

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
February 26, 2015

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***Board of Park Commissioners***

Present:

Lydia Albert  
Antoinette Angulo  
Bob Edmiston  
Diana Kincaid  
Yazmin Mehdi, Vice Chair  
Tom Tierney, Chair  
Barbara Wright

Excused:

Brice Maryman

***Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff***

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent  
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

This meeting is held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Tierney calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Commissioner Tierney asks for approval of the Agenda. Commissioner Mehdi moves to approve the consent items and Commissioner Kincaid seconds. The Agenda is approved.

**Oral Requests and Communications from the Audience**

Garret Munger – Garret is a resident who lives close to Green Lake. He and his cockapoo take daily walks around Green Lake. He keeps track of the levels of cyanobacteria. The neighborhood is experiencing a lot of growth. The promenade is getting very crowded this is causing the paths to widen. One feature of the park is the ring of vegetation, which is diminishing. Parks staff are mowing and reducing rough vegetation around the lake. Seems like the park is becoming more park like and it is changing the nature of the park.

Acting Superintendent Williams responds to Garret's comments. Staff have been told not to cut down the riparian habitat and it states that in the vegetation management plan. Garret feels the plan is not being implemented or paid attention to and the plan needs to be updated. Acting Superintendent Williams gave Garret his card. Garret feels the Thornton Creek restoration is impressive.

Michael Oxman – There are 4 different city departments working on natural area policy guidelines and he wonders how they are coordinating their work. He asks about the open space not included in

the Green Seattle Partnership and wonders about the budget items for GSP versus contractors. Will living green infrastructure be included in the canopy count? He sent us a letter and staff will be replying.

## **Presentation and Discussion: Urban Forestry Commission**

*Panel Discussion with Tom Early and Steve Zemke, Urban Forestry Commission*

Commissioner Tierney introduces the Commissioners from the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC). Commissioner Tierney went to the UFC commission meeting; there is much to discuss between the two groups and the Park Board is eager to learn more about what the UFC has been doing and start a dialogue.

Mission Statement: UFC established to advise the Mayor and City Council concerning the establishment of policy and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle. There are 10 positions on the UFC.

### Recent Accomplishments:

The Commission recently finished the Urban Forest Stewardship Plan, which will help meet the goal of 30% canopy coverage. Right now, the city is at 23%. The Commission wrote letters of support for the Metropolitan Parks District and Green Seattle Partnership – they do so much to transition open space to rich and species diverse places. The Commission is working on an update to the street tree manual. The Commission uses the Race and Social Justice toolkit to identify and ensure equitable efforts.

### 2015 work plan:

Letters to City Council to fund Green Seattle Partnership. The Park Board and the UFC should work together on funding issues on parks and urban forestry issues. Re-districting is going to change a lot and there will be many new people on the City Council.

Treetopping has come to the UFC – Concerns about how it affects the urban forest, Mark Mead has spoken to the UFC about this. Work with Park Board to understand the current status.

Mayor Nickels put in a 2 for 1 tree replacement policy. The UFC wrote a letter on September 5 to Mayor Murray and Councilmember Bagshaw, which states that they are obliged to replace trees with similar types and sizes of trees. Conifers help year round to reduce storm water runoff. They suggest planting smaller diameter trees instead of larger conifers that may have more issues. The UFC would like the Park Board to consider writing a letter of support. Parks should put in more street trees with labels so that people wanting to plant trees would get the opportunity to “shop”.

Revised natural areas and greenbelts supplemental guidelines; UFC would like to be involved in the process. Steve is a wildlife biologist and his issue is habitat. The city has 1500 acres of greenbelts and natural areas; this does not include beachfront. There is confusion in terminology. ½ of this is open space instead of greenspace. There needs to be clarification for the public in terms of what is happening and what are the outcomes Parks seeks.

UFC wrote a letter to the Park Board regarding Cheasty Mountain Bike pilot project and have a number of concerns. The work being done is commendable and a lot of work has been done. Steve

feels there are not a lot of areas that are large natural areas within the city. There are a limited number of areas that could be opened up to other uses. There is value in the city for having natural areas for wildlife habitat; dividing an area decreases the diversity and the number of species. It is hard to determine the impact – because you are doing 2 things at the same time. The restoration and removal of invasives will increase diversity and the bike path will reduce it. Steve wonders how many other areas natural areas will be used for active recreation? These few areas in the city provide special habitat. Are there other places mountain bikes could go? There is a value in not having intensive use in terms of environmental education, quiet areas.

