



# Minutes|Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Zoom

Thursday, September 26, 2024

6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

## Attendance

Present: Haile-Leul, Brockhaus (Co-chair), Mays, Lerer, Chisholm Clare, Diamond, Flinn, Nakamura

Absent: Umagat (Co-chair), Baum, Seyfried, Meng

SPR Staff and Presenters: Williams, Hellier, Daley, Mauto, Sheffer, Plympton, Milliman, Hoff, Burtzos

## Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

Brockhaus calls the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and provides logistical instructions for in-person and remote attendees.

Commissioners and SPR staff introduce themselves.

Brockhaus reads the land acknowledgement.

Brockhaus introduces the consent agenda: 8/8/24 BPRC Meeting Minutes and 9/26/24 BPRC Meeting Agenda. Mays moves to adopt both items; Haile-Leul seconds the motion. Brockhaus calls for a vote. The vote is unanimous in favor of passage.

***Adopted: 8/8/24 BPRC Meeting Minutes***

***Adopted: 9/26/24 BPRC Meeting Agenda***

## Public Comment

Comment is offered on the following topics:

- Gratitude to SPR staff for community and inclusion during difficult times;
- Appreciation for youth recreation programming;
- Advocacy for retaining grass field at Fairmount Playground in West Seattle;
- Concerns about park use and parking at Denny Blaine Park;
- Concerns about maintenance and conditions of boat ramps;
- Concerns about noise from pickleball court at Gilman Playfield;
- Advocacy for increased collaboration with and support from SPR at Volunteer Park dahlia garden.

Williams responds briefly to the comments offered by members of the public.

## Superintendent's Report

Christopher Williams, Senior Deputy Superintendent of Parks and Recreation and Chief of Staff, delivers the report.

### Department Update

**Mayor's Proposed Budget:** Earlier this week, Mayor Bruce Harrell released his 2025-2026 Proposed Budget. The Mayor's budget continues to address the urgent needs of our communities focusing on strengthening public safety, creating housing affordability, and supporting healthy, vibrant, and thriving communities. The proposed budget also responded to a \$251 million general fund deficit with a balanced budget. The deficit means difficult choices that were not required in recent past budget cycles including for Seattle Parks and Recreation.

For SPR, the proposed budget maintains community center hours and facility maintenance, funding for a new project to revitalize Westlake Park, and expanding investments in youth mental health. Key changes include:

- Expanded services provided by the City's Unified Care Team (UCT) from 5 to 7 days a week, adding 6 staff to SPR
- Transfer of graffiti abatement resources from Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) to SPR
- \$500K to support the design, creation and implementation of a "Youth Connector" program
- \$600K to support programming and partnerships at Red Barn Ranch to invest in youth mental health
- \$1.3M in 2025 and \$2.2M in 2026 to support revitalization of Westlake Plaza as part of the Mayor's Downtown Activation Plan
- \$195K to SPR's Pre-Electrification Program to support efforts to prepare community centers for decarbonization
- Fee increases for community center room rentals, aquatics programs, event rental facilities, tennis programs and court rentals, athletic fields, and other permits
- Reduction of supplemental summer season maintenance and support staff and reduces staffing in department administration and support
- Scaling back of park event programming and park concierge and busker hours
- Reductions for the Park CommUNITY Fund, as well as Get Moving and Recreation for All grants.
- Ending operation of Carkeek and Discovery Park Visitor Centers and associated programming beginning January 2026. During 2025, SPR will explore alternative service delivery models.

For more information, read the Mayor's press release at [seattle.gov/mayor](https://seattle.gov/mayor)

**Seattle Parks Foundation Gala:** The Seattle Parks Foundation celebrated its 25th anniversary last Friday at MOHAI and raised more than \$350,000 for the Foundation! The guest list was like a who's who of Seattle Parks leaders, staff and supporters.

**Athletic Field Summit on Oct. 9:** To be held at Hangar 30 in Magnuson Park. A variety of field user groups, community organizations, parks and recreation staff will participate.

