



Minutes|Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Zoom

Thursday, May 22, 2025

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

Attendance

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

Absent: Baum (co-chair)

SPR Staff and Presenters:

Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

Nakamura 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.

Nakamura reads the land acknowledgement.

Nakamura introduces the consent agenda: meeting minutes from the 4/10/25 BPRC Meeting and 4/24/25 BPRC Meeting, and tonight's meeting agenda. Mays moves to approve all three items; Haile-Leul and Meng second the motion. Nakamura calls for a vote; the vote is unanimous in favor of passage.

Adopted: 4/10/25 BPRC Meeting Minutes

Adopted: 4/24/25 BPRC Meeting Minutes

Adopted: 5/22/25 BPRC Meeting Agenda

Public Comment

Comments were heard related to the following topics:

- Concerns regarding Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center;
- Concerns regarding City redevelopment plan for Ft. Lawton;
- Concerns regarding appropriate park use at Denny Blaine Park

Nakamura thanks commenters for their advocacy.

Superintendent's Report

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

Department Update

Spring has Sprung: With Memorial Day here there are 171 picnic reservations in the parks in the coming week. The Beach Fire Programs at Alki Beach and Golden Gardens have been preparing for nice weather and large crowds enjoying the parks. Reader boards with Park Rules, updated park hours, coordinating with multiple city partners and increasing staffing have all been planned and are in place.

Park Beautification Program: To ensure meaningful impact and equitable distribution of beautification resources, five high-visibility, high-use parks were selected in each district for the pilot phase. Selection was guided by a combination of site usage data, geographic balance, visual prominence, and equity mapping. The photos shown include some examples of this work. These include Cal Anderson Park, Hutchinson Park, Green Lake Playground, Kerry Park and Bergen Place.

Spike in Vandalism: Unfortunately, we are experiencing a spike in vandalism to our park facilities, that is taking away from our planned maintenance work. This includes drinking fountains at both Pioneer Square and Hing Hay Park, stolen copper wiring and pipes, as well as fires in our comfort stations.

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Parks & Recreational Services: Parks and Environment / Facilities

Our incredible tree crew's hard work and dedication to ensuring our trees thrive and are inspected regularly for their health and safety. When trees fall, they take action to remove and clean up the area. Their quick action is essential to keeping our park system and communities safe.

Parks & Recreational Services: Recreation

Pre-Summer Beach and Spray Park Openings: On Saturday, May 24th, West Green Lake and Madrona Beaches will be open from noon – 7:00pm on weekdays, and 11:am – 7:00pm on weekends & holidays. We will also be opening 11 spray parks across the city on Saturday, May 24th from 11:00 am – 8:00 pm. These facilities will remain open until Labor Day. Additionally, we will be kicking off our summer aquatics programming and with staff across all our divisions and units to prepare for the start-of-summer. Training has been underway for weeks, and Mounger and Colman Pools have even opened for pre-season swims.

Parks & Recreational Services

Youth Appreciation Week. This week was a wonderful opportunity for over 500 youth to foster community connections, empower their voices, developed skills, and engage youth across several teen life centers and late-night locations.

Youth enjoyed a variety of field trips to Wings Over Seattle, Seattle Aquarium, bowling, and Family Fun Center. Service projects provided youth an opportunity to connect with the community by making and delivering 150 sack lunches for two tiny homes communities.

The week would not be complete without a good dose of fun as teens participated in craft projects, a carnival, movie nights, and basketball.

14 youth were recognized at a Youth Awards Ceremony.

Life Saving Award: On May 13, 2025, Dinko de Forest and Ender Hibbing, lifeguards at Ballard Pool, were presented with the American Red Cross Lifesaving award for Professional Responders. Last October Dinko and Ender responded quickly to a swimmer experiencing cardiac arrest, pulling him from the pool, administering CPR and shocks from an AED. Their quick, professional, and competent response saved this swimmer's life.

Working with At-Risk youth: Over the past month, staff from Magnuson CC teamed up with SPS counseling staff from Eckstein MS, staff from Solid Ground and staff from Mercy Magnuson Place to help promote the importance of school attendance with local at-risk youth. All efforts culminated in a field trip to go bowling at The HUB on campus at the University of Washington on Friday, May 2. Approximately 30 teens (several Magnuson Park residents) participated in the trip after improving their weekly attendance at school.

Parks & Recreational Services: Youth Athletics

Citywide Youth Athletics Track and Field: Citywide Youth Athletics recently completed another successful track and field season, serving over 800 registered youth athletes from across Seattle. This six-week program began on April 12 and concluded on May 17, bringing together young athletes ages 5–18 from 14 different community centers citywide. Age groups were divided as follows: 5–6, 7–8, 9–10, 11–12, 13–14, 15–16, and 17–18.

