

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MEETING MINUTES

June 13, 2002

Present:

Bruce Bentley
James Fearn
Yale Lewis
Sarah Neilson
Kathleen Warren

Excused:

Susan Golub
Kate Pflaumer

Staff:

Ken Bounds, Park Board Superintendent
Sandy Brooks, Park Board Coordinator

Chair Bruce Bentley called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. While waiting for a quorum, the Superintendent's report was given.

Canada geese supporters held a noisy, but peaceful, protest outside the Parks headquarters during the first portion of the meeting. Audience members requested that the protestors be asked to quiet down to allow the audience and Board to carry out their scheduled business. Superintendent Bounds spoke briefly with the protestors, who soon disbanded and left the premises.

Superintendent's Report:

Superintendent Bounds gave the following report:

- **Greenlake Crew National Winners** - Greenlake Rowing & Sailing sent four boats to Cincinnati, Ohio, to the National USA Junior Rowing Championship. Two boats won 1st place and two finished in 6th place. Ken's daughter was coxswain on one of the boy's varsity boats.
- **Thornton Creek Celebration** - A community event is being planned for Saturday, June 15, at 10:00 a.m. to celebrate the acquisition of a property along Thornton Creek, near 35th NE and NE 117th. Parks, SPU, Thornton Creek Alliance, and other groups will participate. The two-acre property was purchased in January, but the event is being scheduled while family members of the former owner of the property are in Seattle. The City is also planning to purchase another property (Maple Leaf Community Garden) from the same seller.
- **Summer Beaches and Wading Pools to Open** - Saturday, June 22, marks the opening of the summer beach season with the opening of seven lifeguarded

beaches on Lake Washington and two lifeguarded beaches on Green Lake. In addition, all 25 wading pools will be open by June 25, with some the weekend before. Thanks to funding from ProParks, the wading pools will operate longer hours and some on additional weekend and holidays. A new brochure has been printed outlining the full schedule. Special thanks to KING-TV which, as the official wading pool station, will make the call for the next day operation, during the 5:00 pm weather report.

- **Golden Gardens** - Tuesday evening a public meeting was held at Golden Gardens Bathhouse to discuss the beach fire problems at this park. There were fairly serious problems earlier this spring with 75 fires on Mother's Day, causing air pollution, crowd control, and other problems. Over 50 citizens attended to hear the Police and Fire Departments explain the problems from their perspective and the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency describe the air pollution these fires create. This agency has also issued us a notice of violation. We took comments from 20 citizens, most of which favored keeping the beach fires. Comments will continue to be taken through June 14 when we will send a recommendation for action to the Superintendent.
- **Jefferson CC Grant** - Parks was successful in receiving a federal grant to put in sprinklers at the community center. This is one of the few federal grants that Parks has access to.
- **The Pergola** - Beginning June 17, work will begin on reinstallation and a celebration event will be held on July 3. Media and public interest in the Pergola repairs continues to run high. Several media outlets ran stories over this past weekend announcing that Pergola repairs had begun and that the structure itself would be returning in the coming weeks.
- **Parks Foundation Volunteer Park Project** - The Parks Foundation is moving forward on a \$60,000 project to begin restoration that will restore the historic ponds that flank the Volunteer Park reservoir. Total cost of the project is estimated at \$60-200,000 and the Foundation is looking for additional funding. We will make sure that the work dovetails with reservoir work.
- **Goose Season** - Earlier this spring, Parks Department staff began adding goose eggs as has been done for the past decade. In July, federal government staff will begin capturing and euthanasing geese, as they have done for the past two years. This effort is in conjunction with other jurisdictions around Lake Washington, including the County, State, and federal governments.
- **Lower Woodland Playfield** - Legislation went before City Council's Parks, Education and Libraries Committee this week on accepting the Mariners grant for the project at Lower Woodland. This work should be done later this summer.
- **Golf Management** - In a previous meeting, the Park Board made recommendations on the management of golf. Parks Department staff, in

consultation with Seattle Golf, will hire a director of golf who will report to the Parks Department and also report to the Board of Seattle Golf as a way of eliminating duplication. Parks and Seattle Golf are discussing how to structure this relationship and what changes should be made to the current agreement, which is in effect for another three years.

