



Minutes | Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Zoom

Thursday, May 28, 2026

6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Attendance

Present: Diamond, Lerer, Zhang, Bakker, Meng, Mays, Chisholm Clare, Baum (co-chair), Stonecipher, Flinn

Absent: Haile-Leul, Werner, Nakamura

SPR Staff and Presenters: Finnegan, Sheffer, Catague, Williams, Hellier, Hoff, Burtzos

Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

Baum calls the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and provides logistical instructions for in-person and remote attendees.

Commissioners and SPR staff introduce themselves.

Baum reads the land acknowledgement.

Baum introduces the consent agenda: tonight's meeting agenda, and meeting minutes from the March 26 and April 23 BPRC meetings. Baum asks for unanimous consent to adopt the agenda; without objection, the consent agenda is adopted.

Adopted: 3/26/26 BPRC Meeting Minutes

Adopted: 4/23/26 BPRC Meeting Minutes

Adopted: 5/28/26 BPRC Meeting Agenda

Public Comment

The BPRC heard public testimony on the following topics:

- Draft Racquet Sports Strategy;
- Restoration/renovation of Cal Anderson Park sport courts;
- Proposed field project and impact on Olmsted design/tree impact at Lower Woodland Park

Noting that Finnegan, who attended the reopening of Westlake Park, has joined the meeting, Baum proposes reordering the meeting agenda to continue with the Superintendent's Report. Without objection, the meeting proceeds with this report.

Superintendent's Report

Michele Finnegan, Interim Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, delivers the report.

I'll start with some updates on projects that you're aware of along with a few newer ones.

Gas Works Park: There's been a lot of progress in the abatement work. All of the appurtenances (catwalks & ladders) have been removed per the plans that were submitted to SDCI (same plans that were submitted to

Landmarks). There is still some minor work and site clean-up left. The project should be 100% complete and wrapped up by mid-June if not sooner.

Lake Washington Boulevard: In partnership with SDOT, we began Phase 3 of the Lake Washington Boulevard Safety Enhancements on May 11. Phase 3 improves the walk and bike path along the lake front, speed cushions that slow people driving but maintain emergency access at six locations. New swing gates are being designed and installed this summer to make operations more intuitive during Bicycle Weekends. The gates will go into use in 2027 and be located at Mt. Baker Beach, S. Horton St. And 43rd Ave S. The last 2-3 years of data show that driving speed is reduced where the speed cushions are installed. After speed cushions were installed, people drove up to 5 mph slower.

Magnuson Park Junior League Play Area: We are happy to announce that, on May 19th, SPR awarded the construction contract for the Magnuson Park Junior League Play Area and Restroom project to Good News Group Inc. The original play area was constructed in 1999 with the support of the Junior League of Seattle. This project will renovate the existing play area with new safety surfacing and play equipment for kids between ages 2 and 12. Other key highlights include a new three-stall all-gender restroom, a new drinking fountain, and accessible path improvements connecting the existing play area, basketball court, and the new restroom.

This contractor mobilized on May 20th, and we anticipate the project will be completed in early 2027. For the duration of the project, there will be no access to a picnic shelter (#3) and the basketball courts will be partially closed. Construction will not impact access to Mickey Merriam Fields or trail access to the soccer field.

Elliot Bay Connections: Opens on June 4th. I'll have more updates on this in a moment.

Moving on to a few operations updates in addition to what Daisy and Andy will cover in their presentation.

Trust for Public Land Ranking: I am very proud to update you all with the recent annual TPL park rankings as we continue our reign as the 8th best parks and recreation system nationwide (as ranked in their 2026 ParkScore index).

For a little more information, the Trust analyzed the 100 largest U.S. cities and used mapping technology and demographic data to determine how well each city is meeting the need for parks. Points were awarded for five characteristics of an excellent park system: access, investment, acreage, amenities, and equity.

As you may have read in our blog, I'll restate here that Seattle's parks and recreation spaces play a central role in daily life across our city, and this ranking reflects the work happening every day to keep spaces welcoming, accessible, and active for our communities. With 99% of Seattle residents living within a 10-minute walk of a park, we're proud to continue investing in parks, recreation programs, environmental stewardship, and public amenities that support communities across Seattle.

Magnuson Park Building 41 and Building 18: We've issued RFPs to find a potential partner for redevelopment and operation of Building 41 and/or Building 18 at Magnuson Park in exchange for a long-term agreement. Building 18 was formerly the fire station for Sand Point Naval Air Station (SPNAS); Building 41 was formerly the fuel station for SPNAS. We don't have designated funding for this redevelopment, so we're looking for proposals that include an adequate and well-defined funding plan for redevelopment. Proposals for Building 41 are due by 3:00 PM on August 5, 2026. Proposals for Building 18 are due by 3:00 PM on September 2, 2026.