**Bill Wright Day on Oct. 19:** Jefferson Park Golf Course community members initiated a request to rename the golf course in honor of Bill Wright and we did so over the summer. Mr. Wright was a Franklin High School and Western Washington University graduate who became the first Black competitor to win a U.S. Golf Association championship. He learned the game at Jefferson Park golf course and made history in 1959 when he won the U.S. Amateur Public Links championship in Denver. We will be holding a ceremony to celebrate the renaming of the golf course on Saturday, Oct. 19.

**Hoa Mai Park Public Safety:** Recently opened Hoa Mai Park in Seattle's Little Saigon neighborhood has experienced some issues with public safety. We are working hard with our City and community partners to resolve these issues. SPR crews continue to clean and maintain the park daily. Park Rangers patrol the park 3-4 times during the week. The Parks Activation team has paused with buskers, however, we will continue to meet with the Friends of Little Saigon so that future programs can be established with a safety plan. SPR and SPD communicate regularly. SPD's West Precinct has increased patrol services of the park (to include after park hours).

**New Senior Advisor:** We're excited to announce the newest staff member joining the Superintendent's Office, Hoda Azadi-Grey (she/her). Hoda will serve as AP's Senior Advisor. She will serve as SPR's primary Tribal Relations Liaison, Chief Environmental Initiatives Officer and assisting in the growth of SPR's public private partnership portfolio. Hoda holds a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in political science and global development. Prior to joining our Department, she was the Executive Director of National Parks England (NPE), which serves at the representative organization for England's 10 National Parks; she also served as the Head of Policy for NPE, was a Policy Advisor for Parks Canada Agency, and a Strategic Policy Analyst for the Dept. of the Environment (Canada).

### **Parks & Recreational Services: Parks & Environment**

A few highlights from our hard-working Parks & Environment Division.

**Parks Urban Forestry Tree Crew:** Using sonic tomography technology, our tree crew recently conducted a health assessment of a cluster of trees in Green Lake Park that were potentially failing. They attached equipment to the trees that uses sound waves to detect various structural conditions such as solid, decayed or cracked wood. After this assessment the team then pruned the trees to mitigate the failure risk.

**Freeway Park:** North Division Crews (NW, NE, CW and Downtown) recently organized a team project at Freeway Park. This is a challenging site for staff due to no parking and limited access. The crews focused on trash removal and spreading 30 yards of mulch to suppress weeds and beautify the park.

### **Parks & Recreational Services: Recreation**

From our always busy Recreation Division!

**Drop-In Pickleball:** A shout-out to John Hasslinger, Recreation Specialist for our Southwest Lifelong Recreation program. John has been running drop-in Outdoor Pickleball in many Southwest Seattle locations, and has also extended this program into Southeast. Through volunteers called Outdoor Pickleball Ambassadors the players themselves oversee the drop-in play, John is building an inclusive

and welcoming program that supports the division and communities he works in. The Ambassadors welcome newcomers to the sport, help with the direction of play so all can have a great time, and give those who are new the support they need to get started in the game. This is a highly successful model!

**Specialized Programs at Camp Long:** A few weeks ago, AP came for a visit and tour of Camp Long and to see summer Specialized Programs in action including climbing at Schurman Rock and a visit to the overnight camp.

**Teen Summer Musical:** This summer's Teen Summer Musical - "Snow Whyte & The Seven - each one teach one" at Benaroya Hall – was a huge success. This soulful adaptation of the classic was featured in 5 performances attended by more than 5,000 people. The talented cast of 70 included 16 youth with disabilities. The program was supported with Seattle Parks District funding and a strong partnership with the Associated Recreation Council and Acts On Stage (Black founded and led).

### **Parks & Recreational Services: Facilities**

**Solar Power!** Seattle is a national leader in clean energy thanks to our ample hydropower and local investments in solar and wind power. Pictured is one of three picnic shelters at Jefferson Park equipped with solar panels. Other examples of solar power in our parks:

- At the "Brig" building in Magnuson Park, SPR partnered with the Office of Sustainability and the Environment and Seattle City Light to install an extensive photovoltaic system on the roof that produces enough energy to power three houses
- At Carkeek Environmental Learning Center, 36 modules produce enough electricity to power half of that facility's needs
- At Mounser Pool, SPR has installed solar tubing to provide solar water heating, seeking to tackle one of our greatest energy draws
- At Miller CC, SPR has partnered with City Light to install a solar microgrid on the roof that is attached to a massive battery bank

In 2024 we are conducting a solar feasibility study for six buildings that are slated for renovations. Possible locations include Green Lake Small Craft Center, Densmore Headquarters, Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center, Central West District Headquarters, Ravenna-Eckstein Community Center, and the Pratt Fine Arts Center.

