



Minutes|Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Zoom

Thursday, January 23, 2025

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

Attendance

Present: Brockhaus (co-chair), Diamond, Baum, Lerer, Leonor, Nakamura, Meng, Mays, Flinn, Haile-Leul, Chisholm Clare

Absent: Seyfried, Umagat (co-chair)

SPR Staff and Presenters: Diaz, Finnegan, Shelton, Nielsen, Burley, 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: tonight's BPRC Meeting Agenda. Flinn moves to adopt; Mays seconds the motion. Brockhaus calls for a vote. The vote is unanimous in favor of passage.

Adopted: 1/23/25 BPRC Meeting Agenda

Public Comment

Public comment is offered on the following topics:

- Burke-Gilman Trail maintenance
- Beach volleyball court availability, maintenance, and fees
- SPR environmental education budget reduction and program/staff loss
- Denny Blaine Park usage

Anthony-Paul (AP) Diaz, SPR Superintendent, briefly responds to public commenters.

Flinn suggests that long-term planning for solutions to environmental education program could include job security guarantees for staff, and notes that dismantling a program's staffing while working to save the program seems dissonant.

Flinn notes that BPRC members have not been included in discussions regarding the proposal to privatize environmental education programs and suggests that SPR staff include the BPRC in discussions related to major changes.

[Off-screen commenter] notes that CM Joy Hollingsworth [chair of the Parks, Public Utilities, and Technology Committee] has not responded to requests for a meeting with SPR environmental educators or their union representatives.

Superintendent's Report

Diaz delivers the Superintendent's Report.

Department Update

It's been a while since we held a regular Board meeting and a lot has happened since then:

City Budget: On Nov. 21, the Seattle City Council approved and adopted the final 2025/2026 City of Seattle Budget adding additional funds (listed below) to the Mayor's proposed budget. Michele Finnegan, our Deputy Superintendent of Finance, reviewed the proposed budget at a previous Board meeting.

The following is a summary of SPR's key changes in the 2025-2026 Budget (as a result of the City Council budget deliberations):

- Infield turf conversions (\$4.5M) at Garfield, Fairmont, and Lower Woodland
- Additional funds to support for artwork at Garfield Super Block Project (\$775k)
- Exploratory funds for a Portal Park at the Battery Street tunnel site (\$150k)
- ADA improvements at MOHAI (\$500k)
- Additional funds to support the Late Night Program (\$100k)
- Additional graffiti abatement funding (\$700k)
- Funds to support the restroom mural at Cal Anderson Park (\$25k)
- Landscape and irrigation improvements at First Hill Park (\$20k)
- Marvin Gardens/Bergen Place public art and kiosk revamp (\$75k)

Park District Board: On Nov 21, the City Council convened as the Park District Board to pass the Park District portion of the 2025 budget. This is a good time to celebrate the existence of the Park District, which is a funding source that is fully dedicated to parks and recreation services. Having this fund source helped us make it through the difficult 2025 budget process with some degree of grace.

17th and Walker Acquisition: We're excited to announce that we acquired a new block-sized piece of property at 17th Ave. S and S Walker St in Seattle's Beacon Hill neighborhood. In December, our City Council Committee unanimously approved legislation authorizing the acquisition. The good news is that the purchase of this 1.4-acre site will come at no cost to the City. Full funding will come from King County's Conservation Futures Tax program and reimbursement from a past purchase. The site will be developed into a park when funding becomes available.

Westwood-Highland Park RUV: Additionally, the City Council approved reimbursement, through the Conservation Futures Tax, for the \$3.25 Million purchase of the West-Highland Park RUV site.

Storm response Nov. 19 and beyond: Garfield CC is being activated as overnight shelter. On Friday, Nov. 22 and Saturday, Nov. 23

Happy Holidays!: We celebrated the holidays in style in December and into January with a full slate of special events and programs including the lighting of Denny Park, Christmas Ships (which stopped

offshore at several Seattle parks), the annual Pathway of Lights at Green Lake, the Polar Bear Plunge on Jan. 1 at Matthews Beach (1,600 people plunged!) and many other festive events.