With a quorum present, the agenda consent items were approved, with one correction to the minutes (Board member Sarah Neilson had heard about a water taxi meeting - she did not attend the meeting, as reported in the minutes), including the June 13 agenda, minutes of the May 23 meeting, and the acknowledgment of correspondence. **The motion to approve, as corrected, was made by James Fearn, seconded by Kate, and approved unanimously.**

Oral Requests and Communications from the Audience

Chair Bruce Bentley reminded the audience that the general public comment portion of the agenda is reserved for topics that have not had or are not scheduled for a public hearing. There were no oral requests.

Westcrest Park Offleash Area - Briefing and Public Hearing

Karen Galt, Parks Department Westcrest Park project manager, gave an overview of the proposed work for the off-leash area. She introduced Nadine Laszlo of Murase Associates.

History: This is one component of a Pro Parks Levy Park Development Project. A new play area and trail improvements are also proposed. The off-leash area is approximately 4.4 acres and includes two main gathering areas, one service road access, and a new 15-stall parking lot and park entrance from the north side of the park.

In 1996 Westcrest Park was designated as an off-leash site, with an off-leash area identified north of the meadow area and south of the West Seattle reservoir. The off-leash dog area was difficult for dog owners to locate. The designated area was small and hard to find, signage was needed, and it was too close to the meadow area designated for use by families and children. Because of poor signage, enforcement of the off-leash dog regulations became extremely difficult. The meadow area was damaged by constant use by the dogs.

In 2000 the Pro Parks levy passed and funding was secured to help implement proposed changes to the park. Three primary improvements were identified: 1) a better location for the dogs that was physically separate from the meadow area; 2) restoration of the existing meadow area as a family area with a playground; and 3) enhancement of the existing trails system within the Park.

On March 7, 2002, the first of three public meetings was held and staff received lots of verbal comments. On April 30, after more design development, the focus became the off-

leash area, which again received a broad range of comments. A third public meeting will be held in mid-July to present construction documents.

Karen displayed two detailed maps, which included the scope of the proposed project. Nadine has been working on this project since 2000. The second map gives a closer look at the off-leash area, which would be fenced off.

Board members suggested wood chips along the trails for trail preservation and asked the length of the service road, which is 1,400 linear feet. (NOTE- north lot doesn't yet exist.) The fenced trail/service road would allow them an off-leash route connecting the two meadow areas and the proposed north parking lot. Mayor Nickels has proposed burying all City of Seattle reservoirs, including this one, which will increase the land acreage of the park. Board members asked why the off-leash area is the only part of the plan coming before the Park Board. Karen answered that it is the only departure from the Master Plan trail/play area.

Scope of Proposed Work: Westcrest Park is comprised of 81 acres. The current (or pilot) off-leash area is 2.5 acres. The proposed project would expand the off-leash area to 4.4 acres. This includes .5 acre for smaller dogs and 3.75 acres for larger dogs (including the fenced service road.) Chain link fencing will be installed around the off-leash area and Park staff hopes for funding to vinyl coat the fencing. Split rail fencing is more attractive but is double the cost of vinyl coat fencing. Park staff believe the recommendation is the best balance of the multiple recreational uses at the park, while being sensitive to the valuable environmental resources. The presentation concluded at 7:45 pm.

Audience testimony: Chair Bruce Bentley reminded the audience that comments are limited to three minutes, to keep emotions out of testimony, and to be respectful of others.

Marilyn Sandal - came to the meeting representing Seattle Audubon Society and worked on the Magnuson off-leash project. Westcrest Park has a high level of native growth plant species. She urged the Board to protect this native habitat by ensuring good fencing and adequate signage of the off-leash areas.