This season added new teams from Lake City Community Center and Magnuson Community Center, expanding participation and growth of the program. Over the past few years, the track and field program has seen a steady increase in enrollment, growing from 15% to 25%.

Citywide Athletics also introduced a new event this year, the Mixed 4x400 Relay—offering athletes a fun, competition format that was well received across all age groups. To support the season, 30 track and field officials were hired through our partner organization, the Associated Recreation Council (ARC). Additionally, through a partnership with USA Track & Field (USATF), several of these officials earned their USATF certification, adding to the professionalism of our meets. The 2025 season reflected strong community engagement, high-quality event execution, and continued momentum in expanding access to youth athletics across Seattle.

Parks and Capital Development

South Park Plaza Opening: Seattle Parks and Recreation welcomed the community to their new park on April 26th. The river gateway park design offers a play area, large plaza, seat walls, lighting, and landscaping. Many cultural elements have been embedded throughout with Lushootseed language etching of “river” walk, tiled surfaces, large colored letters spelling out South Park, Indigenous plantings, story rock and different cultural paving patterns. The sunshine and smiles were on display and the new park was a big hit with children and adults alike!

Bitter Lake Play Area will be open to the public on May 24th. The new play area provides many opportunities for children of all abilities and ages to explore. There will be a formal community celebration when the restroom and remainder of the electrical work for the tennis courts are completed.

Planning & Capital Development Projects

Garfield Superblock Renovation: This project recently went out to bid with a bid base of \$6.5M. The community-initiated Garfield Super Block Project will enhance the Central Area's community gathering place by providing renovations such as a new restroom building, renovated playground,

addition of basketball courts to the existing tennis courts, an accessible 0.34-mile walking loop, a new accessible ramp to enter the site at the southeast (SE) corner, along with renovations of other existing accessible routes already onsite. Other improvements include a nature play pocket, a climate adaptive garden, as well as updated plantings and site lighting throughout. Depending on the contractor's bids for construction, the project could add a covered picnic shelter, parkour park and park furnishings.

This project includes funding from SPR (REET I, II and the Metropolitan Park District Equity Fund), Seattle Public Schools 2022 Levy, Various King County Grants, RCO Federal Grants and the Washington State Department of Commerce.

The Groundbreaking will be held on June 11th.

Upcoming Events

ARC 50th Anniversary – ARC will be celebrating their 50th Anniversary and their Annual General Meeting next Thursday.

Beacon Hill Festival 2025: Join Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) and partners for the Beacon Hill Festival on Saturday, June 7, 2025, from 11am to 4pm at Jefferson Park (3801 Beacon Ave. S). Enjoy free pottery, painting, and gardening classes where you can create your own projects to take home. We'll also have live music, bounce houses, food trucks, kite-making activities, and a talent show.

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

Williams responds to questions regarding the beginning of the summer aquatics season. SPR has adjusted the season to begin slightly earlier as shifts in climate have driven higher temperatures throughout May.

Williams acknowledges difficulties with lifeguard staffing in previous years. This year, SPR can offer higher wages to lifeguards, which has helped with retention of staff, and SPR is also covering the cost of training and certification.

Ft. Lawton Update

Andy Sheffer, Deputy Superintendent of Planning and Capital Development, and Jessica Gomez, Strategic Advisor (Office of Housing), deliver the presentation.

Gomez highlights the distinction between this project and other affordable housing projects, in that this project concerns City-owned public land, rather than privately owned.

Gomez shares a land acknowledgement and notes the importance of the history of Ft. Lawton and its land specifically. Gomez shares overview of Ft. Lawton land, emphasizing that no part of the land has ever been a part of Discovery Park.

The project is a unique chance to create affordable housing in high-opportunity areas. Fort Lawton will have more affordable family-sized housing, and SPR will add almost 22 acres of parkland.

This project began in 2005, and our initial plan for the site was submitted in 2008. However, litigation tied up the process for about 10 years. After that was resolved, we submitted another plan in 2019 and have since revised that plan again, planning for 85-100 permanent supportive homes for homeless seniors and veterans, up to 200 affordable rental homes, up to 200 affordable homes for ownership, and 22 acres of new SPR property.

Gomez shares 2025 revised redevelopment plan, noting areas proposed for redevelopment of various types of housing and SPR facilities.

Gomez provides general overview of qualifying incomes and families for various models of affordable housing, noting the success rate (measured by the rate at which residents remain housed after 1 year) of permanent supportive housing in Seattle is about 95%. Gomez also notes track record of development partners.

