



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: Seyfried, Meng, Baum, Haile-Leul, Brockhaus (co-chair), Mays, Flinn, Umagat (co-chair), Chisholm Clare, Nakamura, Diamond

Absent: Leonor, Lerer

SPR Staff and Presenters: Christopher Williams, Amir Williams, Banner, Smith, Finnegan, Amy Williams, Hoff, Burtzos

Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

Umagat 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.

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

Adopted: 9/26/24 BPRC Meeting Minutes

Adopted: 10/10/24 BPRC Meeting Agenda

Public Comment

Public comment is offered on the following topics:

- Athletic field capital projects planning, especially concerning Lincoln High School;
- Concerns about Denny Blaine Park bulkhead;
- Advocacy for CommUNITY Fund projects;
- Concerns about summer events at Gasworks Park;
- Suggestions for continuing improvements following athletic field summit.

Christopher Williams briefly responds to issues raised by public commenters.

Superintendent's Report

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

Department Update

Fall colors: Fall is here, and many Seattle's parks are showing off their vibrant fall colors. Pictured here is the Seattle Japanese Garden. Here are a few other suggestions on where to see autumn leaves in our park system:

- Kubota Garden
- Washington Park Arboretum
- Carkeek Park
- Volunteer Park
- Seward Park
- Green Lake

City Council Budget Process: We presented our department's budget to the City Council last week and we are busy answering a number of questions we've received from Councilmembers, their staff and Central Staff.

Athletic Field Summit: We met earlier this week in Magnuson Park and had a wide ranging and productive meeting. We will make a presentation on the Summit at the Oct. 24 Board meeting.

BPRC Retreat: We are looking forward to the Board retreat on Nov. 14 and are working on the agenda

Parks & Recreational Services: Parks and Environment/Facilities

A couple highlights from our hard-working Parks & Environment and Facilities Divisions:

Discovery Park North Beach Trail: Our crews recently rebuilt the 25-foot staircase on the North Beach Trail at Discovery Park.

Queen Anne Pool: Our Pool Operations Team recently took care of essential maintenance at Queen Anne Pool, including draining and cleaning the pool. Thanks to their hard work, the community can continue to enjoy this well-maintained facility for years to come.

Parks & Recreational Services: Recreation

From our always busy Recreation Division!

In-Service Day for Recreation Staff: On Sept. 26, Recreation Division staff came together for our 3rd In-Service day of the year to pause, reflect, re-charge, re-connect and plan for fall and the remainder of the 2024. Here is a photo from one of the unit's gatherings that ended the day with a team-building electric slide dance.

Camp Long Rocks Program: We finished out our free drop-in Tuesday Rocks Program for the summer at Camp Long and will be reaching out to those volunteers soon to plan for next summer!

Seattle Mentors: Last week we held a mentor training with 16 mentors at Rainier Beach Community Center. Our fall cohort will launch soon at various community centers and teen centers throughout the city. Program staff will provide a more complete update of Seattle Mentors at our next Board meeting on Oct. 24.

Planning & Capital Development

N. Rainier Landbank site: This new park is nearly complete and will open in late 2024 after the grass establishes. The SPR property team did an amazing job over the years acquiring adjacent parcels to create 1.2 acres of park land to for a good-sized urban village park in a high-density neighborhood in southeast Seattle. The park is in the process of being named.

T.T. Minor Play Area: The renovated play area at T.T. Minor play area is now open on East Union Street! The play area provides play features for both younger and older children, as well as new pathway paving to ensure an accessible route to and throughout the play area. SPR coordinated this play area project with volunteers from the Greater and Greener Conference held in Seattle this past June. The two main structures of the play equipment were donated by Landscape Structures and Play Creation.

Upcoming Events

Oct. 12: Family Saturday at Seattle Japanese Garden: origami paper folding and traditional Japanese toys for kids.

Oct. 13: Meadowbrook Pool will again host the large inflatable pool challenge course from 12-5pm.

Oct. 19: Bill Wright Day at Jefferson Park Golf Course will celebrate the renaming the course after this renowned and beloved African American golfer.

Late October: Join us at many of our community centers and other facilities and parks around the city for Halloween events. This is one of the highlights of our fall activities. Check our blog at parkways.seattle.gov for the schedule of events.

I'd be glad to answer any questions Commissioners may have.

Seyfried and Meng both note the hard work that goes into maintenance and repairs. Meng and Baum make special note of the ongoing improvements to Waterfront Park.

Umagat notes that he and Flinn recently participated in a park inspection, and thanks SPR staff for the hard work in this program. Umagat also asks for an update on capital projects on the upcoming calendar; Williams agrees and directs Hoff to get this update on the schedule.

Mission Moment: Trail Maintenance

Christopher Williams introduces the presentation, making note that walking is the most-engaged activity in Seattle's Parks.

