

Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
September 9, 2004

Present: Kate Pflaumer, Chair
Angela Belbeck
Jack Collins
Terry Holme
Debbie Jackson
Sarah Neilson

Excused: Joanna Grist

Staff: Ken Bounds, Superintendent
B.J. Brooks, Deputy Superintendent
Sandy Brooks, Park Board Coordinator

Chair Kate Pflaumer called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. **Jack moved and Terry seconded that the minutes, as corrected, and the agenda, as presented, be approved. The vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.**

Superintendent's Report

Ken Bounds, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, reported on the following:

Olympic Athletes: Two Green Lake Small Craft Center paddlers, Jordan Malloch and Nate Johnson, were part of the U.S. canoe team at the Athens games. The young men faced intense competition in the canoe events and didn't make the finals. Also, a former youth rowing participant won a silver medal as part of the U.S. women's eight. Parks staff are working with the Mayor's staff to organize a celebration of local Olympic athletes.

Occidental Park Movie: On Tuesday, August 31, more than 125 people gathered at Occidental Park to enjoy "ET," the second outdoor movie shown as part of the summer programming effort. Lawn chairs were spread across the park and viewers munched on hot dogs and kettlecorn provided by vendors.

Canada Geese Update: The partnership to help manage the impacts of Canada geese has been successful at some locations. PAWS and Humane Society volunteers have directed their efforts primarily to clean up, geese relocation/harassment, and chemical treatment of grass. We have received positive public comments about the noticeable improvements at the beaches. Information and interviews for a documentary film are being prepared. A series of fall meetings are planned to evaluate and refine the program for 2005.

Library/Parks Summer Reading Program: The Library partnership for this summer's reading program was a great success. The program involved five sites, which were treated as special branches of the public library system.

Amy Yee Junior Classic: Over two weeks in August, the Tennis Center hosted the 25th annual Amy Yee Junior Classic, comprised of a Challenger and a Champ level tournament. Of the nearly 350 talented juniors, players came from as far away as New York, Utah, Illinois, and southern California to compete. These events support the Amy Yee Tennis Scholarship Fund, which annually provides more than \$3,500 in scholarships for junior lessons at the Tennis Center and supports junior tennis programs.

Dog Swim: Queen Anne Pool is hosting a "dog swim" as the final program before the preventative maintenance closure. The Health Department has provided operating guidelines and approved the plan. After the dogs swim, the pool will be drained and all filter materials replaced.

Summer Life Guarded Beaches Count: The Department's summer beach program came to an end and marked 33 years without a drowning at a life-guarded beach. Madison Beach recorded the highest attendance with 49,201, compared to 40,492 in 2003; this was the highest attendance at this beach since 1997. In spite of a three-day water quality closure, Matthews attendance was also higher than 2003, recording 36,884. East Green Lake attendance was up 66% with 24,172. Special thanks to the lifeguards who did outstanding work, providing safe and fun places for citizens to swim.

Lifeguard Training Team (LTT): A total of 29 teenagers completed the LTT program and obtained lifeguard certifications. This youth program, run from Mt. Baker, provides the skills and training to allow for employment at our pools and beaches. With more than half of the teens being people of color, it is an excellent example of a success for the Race and Social Justice effort.

YES! Program: A 13-year old YES! Volunteer, Sam Deal, raised \$187 for the YES! Program. Sam received a standing ovation at the end-of-the-season YES! potluck dinner for his efforts.

John C. Little Park Naming and Public Meeting: Parks and the family of John C. Little, Sr., will celebrate the naming of a new park after the former Park Board member and youth champion who passed away in 1999. The ceremony will be held in the park, near the intersection of 37th Avenue South and South Myrtle Street, on September 10, 5:30 p.m. After the ceremony, Parks staff will hold a community workshop to discuss proposed improvements to the park. The 2000 Pro Parks Levy provides \$549,045 for the project.

Ernst Park Dedication: Parks will join the Fremont Neighborhood Council and members of the Ernst family on Sunday, September 12, 2:00 p.m., to dedicate the completion of renovations at the new Ernst Park. Mr. Ernst was a former Park Board member, in the early 1900s. The park, located at 723 North 35th Street in Fremont, is the first public park in the downtown, commercial corridor of Fremont. The City purchased the property for a park in the 1990s; however, it sat vacant until funds from the 2000 Pro Parks Levy were allocated for the development of park amenities. The park features a central plaza, amphitheater, grand staircase, ADA improvements, new plantings, and irrigation.

