

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MAY 24, 2001
MEETING MINUTES

Present:

Bruce Bentley, Chair
James Fearn
Susan Golub
Yale Lewis

Excused:

Karen Daubert
Kathleen Warren

Staff:

Ken Bounds, Superintendent
Michele Daly, Park Board Coordinator

Chair Bruce Bentley called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m. Consent items including the agenda of May 24, minutes of May 10, 2001 and correspondence were approved as submitted. Correspondence included letters from Stanislaw Chalicki, Alison & Ted Inkley, Stern family Limited Partnership, Tara Peattie, Woodland Park Neighbors, Ralph and Signe Lyshol and John Havard regarding the Zoo Long Range Plan and letter from S. Wolfman regarding Seward Park upgrades.

Oral Requests and Communications from the Audience

John Havard encourages a mass transit plan be thoroughly considered and a comprehensive traffic management plan for the zoo and Lower Woodland Park ballfield improvements be developed by the city as an integral part of the Zoo's Long Range Plan. The intersections at North 50th/Stone Way/Green Lake Way and North 50th/Fremont have become very problematic. Placing a proposed parking garage may exacerbate the neighborhood traffic problems. He strongly urged that any new development or improved exhibits by the Zoo that have the potential to increase impact on the neighborhood be explicitly tied to a requirement for the zoo and city to first provide a parking and traffic plan to reduce the impact on the neighborhood and an RPZ be established for the neighborhood surrounding the Zoo.

Superintendent's Report

- Colman Pool – Weekend operations begin May 26; seven-day operation begins in June.
- South Lake Union –Wharf Project –The Army Corps of Engineers has forwarded their approval of the Department's design to National Marine Fisheries. NMF will review the design in July.

- People's Lodge/Discovery Park – The United Indians of All Tribes Foundation has hired John Paul Jones to revisit the design; design ideas are expected to be viewed by the public next month.
- Sand Point/Magnuson Off –Leash Area – King County Superior Court ruled in favor of the City, upholding the DNS that had been upheld earlier by the City's Hearing Examiner on the environmental review of the off-leash area at Sand Point/Magnuson Park.
- Aquarium – An otter pup was born on Mother's Day. Both mother and pup are doing fine. This is the second pup for Lootas. Yaku, her first born, has been flown to Chicago's Shedd Aquarium on a permanent-breeding loan in exchange for an adult female, Nuka, who is a Valdez oil spill survivor.
- Green Lake Small Craft Building - repairing the shell house is the best alternative given costs, funding and minimizing short term/long term disruption to the rowing program.
- Pro Parks Teen Initiative Planning – Teen Program Leaders and Community Center Coordinators from Parks and Recreation visited the City of Phoenix Parks Recreation and Library Department's At-Risk Youth Division and attended a teen conference. The conference focused on youth violence, race relations and recognizing the contributions of teens through the Teen Park Board and local neighborhood Teen Councils.
- Pro Parks Learn to Swim Program - Staff has met with School District educators. They feel that allowing kids to be gone from school two hours per morning for two weeks to receive swimming lessons is detrimental to their basic learning needs. The Department is exploring how a swimming lesson voucher system might work.
- "Luseal" Bronze Seal Lion Sculpture has been accepted as a gift is on display at the Aquarium.
- Sand Point/Magnuson Park Wetlands – Forum Public Lecture is scheduled for May 31st at 7 p.m. and an all day charette is scheduled for Saturday June 2. Both are public events.

Items of Interest to the Board – none reported

Proposed Land Exchange – West Duwamish Greenbelt

Mary Lou Whiteford, Parks Senior Property Agent, presented the background and land exchange proposal. Residential improvements to a private property adjacent to the northwest boundary of the West Duwamish Greenbelt are located partially on park property. The encroachment, which has existed since the acquisition from DAS in 1982, consists of a wooden porch and part of a concrete walkway that together occupy 250 square feet of park land. A ten-foot wide vehicular easement for the asphalt access driveway to the home that was granted before Parks acquired the property occupies an additional 250 square feet of park land. Property Management staff has been working with the private property owner to obtain a Lot Boundary Adjustment (LBA) to allow an exchange of land to eliminate both the encroachment and access easement over park

property. Under the proposed LBA, the City would trade 675 square feet of land in exchange for 700 square feet of land from the private owner. The park lot is steep with slopes exceeding 60% and there is evidence of soil loss at the top of the slope near the SW Andover Street right-of-way. Only 30% of the lot could be considered available as park or open space land. The encroachment and driveway occupy two-thirds of that 30% and by proximity, they appear to occupy the other third. The 700 square-foot exchange parcel looks more greenbelt in character and function. The proposed property trade would also provide the City contiguous ownership in this visible area of the greenbelt and access from SW Andover Street.

