC is one of, if not the, largest childcare programs in Seattle, and commends Jainga-Hyllseth and ARC for remaining solvent during the COVID-19 pandemic and for being one of the very first organizations to reopen with modified practices during that crisis. Although the organization struggled financially and is just now getting back on track, the services ARC provided were absolutely essential during the pandemic.

Haile-Leul notes the positive impact of ARC programs and employees in his neighborhood, and thanks Jainga-Hyllseth, ARC and SPR for the partnership and programs.

Baum thanks SPR staff for the focus on ARC as a partner, and Jainga-Hyllseth and ARC for being the first partner spotlight of the year.

# Seattle Parks and Recreation Restroom Audit Report

Justin Hellier, SPR Strategic Advisor, delivers the presentation.

Just to give a timeline, in 2022, City Council (acting as Park District Board) asked the City Auditor to conduct SPR performance audits related to Cycle 2 funding, including of SPR's restrooms. In 2024, the auditor performed interviews, ride-alongs, data analysis, site visits, and sharing of initial high-level findings; SPR developed provisional responses. In the fall of 2024, the auditor provided draft results and SPR developed a response plan. Then in February of this year, the audit was published; Auditor and SPR presented to City Council committee; and SPR initiated response implementation.

It's been less than 90 days since the audit was released. We've got some steps forward already, but many things are still in process – as planned.

Restrooms are regularly cited in public feedback as an area for improvement. SPR's 2020 Strategic Plan and Park District Cycle 2 investments recognized the public demand for improved restroom cleanliness and year-round access. SPR [presented to the BPRC in August 2023](#) on our restroom dashboard and basic approach to restroom maintenance. We welcomed the opportunity to get the Auditor's perspective on how to improve restrooms for park users and partnered closely throughout the audit.

SPR generally concurs with the audit findings and we are jumping into implementing improvements, as outlined in our full response.

## Context: Restrooms in Seattle's Parks

- 129 restrooms in parks, either standalone or attached to shelter houses.
- Many close seasonally (November through April) mainly due to potential for frozen pipes.
  - SPR is in process of weatherizing all restrooms for year-round use.
- Many park restrooms are aging facilities, with capital projects needed to improve the user experience.
- Facility design has varied over time based on public preferences and innovations for maintenance and safety.

## Challenges: Citywide Crises Impact Park Restrooms

- SPR's system of restrooms was designed to meet the needs of general park users – though we work hard to provide access to all.
- Due to a citywide shortage of public restrooms, our restrooms see significant use beyond park users (people experiencing homelessness, bus and delivery drivers, and more).
- Park restrooms are greatly impacted by the citywide mental health and drug abuse crises, with restrooms closures due to unprecedented levels of vandalism and arson, diverting significant amounts of staff time and resources.

The best thing we can do to improve public happiness with our restrooms is to renovate them. Capital renovation is on the "asset renewal" part of the asset management life cycle, so that's how we plan around it. In Cycle 2, we said we would renovate 27 restrooms. So far, we have completed 9 of these projects, with 4 more currently in construction.

Flinn asks if the rate of vandalism varies by type of restroom, particularly between single stall versus traditional “open plan” restroom. Hellier notes that while there is perhaps some correlation with increased vandalism in single stall restrooms, location and other factors contribute as well.

Haile-Leul asks what, if any, feedback the department has received regarding restroom use from the homelessness response system or behavioral response system related to how these assets are being used by individuals in mental health crisis or experiencing homelessness. Hellier notes that SPR has not done much collaboration with these organizations; most of the anecdotal data comes from SPR grounds crews who clean these facilities. Haile-Leul clarifies that he is interested in what collaboration goes into the planning of these assets. Hellier notes that in a smaller number of locations (e.g., Ballard Commons Park), attention has been paid to the possibility of re-encampment, leading to the selection of a Portland Loo design at that location for durability; other locations are in discussion for a staffed restroom design.

