



Memo

Date: October 9, 2017
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Susan Golub, Manager, Policy Unit
Subject: Additions to the Code of Conduct

Requested Board Action

In March 2017 staff discussed with the Board of Park Commissioners potential additions to the Seattle Parks and Recreation Code of Conduct. Staff have modified the proposed additions to the Code and are now requesting a Board recommendation to approve the revised Code.

Project or Policy Description and Background

Code of Conduct Background

In 2010 Parks & Recreation consolidated behaviors prohibited in parks and facilities into a Code of Conduct. Most of the behaviors initially included in the Code of Conduct were already prohibited via the Park Code, the Seattle Municipal Code and administrative rules; some were newly prohibited behaviors. The newly prohibited behaviors were:

- Possession of glass containers at athletic fields, beaches, or children's playgrounds;
- Conduct that poses a risk of harm to any person or property;
- Possession of explosives, acid, or any other article or material capable of causing serious harm to others; and
- Smoking, chewing, or other tobacco use within 25 feet of other park patrons and or at play areas, beaches, playgrounds, and picnic areas.

In 2010 the Park Board reviewed the proposed Code of Conduct, held a public hearing, made recommendations for revisions, and ultimately recommended adoption.

The most controversial of the newly prohibited behaviors was the ban on smoking within 25 feet of park patrons and in play areas and picnic areas. The department recommended a complete ban, but the Board recommended and the Superintendent concurred with the limited ban. The Code of Conduct was updated in 2015 with the adoption of the complete ban on smoking in parks

Proposed Additions to Code of Conduct

Seattle Parks and Recreation's Recreation Division identified several behaviors applicable to **indoor** recreation facilities which were proposed to be added to the prohibited list of behaviors in the Code of Conduct. When presented to the Board in March, these were the behaviors we *were* considering prohibiting at indoor facilities:

1. No use of bikes, skates (unless it is part of a SPR program), skateboards inside Parks and Recreation facilities;
2. No pets, except service animals, inside Parks and Recreation facilities; and
3. No bathing, shampooing or washing clothes in restrooms, except those with designated shower or washing facilities.

A 4th recommended prohibition prevents people from going out onto frozen ponds or lakes.

Public Involvement Process

Outreach regarding the prohibitions on restroom use (#3, above) was made by staff to the Public Defender Association, and is discussed below.

Issues

Indoor Facility Prohibited Behaviors

The behaviors *initially* proposed to be prohibited in SPR indoor facilities (no riding wheeled devices, no pets and no restroom use for bathing and washing clothes) are similar to behaviors prohibited in the Seattle Public Library's Code of Conduct:

C:\Users\golubs\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Outlook\XYHIK407\Rules of Conduct The Seattle Public Library.htm)

When staff proposed the additional prohibited behaviors for the Code of Conduct at the Board's March 9 meeting, a concern was raised that the prohibition on restroom use for bathing and washing clothes would have a negative impact on people who are homeless. To gain additional perspective on this issue, SPR staff invited the Public Defender Association to comment on the proposed additions to the Code of Conduct. (The Association, dedicated to the rights of the homeless, assisted SPR in evaluating the smoking ban and in development of the trespass rule.)

Staff toured a community center with a representative of the Public Defenders Association and spoke with a center coordinator about the problems our centers are facing with the rise in homelessness. For example, we heard about a person bathing in the restroom sink, with little clothes on, while children are using the restroom and there is only one staff person in the building. In addition, staff outlined the many steps SPR and the City have taken to help people who are homeless, including:

- Eliminating the fee for showers;
- Expanding the number of community centers offering showers for homeless people from one location to four;
- Expanding access to swimming pool showers for homeless people; and
- Expanding outreach and shelter opportunities via the navigation team and new shelter.

Following the tour and conversation, the Association convened a focus group of homeless individuals and social service agency representatives to get input on the proposed Code changes.

The upshot of this outreach was a commitment by the Public Defenders Association to **oppose** adding the restroom prohibitions to the Code of Conduct. The Association appreciated the extra measures the City has taken to help homeless people, but felt the overwhelming need mitigated against the additional restroom restrictions.

Weighing the need to keep our recreation facilities safe and welcoming with respect for the needs of homeless people, staff are withdrawing the restroom prohibitions. The existing Code provision which prohibits "Conduct which unreasonably deprives others of their use and enjoyment of the park or park facility" can be used to ask someone to stop inappropriate restroom use if it is disruptive to others' use of the restroom.

Stay Off the Ice!

This past winter Seattle experienced *seemingly* frozen-solid lakes for the first time in many years. Staff placed signs around Green Lake warning people of the dangerous conditions and Seattle police officers responded to staff concerns and told people to get off the ice. However, without a specific provision prohibiting people from going out on the ice, the police were handcuffed in their ability to keep people safe. Therefore, staff propose adding to the Code of Conduct the prohibition on going out onto frozen lakes.



Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend adding three prohibitions to the Code of Conduct:

1. No use of bikes, skates (unless it is part of a SPR program), skateboards inside Parks and Recreation facilities;
2. No pets, except service animals, inside Parks and Recreation facilities; and
3. No access to frozen lakes.

Schedule

SPR would like the Code of Conduct changes adopted in time to notify the public of the “stay off the ice” prohibition before winter.

Additional Information

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