James Fearn moved the Board recommend to the Superintendent that the Department proceed with legislation authorizing the proposed land exchange. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Seward Park/Audubon Education Center - Public Hearing

Cindi Shiota, Parks staff, presented the background to the proposal to develop an Environmental Education Center at Seward Park. Environmental education and stewardship are key elements to the Department's mission. While historically Parks has initiated a host of environmental practices and programs, the Department is enhancing these efforts through the development of neighborhood based services in parks throughout the City, maximizing use of its vast inventory of natural settings as outdoor classrooms. This increased priority is reflected in the Department's revised Comp Plan, in recently adopted environmental stewardship policies and in several initiatives described in the voter approved Parks and Green Spaces Levy. One of these initiatives is the development of an environmental education center in Seward Park.

Currently the Annex Building in Seward Park is home to the Department's Teens for Recreation and Environmental Conservation (TREC) and an interpretive naturalist program. To augment these services, the Department proposed in the Parks and Green Spaces Levy the renovation of the Annex Building into a fully operational Center. While the Levy identified \$618,600 for renovation of the Annex Building for the Center, this amount of funding was not expected to cover all the costs of renovation nor did it provide funds for expanding programming. To provide both the additional funding for the renovation of the Annex Building as well as to expand the environmental stewardship programming, the Department is proposing to pursue development of a partnership with the National Audubon Society. The Audubon also views Seward Park as an ideal location to further its conservation mission and its 1995 Strategic Plan to develop 20 Audubon Centers statewide. With both Parks and Audubon sharing not only a common mission, but also a commitment to service diverse communities and a programmatic approach that uses natural areas as classrooms, this partnership will afford leveraging of resources, expertise, and outreach services. Through collaborative and cooperative programming between Parks and Audubon, the environmental stewardship of Seward Park as well as the quality and quantity of educational opportunities can be enhanced.

A Park Board briefing was held on April 26. A community workshop was held May 8 at the Rainier Community Center. Forty-two people attended the workshop representing Friends of Seward Park, Dunlap School, King County Executive's Office, Seattle Audubon Society, National Audubon Society, Bassetti Architects, Lakewood/Seward Park Community Club, Sealth High School, Seattle Urban League, King County Council representative and Adam Kline, Senator from District 37. In general the audience supported the notion to establish an Audubon nature center in the Music Annex Building. Several participants stressed the need for the community to have input into aspects of the Use Agreement, program content and scheduling, program outreach to the community and to have community representation on a steering committee. Following the workshop the proposed MOU was revised and copies were distributed to the Park Board members for review. The revisions included language clarification. The Audubon would be using other portions of Seward Park for their programming purposes and not for any exclusive use. The second clarification was the Audubon partnership would augment environmental stewardship programs the Department is currently offering out of the Annex Building. The third change identifies the size, location and merchandise of a retail shop, should there be one, which would be subject to public review and comment. Approval or non-approval of any proposed retail shop shall be the decision of the Superintendent. The fourth change was to clarify that there would be public access to the common areas and conference room. The last change was to add a portion to the construction and design section that any proposed improvements will be sensitive to the historic significance of the site, the design integrity of the Music Annex and the Olmsted Parks and Boulevard Plan.

Cindi Shiota expressed appreciation to the people that helped clarify the Memorandum of Understanding language. There seems to be good support for the environmental education purpose of this project. The questions or issues that may be heard at the hearing may reflect "how" we are going to do the project not "what" we are doing to do. The issues will be addressed at the series of focus groups and public meetings that will be held during the year.

Bill Keller, Executive Director of the Associated Recreation Council, informed the Board they deal with 49 locations in partnership with the Department, 36 advisory councils and have 1,500 employees delivering program. The environmental programs are site specific and he believes we should take a measure to see if this is something that the Department desires or find ways to export the environmental programs to the whole park system.