SPR Strategic Advisor Justin Hellier introduces the presentation via video; Hellier is currently at the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) conference in Atlanta, GA.

Amir Williams, SPR Senior Gardener, delivers the presentation.

The Trails Program has been around for about 20 years consisting of 2 crew members. In 2022 we received more funding and were able to hire 3 new Maintenance Laborers in 2023.

- Trails Coordinator Sr. (OOC)- Amir Williams
- Forest Maintenance Worker Sr (OOC)- Zelvian Hutchinson
- Maintenance Laborer- Sophan Um
- Maintenance Laborer- Ian Capper
- Maintenance Laborer- Henry Rabuliman

Over the last couple of years, once we brought our crew up to speed, we have been doing work to restore trailheads, restoring and rebuilding structures such as boardwalk and bridges, and collaborating with community and volunteer group for more significant restoration projects.

We are using GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping to plan and track our work, and we are now working toward making our trails layer accessible to the community to use as a navigation tool, to know which trails are ADA accessible and what structures are on a trail, the grade, surface type and the length of the trail and as a reporting tool for any safety issues or major concerns that may be encountered.

The trails program maintains 130 miles of “soft surface” (gravel) trails in parks and greenbelts throughout the city. Our trail system ties our community together and provides equitable access to schools, services, greenspaces and neighborhoods.

In 2025 the Trail Program will be concentrating on these areas:

1. Complete 75% of our work in Equity Zones.
2. Continue to improve access to connector trails.
3. Continue to improve the visibility of trailheads with renovation and intentional design.
4. Improve volunteer and Trail Steward Program through public engagement.
5. Create a public facing GIS map that is interactive and can be used for navigation and reporting.

Flinn asks how projects are planned for maintenance, and how that process adjusts. Amir Williams clarifies that one major structure repair or replacement is generally planned each month (i.e., bridge, staircase, etc.) and that planning is generally 6 months in advance. However, plans can and do change depending on emergent needs and when issues are observed by crews or reported by park visitors.

Chisholm Clare asks if the GIS trails map is or will integrate with AMWO/Find It, Fix It. Amir Williams affirms that this should be possible. Meng asks how these GIS maps will be accessible; these should be available online, and park signs with QR codes to the maps will be placed in the parks as they come online.

Seyfried asks what the ideal staffing for the Trails Crew would be to adequately address and maintain the entire trails inventory. Amir Williams notes that a crew of 12, including 2 team leads/supervisors, would probably be the right size group for the work needed.

Park CommUNITY Fund Recommendations and Possible Vote

Christopher Williams introduces Rachel Banner and Shaquan Smith, and notes that the upcoming 2025-2025 budget may impact the final funding levels for the CommUNITY Fund project. Banner and Smith deliver the presentation.

The Park CommUNITY fund invests in large and small capital projects using participatory budgeting and equitable grantmaking practices. The Seattle Park District has allocated \$14.8 million to the Park CommUNITY Fund for investment in Seattle communities between 2023 and 2028. Frontline communities will work alongside Seattle Park and Recreation (SPR) staff through a Project Selection process, which includes three phases:

- Idea Collection
- Project Development
- Final Selection

As a refresher – this is the process that we presented to BPRC several months ago. We had a long program planning & design period, then launched Project Selection in March. Today we'll talk about Project Selection so that we can begin project implementation and evaluation here shortly. SPR staff worked with Frontline Community Partners and City of Seattle Commissions to screen and refine projects. They ended up developing 55 proposals. While some projects were further screened out in that process, some of these incorporated multiple projects into one proposal.

From proposal development we moved on to review. Each proposal had at least 2 reviews by community and 2 reviews for feasibility. Each of these reviews scored projects on criteria that were agreed upon by the reviewers themselves. In July we had a large meeting that brought together all reviewers to determine which projects were to move to the Final Selection: Community Selection phase. Frontline Partners helped us determine priority for moving projects forward and the following were the criteria used:

1. Priority Area
2. Geographic Region
3. Minimum Projects per Partner (2 or 3 per partner)

4. Review Score

At that point, we narrowed from 55 proposals to just under 30 projects.

In August we moved to Final Selection. In September we met with Frontline communities and BPRC subcommittee with recommendations and are now here presenting final recommendations to be approved by full BPRC and then afterwards the superintendent.

Umagat speaks to the full Board on behalf of the Park COMMUNITY Fund subcommittee, emphasizing the care, thoroughness, and equity focus throughout the process by Banner, Smith, and SPR staff and community partners.

Smith and Banner introduce project recommendations.