## Discussion

Commissioner Mehdi says it seems natural that there should be collaboration between the two commissions. There is a study that shows access to natural areas improves health; the Park Board takes this to heart. In order to feel a true impact they need to be among the trees. Has the UFC looked at the study? How does one give access that respects the area but helps people get the health benefit? Tom Early says there is a push in conservation biology that is identifying the role of humans in natural spaces. There is an us/them dialog when it comes to greenspaces/natural areas. How do we keep the ecosystem operational but still allow people to be in those spaces? Tom says he has not seen the formula. This is the struggle for the future policy update. Steve adds there are a lot more natural areas in parks that are not classified as natural areas.

Commissioner Tierney says there will be lots of engagement; focusing on asking people what to do in changing urban area that allow people to make use of natural areas while preserving those areas. Commissioner Tierney says he hopes the UFC will be engaged in that conversation.

Commissioner Wright thanks them for all the work they are doing. Many plans and regulations that impact the tree canopy. It is critical to health to have a strong connection to green/natural areas. She feels it is important to coordinate efforts for development regulations in Seattle. Are there the correct ordinances to put green material out – plant and maintain? Is there a map out of all the things that influence our tree canopy? Parks is clearly an important area for natural areas and tree canopies but there are so many other areas.

Steve says that many people are concerned about the development of a more comprehensive tree ordinance that would deal with private development. UFC tries to protect trees in development. There are no regulations that protect trees during development. DPD has not made tree saving a priority. He feels they need to protect larger trees in the city – not just in parks.

Tom adds UFC is keen on private property land code in order to retain trees. Right of way manual suggestions that target successful tree planting ensuring the roots have space to expand and give them room to grow. Street trees do not survive long and are mostly deciduous trees.

Acting Superintendent Williams thanks them for coming. Parks views that 2 for 1 trees is considered a baseline/minimum. Parks frequently exceeds that replacement policy. Parks is hungry for science that acknowledges greenbelts serve an ecological function in the city but recognizing that they are not all created equal in the city. He wonders if there is a ranking or adjustment factor. To compare Northacres to other greenbelts that are not functioning at the same level does not make sense. There needs to be some assessment that gives ranking order for future restoration and allow Parks staff to

deal with them on an individual basis. Steve says the restoration work Parks has performed is commendable; it is a successional thing. Schmitz and Seward are two old growth areas. He suggests looking at the ecological processes not as static, but changing. Areas vary in terms of what they will provide in benefit and this depends on location. He would like to see trees planted in industrial areas where there are pathways for birds and other organisms. This is not a simple task. Private property needs to plant native trees so that species can use these as wildlife corridors. Tom Early suggests talking with the forestry service because they are studying how to create best practices for urban forests.

Commissioner Maryman the company he works for has some contracts where they are doing work with urban forest monitoring, and an OSE climate resilience plan; although he is not directly working on either of these projects. He states the Park Board has been discussing connections between parks, not just for people but as natural corridors and finding a way to marry that to safe routes to parks. Also, Seattle Parks and Recreation has been very accommodating towards tree topping for views. Commissioner Maryman asks the UFC if they are planning on engaging the treetopping conversation more? Steve replies, tree topping has been difficult and was himself cautioned "don't try to catch a falling knife." Steve does not think the tree topping is acceptable.

Commissioner Angulo sees impressive work in the annual report. She wonders who is at the forefront of this kind of work provide guidance. Seattle Urban Nature, Steve says, writes about the connection between human and the natural environment. Author of "Last Child in the Woods" has written another book that discusses the need to get people into the woods. There is a connection between humans and the natural environment. The challenge for both Parks and UFC is getting people into the woods. It is important to look beyond ourselves and future generations to figure it out. Restoration ecology targets this effort – understanding the manmade effort to rehabilitate forests, ecosystems, and natural areas. Steve suggests looking at the UW forestry website and opening dialogue with them about forests. Commissioner Tierney suggests having joint information session with a University of Washington Forestry professional.

Commissioner Tierney says the Park Board wants to ensure to keep the dialogue going with the UFC. Open lines of communication between the two groups on issues that are related to urban forestry because so much goes on in the city and keeping track is difficult.

### **Natural Areas and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines public involvement process**

*Susanne Rockwell, Seattle Parks and Recreation*

Policy context – The City has a 1993 greenspaces policy that covers natural areas and greenbelts; outlines priority areas for acquisition. The city policy will remain the same. The guidelines would be supplemental use guidelines and fall under the purview of Parks Code. Thirteen parks have their own supplemental use guidelines – most of these fall under regional parks category.

