

Seattle Parks and Recreation  
Viewpoint Advisory Team  
Meeting minutes

September 26, 2018

Viewpoint Advisory Team  
Seattle Parks and Recreation Administration Building  
Park Board Room  
100 Dexter Ave. N, Seattle  
6:00 pm- 8:30 pm

<b>Members:</b>	<b>Present (bold)</b>	<i>Absent (italic)</i>
	<b>Michael Austin</b>	<b>William Lowe</b>
	<b>Weston Brinkley</b>	<b>Joanna Nelson de Flores</b>
	<i>Suzie Burke (invited)</i>	<b>Laila Pajimula</b>
	<b>Bruce Carter</b>	<i>Dorian Savon Magee-Petty</i>
	<b>Karen Daubert</b>	

#### **Presenters**

6:00 pm Call to order

#### **Kathy Nyland, SPR, Facilitator**

Started with a check-in to see how group was and what they needed. Proceeded with a recap of the September 12 meeting when we learned about viewpoint history and the designation process. We learned that these 16 parks were actually designated prior and the process in 2007 was focused on identifying criteria and developing a process for any future designations. No parks have been added as official viewpoints since that process was approved in 2007.

We spent time looking at the current conditions of the 16 viewpoints, looking at challenges as well as opportunities. We also discussed resources and allocation and the tensions of plans on paper versus the need to respond to immediate situations.

That was the focus of the last meeting. Tonight, we'll hear from a handful of presenters talking about maintenance to new regulations to possible approaches.

Housekeeping: Minutes from the September 26, 2018 meeting were adopted.

#### **Patrick Merriam, SPR, Parks Resources**

Patrick manages the teams in the six maintenance districts across the city, which are responsible for daily routine maintenance, including evening and weekends. Describes activities and approaches that are deployed on a daily basis. Activities performed at viewpoints (May-Sept) trash removal and cleaning of the parks is seven days a week, two times a day. (Oct-March) this is performed three to five days a week because we lose staff in the winter time. We mow, and prune, with an emphasize at ground level. Frequency is daily in hot weather, even more with the special events. We do set-up and clean-up for those type of events. Routine maintenance is difficult to describe because we do so much response and demand that now seems like routine (i.e. encampment) so it's hard for us to determine baseline.

Graphic demonstrates how much time we spent in Viewpoints throughout 2017. Most on grounds maintenance. There's litter and garbage, irrigation. Treat viewpoints like most other parks. Try to keep in good condition, with landscape maintenance. Frequency is erratic with other demands, like encampments. Other priorities are pulling us away.

Q: What percentage of resources are being redirected to special projects like encampments?

A: Two teams are at full-time. 20% of the two teams time is being redirected to other districts. We work on more than SPR property, like SDOT and WSDOT properties.

Frequently get calls from community to meet onsite and discuss concerns and try to address those to the best of our ability and within means.

Q: Graphics. This is breakdown of hours spent on maintaining viewpoints. What's overall percentage of district time spent on viewpoints? Versus of all of the time spent.

A: This is 2017, average. Different at each viewpoint. Kerry Park is different than others, with users.

Q: Is this allocation of only viewpoints?

A: This is something to give you numbers, showing how we spent time at viewpoints.

Q: Describe that some of the 16 take more maintenance. Having trouble reconciling Mt Baker with I-90, for example. There are wide ranges of needs.

A: These figures are from the 16 viewpoints, and an average.

#### **Deb Brown-McGarry, SPR, Arboriculturist**

Provides overview of Urban Forestry operations. 485 parks, 6,400+ acres, and a rough estimate of 280,000+ trees in our parks and natural areas. Our staff consists of 2 arboriculturists who manage the crew, 3 lead-tree trimmers, and 6 tree trimmers.

Tree care is one of the most dangerous jobs in the country. It requires years of experiences, specialized skills, and equipment (98-foot track lift). Goal of urban forestry is a 7-year maintenance cycle, meaning we get to each park every seven year to assess maintenance needs. Currently, because of the amount of response work, we do not have a set pruning cycle. We try to respond to the most urgent needs.

Historically, our practices were not sustainable. Maintenance was not as safe (bucket trucks on side of slopes) and put people at risk. Other past practices, like repeated topping of trees and coppicing without proper follow-up was unsustainable and viewed as improper tree care. This impacted slope stability and we now have new ECA Ordinance which governs how we manage trees on public property, especially in steep slope areas.