Summary of Recommendations

- Nearly 2,900 people participated in Community Selection
- 15 total projects were recommended
 - 11 - Tier 1: Up to \$150k
 - 4 - Tier 2: Between \$150k to \$1.5 million
- At least 3 - 4 projects were selected in each region North, Central, West, and South
- Recommendations were based on:
 - Top voted projects from Community Selection
 - Advisement from Frontline Community Partners and BPRC Subcommittee to ensure projects reflected high priority needs of frontline communities

Tier 1 Recommendations: Under \$150k

Central

- Exercise Equipment Replacement at Hing Hay
- Water Bottle Refilling Station at Garfield Teen Life Center

North

- Bathroom Study in NE Seattle Parks
- Outdoor Cultural Space at Green Lake Community Center
- Community Gathering Improvements at Haller Lake

South

- Art Installations and Signage at Hutchinson Playground

- Spray Park Feasibility Study in Rainier Beach
- Kids Basketball Hoops at SE Parks

West

- Covered Shelter Area at Roxhill Park
- Duwamish Art & Signage at Herrings House Park
- Outdoor exercise equipment in South Park

Tier 2 Recommendations: \$150k to \$1.5M

Central

- Access Improvements and Plan for Denny Blaine Park
- Black Legacy Community Parks Master Plan in the Central District

North

- Access Improvements at Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center

South

- Covered and Lit Basketball Courts at Be'er Sheva Park

Next Steps

- Superintendent to provide final approval of funded projects
 - Announcement and Celebration Event
- Project Funding
 - 2024 funds allocated to projects
 - 2025 funds pending City Council approval
- Project Start Dates
 - Projects will have phased starts through August 2025
 - Public information about project status posted by Spring 2025
- Evaluation & Workshop for Park CommUNITY Fund 2025
- Next Round of Funding 2026

Umagat shares thoughts on the project selection process, noting that while budget constraints led to some reduction in funding for selected projects, no project was eliminated due to budget concerns. Mays concurs, noting that budget cuts were handled in a fiscally responsible manner.

Meng asks for clarification regarding what changes will be necessary to program deliverables at Green Lake Community Center given the proposed \$50k cut from the initial project funding. Smith clarifies that a community garden is part of the proposed project, but with uncertainty remaining about ongoing maintenance and care for this asset, this was the obvious place to trim budget for now.

Chisholm Clare asks for additional detail regarding the bathroom study in NE Seattle, and whether it would be possible to expand the scope of this study to include other regional parks such as Magnuson that have bathroom needs. Banner notes that this project is an amalgamation of smaller projects focused on individual parks that completely lack bathroom services.

Haile-Leul asks whether and how residents of the Haller Lake neighborhood, particularly the nearby mobile park, will access the planned community improvements and whether this accessibility need has been considered. Smith notes that SPR staff made a visit to better understand the site, and certainly better understands the needs of the area better than before, but more community outreach is planned. Smith also notes that members of the mobile park community are often left out of the planning process, and that intentional outreach to that community will be needed. Banner adds that the project proposal arose from that community, so the process is underway.

Nakamura asks if inquiries about the original recommendations, versus those regarding the adjusted recommendations on discussion today, should be directed to Council. Smith affirms.

Baum asks staff and subcommittee members how funding programs for studies, rather than for hard infrastructure, will be received, and how the project is rationalized to the community in that regard. Seyfried notes that this program has already been an heroic level of effort for Banner and Smith, and he trusts staff to message appropriately given the level of community engagement already invested. Christopher Williams notes that the cost of even a small bathroom is extremely high. Banner adds that this is an extremely common question; yes, the goal is to build the asset, but in many cases a study is absolutely necessary to determine feasibility. Unlike in more affluent areas, where private individuals may be able to fund a feasibility or planning study, the CommUNITY Fund is able to provide these initial steps for areas of the City where this initial investment is not otherwise possible, laying necessary groundwork for capital projects down the road.

Haile-Leul shares appreciation for the consistent focus on equity throughout the process, as well as the delicacy used to balance budget cuts with the needs of the affected communities.

Umagat asks if any members wish to approve the BPRC subcommittee and SPR staff working group's Park CommUNITY Fund slate of project funding recommendations with no further modifications, and to forward this recommendation to Superintendent AP Diaz for his approval. Mays moves to approve the recommendations as-is; Meng seconds. There is no further debate. Umagat calls for a vote by show of hands. The motion passes unanimously.

Adopted: The BPRC recommends the 2024 Park CommUNITY Fund project recommendations as presented.

Baum asks if supporting material for potential votes could be distributed in advance moving forward. Umagat agrees.

Mayor's Proposed Budget for SPR: Overview

Michele Finnegan, Deputy Superintendent of Policy & Finance, gives the presentation.

As many of you may remember, during the Park District Cycle 2 planning phase we worked closely with the City Budget Office and Mayor's Office to determine that our baseline operating budget truly reflected what we thought was most important to continue. So when we were coming up with proposals in the \$20-30M range earlier this year, it was tough, because we really felt strongly that everything you heard tonight and everything our staff does every day is incredibly important.