Mays asks about infrastructure plans for residents with disabilities, and about road infrastructure expansion. Gomez clarifies that all developments will be ADA compliant, but townhomes may have to be adapted for individual residents' needs. The project's SEIS is looking at traffic, and there likely will be some additional traffic congestion in the area. However, there are plans to expand road infrastructure and make the area accessible by vehicle for residents; some road expansion and interdepartmental coordination will also be needed to make the area accessible for emergency services and to increase transit access.

Haile-Leul asks if the permanent supportive housing will be designated for single adults or families. Gomez clarifies that these units will be for single adults.

Diamond notes the difficulty of travel to and from Magnolia via public transit, and thanks Gomez for addressing this issue. Diamond asks if the architectural design will be trauma informed. Gomez notes that the developer submitted a design, and in their development worked very closely with a firm that focuses on this kind of design, specifically noting the disparate impact of homelessness on the indigenous community.

Sheffer presents the portion of the project concerning Seattle Parks and Recreation property.

SPR is grateful to be able to increase our portfolio of open space, but even more importantly, a regional park will be directly serving underserved communities. The park plan is divided into four buckets:

- Natural Wooded Areas – Will be incorporated into Discovery Park
- Other Landscaping Area – Will provide opportunities for active and passive recreation
- Active recreation area – Will be designed with ample community input once funding is secured
- Parking area – Will continue to operate the Unified Care Team crew quarters and maintain the adjacent passive recreation area

Overall, and despite all the housing building and support infrastructure going in, we project that this project will result in a net decrease in impervious surfaces (buildings, parking, and roads) and a net increase in green surfaces in the area.

Gomez provides brief overview of the community engagement efforts to date; so far, 11 community engagement sessions have been conducted, with two more scheduled. The City has a 5-year phased timeline for implementation of this project, which will start when Council formally acts on the proposal; the hope is that there are no further delays.

This is a very affordable land acquisition. The cost for acquiring Fort Lawton from the Army:

- No Cost Transfer Land dedicated to parks and Permanent Supportive Housing
- 50% discount for affordable rental housing

- 75% discount for affordable home ownership

We anticipated an acquisition cost of \$16M for affordable housing and homeownership parcels, as opposed to an equivalent alternative of \$53M.

Here is the upcoming timeline:

- Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) published on April 22, 2025
- Currently in a 30-day comment period
 - April 22 - May 30
 - All comments incorporated into Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS)
- FSEIS published - TBD
- Transmit resolution to City Council – TBD

If you want to submit any comments, please email OH_Comments@seattle.gov.

Diamond asks if additional federal approval is required for the new plan. This new plan does have to be approved by the US Army, but they have been very excited to approve the plan and are waiting for City Council to approve so that they can give their approval.

Partnership Spotlight: Seattle Parks Foundation

Rebecca Bear, CEO of the Seattle Parks Foundation, gives the presentation.

The Seattle Parks Foundation is 25 years old this year, and I want to talk today about our history and mission. SPF's mission is to partner with community to champion thriving and equitable parks and public spaces.

Bear shares [an introductory video](#) [technical difficulties prevent replay in the boardroom].

After the loss of the Seattle Commons, there was a desire to elevate the community's engagement in parks and public spaces, and this led to the formation of SPF. Mayor Schell and Superintendents Holly Miller and Ken Bounds helped create the foundation as a separate 501c3 to help raise funds and advocate for the department in other ways. SPR was instrumental in the creation of the metropolitan Park District; we are also a fiscal sponsor and work with over 120 community partners. Over 40% of our partners are led by people of color, rooted in community, and focused on justice, accessibility, and equity. We subsidize the administrative costs for our partners by 50%.

Seattle Parks Foundation is a community change maker. We partner, we advocate, we support, and we mobilize projects and program that advance our mission of being a champion for thriving and equitable parks.

Community

We work in partnership with community groups to ensure public spaces are equitable, culturally relevant, and provide voice for those furthest from power. Our community partners have benefited from the suite of administrative, financial, fundraising, communications and advocacy that we provide. We've supported over 300 projects, mostly all community and volunteer led.

Activation

We support community members who activate public spaces to ensure they are lively, safe and great places to play. From concerts at Volunteer Park to Alki Beach Pride Festival, we ensure events are successful with the support of fiscal sponsorships, help with permitting, event logistics, etc.

Advocacy

We advocate system wide funding and support as well as for individual projects. We leverage our network to ensure parks and public spaces are prioritized and valued. We were instrumental in the creation of the Metropolitan Parks District that provides critical funding to iconic places like the Zoo, the waterfront and the Aquarium.

Mobilization

We mobilize resources to ensure funding, political support, and community support for projects and programs. Additionally, we help with fundraising, connecting with council members, and writing.

Bear highlights several examples of ongoing and recent SPF projects on SPR land, including the Volunteer Park amphitheater, Seward Park torii, and Cheasty Trails and Bike Park. Bear also highlights numerous examples of capital projects on other public lands, and community activation examples.