The intent is to exceed forest habitat and restoration goals; Parks is sticking to the Legacy Plan goals of access and opportunity. how do we stick with our vision, mission and values and stick with these guidelines.

## Outreach – 5-pronged approach

- mindmixer community blog and survey – some have struggled with the format. 4% of people that interacted had technical difficulties; 793 visitors, 267 interactions – community members posting comments, pictures, responding to questions; a variety of ways people can provide input. 34 different zip codes in the city and a mix of ages. Demographics – 25-34 age range were the first to respond; 24% came between 35-64 and 17% 65 and over. Mindmixer will be open until April 8. Parks can monitor it and there's tracking questions of age, gender and zip code.
- In reach events with historically underrepresented communities
- Invitational focus groups – extended invites to 80 different organizations; these are not public meetings but working groups. Interactive hands-on working meeting.
- April 4th Mini-Summit – 5-7 panelists to speak on habitat health; convention style open house held at Seattle Center Armory Loft.
- Board of Park Commissioners Public Hearing

Commissioner Angulo asked why ethnicity wasn't included? Susanne says they went with a very basic demographic question. Susanne adds they used google analytics that will tell staff if people translated it. Parks staff can change the Mindmixer questions and tweak things as they move along.

Susanne agrees that terminology has been confusing and there have been different efforts out there that have mixed terms. The map of the greenspaces is on the website and can be found here: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/naturalareagreenbeltuse/default.htm>

Commissioner Mehdi asks if an overlay could be put on that shows natural areas that do not belong to parks and could we look at that? She thinks there is value in looking at that.

Commissioner Maryman asks for clarification between the policy and supplemental use guideline. Susanne says the resolution governs everything in the City of Seattle. This looks at urban trails, defined open space and greenspaces. This was in response to the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Tierney says a Resolution is a statement of policy and has full force of the City Council behind it. It is not the same as an Ordinance, which is city law. Acting Superintendent Williams adds policies can be restrictive and SPR want the flexibility in the future - to help us make choices in the future. Susanne adds Parks has used guidelines in many ways – to establish use management guidelines and minimize impact.

Acreage changes based on re-classification of certain parks. GSP has not changed how they prioritize their work. There is still 895 acres of forested land; the acreage has not gone anywhere but it's in different buckets.

Susanne will be coming back to the Park Board for public hearing; there will be a robust conversation. Susanne says she will give the Board data from Mindmixer. She will review the data, draft the Supplemental Use Guidelines and bring them back to the Board. Commissioner Maryman emphasizes that there are greenspaces within parks that are amazing natural areas that need to be conserved and protected. Acting Superintendent Williams went and briefed the Mayor's Office on this topic and he agreed the Guidelines should be flexible and not restrictive. There will be a huge increase in the city's population and Parks has an idea of how they would like to

shape the guidelines. We'll be upfront with the public – Parks want to preserve the best areas for natural areas and use some for public use. They will discuss this with the public what the procedure should be to make decisions about whether or not to use a natural area. Susanne committed to Council that it would be a 2-page document, not a 20-page document.

Commissioner Mehdi is leaving the Park Board in April.

### **Discussion: Right of Way Manual Update**

Commissioner Edmiston introduces himself – He is the Board of Park Commissioners designee as part of the review process for the Right of Way (ROW) manual. This manual shapes how they are designed and how streets are used. It is updated infrequently. Commissioner Edmiston asks the Commissioners how they would like to impact this document in ways that will allow us build the city we want?

Opportunities in between park properties – successful and better choices for tree plantings to create pathways for pollinators and migration  
ROW has ability to create park like amenities to serve functions of parks that are not near parks.  
Access to and through parks is an opportunity to improve through these rule sets.

March 25 is the next ROW update meeting. The draft of the content for review will be available in March – all of our feedback will be from the 10-year old document.

David graves – SDOT Advisory Committee – there's a staff interdisciplinary team to review the Right of Way Manual. No one has seen anything yet. 2005 was the last iteration – before bike, pedestrian and freight master plans. The current version will look to other major cities to work on complete streets; looking at it from property line to property line. Street classifications are meaningful and usable.

There is no street type for Boulevards, but SDOT is working with Parks on their maintenance. Do the parks welcome bikes and pedestrians, including infrastructure and wayfinding signage for accessing other parks, schools, and community amenities. How do we make parks welcoming to bikes and pedestrians?