SPR's Proposed Budget is:

1. People first
2. Preserves critical services, programming and staff resources
3. Enhances revenues
4. Makes thoughtful investments in Mayoral & City priorities

First, some notable allocations. We are particularly focused on some key objectives:

1. Keeping Parks Safe and Accessible
2. Supporting Youth Mental Health
3. Robustly Activating Downtown

Investment: Supporting Youth Mental Health

Youth Mental Health: Nature Access and Programming

- Ongoing resources to support programming and partnerships at Red Barn Ranch (\$600K/\$600K)

Youth Mental Health: Online Youth Connector

- One time funding to design, create and implement an online "Youth Connector" platform (\$500K/\$0)

Investment: Supporting Downtown Activation

Reimagine and Revitalize Westlake Park

- Proposed Budget includes \$1.3 million in 2025 and \$2.3 million in 2026 to reimagine and revitalize Westlake Plaza to support economic development, public safety, the Mayor's Downtown Activation Plan, World Cup preparation and which could include adjustments to current site assets (out of service fountain, stage, and other needed upgrades) to make the area safe, inviting and public serving.

General Fund Savings

To sustain core programs and services while meeting reduced City GF levels, the Proposed Budget:

1. Utilizes Park District Funding Flexibility
2. Enacts efficiencies in various parks and recreation programs
3. Supports City Wide Graffiti Abatement Program

General Fund Savings: Parks and Recreation Efficiencies

To sustain core programs and services while meeting reduced City GF levels, the Proposed Budget enacts efficiencies in various parks and recreation programs:

- Grounds Maintenance Efficiencies (\$600K/\$622K)
 - Adjusts baseline funding for park maintenance (5.69 FTE); ~240 FTE retained.
- Outdoor Park Programming Alignment (\$245K/\$247K)
 - Returns resources for programming parks outside of downtown to pre-Cycle 2 baseline (~\$550K)
- Community Granting Program Consolidation (\$200K/\$200K)
 - Consolidates programs and continues to achieve similar outcomes with \$400K in granting funds
- Leadership and Administration Efficiencies (\$492K/\$517K)
 - Achieves ongoing savings through reduction of vacant positions (3.75 FTE)
- Environmental Programmatic Changes of 50% in 2026 (\$0/\$1M)

General Fund Savings: Citywide Efficiencies

To sustain core programs and services while meeting reduced City GF levels, the Proposed Budget supports City-Wide Graffiti Program:

- One Seattle Graffiti Team Efficiency (~\$500K GF Savings)
 - In support of the Mayor's strategy to combine resources available for city-wide graffiti abatement, the Proposed Budget includes a transfer of graffiti abatement resources from SPU to SPR.

Strategic Alignment of Other Funding Sources

To sustain services and public programming, the Proposed Budget utilizes other, non-GF, city funding sources to minimize impacts to the community.

- Downtown Buskers (Ad Tax: \$224K/\$224K)
 - Continues activation by buskers in our downtown parks
- Arts in the Parks Grant Program (Ad Tax: \$436K/\$444K)
 - Maintains activation of park spaces by artists and art organizations
- Teen Performing Arts (Ad Tax: \$200K/\$210K)
 - Preserves Teen Summer Musical program focused on youth of color
- Center City Activation (PET: \$186K/\$186K)
 - Funds a portion of activation efforts offered in partnership with ARC

Revenue Generation

To sustain services, the Proposed Budget adjusts Park Fund fees to generate revenues to cover increased costs of doing business with focus on access.

- Aquatic Programs and Rentals (\$1.4M/\$1.5M)
 - Adjusts fees and increases Swim Equity Fund from \$50K to \$100K
- Amy Yee Tennis Center Programs and Rentals (\$360K/\$480K)
 - Adjusts fees and creates new scholarship fund
- Special Event Permits and Facility Rentals (\$445K/\$703K)
 - Adjusts fees while maintaining granting programs supporting community-led activities
- Athletic Field Permits (\$423K/\$1.4M)
 - Adjusts fees while maintaining opportunities for free community drop-in play

- Non-Park Use Permits (\$675K/\$560K)
 - Adjusts fees associated with third parties requesting nonpark use of parkland

Next Steps: 2025 -2026 Proposed Budget

- Mayor Transmitted Budget: 9/24
- Council Review: 9/24-11/21
- Public Hearings:
 - 10/15 (MPD Public Hearing)
 - 10/16 (City Budget Public Hearing)
 - 11/12 (City Budget Public Hearing)
- Council Amendments: 11/13-11/15
- Council Adopts Budget: 11/21

Finnegan pauses for questions from the Board.

Noting the time, Umagat adjourns the meeting at 8:33 PM.