



Minutes | Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

Elliott Bay Office Park (EBOP) Conference Room | 300 Elliott Ave. W, Seattle, WA 98119

Remote accessibility via Zoom

Thursday, September 10, 2026

6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Attendance

Present: Rasch, Stonecipher, Lerer, Zhang, Chisholm Clare, Werner, Diamond, Nakamura (co-chair), Flinn

Absent: Baum (co-chair), Haile-Leul, Witt, Kahn, Williams, Meng

SPR Staff and Presenters: Finnegan, Sheffer, Merriam, Fosnick (Premier Golf), Johnsen (First Tee), Catague, Sifford, Hoff, Burtzos

Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

Nakamura calls the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and provides logistical instructions for in-person and remote attendees.

Commissioners and SPR staff introduce themselves.

Nakamura reads the land acknowledgement.

Noting that a quorum of BPRC members has not yet been achieved, Nakamura postpones consideration of the consent agenda until after public comment.

Public Comment

The BPRC heard public testimony on the following topics:

- Concerns regarding SeaFair/Blue Angels permitting;
- Advocacy for Lower Woodland Park dirt bicycle jumps;
- Concerns regarding infrastructure at Lake Washington Boulevard;
- Concerns regarding the Matthews Beach Park overflow parking area;
- Advocacy regarding Denny Blaine Park use; and
- Concerns about Lower Woodland Park EIS scoping.

Recognizing that several BPRC members have joined the meeting during public comment, Nakamura allows additional time for introductions.

Nakamura introduces the consent agenda for tonight: 7/23/26 BPRC Special Meeting Minutes; 8/13/26 BPRC Meeting Minutes; and 9/10/23 BPRC Meeting Agenda. Flinn moves to approve the items as a package; Lerer seconds. Nakamura calls for a vote on the motion; the vote is unanimous in favor.

Adopted: 7/23/26 BPRC Special Meeting Minutes; 8/13/26 BPRC Meeting Minutes; 9/10/23 BPRC Meeting Agenda

Superintendent's Report

Michele Finnegan, Interim Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation, delivers the report.

Superintendent hiring update: Timeline moved from September to October

Denny Blaine Park Settlement Agreement: As part of the Denny Blaine Park for All v. City of Seattle lawsuit, King County Superior Court ordered the City to take additional steps to the existing abatement plan to address conditions at the park.

The court directed SPR to:

- Create a park-specific plan and user code of conduct
- Monitor and report incidents of inappropriate behavior
- Maintain the park grounds to prevent inappropriate behavior
- Establish buffers between the park and neighboring properties
- Educate park users about appropriate behavior through signage and outreach efforts

In response to the order SPR will:

Install Additional Screening to ensure that clothing-optional areas of the park are not visible from neighboring properties.

Seek a Consultant to Develop a Community Liaison Program: The limited scope will include disseminating information about the use guidelines, educating park users about acceptable behavior, and supporting positive use of the park. The specifics of this program will be developed through consultation with park users and the organization selected.

You can find more information on our website at: [Denny Blaine Park Long-term Plan | Engage Seattle Parks](#)

Freeway Park 50th Anniversary Celebration: The August 22nd 50th Anniversary Celebration was a huge success. It spotlighted the park's historic legacy, vibrant future, and enduring role as Seattle's original urban oasis.

Summer Park Activation Updates: As Summer winds down and we continue to reflect on all the programs and services provided, I wanted to highlight the breath of things we do to promote a successful and safe summer particularly with activation of our parks and open spaces.

Total Events, Programs, and Activation Hours: 315 Events, Programs and Activities totaling 743 Hours; These include Ping Pong tournaments, Senior Dance, Senior Exercise, Yoga, Zumba, Dance workshops, concerts and Art Classes