SDOT is starting to produce a multi-use trail plan – 40 miles of trails and they are reviewing and doing assessments on that. Susan McLaughlin is willing to come and walk the through it with the Park Board. David feels that would be a great discussion to have with her. Commissioner Edmiston thinks it would be great to have her come to the March 12 meeting and provide an update on the contents of the draft ROW Manual.

Acting Superintendent Williams says Parks staff have been discussing how to revive Green Streets, which are planting strips that are overflowing with plants. Focus on downtown parks – because there are many opportunities; the traffic circles are ugly, overgrown, and not maintained. What is programmatic impact of Green Streets?

David says SDOT is trying to get away from that term because every street should be a Green Street. SDOT is encouraging parklets and streeteries.

Commissioner Mehdi asks if there are traffic circles and parklet opportunities for putting in trees?

David responds that yes, but it depends on what is underneath.

Commissioner Wright states Commissioner Edmiston started out with some good value statements – want to make sure we can reach goals with what the guidelines are. What in the manual do we need to change so that we have opportunities to plant green everywhere? Commissioner Wright feels the Board needs more time to provide feedback. David agrees and thinks having SDOT should come and brief the Board about the ROW Manual.

Steve, from the UFC, adds that Green Streets does not mean trees it means bikes and pedestrians.

David says the boulevards are maintained by both SDOT and Parks. This has created some conflicting goals. Parks vision is for these grand Olmsted boulevards with big trees – in the past, SDOT has not shared in the vision. Commissioner Wright says the work SDOT is doing is incredible. Parks has an opportunity to ensure there are trees and opportunities for activities.

Commissioner Edmiston adds that Vancouver is a vegetation extravaganza; there are trees everywhere!

Commissioner Edmiston says we should write a document and present it at March 25 review meeting. David Graves says we have the opportunity to write to the SDOT Director to express values; speak at higher level about the Right of Way Improvement Manual (ROWIM).

Commissioner Wright mentions that at the Partnership committee meeting – how do we develop coalition with partners to have good healthy public spaces- not every space that provides respite from the urban environment has to be parks – the city needs to be on the same page. The specific language in the ROWIM needs to capture that. The city is missing a map that shows what public space look like. There is a huge urgency to look at influx of people that it's time to get it right. The manuals have rules and every decision made should take us to these goals.

Commissioner Mehdi says it would be helpful to have Parks and/or the Forestry Commission to provide advice on the types of trees for these different places. Commissioner Kincaid would say it is important to think about what allows for safety. Commissioner Albert adds public health and safety perspective – brief discussion about lighting – having pathways and walkways that allow people to safe; designing parks for good visibility and sightlines.

Commissioner Tierney says the Executive Committee will figure out how to fit this into the future agenda.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Park District Oversight Committee: Mayor/City Council sent letters to those people who wanted to be part of the Citizen's Advisory Committee. This committee is comprised of 4 members from the Park Board; 4 from other Boards/Commissioners; and 1 from each Council District. Commissioner Maryman, Commissioner Wright, Commissioner Tierney and Commissioner Edmiston are the Park Board members. Commissioner Tierney will be chair. Acting Superintendent Williams reviews the list of people who will be on the District Oversight Committee, which can be found [here](#).

He anticipates 4-5 meetings this year. The first meeting will be mid to late May.

Cheasty PAT concluded their last meeting on February 19. The staff work was incredible; Paula, Doug and the facilitator did a great job. . Over five meetings, the PAT contributed ideas for the pilot project design criteria and the evaluation criteria that will be used to monitor the pilot project. In addition, they reviewed environmental and geotechnical analyses associated with the Cheasty Greenspace, and commented on two iterations of the trail's schematic design. All of our meetings included public comment from audience members in attendance, and we have benefited from the perspectives provided through that forum.

On Feb. 19 all 12 members of the PAT answered three questions: 1) Do you support the current physical layout of the pilot project trail? 2) Do you support the evaluation criteria as they have currently been developed? and 3) Do you support the next phase of the pilot project, which would entail the assignment of a project manager from Parks, as well as additional oversight and involvement from Parks planning staff. Eight PAT members indicated that they support the current physical design of the trail, seven of the members approved the draft evaluation criteria, and eight members indicated that the department should move forward with the pilot project. Four members do not support the current physical design of the trail, three members do not support the evaluation criteria as currently written and two, who oppose the project overall, agreed that the evaluation criteria are important and they are on the right track. Two members were opposed to a "next phase" of the pilot project, and two members, although opposed to the project in general, felt that the pilot should certainly have stronger oversight and involvement from the Parks Department.