Parks & Recreational Services: Parks and Environment/Facilities

The big windstorm in late December impacted many Seattle Parks. Huge thank you to our incredible crews for their hard work and dedication in responding to the aftermath of the recent winter windstorms we've experienced. Even before daylight, they were out inspecting blocked roads and clearing fallen trees, demonstrating quick action that has been essential in keeping our park system and community safe. While there's still work to do, we're grateful for their ongoing efforts to help us recover.

Parks & Recreational Services: Recreation

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) is excited to announce a pilot program extending the operating hours at Garfield, Meadowbrook, and Southwest Teen Life Centers that started on December 18, 2024. This expansion aims to give Seattle youth, aged 13 to 24, more access to fun, safe, and enriching opportunities.

SPR's Teen Life Centers offer a wide array of programming to Seattle area youth including special events, Late Night Programs, athletic gyms and workout rooms, recording studios, cooking classes, social recreation and much more.

Seattle Teen Late Night & Cam Wilder Gym Takeover: We partnered with Citywide Athletics and "The Run" to create an unforgettable experience for teens across Seattle. Cam Wilder, a YouTube sensation with over 1 million followers, visited our city to challenge local hoopers in a fun, high-energy basketball game. His mission to entertain and inspire young people drew an enthusiastic crowd of teens and young adults from all over the state.

The night was truly historic, with an extraordinary turnout of 200 teens and young adults inside the building with another 250 teen and young adults outside waiting for the chance to come in once we had folks leave were all able to experience and electric atmosphere. Teens were thrilled to see Cam in action, and the event left a lasting impression on everyone involved. This was a fun and memorable event for all the kids that showed up. Cam Wilder has over 1 million followers on each one of his social accounts, so to be able to pull off an event like this was truly impressive and garnered national attention.

Thank you to the SE Teen Late Night & Citywide Athletics Staff on site. Park Rangers who were so important in keeping the order outside as well as inside of the building. Your leadership in the moments of getting people in and out of the building was truly appreciated. Without your presence I don't think the people inside would have felt as safe, and we wouldn't have had nearly as much order outside without you.

MLK Day March and Celebration: On Saturday, January 18th SPR hosted the 22nd annual youth-led Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Celebration to commemorate Dr. King's life and legacy. The event started at the MLK Memorial at Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Park with speeches and live entertainment. The youth participants then led a community march to Rainier Community Center to participate in a joyful festival with food, music, and celebration. 175 youth participated in this annual, key event for our Youth and Teen Programs Unit.

The theme for this year was, “Team Work Made The Dream Work”, highlighting the teamwork that went into supporting Dr. King’s vision and work. This spirit of teamwork was particularly true with our SPR teams: The Rec-N-The Street and Rainier Community Center teams partnered with the Youth/Teen Programs Unit to implement this successful event. Dr. King’s message is alive and well in the next generation of activists, artists, and leaders.

Parks and Capital Development

Camp Long Emergency Fire Repairs: SPR has .85-acre an Emergency Public Works contract with Diverse Earthworks to stabilize the building. The stabilization work is focused on maintaining the lodge structure and preventing any further damage until a long-term project can be scoped, designed, and completed. The scope of the stabilization work includes selective demolition of the damaged parts of roof, assessment and shoring of walls that need support, carting-out of debris, and ventilating the building to dry it out.

The stabilization work is allowing our team to better understand the extent of the damage caused by the fire. The building has been cleaned, walls shored, temporary stairs have been installed, and drywall removed to stop the mold from taking a stronger hold. The next steps are to address structural work, the roof, and other aspects to save the building. The pictures above (before and after) show before and after in the main front office area. Contractor Diverse Earthworks and their subcontractor Dickson Demolition are making great progress on cleaning and stabilizing the building. These photos also show the temporary shoring that is helping stabilize the structure. This emergency project will stabilize the Camp Long Lodge Building post-fire to comply with the SDCI correction notice and is necessary to inform the next steps for the fire damaged building.

