

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MEETING MINUTES
October 24, 2002**

Present:

Bruce Bentley
James Fearn, Jr.
Susan Golub
O. Yale Lewis, Jr.
Sarah Neilson
Kathleen Warren

Excused:

Kate Pflaumer

Staff:

Patricia McInturff, Deputy Superintendent
Sandy Brooks, Park Board Coordinator

Chair Bruce Bentley called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

It was moved and seconded that the agenda consent items, minutes of the October 10 meeting, and the acknowledgment of correspondence be approved, and a request for consent for a Revocable Use Permit (at 3406 Magnolia Boulevard for installation of a four-foot wide private walkway, minor landscaping, and irrigation system) be approved. Sarah asked for clarification on the Permit and JoAnn Cowan, Parks Property and Acquisition Manager, responded. **The vote was taken and the motion was approved unanimously.**

Superintendent's Report:

Deputy Superintendent Patricia McInturff attended the meeting, as Superintendent Ken Bounds was out of town. She reported on the following:

Kalakala Moorage: Patricia distributed copies of two letters written by the Superintendent, refusing the Kalakala and Maritime Heritage Foundations' request to temporarily moor the Kalakala at Waterway 3 in South Lake Union Park. Parks has denied several previous requests to moor boats that aren't seaworthy in Waterway 3, e.g. the Virginia V. Parks made a commitment to work with Kalakala supporters to try to find a permanent home for the ferry on the central waterfront, once it is restored. Kalakala Foundation Director Art Skolnik held a press conference to express his joy over the prospect of a berth at the Washington Street Boat Dock. Parks will bring all the players together all property owners of the site and its surroundings: Port of Seattle; Washington State Department of Transportation; and City of Seattle's Parks, Transportation, and Fleets and Facilities Departments.

Ravenna Creek Decision: On Wednesday, October 23, Superintendent Ken Bounds announced his decision to proceed with a modified version of Alternative 1, the option that "daylights" the creek around the existing ballfield and leaves the baseball field where it is. The modification is to design the daylighted portion of the creek to accommodate a potential future expansion if Parks ends up relocating the ballfield. We sent a letter to the community and issued a news release to that effect. Ken met late last week with Kit O'Neill of Ravenna Creek Alliance to discuss the decision. She asked Parks to delay the project until the baseball field can be relocated, or to build the project in two phases and to commit to moving the baseball field in the next few years. She also wants King County funding for construction to be split so that funding for both phases would be available. Kit will likely make these suggestions to the Mayor's Office and to King County Parks.

Park Donation: A benefactor who wishes to remain anonymous will soon donate \$1.3 million to the Seattle Parks Foundation for the purchase and development of a park in the Central Area at 24th and Howell. He wants to name the new park after Homer Harris, a retired Seattle dermatologist and famed Garfield High School and college football player. Mr. Harris was the first African American football team captain at the University of Iowa. There is Pro Parks funding for an adjacent property. Parks' staff is working with the donor, the Foundation, and Mayor's Office staff on how to best announce the donation and naming, which will require City Council approval.

Advisory Councils and the 2003-04 Budget: Parks' staff held two meetings on the budget this week with representatives from all advisory councils. Discussion focused on the restructuring of KidsPlace and Key Project, and community center hours. Based on input from these meetings, the department will modify implementation of the KidsPlace after-school scholarship program by providing a full sliding-fee scale with up to 100% scholarships, eliminating the need for a 20% co-pay for full scholarship recipients. To help some of the less affluent Advisory Councils, the Associated Recreation Council created an Opportunity Fund of \$85,000. This should help reduce some of the impacts of the budget reduction. Several Advisory Council members objected to not being consulted more openly during the budget development process.

Repeal of City Law: Recently the law forbidding posting flyers on utility poles was repealed; however, Parks' opinion, and the Mayor's opinion, is that flyers may not be posted on utility poles in the City's parks.

People's Lodge: Parks' staff continue to work with People's Lodge staff and United Indians of All Tribes.

Sand Point Magnuson: Parks' staff removed 135 non-native poplar trees from the community garden site. Some people were upset and called the Superintendent's office; others supported the action. The removal is consistent with the Community Garden Plan poplars have invasive root systems and we will replace them with native trees, shrubs, and ground covers whose root systems won't interfere with the garden.