Off-Leash Areas (OLAs): For all our dog parents out there, I want to note two reopenings following temporary closures for routine maintenance at Woodland Park and Plymouth Pillars OLAs. Woodland Park OLA closed on May 18th and will reopen tomorrow, May 29th. Plymouth Pillars Park OLA closed for a shorter period last week, from May 19th through May 21st.

A follow-up to several projects that you all are aware of and perhaps hearing from your constituents on.

Queen Anne Pool Update: We're continuing to hear some misinformation from the community regarding the project, and we wanted to reiterate progress to date and what we're doing to expand opportunities at nearby facilities. The pool repairs are significant. This doesn't qualify as a public emergency. We developed an accelerated schedule for its design, permitting and construction to add it to the City-wide pool package.

We have increased programming at Mounser for the summer and fall to mitigate for the loss of program hours:

- 3x the swim lesson capacity
- Expanded swim league opportunities
- Exploring expansion of fall lap swim hours at Ballard, Evans and Medgar Evers.

We understand this is a major impact to the community and continue to evaluate demand and explore opportunities for further expanded programming beyond the fall until the pool reopens.

Flinn asks for confirmation that Medgar Evers Pool is scheduled to open on or around June 20. Finnegan confirms.

Coleman Playfield: If you recall, a question was raised during public comment at the April meeting related to the current usage of Coleman playfield based on the proposal Seattle Children's Garden is working on. There is some availability later in evenings on summer weeknights and late afternoon/evening on Sundays between April-October. A related question around the timing of the next round of RCO grants was asked. Applications for 2026 were due on 4/30, so the next window will be Q1 of next year.

Lincoln High School: I also wanted to provide an update on Lincoln Playfield. Most recently, SPS has indicated their working towards a decision to be announced at the end of the school year, on June 11th. We have a placeholder on our June 11 BPRC meeting for an update pending further discussions and alignment with SPS.

Elliot Bay Connection: The greenway is open and the two parks (Mrytle Edwards and Centennial) are reopening on June 4th. We're negotiating a one-year interim agreement with the project donors to have them maintain the improvements during the warranty period. We would then accept them early next year. There's a lot of green infrastructure that needs special care and we didn't have the staff to perform that work.

We're beyond thrilled about this innovative partnership and improvements to the park and connection to the new waterfront. I also just learned about other improvements that SAM is making to their section of the park, including a cool new putt-putt golf path through the artwork in combination with improvements to the building on the northwest entrance of the park to offer more community connections.

FIFA World Cup Games: I also wanted to follow-up on a question Whitney raised at our co-chair check in last week about citywide FIFA information specific to local business likely impacted by the events. The city is hosting six matches from June 15-July 6 and is taking significant steps to prepare for safety, security, pedestrian movement, and traffic mitigation.

If you're looking for more information for yourself or your communities, the website listed here includes a pretty comprehensive listing of city resources available to the public including drill downs on a wide range of topics from events to street closers and a lot more. You can also message us if you can't find answers to a particular issue and we can try to connect you to right folks in the City.

Parkways Blog: As you've hopefully received in your inboxes the past two Fridays, [OOO Communications Manager] Christina Hirsch has started compiling blog posts and will be sending to all the commissioners every Friday.

Opportunities to Engage

Beacon Hill Festival (Jefferson Park): Jefferson Community Center is hosting its Annual Beacon Hill Festival on June 6th from 11 AM – 4 PM. The event will include free pottery, painting, gardening, and self-defense classes.

Pop-Up Concerts: In partnership with the Park Foundation and sponsored by Amazon, we're launching the return of our free pop-up concerts at a few designated parks this summer. Each one runs from 6:30-8:00 and they're totally free to the public.

Outdoor Racquet Sport Strategy: As you know, we're continuing robust community engagement surrounding outdoor racquet sports. Following three in-person meetings in May and substantial correspondence from constituents, we're extending additional opportunities to provide feedback into the month of June.

Planned June engagement opportunities:

- June 23rd – West Seattle Public Meeting
- June 25th – NE Seattle Public Meeting
- June 27th – CW Seattle Public Meeting

Next step is to bring back the next round of the draft proposal after gathering and incorporating the extensive community feedback we've received.

Stonecipher notes that there were some RSS changes that were available to take effect in June. Are those changes paused until after the engagement sessions? Finnegan confirms and clarifies that the June timeline was the earliest possible, not that those changes were actually going to occur. However, in collaboration with specific communities, there may be some pilot programs prior to broader implementation.