Woody Wheeler, Director of Audubon Centers, stated it is hoped to reach one out of four children annually with an experience at one of the environmental centers and hopes to recruit an average of 500 volunteers per center. Recent centers at Deb Center in Los Angeles and Prospect Park in New York are both in city parks and serving diverse populations. The goal is to create a network of centers throughout the country that will be like the Carnegie Library System for nature. No matter where you live or who are you have a chance to have access to a center and all the benefits it brings. There are currently two centers up and running in Washington – University Place in Tacoma and one in

Sequim. Audubon looks for sites that have a wild nature experience, an outstanding natural setting and would serve a diverse population. Southeast Seattle is underserved and has the most children. The program can be expanded to Magnuson Park and Discovery Park. The Audubon also looks for opportunities where good programming is already taking place which is occurring at the Annex. The building is not up to standard as it is not handicapped accessible, not earthquake proof, and has old wiring and plumbing. The Pro Parks Levy will get part of the job done. The Audubon will help with the operations and they will work very closely with the community. Seventeen people that attended the May 9 workshop signed up to participate in focus groups to help with programming planning for the Center.

Jeff Parsons, Executive Director of Washington State Office of National Audubon Society, has worked with Seattle Audubon for a long time and is aware of their extraordinary environmental education programs that they deliver in the City. National Audubon has established a "2020 Vision" that focuses on environmental education and stewardship and Seattle Parks has a mission that includes environmental education and stewardship. The Audubon Society is a non-profit, charitable organization and their mission is public service. The mission is to conserve and restore ecosystems focusing on birds, wildlife and habitat for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. In delivering that mission Audubon believes in public involvement. In the case of Seward Park, Audubon would be delivering a benefit to the Seward Park community. They want to bring resources into the park, provide environmental education for the children of southeast Seattle, provide resources for local citizens and provide stewardship of the park. Audubon wants to help Seattle take care of this extraordinary park. This is just the beginning of a public involvement process. They want to discover what the community needs, serve the community and help Parks implement its mission of environmental education and stewardship at the same time. Audubon has expertise in education and the ability to do fund raising, not only in the city of Seattle but outside the city.

Francesca Lu, YMCA Earth Service Corps, looks forward, on a community organization standpoint, to partner with this project and hopefully involve some high school students in the design process.

Charlie Kahle, National Audubon Society and Seattle Audubon Society, supports the opportunity to work at Seward Park with the city. It is going to be a site-based program to bring in kids to experience hands on nature and it also represents the opportunity to link in with a lot of programs that Seattle Audubon has in place in the public schools and the community at large. There is also an opportunity to expand programs at this facility into the schools as well as expanding and developing new programs.

Rob Hard, Friends of Seward Park Co Chair, shared some comments he has heard in the community. He appreciates the openness of the process and appreciated the opportunity to craft and revise some of the language that was in the Memorandum of Understanding. The neighborhood has a certain amount of suspicion about large organizations. There are many people in the neighborhood that feel they take the brunt of large events for many weeks during the year. The events benefit the city but the community gets little benefit in

return. They want to make sure the general public would not get pushed out when it came to public meeting space and other opportunities and that the existing programs are not somehow supplanted. People came away from the first meeting with a lot of questions answered. An agreement will be publicly crafted with acknowledgment of some of the neighborhood history. Avoid the appearance that Audubon has an agenda other than what they are talking about will go a long way to prevent any kind of misunderstanding. He supports the MOU, the process, and hopes an agreement can be crafted where all parties feel comfortable and supported and perhaps some earlier misconceptions can be satisfied.

Yale Lewis moved the Board approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation and the Audubon Society for environmental education center at Seward Park. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Zoo Long Range Plan – Board Discussion/Recommendation

The Superintendent reported that after the hearing on May 10 he met with Mike Waller, Zoo Director, and Jim Maxwell, Project Development Manager, to discuss possible ways to deal with the major issues that came out of the hearing. It was suggested public workshops be held in July to deal with the traffic and parking in and around the Zoo. The workshops would provide a way to complete the EIS and lay out alternatives. Mike Waller reported he met with the EIS Consultants to review the public comments received at the EIS hearing and the Park Board Long-Range Plan hearing. It was determined there was more work to be done before questions could be answered. Despite the number of meetings held prior to the publication of the EIS, people did not feel they had been included so the workshops will provide an opportunity for more participation for looking at the options and discussions with the whole community. The previous focus was to the neighborhood north of the Zoo. It is hoped a neighborhood consensus can be developed. At the same time the Zoo is just entering the next area of planning on the Discovery Village which is one of the projects that came up in the discussions, particularly with regard to its impact on the Phinney neighborhood. Zoo staff is having the consultants take another look and think about the other facilities on the Zoo grounds – if they are the appropriate size, reviewing data and projections. Zoo staff has also engaged with CarSmart and King County Metro Transit staff to begin exploring some options. A kickoff event may be held in July to encourage more transit and carpool use at the Zoo. Councilman Licata's idea of a zoo entrance fee discount for Metro transit users may be tried this summer. Zoo staff will also have discussions with the Olmsted group in response to their letter.