Jefferson Community Center Dedication: Parks will dedicate its new gymnasium on Saturday, September 11. The dedication's keynote speaker will be Mayor Nickels. Entertainment is being provided by the Jefferson Breakdancers. Following the dedication, the Community Center is holding an open house for the community. The community center has been under construction since October with the building of the new gym.

Horiuchi Park Dedication: On Saturday, September 11, a small park on 1st Street, right off Broadway and just north of Yesler, will be dedicated. This new park is named after the late C. Paul Horiuchi, one of Seattle's best known and respected artists, for his invaluable cultural contributions to the life of the city.

Woodland Park Zoo Long Range Plan: The Zoo Long Range Plan was presented to City Council on Tuesday, September 7. Further Park Board discussion will take place tonight under "Old Business."

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

Kate explained that this portion of the agenda is reserved for topics that have not had, or are not scheduled for, a public hearing before the Board. Speakers are limited to three minutes each and will be timed. No one signed up to give testimony.

Discussion and Recommendation: Occidental Park

Parks Department project manager David Goldberg came before the Board at its September 9 meeting to give an update briefing on the Occidental Park project, immediately followed by a public hearing. Tonight the Board is being asked to discuss this project and make a recommendation to the Superintendent.

Summary

The Board asked David for additional information on several items at the September 9 briefing: (1) Terry requested a map showing what is currently in the park and David distributed copies to the Board; (2) The Board also asked if David is coordinating with the artist who installed the totems at Occidental Park. David has contacted the artist by e-mail but hasn't yet heard back from him. He will follow up with this request. (3) There were also questions about what happens, programmatically, during the rainy months. David spoke with Lori Chisholm, Parks Department program manager for Occidental. In the fall, an assessment will be made of how programs have gone this summer. Vending will continue through the winter holiday season. The idea of the ice skating rink has been put on hold for this year; however, major donors are being sought to fund the rink. The 1st Thursday art walk will continue through the winter. The sense is that activity will slow down during the winter, especially during construction, then increase in warm weather months, when most construction will stop.

Board Discussion/Recommendation

Jack referred to a letter from Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck, dated September 7 and received just prior to tonight's meeting, in which the Councilmember urges that no trees be removed from Occidental Park and asked if the Board should respond to this letter. Kate stated that this is an awkward situation, as the Board's role is to advise the Parks Department, Mayor, and City Council. In this instance, City Council is advising the Board.

Angela asked for information on the current management of the park, in terms of selection of vendors, etc. B.J. answered that the Pioneer Square Community Association is the managing group and has a signed memorandum of understanding between the Association's Board and Ken. PSCA manages the 1st Thursday art walk and other events. The vendors are overseen by Lori Chisholm, who verifies vendor licenses and confirms vendor spaces. Lori also collects the vendor fees, of which Parks Department receives 10%. Parks also has maintenance staff at the park. If this management system is successful, it will be enhanced. The events are going pretty well, so far.

Terry visited the area today. He noticed that in Pioneer Square (a nearby park) there is some new paving, old paving, and a transition area near the pergola and wondered about the intent. David answered that this project was started in the spring, put "on hold" during the tourist season, and work will soon resume. The intent is to finish the re-paving in a herringbone pattern. Terry asked if all the cobblestones are being removed and David answered that some will be kept and noted the areas. Terry asked for clarification on the extent of repaving planned for Occidental Park. David answered that nearly all walking surfaces will be re-paved, excluding the Occidental right-of way.

Terry asked if the trees at Occidental are all sycamores and is this species known to be disruptive to paving. David answered yes to both questions. Terry noted that any kind of paving system installed is liable to be disrupted from the existing tree roots. David answered that, in Pioneer Square, copper mesh is being placed over the roots of the trees, to encourage the roots to grow downwards, rather than upwards. One idea for the north area of Occidental Park is to remove all the paving and put down a porous surface that could be raked out, when cleaning/maintenance is needed. That wouldn't provide a great surface, but as long as the trees continue to grow, the surface will experience root disturbance. David stated that staff continue to work on the main activity area so it will be free of trees and, therefore, stable over the long term.