### **Planning & Capital Development**

As usual there's a lot happening with the planning, design and construction of our capital projects.

**Overlook Walk opens:** The long-awaited Overlook Walk on Seattle's Waterfront will open to the public on Friday, October 4! Located where the Alaskan Way Viaduct once stood, this iconic elevated park will provide a new, direct, pedestrian connection between Pike Place Market, downtown and the entire 20-acre Waterfront Park.

**Genesee Playfield Turf Replacement:** We have begun a project to replace the synthetic turf on two fields at Genesee Playfield. Playfield 2 (upper) will be completed in spring 2025. Playfield 1 (lower) will be completed in fall 2025.

**Lake Washington Blvd. improvements:** After inclusive outreach with the community, SPR is installing improvements to Lake Washington Boulevard from Mount Baker Beach to Seward Park in collaboration with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). The project will improve conditions for all street users through intersection safety enhancements and traffic calming measures (“speed cushions” and marked crosswalks) to deter speeding. Construction is starting this month. The project will be completed by summer 2025.

**Wallingford Playfield proposal:** 100-120 community attended the meeting on Thursday evening. Seattle Public Schools (SPS) presented its proposal to build an artificial turf field at Wallingford Playfield and rebuild the track around Lower Woodland #7. SPS handed out question/comment cards to the audience and took some questions/comments from the audience. There was support for the track and some support for artificial turf at Wallingford Playfield. However, more people spoke out against the proposal and in favor of keeping the playfield as a resource for the whole community supporting a variety of events.

**Burke Gilman Trail:** Burke-Gilman Trail improvements began this week in northeast Seattle. We anticipate this work to be completed within the week.

**Bid Openings:** PCD had three bid openings on earlier this month with good results including multiple bidders and costs within budget. The three projects are Maple Wood Playfield, Madrona Play Area renovation, Mickey Merriam Field #8 renovation. Construction is anticipated to start on these projects in early November.

## **Upcoming Events**

**Saturday, Sept. 28:** Join us for the First World Flight Celebration Event on Saturday, Sept. 28 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at NOAA/Magnuson Park. Seattle will mark 100 years since the first around the world flight was completed at Sand Point. The event includes vintage flyovers, music, food trucks, performances, exhibits, and more!

**Oct. 5:** Piper’s Orchard is bringing back the annual “Festival of Fruit” on Saturday, Oct. 5, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Piper’s Orchard in Carkeek Park! Come celebrate the harvest with cider pressing, apple sampling, an Apple Identification Expert, a mason bee demonstration, live dance performance, cake walk (“Pie Walk!”), historic information, and more.

**Oct. 26 – Nov. 2:** We’re excited to announce that our 4th annual Seattle Forest Week is just around the corner. This fun-filled, weeklong celebration will be packed with festivities that encourage folks to get outside, get involved, and connect with Seattle’s urban forests. Choose your favorite activity: restoration, arts & crafts, tree giveaways, interactive tours, and more.

**Late October:** Check our website, [seattle.gov/parks](https://seattle.gov/parks) for a long list of Halloween events at community centers throughout the city

**Fridays at Discovery Park:** Sign up for the FREE Discovery Park Walking Club for adults ages 40+. Trail lengths will be from 60 to 90 minutes from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Fridays through, Dec 13, 2024. Call 206-618-4254 to register.

Williams stops for questions from BPRC members.

Flinn asks if the transfer of Graffiti Ranger team to SPR will come with additional budget, or if that will eat into existing SPR maintenance budget. Williams responds that SPR anticipates receiving the administrative support necessary to perform this additional work.

Flinn asks if closures of the Carkeek and Discovery Park facilities will remove any restroom access in those parks. Williams notes that the buildings will be available but staffed at a lower level.

Flinn thanks Williams and staff for good works, highlighting follow-up on Burke Gilman Trail.