The Board of Park Commissioners will receive a briefing on the project and hold a public hearing at its meeting on April 9. Acting Superintendent Williams recommends long-term oversight with Park Board involvement.

Moorages – The purpose of the project advisory teams (PATs) is to bring people with different points of view together and move the ball down the goal line using clear guidelines and directions. PATs were used for both the Leschi and Lakewood Marinas. The PATs gave policy direction for moving forward:

- Provide safe, accessible and affordable moorage for Seattle residents;
- Protect shoreline habitat;
- Improve public access and community benefit without compromising security;
- Create quality facilities that are competitive in the marketplace;
- Enhance the sailing heritage at Leschi;
- Make moorages self-sustaining for ongoing capital upkeep and maintenance; and
- Ensure concessionaire quality with performance measures and regular auditing of the new concessionaire contract.

Parks has determined that these goals can best be achieved by a private partner with the expertise and capital to make the marinas economically sustainable. Parks will issue a new RFP for a concessionaire to take over operations of the marinas, make the necessary capital improvements and perform ongoing major maintenance. Given Parks' projection that existing moorage revenues would not be enough to cover capital and operating expenses, the City will use the \$4 million already allotted in the CIP for marina upgrades in conjunction with a concessionaire to offset the investment required to rejuvenate the marinas.



The RFP will require respondents to meet the policy goals above. They will also be required to develop separate capital improvement plans for each moorage facility to allow for investments to be made independently or in separate phases. Because of the capital requirements, Parks expects the concessionaire agreement to be long-term, and will require any future concessionaire to meet ongoing quality and performance measures.

When you look at the range of Seattle Parks and Recreation property, debt financing is not the best use for this property. Acting Superintendent Williams will talk with the Executive Committee about possible briefing/discussion for a future agenda item.

130th street end - Parks has received a number of complaints about the NE 130th Street End. This is a piece of property that has been utilized for public access along Lake Washington since the 1920's. Recently, the adjacent owners were awarded the property through a complicated claim in court. We are working with the Mayor's Office to explore the options for keeping this property in public ownership.

New Superintendent will be in town next week. On Sunday morning – Japanese garden opening ceremony. There will be a Shinto priest doing a blessing. He will meet with Ian Gordon from Laborers Local 1239. He'll meet with Bob Davidson from the Seattle Aquarium. Jesús plans to go to every community center, meet with Seattle Parks Foundation, the RSJI change team; meet and greet with Office of Policy and Innovation, City Budget Office, the Deputy Mayor, and Deborah Jensen at Woodland Park Zoo. Jesús is immersing himself in the Greenbelts and Natural Areas Supplemental Use Guidelines discussion. He returns March 29-April 3.

Smoking ban – Parks staff met with the Mayor's Office and was given a tentative green light to go forward with the smoking ban. The schedule would be a May 14 public hearing. Parks is again using the mindmixer tool to gauge community readiness. Public comment would go from April 9-May 21. May 28 Board of Park Commissioners meeting would be a discussion and possible recommendation. June 1<sup>st</sup> Acting Superintendent Williams would give his ruling and the City Clerk waits 30 days to file an administrative rule.

Associated Recreation Council board meeting – ARC had their 40th anniversary celebration – Dave Towne, who was Superintendent in 1974 told the story of how ARC was started with civic activism. The first budget was \$1500 dollars. They have done incredible things over the past 40 years! They have assisted SPR with many hard budget years; keeping the doors open at many community centers and paying for necessary staff. The partnership is bigger than anyone ever expected. Commissioner Angulo was given an award for her role on the ARC board for providing great board development skills. She brought good ideas in a way that makes people feel open to those ideas.

John C. Little Award – Many people came here for Jean Lee's award; including the kids from her mock trial team. Jefferson is the only community center that competes in mock trial and Jean Lee's team made it to the finals.

NRPA magazine – back in June 2014 they had articles about bike trails in urban parks in greenbelts and natural areas and it contained best practice information.

**Old/New Business**

None.

**Commissioner Wright moves the meeting adjourn; Commissioner Mehdi seconds the motion and the motion carries. The meeting adjourns at 8:46 pm.**

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
Tom Tierney, Chair  
Board of Park Commissioners