Planning & Capital Development

South Park Plaza: This new .85-acre park is at the gateway of the South Park Community, connecting to a growing Pedestrian and bicycle trail system in Southwest Seattle. It includes culturally significant art, with an emphasis on indigenous landscape that includes art, landscaping and Lushootseed messaging. There will be a large community gathering plaza (including event lights and power), an entry overlook, 3 lawn areas, a play area, tiled seat walls with lights, irrigated landscape plantings, picnic tables, benches, a drinking foundation, interpretive panels, and stormwater treatment swales. The project is expected to be substantially completed early this year.

Prayer Paddles Installation: Late last year at City Hall Park, an installation of prayer paddles created by Tulalip Tribe artist Ty Juvinel was on prominent display at City Hall Park. The paddles honored the Coast Salish people, a group Juvinel says is often underrepresented in the region’s cultural landmarks. The paddles remained on display at City Hall Park through Jan. 17, 2025.

Judkins Park: Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR), in partnership with Africatown Community Land Trust, No More Under, A Personal Point of View LLC, and Inclusion Matters, is renovating Judkins Park to advance inclusivity, equity, and accessibility. By leveraging public-private partnerships, the project aims to maximize benefits to the community. We are excited to collaborate with the community to actualize renovations to Judkins Park, including the play area, spray park, and restroom improvements.

There will be a Youth Engagement Event: Tuesday, February 2, from 3-6 p.m. at the William Grose Center For Cultural Innovation, 101 23rd Ave S, Seattle, WA 98144 and a Community Engagement Event: Thursday, February 27, from 4:30-7 p.m. (location TBD, but we will keep you posted).

During these events, we'll discuss the project and collect community input to shape the future of Judkins Park.

Sound View Play Area: This project went out to bid earlier this month and we will review bids before the end of the month. This project will convert the upper field from grass to synthetic turf and renovate the restroom.

Upcoming Events

Pancake Breakfasts: Over the next month or so, Bitter Lake and Loyal Heights Community Centers will be hosting their annual pancake breakfast events. These events are implemented in partnership between SPR site staff and ARC Advisory Council members. All proceeds go to helping fund program scholarships for our customers. These events are a great opportunity to see our community center staff in action and to meet community members. I invite the BPRC members to consider attending one or both of these events. The food is enjoyable and the company even better!

Be'er Sheva Park Play Area Design: SPR is hosting a public meeting on February 8th to review the four play area options shaped by community feedback. This design will include a new accessible path with a fitness zone, new picnic tables/benches, bike racks, barbeques and park elements.

Flinn asks for an update on the timeline for repairs to the Be'er Sheva Cultural Stage, which was damaged in the November storms. Diaz shares that the current plan is to have this asset repaired before summer.

Haile-Leul notes that the Seattle Teen Late Night event was a great success, and thanks Diaz and Christopher Williams for their presence and support.

Use and Scheduling of Outdoor Athletic Facilities

Lisa Nielsen, Events and Athletic Scheduling Manager, delivers the presentation.

Over the last two years, we've really tried to align what we are doing with the actual policy on file, and we're here today to present a little bit of what we've done and how we've worked with the policy. We want to present these changes to you all so that the Board has a chance to weigh in and make suggestions before we send our changes and recommendations to the City Clerk.

The internal policy review team included:

- Lisa Nielsen (Athletic & Event Scheduling Mgr)
- Christopher Powell (former Sr. Athletic Scheduler)
- William Bartram (former Sr. Athletic Scheduler)
- Chris Delaune (Sr. Athletic Scheduler)
- Shalandra Shippentower (Sr. Athletic Scheduler)
- Shanyanika McElroy (Strategic Advisor)

Why update the policy now? Following our Strategic Plan athletic field use analysis in 2023, it highlighted that our policy was outdated (20 years old) and largely irrelevant to our SPR athletic field scheduling processes today. Updating it now allows us to:

- Better align the policy to our current use and scheduling processes
- Create clarity for our community organizations on how SPR schedules and allocates athletic field time on our SPR and SPS field inventory; and