Baum adds that design features may be able to increase durability, but also may be useful in discouraging the use of these assets as short-term shelter locations. Hellier notes that there is overlap in these issues; many fires originate as warming or cooking fires inside or outside of these restrooms.

Some of our updates that respond to the audit comments include:

- Bundling multiple restrooms into single bid packages
- Bundling restroom renovations with other site improvements
- Align condition assessments with 6-year Park District planning processes
- Formally update design standards to incorporate lessons learned around vandalism, durability, and maintenance

We are also focused on preventative maintenance to keep more of our restrooms online and available for more of the year. Preventive maintenance (PM) is proactive, routine maintenance on assets to keep them in good working order, with a goal of avoiding unexpected failure and costly, unplanned downtime.

Regular restroom PM includes:

- Replace integral plumbing components
- Inspect for leaks and other damage
- Verify integrity of freeze protection
- Evaluate interior and exterior lighting function and other electrical assets

Our Cycle 2 investment specified that SPR would bolster support for scheduled preventative maintenance and regulatory compliance work by adding positions in skilled trades.

Currently, preventive maintenance is falling below aspirational goal 60% / 40% due to increased demand work (especially related to vandalism). We continue to focus on hiring skilled craftspeople in a difficult environment, with 2 plumbers hired in April 2025.

Other actions responsive to the audit include:

- In progress: Developing clear operations & maintenance (O&M) standards for annual restroom preventative maintenance.

- Q3 2025: Refine annual performance goal related to meeting these O&M standards by year-end 2025.

Baum notes that instead of being aspirational in public-facing reports and documents, SPR might want to be *realistic* (e.g., “this is what we can do, this is what we are going to do”) to build and maintain public trust. Baum advocates for increased transparency around the costs and difficulties surrounding restroom maintenance, as well as the path towards realistic goals.

In Cycle 2 we also aim to increase year-round access to restrooms by weatherize ~60 restrooms by end of 2028. Currently, 18 sites weatherized for year-round operation in 2023 and 2024. We are on track for completion in 2028, with some lessons learned along the way. Hellier provides examples of projects demonstrating the work done by SPR crews.

The auditor found that 20 restrooms were responsible for 60% of our skilled crafts maintenance time, and so we spent some time examining the data around those assets. Many of the hours reported involve vandalism or special projects. Compared against the first few months of 2025, it does not seem like the same 20 sites are giving the same type of trouble as during the audit period; additionally, much of the actual work being performed is graffiti abatement, rather than major maintenance and metalwork.

Baum notes that comparing data from the audit period against data from Q1 2025 is not going to provide comparable information, since many restrooms are seasonally closed during that period. Hellier acknowledges the discrepancy.

Hellier briefly discusses daily cleaning, noting the [August 2023 BPRC presentation](#) on the topic if commissioners want to see more detail. Hellier notes that SPR committed to add 2 teams to increase evening, weekend, and non-peak season maintenance in Cycle 2. Currently:

- 2 teams launched in Q2 2023, but 2024 financial issues reduced resources available systemwide.
- 44 laborer positions hired (32 new employees, 10 internal promotions), temp hiring under way.
- Second shift confirmed starting mid-May 2025, including a dedicated afternoon restroom route.

Flinn asks if every restroom gets two cleanings daily, or if there is a sort of staggered schedule. Hellier clarifies that every restroom is on a route for the relevant crew that should assure that it receives two cleanings per day. Certain high-use locations should receive three cleanings per day during peak season. However, the auditor also recommended to adjust these schedules where it makes sense. It’s a big step up from last year to have a confirmed second shift.

Lerer asks what the staffing target is. Hellier is unsure but notes there are still a few vacancies for maintenance laborers with the grounds crews. Baum reiterates that communication of realistic goals to the public – i.e., announcing that “SPR has the staff to clean every restroom every day, and we will try to clean the high-volume restrooms 2-3 times per day” – would be helpful; Baum notes that the auditor’s report hinted at a disconnect between public expectation and SPR’s messaging.