Nakamura asks for clarity regarding fee increases in proposed budget, and if reduced fee options exist for participants with financial need. Williams notes that SPR prioritizes a policy of not turning anyone away from programs due to inability to pay. The most significant increase is the youth athletic field fee; SPR has kept this fee low for many years, and this increase will bring SPR into the median regionally. The revenues from this increase will offset other costs, including athletic field improvements and maintenance.

Nakamura asks if this process also applies to rental fees. Williams notes that SPR has a separate fee reduction/waiver process.

Chisholm Clare asks for clarification regarding which specific segment(s) of the Burke Gilman Trail are being repaired. Sheffer notes repairs along several locations, and shares specific locations with BPRC members.

## Mission Moment: Pre-Electrification and Oil Heat Removal

Justin Hellier, SPR Strategic Advisor, briefly introduces Park District funding allocation for utility conservation and goal of presenting results during the 6-year funding cycle.

Jacob Daley, OOC Sustainable Operations Manager, presents the results of this investment so far.

Seattle Park District Cycle 2 Investments:

- Prepare community centers for decarbonization by shrinking energy use through energy conservation interventions.
- Install electric heat pumps in smaller facilities that currently use oil heat.

2024 Adopted Budget: \$1,060,078 (for the entire DLOB, not just the work we're discussing today)

Performance Measures:

- # facilities partially electrified – annual goal of 2
- # small buildings converted from oil to electric heat – goal of 4 by 2028

## Red Barn Ranch – Summer Programming and Next Steps

Williams introduces the topic.

Next is an update on an initiative that involves Red Barn Ranch, a 39-acre property located in rural King County, southeast of Auburn. For many years it served as a location for summer youth camps and it was subsequently operated by Seattle Tilth.

Andy Sheffer, Deputy Superintendent of the Planning and Capital Development Branch, introduces the presentation. SPR's primary focus in 2024 has been to get "boots on the ground" at Red Barn Ranch to fulfill the Mayor's vision.

Sheffer introduces Tizai Mauto, Planning and Development Specialist, to deliver the presentation.

Red Barn Ranch is located in Auburn, approximately a 60 minute drive from Seattle.

Background on the site:

39-acre site, developed as a recreational camp with farm space in Auburn

- 1966: Elgin Baylor purchased property and advocated to develop the Red Barn Ranch to be used as a youth sports camp. Black property ownership in service for Black youth. One of the 50 greatest players in NBA History. He went to Seattle University and played for the LA Lakers.
- 1970: City purchased Property with RCO funding
- 1971-83: SPR renovated property & operated youth camp
- 1983-1994: Site used for contracted recreation uses and education programming, with periodic site closures
- 1995-2011: Camp Berachah operated equestrian camp
- 2011-14: Camp Berachah & Seattle Tilth incubator farm
- 2014-18: Seattle Tilth farm operations alone
- 2018-present: Site vacant but city engaged various community organizations seeking to develop a vision for sustainable programming at the Ranch.

The current plan would include demolition of all but one of the existing buildings at the site, and renovation and bringing back online of the utilities and electrical infrastructure, which has degraded over the years.

This summer, Red Barn Ranch was the site of the Buffalo Soldiers Summer 2024 Equestrian and Youth Development Camp. SPR's vision, which aligns with the Mayor's vision, is to continue using this site for outdoor youth development programs, particularly for Black and other minority youth.

The vision for Red Barn directly serves the City's Mental Health Initiative through:

- Connection with Nature
  - Spending time outdoors allows black and other marginalized youth to connect with nature, which can be especially powerful for those with limited access to green spaces in urban settings.
- Physical Health Benefits
  - Outdoor activities encourage physical movement and exercise, improving overall health and mental well-being.
- Cultural Connection & Identity
  - Engaging in practices rooted in their culture can foster a sense of pride and identity for black youth. Reclaiming outdoor spaces that may have historical significance for their communities can also strengthen cultural bonds and a sense of belonging.