Seattle Beautiful Game Series: We wanted to keep the reminder of SPR events taking place during FIFA. across programming, operations, and community engagement.

Some of the activities we'll be offering include neighborhood watch parties, youth soccer jamborees, over 60 recreation programs reimagined with soccer themes occurring at community centers, parks, and aquatic facilities and a variety of activations thorough the Beautiful Grant supporting community-led soccer, futsal, and cultural events. Again, you can find all of this on our website for updates if you'd like more information as we get closer to the event.

And here's a quick recap of your subcommittee assignments. The teams have reached out to you earlier this week to make some initial introductions and to orient you to upcoming work and to establish a work plan. So much will be coming on these over the summer.

I also wanted to give you an update on the BPRC Vacancies.

SPR staff are currently working with the Mayor's Office and PCL Committee Chair Juarez's Office to shepherd through four appointment packages. We'll keep you updated as this moves through final approvals and then on an onboarding plan.

Finnegan pauses for questions from the Board.

Stonecipher asks if overtime hours will be authorized for the Park Ranger team during the World Cup. Finnegan clarifies that there will likely be some overtime authorized, as well as additional maintenance/grounds crew focus and other means of keeping eyes on the facilities.

Mays congratulates Finnegan and the department on the recent South Park Plaza opening.

2025 Annual Report

Justin Hellier, Strategic Advisor, delivers the presentation.

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

Hellier describes the purpose and scope of the annual report, noting its requirement as called for in the inter-local agreement establishing the Park District: “an annual report prepared by SPR for the Seattle Park District and the City, including assessment of performance measures and expenditure of District funds.”

Since we’re joining you on the United Nation’s Public Service Day, I thought there’s no better way to begin than to highlight some of the tremendous public service professionals that steward our park and recreation system. We do our work in these three buckets of Healthy People, Thriving Environment, and Vibrant Community, let me introduce you to three of our staff members who help us reach these outcomes.

Hellier introduces three front-line staff stories and anecdotes of their work. The hard work of these folks are more than 1,000 other staff have helped us to be the 8th best, according to the 2025 Trust for Public Land rating.

2025 marked the half-way point of Cycle 2. The Cycle 2 (2023-2028) financial plan added significant resources to many lines of business—expanding existing programs and creating new or rebooted programs. In 2025, SPR continued delivering on the vast majority of Cycle 2 program and service-level commitments, and capital project commitments are generally on track.

Hellier notes that he will not be presenting on every line of business today, but will focus on:

- Athletic Field Scheduling & Management
- Lifelong Recreation
- Childcare
- Decarbonization & Electrification
- Green Seattle Partnership
- New Park Development
- Restroom Updates

SPR’s Athletic Scheduling team coordinates field use by schools, community sports organizations, and SPR programs on athletic fields, ball fields, and sport courts. SPR had a 2025 goal of 250,000 hours of scheduled use; the actual total was 251,567 hours. This included a daily average of 700 hours of sports on SPR/SPS fields (through the JUA), by 250+ community organizations. We updated the SPR field scheduling policy to prioritize newly available field time for new user groups/new sports, and 10 fields were kept unscheduled in winter and summer for drop-in use and spontaneous play.

SPR maintains hundreds of athletic fields and related assets, and a focus of our Cycle 2 capital program is to update and improve these fields. We’ve got a Cycle 2 goal to replace 8-10 synthetic turf fields by 2028, and with 3 completed in 2025 we have reached 8 already! We’ve also working to convert 2 new fields to artificial turf for the first time – and with South Park and Soundview in construction we’re confident we will hit this target in 2026. Cycle 2 also includes playability improvements (field lighting, bleachers, and accessibility) at several sites.

Lifelong Recreation cultivates opportunities that nourish the body, engage the mind, and create community connections for our aging neighbors, including fitness and arts programs, field trips, and more. SPR’s goal for Lifelong Recreation in 2025 was 5,000 programming hours annually; the actual total was 7,888 programming

hours. In 2025, Lifelong Recreation celebrated its 50th year with 29,904 participants across all programs, including Dance for Parkinson's at Garfield Community Center and a partnership with UW Memory Hub for people with dementia and their caregivers. We are reviewing their annual goal due to consistent overperformance.

Cycle 2 provided resources to kickstart SPR's transition to decarbonized facilities. Our goal for the cycle is to decarbonize 4 community center in scope of redevelopments. Lake City, Green Lake, and Queen Anne CCs are in design, with Loyal Heights in planning; construction anticipated by 2027/2028. Additionally, we aim to decarbonize 8 additional facilities by the end of the Cycle.