Yale Lewis stated there are a half dozen discreet issues, some of which are related. There is a plan of the Zoo and what to do with the animals, trees, paths and so forth and he has no comment on that as long as it is well thought out. A second issue is the event center and the carousel which are increased structures to bring people in for events and are revenue producing. A third issue is the impact of the zoo on the immediate neighborhood in terms of parking. That is a long-term issue and has around for years. He thinks the neighbors should apply for Residential Parking Zone permits. The neighborhood to the

south of the Zoo has applied for the RFP zone. SeaTran has put the permits on hold. The permits would help the neighborhood but have a negative impact on the Zoo. He does not favor a garage on Zoo grounds. Yale was taken with the notion expressed at the public hearing of having a large parking lot/garage on the west side of Aurora. The area could use a community-parking garage. Parking is also limited for people using the playing fields. Parking is one issue and traffic is another issue. The consultants will be asked to estimate the costs of tunneling under Aurora as one alternative. People currently park on the neighborhood streets rather than pay a fee at the Zoo parking lots. Yale suggests people that park in the garage could take their parking ticket to the Zoo gate and get a reduced entrance fee as well as a reduced entrance price if visitors use Metro transit. He suggested on and off ramps on Aurora to the garage area could be constructed. People could use the parking garage when they attend Husky Stadium events, Safeco Field, football and soccer events in downtown Seattle. Shuttle buses could transport the people. He would like the city to look into this opportunity. People could park at these sites, as well as at Northgate, and use the shuttle bus service to get to the Zoo. He thinks the parking garage could pay for itself. A parking garage would cost an estimated \$25 million to build. Yale stated if a good plan could be suggested for helping solve traffic around the zoo that will also make a contribution to other parts of the city, the parking garage would stand a better chance of getting financing.

James Fearn shares Yale's concerns but thinks it would be better to identify the problems, not solutions that should be addressed. The proposed workshops may be the means to deal with some of these issues. There are tradeoffs for each issue. As a starting point the Board could say the Zoo should have not have any greater impact on the neighborhood than it has now. Traffic and parking impacts need to be addressed. James said if he was going to vote right now the event center would have to wait until the parking and traffic problems were addressed.

Susan Golub requests more signs and maps for Zoo visitors be available to enable them to find their way around the Zoo grounds. A "Wayfinding" project is proposed. Susan thinks the Carousel is a wonderful addition but wants to make sure the sound will be contained. The Carousel building will be opened up in good weather. Jim Maxwell stated very small directional speakers will be used and the sound will be contained within a reasonable distance of the carousel. They do not want any noise to go into the neighborhood nor to cause stress the Zoo animals. Susan is also concerned about the event center. Mike Waller stated the event center will provide an indoor space for events that are currently held outdoors. 400 events, including birthday parties, wedding receptions, corporate parties, are currently held on the zoo grounds. This would give the Zoo an opportunity to sell the Zoo experience throughout the year. Most people attend an event and also tour the Zoo as part of the event. Mike Waller reported that these kinds of activities represent 10% of the total attendance. Last year catering was estimated at over \$1 million. The event center would allow the catering revenue to increase approximately 50%. The scale of the event center is being reviewed.

James Fearn moved the Board sponsor a series of workshops on the Zoo Long Range Plan, focusing on parking and transportation issues. The motion was seconded

and carried unanimously. The Park Board will revisit the Long Range Plan at a future meeting after the July workshops are completed.

Old Business/New Business: None

Future Agenda

The Park Board North Division Tour is scheduled for June 9. Margaret Anthony, North Division Director, will lead the tour beginning at 10 a.m and ending at approximately noon.

A creek tour, led by Cheryl Eastberg, Watershed Project Coordinator, is scheduled for 4 p.m. on June 14 prior to the evening Park Board meeting. The Neighborhood Initiated Parks Projects Update has been moved to the June 28 agenda and the Regrade Park Presentation has been moved from June 28 to June 14.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

APPROVED: _____ DATE: _____

Bruce Bentley, Chair