Terry found this to be an interesting study in contrast to last spring's Gas Works Park project, where the Board received 300-400 e-mails, many opposed to cutting a portion of the trees. In that instance, the Board recommended to leave the trees. With regard to removing trees at Occidental, with the notable exception of Councilmember Steinbrueck's letter, only a couple of letters have been received by the Board opposed to cutting the trees. Another Board member commented that the opposition at Gas Works was because the trees would be cut to enhance private views. Terry agreed with this and said that there was an organized community reaction with the Gas Works project and there doesn't seem to be organized opposition at Occidental.

Terry has received several citizen questions on whether pruning the trees would be as effective as removing them. A good, thorough evaluation of the two options would be very informative to the Board. David answered that during the initial planning sessions, the community recommendation was to remove trees. Both the City arborist and a private arborist surveyed the trees. The City arborist observed that the trees could be pruned but it wouldn't change the amount of light and shade in this area. The trees have high and sparse canopies — pruning would not increase the daylight in any significant amount.

Terry asked if the trees in the future market/stage area could remain until the stage is built. David pointed to some trees on the north area that could possibly remain. Five trees must be removed in order to build the stage. This would be done during phase 1. The market area is planned for Phase 2.

Ken's understanding is that during phase I, another goal is to remove the fencing barrier around the totems and garden. David answered that the totems *could* remain where they are, but the idea is to remove the fence around the totems, open up the area, move the totems, install a moss garden, and make the area more approachable. This is currently the darkest area of the park.

Jack asked if one of the Department's professional landscapers is involved in this project, as Councilmember Steinbrueck's letter recommends. David answered that Parks Department landscape architects have been reviewing the proposal all through the process. A landscape architect prepared both the previous and the current plans. PPS developed the proposed concept and the landscape architect prepared the plans. Ken believes that some of the concern is in regards to what the architectural details will look like. In Ken's letter of response to Councilmember Steinbrueck, he will give assurance that the project will be handled well, with good architectural sensitivity. Debbie understands there are 60 trees in the park, so to remove 1/3 means cutting 20 trees. David reviewed more of the history of the trees in the park. The community originally requested dramatic and ongoing pruning to let in more light — if that didn't work, then the trees would be removed in the center area. Parks staff members believe that removing the trees is more effective to reach the goal of increased daylight. Kate asked whether this has gone through the community process. David has gone back to the community several times — the community supports getting more daylight into the park, but disagrees on how to get it.

Terry asked about the life expectancy of the sycamores. David said these are long-lived trees. Some of those in Occidental Square are in stress, but overall the trees are well-suited for urban areas. They are the designated street trees for the Pioneer Square district. Old photos of Occidental Park show that when the 60 trees were planted, they appeared insignificant, but have now grown to be very crowded. If the trees were being planted today, another species might be chosen. Ken commented that, due to overcrowding, many trees at Freeway Park have been removed over the past five years. Jack recalled that trees for the 1962 World Fair were planted and as the Sycamores, or London Plane, trees matured, the roots heaved the sidewalks. Many of the trees had to be removed, which caused quite a controversy.

Terry asked if more street lighting is being added for night use. David answered no, the tree canopy is higher than the street lights — blocking out sunlight, but not the streetlight. The goal is to add more daytime lighting.

Sarah asked if the totems could be left where they are and the moss garden built around them. David answered that this is a possibility. The totems were commercially purchased and installed by a landscaper — they were not a tribal installation. He will work with the totem carver to determine which options work.

Sarah asked if larger stones will be used to replace the cobblestones. David answered that the replacement would probably be smaller stones installed in a herringbone pattern. Sandstone may be used in accent areas, but not in walking areas. Sarah asked why a bocce ball court was installed and David answered that this was an idea that came from the community.

Terry asked if seasonal lighting will be provided in the park. David answered that Parks will work with other City departments to provide enhanced lighting and install needed electrical outlets.

Sarah asked how the Mayor's office plans to deal with the homeless who use this park. Ken answered that a great deal of effort is going on, especially from the City's Human Services Department (HSD), in regards to feeding and shelter stations. HSD is working on day use and shower facilities. This is a big issue and a big concern.

Jack moved the Board endorse the proposed improvement, including programming and management. Debbie seconded.

Jack commented that the project has had thoughtful and comprehensive community input. Terry asked staff to consider removing the trees in stages, as various areas are built. David will work with the landscape designer on this idea.