Over the next five years, SPF looks to prioritize nature-based solutions to benefit all people and create a healthier environment and fostering inclusive communities, so everyone has access to safe, healthy, and vibrant outdoor spaces. By 2030, we will work with our partners to advance transformational projects, both large and small, that ensure our shared spaces are welcoming, accessible to all, and built to be climate resilient. Investments in our parks will shift the trajectory of our future and shape the legacy of our region.

2024 Seattle Parks and Recreation Annual Report

Justin Hellier, SPR Strategic Advisor, delivers the presentation.

Cycle 2 of the Metropolitan Park District represents an unprecedented investment of public dollars in parks and recreation services, which deserves a high degree of performance oversight and accountability:

- Mayor's Office appoints department leadership and sets department priorities
- City Council and Park District Board set funding levels and provide general policy direction and regular oversight
- BPRC Performance Oversight Subcommittee tracks our performance against Cycle 2 commitments, and will co-design the mid-cycle evaluation
- City Auditor conducts independent analyses and develops recommendations

Our approach to reporting includes a Cycle 2 Reporting Plan, which sets performance measures for all parts of the organization. Online financial and performance dashboards report this information to the public on a twice-annual basis, and annual reports provide updates on year-to-year accomplishments, a mid-cycle evaluation identifies lessons learned to inform the next planning cycle, and a cycle-end report provides a summative assessment.

The Interlocal Agreement requires “an annual report prepared by SPR for the Seattle Park District and the City, including assessment of performance measures and expenditure of District funds”. This report is a narrative annual report with selected stories, as well as a detailed financial and performance appendix providing transparency across all lines of business. We report on the whole department, across all funds, given the braided nature of our resources and our impact.

The Performance Oversight Subcommittee reviewed SPR’s performance measures closely, with opportunities to ask questions of subject matter experts and dig deeper to understand the dynamics of the year. While there is always room to do more, we want to note that improvements in reporting and data collection are providing clearer insights into parks utilization and engagement.

Hellier shares a few staff profiles from the 2024 report as an example of how the report aims to connect human stories to the performance and metrics of the department.

Some key themes emerged in the 2024 report. 2024 was the second year of the 2023-2028 Cycle 2 financial plan. Cycle 2 added significant resources to many lines of business—both expanding existing programs (community centers, forest restoration, play area renovation) and calling for new or rebooted programs (Rangers, decarbonization, an equity fund). SPR was focused on maintaining or ramping up to Cycle 2 service levels, while weathering financial uncertainty due to citywide budget conditions.

In 2024, we made significant strides in fulfilling commitments we made for Cycle 2, from renovating four restrooms and increasing Teen Life Center operating hours to expanding the Park Ranger program citywide and planting 336 large trees in developed parks. Along with most City departments, SPR also faced resource constraints in 2024, including a partial Citywide hiring freeze that impeded progress as planned. Despite these challenges slowing some of our work, we met the vast majority of our performance goals.

Hellier highlights the Ranger program, Park CommUNITY Fund, and Seattle Mentors program as examples of detailed lines of business examined in the 2024 report.

The Annual Report traditionally opens with letters from the Superintendent and the BPRC. A draft for the 2025 BPRC letter was developed with and reviewed by the Subcommittee and Co-chairs (signers) and sent to full BPRC for review May 15.

Chisholm Clare asks how many rangers SPR currently employs; Hellier and Williams confirm that SPR currently has 27 Park Rangers.

Nakamura asks for procedural clarification regarding BPRC approval of the introduction letter. Burtzos clarifies.

Nakamura asks if there are any additional questions or comments prior to motions for approval of the introduction letter. There are none.

Haile-Leul moves to approve the BPRC introductory letter as drafted; Lerer seconds. The vote is seven in favor, none opposed, two abstaining. The motion passes.

Adopted: The BPRC approves for publication in the 2024 SPR Annual Report the BPRC Introductory Letter.

Hellier thanks the Board and provides updates on next steps.

Old & New Business

Summer schedule reminder: Burtzos reminds the Board that the BPRC has traditionally met only for one full Board meeting per month during the months of June, July, and August.

Nakamura revisits the proposal to shift BPRC meeting times to 6:00 PM from the current time of 6:30 PM. Lerer asks what the result of the informal poll of members was; Burtzos notes that the poll was 6 to 4, with the majority in favor of keeping the current time. The group notes the difficulties posed by traffic, work schedules, and childcare, as well as consideration of City staff concern. Nakamura suggests piloting a 6:00 PM meeting time during the summer. After some discussion, the Board agrees to pilot the earlier time. Lerer notes that public comment may also be impacted.

The next meeting will be June 12, at 6:00 PM.

Nakamura adjourns the meeting at 8:25 PM.