- Stress Reduction & Coping Skills
  - For black youth facing systemic challenges, spending time outdoors can serve as a form of self-care and stress relief. Learning to cope with difficulties cultivates resilience and problem-solving skills that are transferable to other areas of life.
- Community Building & Social Support
  - Outdoor activities often involve teamwork and collaboration, fostering bonds among peers and mentors. These experiences forge strong memories, strengthen relationships, and improve a sense of community and resilience.
- Mindfulness & Reflection
  - For black and marginalized youth navigating complex social and cultural identities, taking time to reflect in nature promotes introspection and personal growth.

Mauto provides overview of historical disadvantaging with respect to accessing nature for Seattle's Black population.

We are building a coalition that includes non-profit organizations, public partners and the private sector.

Examples of this include: Black-led organizations, BIPOC communities, Indigenous organizations, aligned businesses, nature access groups and many others. We continue to ensure our underserved populations benefit from the access, programming and skill development opportunities at Red Barn Ranch.

#### Year 1 – Areas of Concentration for Youth Education & Programming

- Horsemanship and outdoorsmanship programs to educate and reduce barriers facing black youth and community.
- Engage with youth to design and build a food garden. Collaborate with local Black-led, farming focused organizations such as Nurturing Roots, Wakulima USA, Black Farmers Collective, and Living Well Kent
- Engage with local community to design and build a community trail with educational and experiential nodes

#### 2024 – Events and Stakeholder Engagement

- 377 youth volunteering at RBR. Two more EarthCorps volunteer events planned before Thanksgiving. One large event 250-300 students and one medium size, 20 to 50 students
- 1320 volunteer hours at RBR
- 64 Kids from Boys & Girls Club events
- 25 youth at the Buffalo Soldiers summer event
- 36 hours of EarthCorps crews - Restoration work



## Looking Ahead > Expand partnerships with schools and Black-led organizations

### Process

- Partner with schools in Seattle, especially those serving a large percentage of black youth. Plus, other schools outside Seattle.
- Partner with black-led organizations providing empowering services for youth.
- Identify resources and logistics needed to secure services and flow of participation of black youth.

### Expected Outcomes

- Schools become partners of the RBR project. Schools develop a calendar of field trips to RBR for the 2024-25 School year.
- Black-led organizations provide empowering services for black youth. A calendar of regular learning and recreational activities at the RBR for black youth is established.
- A financial and logistic plan is developed to sustain relevant activities and services to be offered at RBR.

Board members watch brief video showing [highlights of 2024 Buffalo Soldiers Day & Overnight Camp](#).

Mauto stops for questions from BPRC members.

Diamond asks for additional information regarding equity outreach. Diamond also clarifies Elgin Baylor's role with NBA as successful executive, noting that this career path is important to elevate and aspire to for Black youth. Mauto acknowledges that SPR has encountered some difficulty in partnering with Black-led community programs, but is currently working with Dawn Mason and Parents for Student Success to better reach the Black community in Seattle. These outreach meetings are ongoing. Diamond emphasizes the need for Black and Indigenous leadership throughout the process of planning and development, not just outreach for participation.

Sheffer and Williams emphasize the need to collaborate with BIPOC organizations and leaders.

## Swim Seattle Report

Williams introduces the presentation. Swim Seattle is our citywide initiative to help prevent drowning and teach kids to swim. It debuted in 2023 as announced by Mayor Harrell and SPR Superintendent AP Diaz. We're pleased to present an update on the program tonight.

Mike Plympton, SPR Aquatics Manager, and Rebecca Milliman, Strategic Advisor, deliver the presentation.

[Brief delay due to technical issues]

Announced in April 2023 by Mayor Bruce Harrell and Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR), Swim Seattle is an initiative that combines efforts with drowning-prevention partners to remove barriers when it comes to learning to swim and aquatic access. Swim Seattle seeks to eradicate disproportionate drownings amongst our most marginalized communities. The focus of Swim Seattle is to remove barriers to swimming opportunities, centering the communities who need it the most.

Our equity approach is based on research regarding health disparities and drowning prevention:

- Drowning deaths differ by age
  - Drowning is the leading cause of death among children ages 1–4. Unfortunately we have actually seen an increase in drowning deaths over the last 5 years.
- Drowning deaths differ by race and ethnicity
  - American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) people and Black people experience higher drowning rates than any other race and ethnic group.