Angela visited the park today and found it "unapproachable." She favors removal of trees in order for the public to walk up and enjoy totems. Sarah observed that the totems are moved in some drawings and not in others. David answered that in the short term the totems stay where they are and in the long term, may be moved. Terry asked the Department to keep the Board apprised as the plan develops and Ken agreed.

The vote was taken and was unanimous in favor. The Board thanked David.

Briefing: Lower Woodland Skatebowl

Susan Golub, Parks Department Strategic Advisor, came before the Board to give an update on the Department's proposal to build a skatebowl at Lower Woodland Park. The Board received a written and verbal briefing; both are included in these minutes. No action is requested of the Board at this time.

Written Briefing

REQUESTED BOARD ACTION

No formal Board action is requested at this time. We are providing the Board with an informational briefing fairly early in the development of this project.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Skateboarding is widely popular sport – and growing. Information compiled by SGMA, the association of the sports products industry, illustrates this:

- 55% growth over last 5 years;
- 2nd fastest growing sport;
- 1 in 10 people under 24 own a skateboard; and
- Girls make up approximately 22% of all skateboarders.

Responding to the popularity of the sport, in 2003 we adopted a Skateboard Park Policy. In this policy the City recognizes skateboarding as a healthy and popular recreational activity and a legitimate use to be accommodated in the parks system. The Policy outlines procedures for gathering public input, criteria for siting skate parks and guidelines for design, construction and maintenance.

Unfortunately it is a lot easier to approve a Skateboard Park Policy than it is to develop a skateboard park. Seattle is behind the curve when it comes to meeting the skateboarding demand. We have two parks: one is at the Seattle

Center, and in Ballard we have a temporary facility that includes a small bowl and a street skate area that we will be replacing with a slightly larger bowl.

To best understand the skateboard community interests and needs, a brief explanation of the types of skateboarding activity may be helpful:

- **Bowl skating** is skating in concrete swimming pool like bowls;
- **Street skating** is skating on and jumping over objects that replicate items from city streets: curbs, benches, railings;
- **Speed skating** is skating down streets or paved paths at high speeds.

Location and Site Suitability

The site for the Lower Woodland Skateboard Park exactly meets the locational criteria of our Skateboard Park Policy. In many ways it is the perfect site:

- Until recently it was the location of large piles of wood chips – there are no competing existing uses for the site;
- It is separated from residences by the Lower Woodland athletic fields – there shouldn't be any neighborhood noise issues;
- Two bus routes serve the park;
- It is part of a large park and can use existing parking, restrooms and drainage; and
- Because of the active nature of the park and the adjacent service road, there will be easy observation and supervision.

Project Design

In February this year the Department convened a Skateboard Park Advisory Committee to help plan and design parks. The 15 member Committee is made up of skateboarders, parents of skateboarders and skateboarding advocates. This Committee, over 2 design workshops led by staff landscape architect Kim Baldwin, developed the basic design for the park.

The total site area for the skatepark is 23,000 square feet. We will be developing 14,000 square feet with the first phase. Also in the first phase is the relocation of the existing service road. Skating features include a street skate area, an intermediate bowl, a beginner bowl, and a full pipe for more advanced skateboarders. There will also be a raised observation area that will serve both the skatepark and the BMX bike area. Phase 2 will include more street skate space and a swimming pool replica for the bowl skaters.

Project Support

We have received letters supporting this project from the Puget Sound Skatepark Association and from Parents for the Ballard Bowl. We are just beginning our neighborhood outreach efforts and will be forming a "Friends of" committee. A presentation was made before the Wallingford Community Council and the park received general support and pledges to join the volunteer efforts for the park.

Funding

An early stage estimate of the cost for phase one is \$1 million. This includes moving the service road, drainage and fencing for the whole site, the beginner and intermediate bowls and part of the street area. We have applied for \$300,000 in State funding from the Interagency Committee on Outdoor Recreation and have allocated \$330,000 from the Department's 2005-06 Capital Improvement Program for Lower Woodland. The remaining funding will come from additional grants and community fundraising.