- **Dancing 'til Dusk:** On August 13, 2026, the Park Activation Unit hosted a Dancing 'til Dusk West Coast swing dance event at **Lake Union Park**, with the dance floor in front of the Historic boats at Lake Union Wharf. total estimated attendance of 300. **Lake City Mini-Park** had a Salsa band and attendees enjoyed a beautiful evening of dancing under the lights! The Dancing 'til Dusk park activation is one of the most popular summer programs. At the **Golden Gardens Fundraiser**, last weekend, pictured in the lower righthand corner, attendance was estimated at 200 participants and the event raised over \$11,000 to support the Dancing 'til Dusk equipment fund.
- **Center City Cinema at Hing Hay Park:** On Saturday, August 15th, the Park Activation Unit hosted a Center Cinema screening of *Ulam: Main Dish* in collaboration with the Seattle Asian America Film Festival (SAAFF). Before the first pre-screen event, Alexandra Cuervo, the director of the film, walked into Hing Hay Park, surprising everyone to introduce the movie.
- **Ballard Commons:** The Ballard Alliance brought back its annual Movies in the Park series in August, with four free outdoor movie nights scheduled at Ballard Commons Park.

And we can't forget the **5538 attendees** that attended the 7 Outdoor FIFA watch parties and Our efforts brought together more than 500 attendees across 11 indoor watch party locations, more than 2,000

attendees at our outdoor watch parties, and more than 700 youth participants through our jamborees and clinics.

Project Updates

South Leschi Marina

- We are about to start necessary utility work for the Leschi South Marina Facility Improvement project on Monday, September 14.
- The upland utility work is expected to take 3 to 4 months, depending on weather conditions.
- We recognize that construction will affect park users, neighbors, and nearby businesses.
- After meeting with the Leschi businesses and community, SPR pushed the construction schedule outside of summer months, adjusted construction hours and adjusted some parking arrangements that reflect the priorities of businesses and residents.
- Our PCD team has been working with and will continue to work with the contractor, Harkness Construction, to minimize construction impacts wherever safely practical.
- Construction is a necessary component of park stewardship, and we recognize it has impacts.

Additional Notes: During construction parking and bus zones will be revised. Business and residential access will remain open. The lot adjacent to the marina that is parallel with the road will largely remain open. The Seattle Parks and Recreation's pier parking lot will be closed during construction and will reopen when it is safe to do so. Some short duration work will occur overnight to mitigate impacts to adjacent businesses. Dates and times for after-hours work will be communicated on the website once determined.

The upland utility work will support power, sewer and water for the marina. The overall project provides a brand-new public dock, breakwater, and associated utilities for the facility. This includes a sewage pump out facility for boats and the removal of the outdated and environmentally harmful creosote dock. This project supports better water quality in Lake Washington.

Stan Sayres Boat Launch Closure:

We're replacing the existing [Stan Sayres Boat Ramp](#), [3808 Lake Washington Blvd S](#) adjacent to Mount Baker Rowing and Sailing Center, which has reached the end of its useful life. We received a \$1.6 million grant for this program from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office's Boating Facilities Program, and Forma Construction has started mobilizing to begin this work on the north section ramp.

During the closure (which we anticipate being completed by mid-October 2026), crews will replace several of the damaged ramp panels leaving a much-improved surface for launching and retrieving boats. We encourage you to use [Atlantic City Boat Ramp](#), located at 9026 Seward Park Ave S, approximately 4 miles south from Stan Sayres.

You can get more construction information on our website under [Stan Sayres Boat Ramp Replacement Project](#) and find other ways to get out on the water in Seattle under the [Boating & Fishing page](#) on our website.

Burke Gilman Trail Construction: At the July meeting, you requested additional information about planned construction work on the Burke Gilman Trail. The project our PCD team is leading makes repairs along areas of the Burke-Gilman Trail between NE 65th St and NE 77th St in northeast Seattle during the month of September. Work began Tuesday, September 8 and is anticipated to last 3 weeks. The schedule may change based on factors such as inclement weather. This section of the Burke-Gilman Trail will remain open and passable with temporary gravel ramps in place where asphalt has been removed. Cyclists are asked to dismount and walk through work zones following all detour signs. Please use extra caution in repair sections and expect travel delays during construction. Burke-Gilman Trail maintenance includes repairing

portions of the trail where the surface has been damaged by tree roots or other environmental factors. Similar work was performed in 2025 north of NE 77th St.

Smith Cove Park: Councilmember Kettle toured Smith Cove Park (Phase 1) construction site with Parks staff and reviewed process at the park. Construction began in late 2025 and the park will be partially reopened by end of the year, with new off-leash area (OLA), accessible trails loop around the park, and new native planting, log zone, and bioretention areas for passive recreation. The park will fully reopen in summer 2027 with renovated natural-turf playfields. This will allow time and needed care for optimal growth and grass establishments.