Bowen Park in 2008 was an example of new restoration practices, such as erosion control, selected trees removed, fabric used, mulching, plantings to hold slope. These are ideas that we could use to improve stability. This was an example of better management: removal of selected trees, restore slopes with lower growing native shrubs, manage for pollinators, slope stability, and views. To scale this up, it would need a large initial investment, but it would be beneficial and more sustainable in long-term.

Q: Do we do thinning? Is this a current or past practice?

A: Thinning as in individual tree? You'd have to think so much to see through it so wouldn't really help improve views. You'd need to lift canopy to see under them. Many of trees were topped in past and grew back dense to thin, you'd need to remove so much.

Q: Do we have reciprocity agreement with SCL in common area about power lines.

A: Power lines are in right-of-way. SCL clears within 10' of power lines in right-of-way.

Q: Thoughts on ongoing changes in climate, are there any current slope conditions in certain locations that will take an especially high cost to stabilize?

A: Hold thoughts for geo-tech consultants.

Q: Slide of Bowen Park. Can you talk about slope treatment at Bowen versus treatment at Kerry Park? Slope looks similar, but treatment differs. Kerry planted with grass, and in stark contrast with Bowen.

A: Bowen slope is quite a bit steeper and there are houses involved, if there's a slide. As opposed to Kerry Park.

Comment: At Magnolia Park, we have problems with maples. They are tall and swing in winds. Talk about replacing Maples.

Response: Coppicing is a very particular practice. Doesn't help with slope stability. Practice is coppicing once and then wait 10 years for harvesting (firewood). In Magnolia, we were cutting every two years which isn't coppicing. Old practice for firewood. If cut every two years, not allow root structure to recover which leads to instability.

### **Nich Johnson, SPR, Arborist**

Our trees are maintained for safety. That is our primary concern. Our second concern is health. And then, there's sites that have different maintenance needs, such as the Japanese Garden. Maintenance there is more along the lines of disease maintenance. Lincoln Park or Discovery our role is more managing trees around potential falls that could be impactful. Trees at Denny or more along branches. Different sites require different maintenance.

Maintenance always starts off with an assessment. There are three types. One is walking through/walking by, with a quick visual glance. There's also walking around the tree and visually assessing. And the third kind is sonic tomography /boring equipment to look inside the tree. More intense, can climb inside tree which is more intense and can take two or three hours per tree. Most common assessment is the visual, walk around.

Often get asked to do pruning for (building) clearance. We are required to keep our tree 14' above the roads, so not to reach over the sidewalk. This takes a significant amount of time. Maintenance for tree life is a growing need. Goals is usually safety related. Significant amount of work revolves around removing dead or unsafe trees. Get calls, 5-10 calls a day, from people asking us to look at a tree. Cabling is a tool that we don't utilize often: it's a rope system to support a tree system that might be failing. Needs a 3-5 inspection cycle and we aren't able to do that currently. As far as diseases, we have only focused on Dutch Elm which was introduced to Seattle around none years ago (beetle fungus in Elms). Last maintenance task is watering.

Composition of tree is viewpoints is mixture- native and non-native. Some mature, and some young/saplings. Some have grown to potential and are starting to recede. Benefit of tree are many- improve slope stability by reducing erosion. Stop rain water from hitting soil. Pull water out of soil, making less amount of time when soil is saturated.

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Q: Over the years, how have the quantity of your resources changed to maintain trees? Is crew the same size as it was 10 years ago?

A: It's about the same size, same capacity. 11 staff members for 485 parks, 6,500 acres, and 280,000+ trees. Can't get to everything so looking at practices, priorities, and resources to be more responsive. For tree crew, the focus is public safety. This crew is often called for assistance by SFD. Work interpreted by seasonal weather changes. Have been tracking since 2015, see patterns around August when storms hit hard. Then tapers, hit again in January/February. That seasonal cycle and emerging issues pull our resources.

Q: When responding to storms and damage, are these trees that were on your radar? Would more resources devoted at the front-end (assessment), help minimize efforts when responding? Would that help better predict?

A: Sometimes yes. Sometimes no. Sometimes dramatic swings effect even healthiest of tree (like spike in temperature in Spring).

Q: Are there special policies for tree crews when it comes to viewpoints? Or strictly focused on priorities and sometimes viewpoints fall under response and there's no systematic approach? Not technique per se but is there a policy specific to viewpoints?

A: No, this is our starting point. There's no priority. The goals are across city-wide for all parks and trees. There's nothing specific for viewpoints.