Free Symphony at Langston Hughes: Led by guest conductor Paul-Elliot Cobbs and featuring principal flutist Scott Goff, the orchestra performed a compelling program of baroque, classical, romantic, and modern music. Approximately 200 people, including many youth, heard one of the nation's greatest orchestras, at not charge.

Green Lake Toxins: Algae toxin levels in Green Lake remain high. The most recent samples showed an elevated reading of 100 micrograms per liter; the safe level is 1 microgram per liter. The lake has been closed to swimming and some boating activities for more than two months and there is no indication that the conditions are improving. This is clearly a long-term issue that needs to be studied and resolved.

Oral Requests and Communications from the Audience:

Bruce explained that the general public comment portion of the agenda is reserved for topics that have not had or are not scheduled for a public hearing. No one signed up to give testimony.

2003 Aquatics Facilities Plan Preliminary Draft Briefing:

Fritz Hedges, Parks Department Director of Policy Planning and Evaluation, and Kathy Whitman, Aquatics Program Manager, came before the Board to give a briefing on the 2003 Aquatics Facilities Plan Preliminary Draft Briefing. Board members also received a written copy of the draft, a portion of which is included in these minutes.

The purpose of the plan is to have the needs of Parks' facilities documented to allow improvements and upgrades to be considered when future funding opportunities arise. The plan includes elements for swimming pools, wading pools, beaches, shorelines, and small craft facilities.

The plan is based on the work of Parks' staff and a series of discussions with a group of interested citizens. These "aquatics advocates" have been involved as the initial direction of the plan was being developed. The swimming pool section includes concept plans prepared by an outside design consultant. The draft is still being reviewed by Parks Department staff. This briefing is to bring the plan before the Park Board for discussion before initiating widespread public review.

WRITTEN BRIEFING

Purpose

The purpose of this development plan is to set forth the Department's project for expanding aquatic recreation opportunities and improving the City's aquatic facilities and programs. Approval of the plan will allow the Department to seek capital funds for implementation. A related goal is to increase revenues from aquatics programs and reduce current subsidies.

Scope

The plan addresses facilities and programs for the following activities:

Indoor and Outdoor Swimming

- Indoor and outdoor swimming pools
- Swimming beaches and open water swimming

Non-motorized Boating

- Small craft centers
- Launching and landing shoreline access

Park Water Play Features

- Wading pools
- Spray pools

The plan addresses new facilities, improvements, and/or expansion to existing facilities, capital costs, and potential revenues/expenses.

Format

For each type of facility, the following information is presented:

- Existing facilities
- Current trends
- Program niche and goals
- Proposed development plan

Background

The Department first initiated lifeguarded swimming beaches on Lake Washington and Puget Sound in 1912. Colman Pool was opened at Lincoln Park in 1941. Evans Pool at Green Lake opened in 1954. The 1968 Forward Thrust Bond Issue made possible the development of seven indoor pools mostly during the 1970's. Mounger Pool in Magnolia opened in 1998.

The Small Craft Center at Green Lake opened in 1948. A forward Thrust project made possible the Mount Baker Rowing and Sailing Center at Stan Sayres Park in 1985. Launching and landing of non-motorized small craft have occurred from park shorelines since the beginning of the park system by designated locations for these activities date back only to 1998.

Wading pools date practically back to the beginning of Seattle's park system with the first such pool developed at Volunteer Park in 1910. During the past decade, due to a variety

of factors, wading pools began to be replaced as park water play features by water spray pools. Combined, there are presently 30 wading and water spray pools in the park system.

This brief history of Seattle's aquatic recreation facilities reveals that almost all of the swimming pools are over 25 years old. Likewise, the small craft centers were either built or expanded over 20 years ago. Most of the park waterplay feature inventory also is quite old. However, participation in aquatic activities remains very popular. Aquatic activities are a proven path to fitness and many other benefits.