- Align with five critical points:
 - Field maximization
 - Joint Use Agreement (JUA)
 - Historical use
 - Scheduling prioritization
 - Capital improvements

Proposed Updates to Policy

- Specific information regarding sport season start and end dates, times for practice and game schedules (# of hours per), states information specific to JUA from 2002
- Utilizing more broad language to cover how scheduling functions.
- Identifying historical use as a main aspect of our scheduling policy; mentioned in the current policy but governs 90% of our scheduling
- Naming that we will allocate new field time to new field sports and/or new field sports organizations
- Accounting for scenarios when significant financial contributions come in we may establish a field scheduling allocation
- Name the JUA but do not name specifics of the JUA, as those will change every 5 years
- Identifying the factors that play into our schedulers process in allocating field time within our inventory; Revising the policy to accurately reflect those factors, without getting too granular to account for evolution is critical for the community's understanding
- Building in a component that allows equitable distribution any new field time that comes into our inventory

Disaggregation of Policy and Procedure: the new policy will retain guidance regarding youth sports prioritization, historical use, and general scheduling guidelines. Other guidance, including Regular and special hours for certain athletic fields, permitting seasons and seasonality of sport use on fields, expanded detail of JUA, expanded detail of historical use, and new field time allocation process, will be laid out in procedures.

Seattle Public Schools

- Priority during times established through the Joint Use Agreement.
- Details are determined through the Joint Use Agreement between SPS and SPR

Community Historical Use

- After JUA times, priority for outdoor athletic fields shall be granted to permit holders with a documented history of regular or long-standing field use.
- Historical use will be determined based on the frequency and duration of previous bookings.

Remaining Field Capacity

Priority will be given to requests based on the order in which they are received.

- SPR youth programs
- Community youth programs
- SPR adult programs
- Community adult programs

Stakeholder Engagement and Equity Analysis

SPR surveyed the top 100 historical user groups and gathered demographic data. Field allocation analysis and survey findings were brought to SPR's Change Team and Equity Committee for equity analysis. One avenue identified is to equitably allocate new field time that occurs through lighting additions and turf conversions. This field time is not already allocated. New Field Time Allocation process will be part of new scheduling procedures.

Mays asks for clarification regarding outreach data from COVID-affected years. Nielsen clarifies that the data from 2020 and 2021 were indeed discounted due to the circumstances of those years.

Strategic Plan High Level Findings

- 2002 Use and Scheduling of Outdoor Facilities policy is outdated and irrelevant
- 90% of survey group respondents listed "availability of local fields" as their main obstacle to gaining access to fields
- 24 of 94 (25.5%) survey group respondents neglected to answer demographic questions
- Historical users have majority of field time available, leaving not much left after roll overs annually; historical users often acquire more and more hours each year
- Youth groups are not incentivized to return not-needed rentals, due to low cost, challenges to retain historical use

As we dug into this policy, we wanted to make it more equitable within the limits of the time and hours available to schedule our fields. We also wanted to provide greater transparency and clarity for our users, and to align our policy more with how things are functioning.

Flinn asks about back-end accountability to ensure that reservations are actually being utilized, and that organizations are not simply "squatting" on field reservations. Nielsen notes that not all sites can be staffed, but that cost of reservation tends to discourage this behavior and other field users do occasionally report when this occurs. SPR understands groups not wanting to "tattletale", but this is a scarce resource.

Meng asks for clarification regarding demographic survey results concerning underserved populations represented by field user groups. Nielsen clarifies.

Diamond asks how SPR was able to use data to address inequities in the system in 2024, and were these attempts successful? And is BIPOC demographic data disaggregated, or is all BIPOC population grouped together? Nielsen clarifies that no real action has been taken yet based on the survey data; in order to make the whole system equitable, the whole system would have to be burned down and started over. The goal for this project is to make improvements and find intentionality where possible. Nielsen also notes that yes, all BIPOC user data is grouped together. At least in part, this is because some of the field user groups do not collect this data in detail. Diamond emphasizes that there was no strategic plan to address inequities in this system prior to 2023 and asks if there is any longitudinal data to track progress. Diamond reiterates her concern regarding the lack of specificity in racial minority data and asks for additional to be made available to the BPRC if it is or becomes available.