Q: Equipment- weight of truck, are of truck, counterweight, is there a counter to get to yes.

A: Want to get away from dangling people off bucket. Find a holistic way to prune and cutting trees down. Want landscaping to sustain itself, with environmental purpose. Changing the environment. Examples like landscaping that serves multi-purpose- low growing an contributes to pollinator pathway. May need to plan out a large capital improvement plan to tap into these concerns. 11 staff that are qualified arborist to tend to 485 parks and maintain 280,000 trees, plus greenbelts (3,600 acres). Right now, just able to focus on target area which is the highly used trafficked areas.

Q We've heard about the problems but are we going to hear about possible solutions. That's more than just an ask for funding.

A: yes, the technical reports will touch upon some recommendations.

Q: You've mentioned the 7-year cycle goal. Do we need to shorten that?

A: We are not anywhere near meeting that goal. Seven years is the maximum amount of time between maintenance cycle to allow for most effectiveness (health and safety of trees).

Q: Hear that are only 11 of you? Do we need to double that staff? Are staff available? And cost?

A: Best "guesstimate". Based on word orders and need for maintenance, maybe 30 more people. Cost is a big ask. Off the cuff, \$3M plus benefits, equipment, fleets, etc....

Data: Budget breakdown, staff capacity

Q: How do we compare to other metropolitan areas? In terms of number of staff, need, and approaches/techniques?

A: Portland and Seattle most comparable. Portland integrates their version of Department of Transportation. Their Parks Department is responsible for the street trees. They allocate work differently.

Q: Can you make a correlation between native/non-native? Do we need to focus on non-native?

A: Some non-natives are undesirable: they're invasive but some are appropriate. Some were native that we're re-introducing (White Oak).

Comment: Many of our developed parks aren't native environment, have beautiful ornamental. Non-natives contribute other benefit.

Q: Can we talk about non-native in Colman Park?

A: Haven't seen an inventory of tree in Colman Park.

Q: Comments: Can you expand on the native/non-native trees? Neighbors in Mt Baker area, Colman Park. How do we weigh in the individuals with the historic views under outdated practices? How do we weigh that with being responsible stewards? How do we address both? Concerns of neighbors who are used to certain practices versus today's best practices? There's also private views and public views. Issuing permit to private individual to cut trees on park property is giving away city resources for private benefit? How do we decide who gets the view and what view? Is the greater question maintenance?

A: Currently we do not have a good solution. Comes down to resources. Have nine-staff, only maintain 16 viewpoints as a starter for 7-year cycle.

Q: Is parody on our horizon? Is there a starting point that reachable? Do we need to farm this out?

A: Yes, possibility with resources. With restoration efforts, could replace some large trees with lower growing shrubs so you wouldn't need same level of maintenance. Some wedding and pruning but less need from tree-crew. Trying to work with SGP, turn the viewpoint areas (or areas below view) into their work so our tree crew isn't the point and can focus elsewhere.

Q: Have there been other programs that have replaced large tree with these lower growing shrubs? Other cities? If so, was it successful?

A: We've tried at Betty Bowen.

#### **Claire Hoffman, consultant, ESA**

ESA local environmental company- permitting, water, engineering, restoration, etc. Hired to look at existing view condition at a few parks, began with a few locations. Conducted desktop analysis. Public views protected under Seattle Municipal Code. Environmental Critical Areas (ECAs) are protected- wetlands, geologic hazards, steep slopes, etc. Sunset, Hamilton, Dr Jose Rizal.

Sunset Hill- has all of the critical areas. Graphics: Green is park. Tan is wildlife habitat. Blue hatched is wetlands. Whole area is essentially a steep slope.

Hamilton: Steep slope but doesn't have other critical areas.

#### **Brad Thurber, consultant, HWA**

HWA is a geo-sciences consultancy firm- geology, slope stability, construction inspections. Brad is an engineering geologist, focusing on glacial geology. Looked at three parks. Walked slopes to an extent (where it was safe), observed slope inclination, and vegetation (types), conditions of trees and undergrowth. Looked at some structures, like retaining walls and sidewalks. Looked at run-off, groundwater seepage, and past sliding. Didn't see fresh/new sliding. Time frame was April 2018. Reviewed records of landslides, available geotechnical data. Slides- slide evidence, topography. Purple shows previous slides from 1923, 1980. Blue area is landslide study area from 1975. Slide: Geological map of Seattle, zoomed in to Hamilton (2005). Layers- blue is advanced outwash sand, underneath that (purple) is clay from glacial deposits, and green is older clays and silts. Ice over-consolidated sediments and made for dense condition. Issue is (as shown by black squares) indicate landslide deposits on steep slopes. Hard clay with sand on top is place for water to perch, making it prone to landslide to occur. Because of this condition, you have steep slopes: the view is great because the land in front of you has gone away! (because of previous slides). At Hamilton, no fresh sliding observed. Elder fallen, blackberries taking over. Maples had been topped, and now prolific growth with growth at top. Not preferred maintenance method. Least unstable portions of slope are those with Douglas Firs growing on them and there are none of those at this site. That said, Douglas Firs are no guarantee of slide