Verbal Briefing/Board Discussion

Susan gave a Powerpoint presentation and discussed several types of skating: street skating, bowl skating, and speed skating. Currently, there are only two skatebowls in Seattle, one at Seattle Center and one in Ballard. In 2003, the Parks Department adopted a skatebowl policy which, for each proposed site, is to look at location, mitigation, and public input. The first new proposed site is at Lower Woodland Playfield. Susan displayed a large map of Woodland Park and pointed out the location, which is near the tennis courts, buses, restrooms, and parking lots. Kate asked if overhead lighting would be added and Susan answered that the plans do not yet include lighting. Susan stated that bmx bikers currently use the area at night, aided by lights from the nearby playing fields. There are access roads near the area which make it easy for Parks Department and Police Department vehicles to monitor the area. The Board asked about the accident rate and Susan answered that skaters report fewer accidents than most other sports.

A Skate Advisory Committee has worked to develop the basic design of the skate park. Kim Baldwin, landscape architect, is now working to refine the design. The park would be developed in two phases. Funding is expected from several sources, with the majority of funds going towards site preparation and the skatebowl.

Questions & Answers

Terry asked if the skate elements would be built as a permanent fixture and Susan answered yes. He asked about the likelihood of the State's Interagency Committee on Outdoor Recreation awarding funds to this project. Susan answered that it is possible, as the Committee has awarded funds to several skateparks in its last several awards. Sarah asked if it would be beneficial for the Board to write IAC a letter of support. Following a discussion, it was agreed that Susan would draft a letter and Kate will sign.

Debbie asked how many current skatebowl users there are and the projected number of users. Susan will send that information to the Board. The Board also asked Parks staff to compile the number of citizens who, during the Ballard Civic Center Park and Ballard skatebowl process, either testified or signed a petition.

Debbie asked about the construction timeline. Susan answered that the design would be completed in 2005, with construction in 2006. Terry stated that the design is of the highest importance. He asked how the plan got to its current state and Susan answered that it came from the skateboard design committee. However, a skate park cannot be built from the drawing. A future step will be to apply to the Neighborhood Matching Fund Small and Simple Fund for the dollars needed for a professional design. The Board briefly discussed that some skatebowl builders are held in higher regard by the skate community than others. Ken described the City's public works bid process, where projects go out for bid and the lowest bidder who meets the qualifications is awarded the project. High standards can be written into the bid, but the bid cannot specify which company can be selected to do the work. Susan stated that the standards in the bid package can be written so high that only the most qualified skatebowl builders would qualify.

Kate stated that she is very excited by these plans and thanked Susan for the briefing.

Park Board Business

None

New/Old Business

- Sarah announced that she has accepted a job offer in Chicago and will re-locate the end of September. The September 23 Park Board meeting will be her last. The Mayor's Boards and Commission coordinator has been asked to begin the search for a replacement.
- Kate, as the new Park Board chair, appointed Terry as Vice-chair.
- Magnolia Community Club is sponsoring a community meeting tonight regarding the Navy's privatization of housing at Discovery Park. Discovery Park project manager Kevin Stoops is at the meeting. The Board asked for an update briefing from Kevin in the near future.
- City Council is holding a public hearing on the Zoo's Long Range Plan on Wednesday, September 15. At the Park Board's August 26 meeting, Zoo staff gave a briefing on the proposal to locate the parking garage in the northwest corner of the Zoo. **Jack moved that the Board support the recommendation of Zoo staff that proposes the parking garage be relocated, as their plans illustrate, to the northwest corner of Zoo**

grounds. Angela seconded. Terry stated that he was hesitant to support the motion until a traffic study is completed in the adjoining neighborhood. Ken stated that all questions on the traffic flow may not be answered until the design is further along. **Terry asked to add a friendly amendment, which was accepted by Jack, “that the Zoo make a sincere effort to mitigate impacts to adjoining neighbors to that corner.” The vote was taken. Sarah abstained from voting as she missed the prior meeting. Kate, as chair, abstained from voting. The vote was 4-0 in favor. Motion carried.**

- Because the Zoo’s Long Range Plan has been being developed for several years and three of the Board members are new, the Board asked that Zoo staff give a full briefing on the Long Range Plan at the September 23 Park Board meeting.
- Board members are currently asked to fill membership on seven committees. The Board discussed the vacant committees and members volunteered to fill each of the vacancies.
- The Board discussed and selected a retreat date and discussed various topics to cover at the retreat.
- Angela asked if a winning bidder has been selected from the Request for Proposals for golf management. Ken stated that the winner has not yet been selected.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

APPROVED: _____ DATE _____

Kate Pflaumer, Chair