In addition to the 2025 accomplishments, we've also taken a hard look at our decarbonization plans and identified budgets. As we complete our first decarbonization projects, and as we diver deeper into design work and cost estimating, we're learning a lot about these technologies. We're seeing higher anticipated costs than we initially estimated in 2022. We continue to study full electrification at a variety of sites, such as Van Asselt, Garfield, Jefferson, and Rainier Community Centers, Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center, and Genesee Crew Quarters, and intend to decarbonize several of these, depending on project costs and available resources.

SPR is committed to restoring 2,500 acres of natural areas through the Green Seattle Partnership, engaging community volunteers in stewardship. We had a goal of 50,000 native trees planted in the Cycle (currently at 24,416) and 360,000 other native plants installed (currently 171,991). GSP celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2025; we trained a new crop of Forest Stewards, for a total of 170+ active stewards in 174 parks citywide, and released a strategic action plan to guide restoration, education, and community connections until 2035.

Childcare is an essential service, and SPR and our partner the Associated Recreation Council (ARC) are one of the state's largest providers of licensed care. In 2025 we exceeded our enrollment goals and came very close to our scholarship goal (\$1.47M distributed against a goal of \$1.5M). SPR and ARC operated 18 school year sites and 15 summer camp sites. We also became an eligible provider for the City's childcare assistance program, (CCAP), and had 11 Youth at Work interns in paid job training earning the certifications to work in childcare statewide.

New Park Development: We have several new park commitments in Cycle 2, including the completion of several land bank sites from Cycle 1. Smith Cove Park is on schedule for completion in Fall 2026. For our commitment to complete 8 Cycle 1 land bank sites, we have 3 completed (Cheryl Chow, Hoa Mai, South Park Plaza), 4 sites in pre-bid phase of construction, and 1 site in design. And of our Cycle 2 land bank sites, we have 1 completed (Cayton Corner), 2 sites in design, 3 sites in planning.

Finally, we have Cycle 2 goals to renovate 27 restrooms and weatherize 60 restrooms. After 2025, we have completed 12 renovations and weatherized 28. In 2025, we also developed new design standards for park restrooms to emphasize vandalism resistance, material durability, ease of maintenance, and operational safety, and began a staffed restrooms pilot, using resources from Seattle's Participatory Budgeting program.

The Annual Report traditionally opens with letters from the Superintendent and the BPRC. A draft for 2025 BPRC letter, developed by Phillip Meng after subcommittee review of 2025 accomplishments, was sent to full BPRC for review on May 22. Our question for you is – do the Board and the co-chairs feel comfortable with the draft letter? I want to let the subcommittee members offer their thoughts first.

Flinn expresses support for Meng's letter, specifically noting language about parks being community gathering and meeting spaces. Hellier notes that there was some disagreement about the language included, but broad agreement about content.

Meng thanks Hellier for the level of detail included in the Annual Report. Baum echoes.

Baum notes that he would like for co-chair Nakamura to weigh in before signing the letter, but is comfortable with the draft. Hellier thanks the subcommittee and other SPR staff for their work in preparing the Report.

Summer Readiness

Andy Sheffer, Deputy Superintendent, Planning and Capital Development, delivers the report.

First, I'll talk about our asset readiness. In order to be "summer ready" we strengthen operational readiness ahead of peak season. Our team meets regularly to discuss where our assets stand today, our diverse asset portfolio, the varied usage, and operational challenges.

The core pillars of asset readiness include:

- Preventative Maintenance & Major Maintenance
- Strategic Resource Allocation
- Performance Monitoring & Optimization

Sheffer provides examples of seasonal asset readiness, such as tree watering in summer, and leaf management and winterizing restrooms in the fall.

From a capital standpoint, asset management starts with planning for the lifecycle of an asset, assessing the condition, and determining whether and when that asset is fit for preventative maintenance, renewal, or replacement. The evaluation of these assets includes condition and risk assessments, performance metrics, and projecting future demand.

Sheffer briefly presents current readiness of key summer asset categories:

- Pools (2/2 outdoor open; 8/10 indoor open)
- Wading pools (19/19 open)
- Spray Parks (19/21 open)
- Restrooms (117/129 open)
- Play Areas (154/158 open)
- Synthetic Turf Fields (overview of life cycle/projects)

I'm proud of our approach to asset readiness because it allows us to check our forecast and improve our approach each time. And our asset readiness meetings have Facilities, Recreation, everyone in the room, so we can have good conversations and go through the asset categories.