prevention/slope stability. Deciduous trees are suspect if have no information about slide history. Wall near top that will need future maintenance.

Recommendations: unless have the funding, hardscape everything as if you were retaining hillslope above. Promotion of tree health. Native plantings. Remove invasives, such as blackberry brambles (bare soil underneath). Storm water drainage needs to be maintained. Retaining walls, maintained and replaced. Sunset Hill has slide starts at edge of grass. Air photos show hasn't retreated much but sidewalk buckled. Gradual but incessant change. To maintain views, could just let slopes do their things but you'll lose the land from which views are enjoyed, and liability is an issue.

Q: Given types of soil you've described, is it likely for slow slope retreat or is there a chance you could go seven years without any incident and then something major could happen?

A: Yes, to both. At Hamilton, lost few feet of soil in a couple different areas.

Q: Lidar, is that an expensive process? Is that something standard for each of the 16 viewpoints?

A: It's already been done, has been compiled by Washington DNR on their web portal. Gray scale, topographic images available online. Information helps reveal slide areas. Have not looked at all viewpoint sites, that would be next step, to examine and process data. Info was eye opening.

Q: Based on review of three, if we selectively removed large tree and replaced with ground cover and native shrubs, do you feel that would be that vegetation could stabilize slope? Or are we still at risk?

A: Typically trust tree rooting, because it's deeper. With Big Leaf Maples, fast view blockers, what's their root depth versus native shrubs? What's most effective? Inclination of slope comes into play, as is type of soil. Vegetation is not guarantee for slope stability everywhere, but better than bare soil or sod and cheaper than hardscaping, which would still have maintenance costs.

Comment: there are certain types of plants that are better suited that have deeper roots. If super steep, shouldn't have to go too far down [with view-managed vegetation], is shorter/low growing. Ex: Hamilton is 80' slope could have trees that max at 15' planted that won't interfere with view.

Q: What are your principal candidates for that kind of planting?

A: I'd say natives. Thrive in slope conditions. Specifics include site specific depending on what you want to achieve. With change in climate, may want to move into a new direction like re-introduction (White Oak). Samples from California that are drought tolerate. Native was rule but rules are changing.

Q: Is there a chance, that after looking at other 13 viewpoints, that these recommendations would change?

A: May have other situations arise that need to be addressed. Maybe more site specific. But generally, these recommendations are applicable.

### **Andrea Petzel, consultant, Broadview Planning**

Focus on the policy piece. Broadview Planning (BVP) staff are planners, public health analysts, community engagement specialists who are rooted in local government experience. For this project they will assist with policy development, technical writing and community engagement. They are not the drivers but will assist and help articulate policies. BVP just wrapped up work under tree management policy, which was last updated in 200, and are involved in the viewpoint policy work because of SPR's desire to separate out tree management from viewpoint policies.

Q: Reference to tree management plan, is that for SPR or city?

A: To clarify - it is not tree ordinance, but SPR's tree management policy. All of these documents are influenced and are informed by one another. The tree management policy is from 2001 so we need to

separate and unbundle the two in order to have policies for tree management and policy for viewpoints. As far as other jurisdictions, not many have done this work, yet. There isn't a lot of guidance from other cities. Not surprised that work doesn't exist to a great extent because people are reluctant to put preventative maintenance on paper.

Q: For outreach, will there be questions around how views are cherished now versus to how they used to be? Maybe there are views that are no longer considered significant.

Q: Are there going to be conversations about potential Private Public Partnerships (P3) opportunities? It sounds like some of the parks generate revenue. Are there possibilities there?

A: We are just starting the outreach with this process. Equity is a focus, especially the accessibility of these parks. It's about primarily about maintenance and but also several other issues.