Dr. Blanche Lavizzo Park: We recently completed a concrete maintenance project at Dr. Blanche Lavizzo Park. The project removed and replaced approximately 1,200 square feet of uneven pavement and broken brick pavers. During public outreach held in Winter 2025-2026, staff heard from community that the former sidewalk created unsafe conditions for pedestrians and cyclists from the slippery brick surface and bricks moving out of place.

SPR in-house staff designed the sidewalk project to meet safety concerns but also maintain the basketweave pattern that was developed as part of the Central Trail Project in 1998. The Central Park Trail provides a pedestrian connection from the I-90 Lid Park and the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail through Judkins Park, Judkins Playfield, Washington Middle School, and Dr. Blanche Lavizzo Park. What may appear at first as new brick pavers is concrete that has been stamped and dyed in the shape and color of bricks. This solution provides a more durable and safer surface that will be enjoyed by many for years to come.

Opportunities to Engage

Bridgerton Stroll:

On Saturday, September 26th from 1 – 2 PM, you are invited to a Bridgerton Stroll at Volunteer Park. The event will feature music from Bridgerton, Game of Thrones, Elden Ring and more!

Dolly Parton Silent Disco and Movie Night: SPR will be hosting this event, in partnership with the Seattle Symphony, at Denny Park on Sept. 25th. The Disco is from 4 – 6 pm and the movie starts at 6:30pm.

More information on these, and other events, can be found on our website!

Superintendent Feedback Loop

Parque Libertad: The new name, **Parque Libertad**, was recommended by the BPRC's Park Naming Subcommittee, and I am pleased to support their commitment to SPR and the communities they serve. Given this land is owned by King County, and operated under an agreement by SPR, the County has also provided support for this name change. Libertad ("freedom") is a universal value that reflect the enduring pursuit of civil rights, equality, and opportunity for all.

Lake Washington Blvd: We will be putting together an operations plan to support use of these gates, which will include stakeholder engagement, prior to the 2027 Bicycle Sunday season.

Lewis Park Notes;

- Our Natural Area Crew and Trails Program accomplished 110,182 sq ft of trailside vegetation pruning to improve site lines into the park and address blackberries that were smothering previously planted native trees.
- Facilities repaired the pedestrian bridge
- Urban Forestry: Parks Urban Forestry- 11 trees pruned and 1 removal along S Charles St

- Contractor Kemp West - 8 pruned and 10 removals in the alley using 120ft lift truck for a portion of the work. 37 pruned and 3 removals along Golf Dr, adjacent to metro lines.
- SPR Paint Shop installed new Rainbow Sign and graffiti abated throughout the park
- SDOT UCT Team supported SPR with litter abatement
- SPD provided over a week of support on site
- Next steps include Parks Activation and Community Engagement and NRU is preparing a scope of work for Phase 2 of the maintenance plan

Finally, Seattle Parks and Recreation is excited to announce that Seward Park has received the international Green Flag Award for the third year in a row. This award recognizes the park's excellence with several key elements including A Welcoming Place; Healthy, Safe, and Secure; Well-Maintained and Clean; Environmental Management; Biodiversity, Landscape, and Heritage; Community Involvement; Marketing and Communication; and Management.

Finnegan pauses for questions from the Board.

Werner requests copy of presentation after the meeting.

Werner asks for clarification regarding SeaFair permitting and for an update of Lake Washington Boulevard access gates. Finnegan notes that SPR has not yet used the new access gates and will not do so until an operations plan is established in coordination with stakeholders. Finnegan also clarifies that large City events are coordinated through the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), with input from other City departments. The SPR Superintendent has historically signed the SeaFair permit, but the decision is made within a broader process. Werner asks for best practices regarding BPRC communications and idea sharing; Finnegan clarifies.

Flinn notes the restoration and reactivation of Freeway Park, congratulating SPR and partners for all the work and process that contributed to that park's reopening and celebration event.

Partner Spotlight: Premier Golf

Andy Sheffer, Deputy Superintendent of the Planning and Capital Development Branch, presents the topic and introduces the presenters: Patrick Merriam, SPR Golf Manager; Mike Fosnick, Vice President/Director of Operations, Premier Golf; and Evan Johnsen, Vice President of Programs & Development, First Tee of Greater Seattle.