Baum advocates gathering some longitudinal data from historical use groups to determine use needs for groups with higher or lower growth rates to create space for groups with emergent needs and to serve the largest number of users. Nielsen notes that some of these data are being collected.

Baum notes that BPRC members have not seen the actual policy proposal. Policy packages will be sent for review well in advance of any public hearing or vote.

Native Plant Policy Update

Todd Burley, SPR Sustainability Advisor, and Stephanie Shelton, Natural Resources Unit (NRU) Manager, deliver the presentation.

SPR has had a Native Plant Policy for a long time, and it was last revised about 15 years ago. In our ongoing policy review, it was determined that this would be a good one to help us reassess and move forward with the best priorities of our department.

The purpose of this presentation today is to provide an overview of the current policy and its implementation, summarize the modifications and updates we are proposing, share issues to be aware of, and receive feedback.

Why update the policy?

- Current policy is 15 years old
- Incorporate climate change considerations
- Align with current standards
- Recommit to native plant prioritization
- Support citywide commitments

Our internal review team has shifted over the years as people and roles have moved around, but as you can see, it has included ecologists, gardeners, water management specialists, landscape architects, crew chiefs, and other experts.

Why Native Plants?

- Support wildlife habitat
- Require less long-term maintenance
- Regenerate ecosystem
- Support Indigenous food systems
- Sense of place

Key Considerations

Our climate is changing for the warmer, and the trajectory of that change is really sobering. AP and I received some very sobering reports coming out of COP16. Scientists are now planning for a 3 degree temperature increase over the next couple of decades, as opposed to 1.5 degrees. So being resilient, thoughtful, and prepared is part of building park landscapes to endure. There is a lot of strong support from the City and from the public for this work, and we are actively working with our tribal partners.

Issues of Note

- “Native vegetation” definition
- Population/Assisted migration
- Limitations of metrics
- Practicality of sourcing

- Exemptions and phased approach

Proposed updates

- Align “native” definition with SMC
- From 80% goal to prioritization
- Support population migration; allow for some assisted migration
- Include seed sourcing requirements
- Clarify exemptions
- Update definitions and references
- Delineate/update responsibilities

Burley notes that updates are not terribly extensive but the policy did need to be reworded, so a red-lined version is not really practical in this instance. As with the Athletic Field Policy, a full comparison version will be available well before any public hearing or vote.

Flinn asks if the SMC definition of “native” was satisfactory to the review team. Burley and Shelton note that the SMC language is not specific but suggests a definition akin to the “lower Puget Sound trough” area that was the basis of the previous policy. There was some discussion of whether to expand the definition to the larger Cascadian bioregion, which encompasses southern Alaska, western Montana, and northern California. Changing the SMC definition would have required City Council action.

BPRC Retreat Housekeeping

Michele Finnegan, Deputy Superintendent, Policy & Finance Branch, briefly reviews updates to BPRC operating procedures from the BPRC Retreat in November.

Finnegan announces SPR staff recommendations for 2025 BPRC Subcommittees:

Park Naming Subcommittee

- Mays
- Chisholm Clare
- Leonor

Park CommUNITY Fund Subcommittee

- Nakamura
- Lerer
- Haile-Leul

Performance Subcommittee

- Diamond
- Baum
- Flinn
- Meng

Brockhaus notes that both she and Umagat will be stepping down from their positions on the BPRC when their current terms expire at the end of March; members interested in serving as co-chair and

on the Executive Committee should reach out to Paula Hoff. Brockhaus is happy to answer any questions related to this commitment that members may have.

Diaz notes that other issues, including meeting times, are potential items for discussion; members generally agree that work transition would make earlier meeting times difficult for members and public.

Brockhaus adjourns the meeting at 8:22 pm.