### **Jon Jainga, SPR, Natural Resources Unit**

Walked through updated matrix, which now includes some budgetary information. Focus on Hamilton, and possible strategies. Matrix includes various elements within the 16 designated viewpoint parks. Walked through the headers/categories.

Q: Not all significant trees are obstructions, correct?

A: Yes. Not all are blocking.

Q: What's the definition of significance?

A: Defined by size (diameter), same as ECAs ordinance.

Hamilton: What could we do differently?

Identify view corridor. Because of previous landslide about 8-9 years ago, we have an opportunity to try something different. We started restoration process. Plant native shrubs, with deeper rooting to help stabilize. Erosion control methods to create other possibilities (pollination pathway). Enhance wildlife, like ground-nesting birds.

Q: Your restoration costs estimates, is this one-time cost to get to more sustainable place? If that expense made (investments), are you anticipating labor costs would be less in future?

A: Yes and yes. Larger initial upfront costs and then less to maintain. A step towards hitting seven-year cycle?

Q: Do utility run under parking?

A: Yes.

Q: Restoration costs seem low. Square footage and figures seem off.

A: Square footage is of entire park.

Comment: If you could break out square footage for maintenance and restoration.

Q: About Vegetation Management Plans as it relates to these viewpoints. Laid out by arborist, seem complete but with no budget figures. These are proposals. They are tolls that could help you with options. Are there budget figures? Are they aligned with the matrix columns?

A: Yes, they are basically the same. We can further dissect and drill down?

Q: Is initial costs, restoration? Does it include initial establishment period?

A: Yes.

Q: Moving maintenance to GSP program. Would that mean, maintenance costs just go elsewhere? Are there other deferred costs elsewhere? Are there more examples e should explore?

A: Yes, smaller elsewhere. And will look at other possible costs.

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Q: Understand some neighborhoods are more mobilized and can help maintain some of the parks. Is Hamilton a mobilized area that can help maintain to keep costs down? P3 possibilities, look at system-wide benefits. Can revenue generating areas help with less able areas?

A: They have a large volunteer group in that area. We want to think outside box, maybe look at companies or sponsorships? Example, Hamilton on tour bus stop. Maybe tour company can help us with maintenance. What are the partnership possibilities? Naming rights?

Q: Are there policies in place? Or do we have to create?

A: They exists.

Comment: We can email policies to group.

Comment: Dr. Jose Rizal demonstration site because it's located in an area that is outside the viewpoint cluster. Refer to the Equity Index map.

Q: Naming rights, have other cities raised significant funding?

A: Other cities have not started this process and are watching what Seattle is doing.

Q: Have we prioritized restoration? Do we look at return of investment?

A: We could.

Comment: matrix: ADA next to transit columns.

**Public Comments:**

Three comments provided.

Comment: Magnolia Community Council requests that Ursula Judkins Viewpoint be replaced with the Magnolia Park and Magnolia Boulevard. Ursula Judkins viewpoints sit on edge of the Magnolia Bridge and is being decommissioned in 2020 so park will not be accessible. Ursula limited current use. Focus on community is on Magnolia Park and Boulevard. They are used regularly, for all uses. We've worked closely with SPR on maintenance of these parks. Ursula should not be a high resource focus.

Response: Make sure this is flagged as issue as important. We decided to start effort with the officially designated 16 parks.

Comment: Curious why Olmsted Parks are not incorporated into this effort. Was led to believe these parks were going to be incorporated. For the last couple of years, have work closely with SPR and identified public view corridors along Magnolia. Had geo-tech consultants come in to say what areas to focus on; walked boulevard and surprised that all that work doesn't count. These designations and policy were a surprised and unknown. Encourage to review and make sure resources are allocate to parks being used.

Comment: Great effort but it is a shame for Magnolia to use Ursula Judkins instead of Magnolia Park. We've been working with SPR on these very efforts, maintenance for iconic views. Shame for not opening up the process to add more. Encourage you to substitute Magnolia Park and Boulevard instead of Ursula Judkins.

**Kathy Nyland, SPR, Facilitator**

Reminder that group making recommendations and options. Draft report and present to Interim Superintendent in early November. We have some homework: edit the matrix (transit/ADA), get more funding info about staffing and capacity, and compile the questions.

October 10 is next meeting, which we are developing the agenda. It's about prioritization, related policies, other city initiatives, and budget.

Round Table: What do you need to help with next conversation?

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- Spend time with existing information.
- Print out material.
- Appreciate equity index overlay with map of 16
- Snacks. Popcorn!