Merriam describes each of SPR's golf courses and the amenities offered at each and clarifies the relationship between SPR maintenance crews and the golf staff, which is hired and maintained by Premier/Troon. SPR directly employs and manages the grounds crews responsible for all maintenance across the city's golf courses, currently numbering 27 staff (20 full-time).

Since 2018, the golf course revenue has grown from \$11.8M to \$20.6M in 2025. Merriam stresses that increasing access and broadening the perception of who is welcome to participate in golf has been a primary goal under his management of the programs.

Flinn asks if the revenue increase is primarily driven by fee increases, more rounds played, or a mix of both. Fosnick notes that this trend does reflect a mix of both trends, but primarily an increase in rounds played. This also reflects an expansion of public access beyond golf; combined, the four courses provide 500 hours of community access annually, year-round recreation and community programming, free access to select practice areas, and trails & meeting spaces. All told, these other uses are valued at around \$175k annually.

Premier also prioritizes bringing golf into the community, through annual community events, free golf clinics, activities, and contests, and partnerships connecting youth and families to golf. The value of these services is estimated to be at least \$60k/annually.

In addition, Premier seeks to expand access to golf, providing 8,600 discounted youth rounds annually, with 3,700 youth served through junior golf programs. 16 high school programs are supported with free golf and practice areas, and 50,000 discounted rounds for seniors and super seniors. These discounts total over \$1M annually in reduced price golf access.

Fosnick pauses for questions from the Board.

Flinn asks if Premier/golf participates in SPR's Big Day of Play. Finnegan and Fosnick clarify; there is golf information at BDOP, and there are free community swing events at the courses on other days. Fosnick expresses a desire to expand these events in coordination with SPR community centers. Flinn notes that a community center league might be helpful for retention, rather than one-day events. Merriam agrees, and notes that SPR already has the materials in hand (including clubs).

Johnson speaks about First Tee of Greater Seattle. First Tee – GC is a nonprofit headquartered at Jefferson Park/Bill Wright Golf Complex, serving King, Snohomish, and Skagit counties. In 2025, COS courses saw 2,320 season registrations. First Tee has served more than 30,000 youth served since 2003 in Seattle and 75,000 overall. First Tee is also a fee-paying tenant of SPR, with payments to Seattle courses in 2026 projected at \$75,000.

First Tee offers several youth programs, including:

- Year-round program offerings
- Weekly *Golf & Life Skills* classes
- Coach & volunteer training
- Internship and leadership pathways
- Junior Advisory Board
- Special events, tournaments, leagues & clinics
- Schools Program: teacher training, equipment & curriculum
- Partnerships with local universities, golf programs, & employers

The First Tee School Program gives physical educators all the tools to get started. We provide the training, equipment, and lesson plans that integrate life skills and values with the game of golf and motor skills. In 2025, these programs were active in 242 elementary and middle schools, reaching 115,000 students. Johnsen notes that First Tee participants report benefits in social skills and academic performance, above and beyond any athletic coaching.

Johnsen emphasizes First Tee's teen and female enrollment, noting that over 39% of the program is currently young women and over 63% is non-Caucasian. First Tee aims to redefine who is welcome in the sport from an early age. Most participants are between ages 7-12, but there is good participant retention through high school despite a lack of competitive focus in the program.

Johnson expresses appreciation for SPR and Premier/Troon and thanks the Board for the opportunity to share information today.

Fosnick pauses for questions from the Board.

Sheffer prompts Merriam to describe the next focus for SPR golf in partnership with Premier. Merriam answers that accessible and adaptive golf programs are the next big focus for this partnership. Johnsen adds

that adaptive golf is very much on First Tee's radar, but since First Tee does not own any facilities, they cannot be the primary driver in this work.

Burtzos notes an online comment regarding accessibility for remote Board participants and commits to emailing BPRC members PDF copies of all slide presentations from tonight's meeting after it concludes.

Scholarships

Daisy Catague, Deputy Superintendent of Parks and Recreational Services, presents the topic and introduces Katie Sifford, OOC Matrix & Partnerships Manager to deliver the presentation.