Some of the drowning rates are related to access. 40 million adults do not know how to swim. Basic swimming and water safety skills training is a proven, effective way to prevent drowning. Over half of US Adults have never taken a swim lesson.

- About 2/3 of Black adults reported never taking a swimming lesson.
- About 3/4 of Hispanic adults reported never taking a swimming lesson.

Differences in access to swimming lessons are one barrier that could contribute to these outcomes. Swimming lessons can be expensive or may not be available in some communities. The cost of one 30 min group swim lesson varies from \$8 (SPR) to \$25 (Y) to \$40-\$100 (private lessons). Even when swimming lessons are available and affordable, some people may be hesitant to participate due to complex social, historical, and cultural factors. Everyone should have access to basic swimming and water safety skills training.

Our partners include the YMCA, ARC, Washington State Parks, No More Under, Oshun Swim School, Afro Swimmers, Seattle Children's, UW, SplashForward, and Seattle & King County Public Health. We also participate in the WA State Drowning Prevention Network and the King County Swim Equity Coalition.

Next we will provide an overview of the 3 main components of the Swim Seattle Initiative:

- Free Swim Lessons and Priority Registration
  - Free Beginner Lessons + Priority Access for Scholarship-Eligible Families
  - Q1-Q3: 1964 free beginner swim lesson series to scholarship-eligible families
  - Q1-Q3: 1539 enrollments during priority access (early registration)
  - Beach Lessons: 467 free, drop-in lessons offered in Q3 (Summer 2024)
- Teen Aquatic Programming
  - Free Beginner Lessons + Priority Access for Scholarship-Eligible Families
  - Q1-Q3: 1964 free beginner swim lesson series to scholarship-eligible families
  - Q1-Q3: 1539 enrollments during priority access (early registration)
  - Beach Lessons: 467 free, drop-in lessons offered in Q3 (Summer 2024)
- Community-Specific Outreach, Events and Partnerships
  - Monthly BIPOC + Allies Swim
  - Black Lifeguard Training
  - We Come From Mermaids
  - Intro to Swim Seattle + Mini Lesson Series
  - Ethnic Media/CEA Outreach Campaign
  - Water Safety Day

- Swim Gear Giveaways
- Q1-Q3: 601 participants
- Upcoming: Selective Swim Equity Assessment and Scholarship Registration Event

Plympton and Milliman pause to take questions from BPRC members.

Mays asks for clarification regarding scholarship utilization. Plympton explains that the Swim Seattle program has aimed to increase access to lessons through scholarships as well as easing the logistical barriers to access.

Mays asks about accessible access for children with disabilities. Plympton explains that adaptive and accessible lessons are available but often have to be worked out on a case-by-case basis pursuant to the needs of the student.

Haile-Leul asks which pools participate in the teen program. Plympton clarifies: Rainier Beach, Southwest, Evans, and Meadowbrook. In 2025, the goal is to add Medgar Evers and Helene Madison pools to this program.

Chisholm Clare asks if the program allocation is informed by overall demand for lessons, even for children who do not qualify for scholarship assistance, and specifically regarding the Green Lake Pool [Evans Pool]. Williams notes that demand will always outpace SPR's ability to provide programming. Chisholm Clare asks where current programming levels are relative to pre-pandemic. Plympton notes that Evans is lagging due to a later re-opening time after the pandemic; the non-benefitted staff is still rebuilding. Williams notes that youth employment opportunities, such as lifeguarding, and programming options will be available of the Youth Connector phone app.

Lerer asks about expedited lifeguard training and alternate pathways to lifeguard certification. Plympton notes that lifeguarding staff tends to be employed for 3-4 years, so the pandemic really threw this cycle off. Additionally, training and hiring are separate processes, so there is additional time added there. Williams adds that a first-year teenage lifeguard may not be the best choice for a beach lifeguarding role overseeing 50-60 swimmers in open water; there is some on the job experience that factors in, as well.

Diamond asks about adult and community swimming lessons for parents of children. Are adults eligible for swim lessons and scholarships, and are those lessons with other adults, or with children? Plympton notes that research supports that family and community water fluency contributes to overall water safety, especially for children. SPR offers up to 90% scholarships for adult swim lessons at a variety of levels.

Brockhaus adjourns the meeting at 8:36 PM.