Finally, Seattle is a city defined by water. The opportunities for water-based recreation activities are practically endless. Therefore, Seattle Parks and Recreation has an obligation to provide opportunities for many of these activities but, more importantly, strive to make our citizenry, particularly our youth, feel comfortable around water. In addition, the public should be respectful of the dangers inherent with water-based recreation and be able to try a variety of activities regardless of their economic situation.

Given the continuing popularity and value of aquatic recreation, the increasing age of facilities serving these activities, and increasing costs related to maintenance and operation, the Department has developed this proposed plan to address future facility needs related to aquatic recreation in Seattle.

Regional Considerations

This draft plan has been prepared in consultation with the King County aquatic staff. Due to significant uncertainties surrounding the County's future role and availability of funding for aquatics facilities and programs plus the changing future roles and funding associated with suburban jurisdictions, the plan does not fully address Seattle's future role in more regional aquatics facilities.

One issue is a proposal for a second 50-meter pool to serve Seattle and the more northern parts of King County plus the southern parts of Snohomish County. At this time, King County operates a 50-meter indoor facility in Federal Way, Seattle operates a seasonal outdoor 50-meter facility in Lincoln Park (southwest Seattle), and the University of Washington is contemplating a new 50-meter facility to replace its existing two-yard competitive indoor pool. Some of the Seattle citizens we have talked to who are involved with competitive and more recreational aquatics teams and activities believe that the region needs a second indoor 50-meter facility located within the city or in southern Snohomish County.

Another regional issue is the need, location, and funding for larger multipurpose indoor aquatics activity centers. Both the County's and Seattle's public pool inventory is largely Forward Thrust 1970's vintage. The pools are relatively compact and not sized or designed for much multi-use. This plan recommends updating and retrofitting existing Seattle Forward Thrust pools to a more multi-purpose configuration. However, in most cases, site limitations restrict how much expansion is possible. The newer multipurpose aquatic facilities require larger sites with associated parking and should be located for

broader access near freeways or arterial roadways. These types of sites are hard to find in Seattle.

In view of the need for regional coordination and cooperation, at an appropriate time we favor a regional conference on planning for aquatic facilities. This could be either a King County Conference or a TriCounty (King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties) conference. Attendees would hopefully be asked to address issues related to 50-meter pools, large multi-purpose aquatics facilities, and other areas of aquatics such as launching and landing sites for small craft where regional coordination and cooperation would be of benefit to the citizens of this area.

ORAL BRIEFING and QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Parks Department staff has been working on this plan with a self-appointed group known as "Aquatics Advocates." Fritz and Kathy briefly discussed the various topics outlined above. According to Fritz, King County may close 10 of its pools because of budget constraints. The City of Seattle has never closed pools due to budget cuts, however its indoor pools are heavily subsidized.

Outdoor swimming pools: the two outdoor swimming pools, Colman in West Seattle and Mounger Pool in Magnolia, are both heavily used. It has been suggested that a new outdoor pool be built in Rainier Valley.

Indoor swimming pools: all of the pools are at least a quarter century old. Some areas of the city have better distribution of pools than other areas and this inequity is addressed in the Aquatics Plan. Local high schools use the City's pools in the morning for practice and also hold their meets at the City's pools.

Kathy said that the focus has been on how to increase use of the existing pools and make them more profitable. The two outdoor pools have a high recovery rate Colman Pool at 85% and Mounger Pool at 95%. The design of most indoor pools is a six-lane lap pool, which doesn't always lend itself to other uses. Most of these pools have 80% of people in the shallow water which is only 40% of the pool area. In contrast, Mounger Pool has six lap lanes, and in addition has a shallow/warm water area with easy access stairs and a large slide. This popular pool has received three times the anticipated number of visitors.

Kathy posted three conceptual plans, as drawn by a consultant, for Queen Anne and Meadowbrook Pools and a proposed Rainier Valley pool. The anticipated cost would be \$3 million dollar, with additional costs for project management. Kathleen asked the timeline on the work. Fritz said that if the community center levy is renewed, some of this construction could be included in that levy. Discussion is going on with King County regarding an aquatics bonds. Kathleen also asked if any pools will be removed and Fritz answered no, that they would be retrofitted. The Board asked about why some pools recover a lower amount of their operating costs. Kathy answered that Evers Pool, at 23% recovery, is the lowest and that it has high usage from the local public schools and has the

most low-income fee programs. Colman Pool, because swim teams rent it every day from 6:00 am - noon, then it is available to the public, has an 85% recovery rate.