Financial aid helps make our programs and activities more accessible to our community members. Opportunities include recreational classes and activities for youth and adults, summer youth activity camps, swimming for all ages, youth athletics, lifelong recreation for participants aged 50+, specialized programs for youth and adults with disabilities, and licensed childcare during the summer and school year for children ages 5-12. Scholarships are available to anyone who qualifies based on income and family/household size.

Childcare scholarships funding is allocated between two terms: summer and school year. These funds support licensed school-age care programs across 12 community centers and 8 school-based locations, listed here on the right. We have two additional childcare sites that are working to license this year: South Park and Hiawatha CCs.

Seattle Parks District funds the recreation scholarship, which is allocated into 5 buckets: youth recreation, adult recreation, aquatics, activity camps and private music lessons. MPD buckets are "replenished" each quarter before registration opens.

As previously mentioned, eligibility is based on household income and family size. SPR scholarships are available to all interested participants; there is no requirement that an individual or family must reside in the city of Seattle. An individual or family is eligible for scholarship if they earn below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level. Scholarships are awarded between 50% and 90% of program cost, with 80% of our current scholarship recipients qualifying at a full 90%.

A benefits platform was created for the City of Seattle called CiviForm. CiviForm takes your household information (family size, income, etc.) and suggests various benefits programs based on your eligibility. CiviForm provides a hub for government assistance programs translated into 7 languages, removing access barriers for Seattle families. CiviForm does not provide one application for all programs; it directs customers to each Department's unique application, including SPR.

Our scholarship cycle runs from Summer to Spring aligned with SPS to provide continuity of care for childcare families who could, for instance, lose eligibility at the end of the calendar year and must withdraw from SAC mid-school year. This also aligns with tax season, allowing customers to submit their most recent 1040.

SPR's total scholarship fund for 2026-27 is a little over \$1.9M. About \$470k of that fund comes from MPD and is utilized for recreation scholarships. The other \$1.4M from the FEPP Levy and King County grant is allocated for childcare scholarships. Recreation scholarships are further allocated into 5 buckets to improve equity and effectiveness across our community center system. The graph on this slide shows the variety of factors that are considered when determining where childcare funds will be made available.

Amy Yee and Aquatics do not provide scholarships for private 1 on 1 lessons.

Recreation scholarship is triggered at registration if there are funds available in the program bucket. If no funds are available, the full amount will be charged, and the customer can choose to back out of registration or pay in full. Funds are loaded into the 5 program buckets ahead of each registration date throughout the year. These funds can run out very quickly, often within minutes. There are no retroactive scholarships if funds are not available at the time of registration. There is no functionality in our system to join a waitlist. We have roughly 1600 customers using recreation scholarships this cycle.

Childcare scholarship funds are divided among sites and customers submit their scholarship request for a specific site-based program. This provides an equitable allocation across sites. Scholarship waitlists are created for each site after all funds are allocated.

In 2026 our SDC had 68% enrollment. We had an average weekly enrollment of 460, with spaces available for 680 participants. We had 107 participants on our waitlist, and 52 were able to enroll.

Our after-school program is currently enrolled at 91% with a waitlist of approximately 292 students. The school year just started so there is still some movement within our registration and waitlist systems.

SPR accepts subsidies from DCYF (WA State), CCAP (Seattle residents/DEEL), Child Care Aware of America (military and DOD childcare assistance), and BSK (King County) to supplement the other scholarship funds.

Sifford pauses for questions from the Board.

Flinn asks for clarification regarding overall scholarship utilization for summer programs; Sifford clarifies that the overall percentage figure obscures some site-specific data.

Nakamura asks about Seattle residency data collection for scholarships. Finnegan notes that some funds have requirements and others do not, and SPR has started tracking this information a bit more than it had previously. Sifford adds details around what programs are funded this way.

Rasch asks how capacity/waitlist is managed, especially when site capacity is reached. Sifford notes that school-based programs in particular tend to fill quickly. Sites have a license capacity and face staffing limits; nationwide, there is a general shortage of childcare staffing.

Old & New Business

Nakamura invites any members of the Park Naming subcommittee to report out on the recent process leading to the naming of Parque Libertad.

Diamond expresses frustration with the remote participation experience at this meeting. Finnegan commits to reviewing the setup for the meeting.

There being no further business, Nakamura adjourns the meeting at 7:54 PM.