Hellier provides overview of daily staff responsibilities and standards that grounds crews are responsible for on a regular basis. Hellier also points out that SPR maintenance staff speak 7 languages, so these standards have been translated into the relevant languages.



How does SPR know that it is doing a good job? The primary measure is public satisfaction with our services, which is measured in a variety of ways. Every two years, we conduct a statistically valid survey; we look at Find It, Fix It for data; we monitor our social media and maintenance request line. But we also have our Park Inspection Program.

Park Inspection Program:

- Since 2017, SPR has engaged cohorts of trained volunteers to inspect parks.
- Provides park- and asset-specific data on how we're performing against our maintenance standards, on a 1-5 scale.
- Used internally and publicly reported on our dashboard and in the annual report.

Hellier shows some examples of Park Inspection Program survey data. Lerer asks if volunteers for this program choose the parks they inspect, or if those are chosen by SPR. Hellier confirms that the locations are selected by SPR.

In response to the Auditor's recommendations, we are going to formalize expectations around supervisor monitoring across maintenance districts. These expectations have already been developed in early 2025, and lead staff in each district know how often they should be doing site visits and monitoring work. Additionally, we're going to use the park inspection data I just shared, along with a few other data points, to set a specific numeric goal for restrooms, to track it over time, and to regularly review actual performance against the goal with crew chiefs.

Baum asks if crew chiefs supervise inspection of parks in their own districts, or of parks in other districts, noting that cross-district standardization can be beneficial in some instances. Hellier agrees but is unsure how these inspections are carried out in practice.

Hellier pauses for questions from the Board.

Baum asks if any additional audits are going to be conducted. Diaz and Hellier note that the City Auditor has not indicated any upcoming audits.

## 2024 SPR Performance Review Update

Hellier notes that SPR is responsible annually for providing an annual report to the community and to City Council acting as the Park District Board on the accomplishments by the department in the prior year. This report has a narrative piece and a much more detailed financial report. SPR staff reviews and reports this data with the BPRC Performance Oversight Subcommittee, which John Flinn will report on today. Additionally, this report includes an introduction letter from the chairs of the BPRC, which Hellier will be working to prepare with those members between now and May 22. After that meeting, the release of the report will be timed to coincide with the June 24 meeting of City Council in their role as Park District Board.

Flinn introduces the BPRC Performance Oversight Subcommittee members and SPR staff liaisons, and describes the subcommittee's scope of work: to review SPR's annual report and the BPRC introductory letter, and also to work with SPR on its data practices. Flinn provides a summary of the subcommittee's meetings, including some of the challenges faced in data collection (such as manual data collection by program leaders).

Flinn describes how the subcommittee helped SPR staff identify themes to highlight in the annual report, including improvements in data recording; CARE and Ranger team interaction reporting; and

forecasting and budget complexity, in part resulting from market salary adjustments at the city level. Flinn also notes that capital projects often don't show up early in budget cycles, since these are by definition multi-year projects and many simply haven't been completed yet.

Flinn notes that the subcommittee also identified several areas that deserve deeper dives into the data. One area includes Ranger community hours and interactions; while SPR tracks the number of engagements by Rangers, there is not yet a mechanism to track whether these interactions result in a decrease in negative behavior or 911 calls from parks.

Flinn also notes that the subcommittee recommended to SPR to be very up-front and transparent to Council and to the public regarding the impact that the ongoing hiring freeze and citywide budget cuts have had and will continue to have to SPR services.

Flinn pauses for any questions from the Board.

Hellier notes that the current Performance Oversight Subcommittee has been very involved and invested in the review process and commends the Subcommittee members for their work. Diaz notes that this process helps remind SPR how the public will see the data.

## Old & New Business

Baum notes the ongoing discussion regarding BPRC meeting times; members agree to push this discussion until more members are present.

The next full BPRC meeting will be on May 22.

Baum adjourns the meeting at 8:21 PM.