Kathleen said she is especially interested in Evans Pool. Kathy described the proposed re-design which would include a splash-down pool and walls being moved out to allow for the slide. The Board asked if additional parking sites would be added at Evans, to handle any increased parking needs and were told that no additional parking would be added.

Patricia said that water sports are the fastest growing activities for seniors. Fritz said that senior citizens enjoy warmer water more, while swim teams need cooler water.

The Board asked about the possibility of covering Mounger Pool (like the outdoor pool at Lake Chelan) and were told that the cost for the cover and to heat the site during cold weather would be prohibitive.

Swim beaches: No new ones are planned; mainly upgrades including a first-class turf, easy entry, good floats, showers, etc., are included in the plan. Because of the water quality problems at Greenlake Park, the swim area there may be encased by an artificial beach so the swim water would be separated from the general lake water.

Open water swimming: this is swimming that is done outside the lifeguarded beach area and swimmers do it at their own risk. Currently, no areas are designated as "open water" swimming. There is discussion that there could be designated areas for open water swimming. The Board asked if Greenlake would be an option for open water swimming, as it has no motorized boats. Fritz answered that even though there are no motorized boats on Greenlake, there is a heavy volume of non-motorized boating. Non-motorized boating has been very successful at Greenlake and Mount Baker. A small craft center is being developed at Sand Point/Magnuson Park and is being discussed for South Lake Union.

Wading pools: no more are to be built in the near future. Some of the traditional wading pools will be retained. Some have already been converted to water sprays, which are the probable future of water play. Wading pools must have an attendant present during hours of usage, water must be treated several times during the day, and the water must be drained and refilled daily.

The Board asked what is the most controversial portion of the plan? Fritz answered that it is finances. Most of the discussions to date have been with proponents of the aquatics plan. Kathy said that as the plan is discussed with the public, issues may come up, such as the impact on neighborhoods, parking, etc.

The Board asked if any funding is available. Fritz said this is still in discussion and the plan must be approved before revenues can be designated. Patricia said that only approved plans received funding from the Pro Parks Levy when asking for voters' approval. The Board asked if any new sites would be included for launching kayaks and

other small vessels. Kathy said that Madison Park might be adapted to accommodate a low-floating boat launch.

Patricia referred to an e-mail she received, and that had been forwarded to the Park Board, from a group of scuba divers asking for a designated park for scuba divers. Does this plan address this need? Kathy said that this plan doesn't. Sarah referred to the Edmonds dive site, and said because it is a marine protected area that marine life exists there that doesn't exist outside the dive site. Bruce noted that there was no new development in the West Seattle area. Kathy said that the plan was looking for good geographic balance and that southwest Seattle already has four wading pools which can be converted to water spray sites, while southeast Seattle has only one wading pool and would have new water play sites developed.

Fritz and Kathy will come back before the Board after the public process to give another briefing. The Board thanked Fritz and Kathy for the briefing.

Park Board Business:

- Kathleen recalled that during the October 10 Park Department budget briefing, an increase of field fees was mentioned. She asked if Parks made similar fee increases for adult classes? Patricia said the Department looked at the real cost of maintaining fields and adjusted fees accordingly. However, fees still don't pay for all of the maintenance costs. The Department raised swim fees and Aquarium fees, etc. Children's fees were kept lower. Kathleen voiced concern that people won't be able to afford to play on the fields. Patricia said City Council is closely monitoring the fees and the Department is looking at other City's fees and keeping the Department's fees close to those. Alix Ogden, Parks' strategic advisor, can give the Board a breakdown. Bruce said that Parks doesn't want to raise its fees as high as King County has; Patricia said that Parks also doesn't want to keep its fees so low that many people living outside Seattle begin using the City's facilities to save money.

Other Business:

Just prior to the Park Board meeting, Bruce attended the Park Naming Committee regarding naming the new community center in the International District. The Committee's recommendation is "International District/Chinatown Community Center."

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

APPROVED: _____ DATE _____
Bruce Bentley, Chair