Flinn asks if SPR is able to set aside budgeted funds for planned maintenance based on asset lifecycle or if those funds must come from annual budgeting. Sheffer clarifies that some of both occurs; maintenance funds are identified as assets come online but asset lifecycles generally far exceed funding cycles, so both are needed. Finnegan adds more maintenance budgeting occurred before the passage of the Metropolitan Park District in 2014, which helped stabilize funding.

Baum asks for clarification on asset management and funding planning. Sheffer clarifies.

Now, I'll talk about our summer recreation programs.

Our outdoor recreation programs bring recreation communities to the communities. Our Summer Food Service & Expanded Recreation provides free lunches, snacks, and recreation opportunities in partnership with United Way, and serves youth ages 0–18.

- 9 Outdoor sites: Little Brook, Pratt, Brighton, Beacon Hill, Roxhill, Highland Park, Judkins, Othello, North Acres

Rec 'N The Streets brings free citywide fitness engagements and year-round flexible recreation programming focused on communities experiencing health disparities. Neighborhoods include Rainier Beach, South Park, and Lake City.

Our Community Centers are providing Summer Day Camps and Activity Camps. School Age Day Camps are for ages 5-12, and Activity Camps, for ages 3-10. Camp themes include sports, arts, science, and outdoor education and more. Scholarships are available.

The Summer of Safety Program (SOS) provides free drop-in structured, supervised activities to support young people who may not otherwise engage in formal programs in the months of July and August. Summer of Safety is designed:

- To provide spaces for youth and teens, from underserved communities who wouldn't otherwise have access, to attend a structured activity program at a Community Center.
- To provide a safe environment for learning at least one new skill or participating in one experience that they have not had before.
- To develop a sense of their ability to influence their own future and their impact on the community.

There are many other opportunities for recreation in our communities this summer:

- Teen Summer Musical: 5 shows August 28-August 30
- Big Day of Play: August 15th
- Summer City Center Events: including Dancing 'til Dusk and Center City Cinema
- Summer Youth Employment & Service Learning Programs: internships for youth ages 16-24

The Beautiful Game Series

- 7 outdoor watch parties in neighborhood parks featuring live match screenings, family-friendly activities, cultural performances, and community programming
- 12 indoor watch parties at community centers throughout Seattle
- 2 youth soccer jamborees at Magnuson Park and Delridge Playfield
- More than 60 recreation programs reimagined with soccer themes at parks, community centers, and aquatic facilities
- Community-led cultural and soccer events supported through the Beautiful Game Grant program

We are offering free programs at our swimming beaches. We have 9 lifeguarded beaches this summer; we are offering free beach swim lessons for kids aged 6-16 at all lifeguarded beaches. Children receiving free swim lessons from Swim Seattle at swimming pools may also participate in beach swim lessons in addition to their lessons at the pool! We are also offering a lifeguard training team at Mt. Baker and West Green Lake beaches. This free 8-week program for ages 15–18 prepares youth for employment in aquatics includes certifications, uniforms, and job skill development.

Finally, I'll spotlight Beautiful Games Activation at Discovery Park. We are activating Discovery Park this summer in several ways.

The Agents of Discovery app will create an interactive, self-guided trail experience, transforming the Discovery Park Loop Trail into a digital educational tour. The app highlights Discovery Park history, wildlife, and ecosystem education, provides SPR-branded digital wayfinding for visitors and tourists, and will increase educational outreach and visitor engagement throughout the summer.

We're also going to establish a temporary pop-up tent and visitor information station near the Discovery Park Visitor Center to:

- Provide Information, hand out maps, and give directions
- Offer visitor engagement opportunities and education
- Answer questions
- Make sure temporary bathroom is open and clean
- Operate Thursday through Sunday throughout the summer season

The operating Hours of this visitor's center will be 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM, from June 18, 2026 – September 6, 2026. It will be staffed by 2–3 temporary recreation attendants.

Finally, we will be providing a Saturday shuttle service and other accessibility improvements. The shuttle service will support transportation access throughout Discovery Park. Our goal is to improve visitor mobility and access to activation areas, to support accessibility for families, seniors, and visitors with mobility challenges, and to coordinate with event operations and visitor information staff. This plan will include Sanic accessibility planning and wayfinding signage.

Sheffer pauses for questions from the Board.

Meng asks if SPR or another agency will be operating the shuttle. Finnegan clarifies that ARC will be running the shuttle.

Chisholm Clare asks about lifeguard staffing levels. Finnegan notes that staffing is full, outside of summer swim league at Medgar Evers Pool, which is affected by maintenance.

Old & New Business

Baum adjourns the meeting at 7:44 PM.