Allen Yen - a botanist, represented the 800-member Central Puget Sound Native Plant Society, with most members owning dogs. He is pleased that the off-leash area is marked off and urged Parks Department to restore the previously damaged areas. He approves of the plan presented by Parks staff and approves the expansion. He had three points to make: 1) if dogs are allowed to run free, enforce the off-leash laws; 2) respect multi-use of the park - trails, school usage, exercising dogs - and don't favor any one group over another; and 3) restore the habitat with native plants.

Linda Feltner - has lived next to Westcrest for 16 years, takes her dogs there, and has observed a large number of other dog owners and their dogs using the park. She supports the off-leash area, but is concerned with damage to the habitat and with safety issues. She

urged Parks to make the fencing dog-proof and install clear signage. She suggested that a future Neighborhood Matching Fund project could be to install fencing.

Carrie Nolen - is a dog owner and pro-dog park. She used to drive to Magnuson and Marymoor Park to exercise her dogs, but that is too far for her to drive from southwest Seattle. She pointed out that Seattle has only eight small off-leash parks and asked for 8-10 acres for the Westcrest off-leash area. The proposed 4.5 acre off-leash area in Westcrest is partially unusable due to blackberry thickets and brambles. She believes that allowing a smaller amount of space for dogs causes more damage - and giving dogs more space to run causes less damage. She questioned whether, once the reservoir is capped in the future, that area would be included in the off-leash area.

Cheryl Cullen - is a member of Citizen's for Off-leash Areas (COLA) and believes citizens who oppose the off-leash area paint a negative picture. She is not opposed to fencing in the off-leash area, but believes a chain-link fence bordering a paved service road is not a natural park setting for dogs. She requested that the half-mile loop trail at the northeast portion of the park be fenced in and used as off-leash so the dogs can have a more natural trail site experience.

Linda Camp - has been walking the Westcrest Park trails for 20 years and believes the illicit activity that has occurred at the park has decreased due to walkers/dog walkers frequent park use. Dog walkers have maintained the trails, picked up litter, knives, and broken glass, and currently have plans to plant donated flowers and trees in the park. Dogs and their owners need shady areas to walk - the open field is too hot in the summer.

Susan Hansen - used to live near Westcrest Park and continues to drive there five-to-seven times weekly to exercise her dogs. She thanked Parks and City Council for the off-leash areas. Don't penalize either dog owner/non-dog owners. She believes the fenced access road is not a trail experience, expanding the trail into the northeastern loop is not unreasonable, and that off-leash use of the park has increased use of the park by others.

Chuck Carver - believes that before the off-leash area was included at Westcrest that drug/sexual activity controlled the park and many people avoided the wooded areas. Dog owners have helped deter the unwanted activity, which now has moved to the far south end of the park. He believes that land value near the park has increased due to more park usage and that the elderly now feel safer using the park. He urged the dog owners/non-dog owners to work together.

Temple Morris - is a dog owner and uses the trail along the reservoir and all other trails frequently. It is helpful for dog owners to be able to get under trees if it is raining or if the weather is very warm. She urged that the Park be maintained as an off-leash area.

Pat Shaffer - is a dog owner who uses the park often and obeys the off-leash rules, but believes the lack of signage/enforcement encourages others to use non-off-leash areas for their dogs. She thinks responsible dog owners want to come to off-leash areas, instead of having their dogs in areas where they aren't wanted/allowed.

Mike York - has lived next door to the park for 16 years and is a dog owner. Before a portion of the park became off-leash, the park was used for both legitimate and illegitimate purposes. He thinks it is a misconception that the off-leash area has encouraged use of the park and that dogs have encroached into non-off-leash areas of the park. He suggested fencing off the proposed trail to protect habitat surrounding the loop and changing the north parking lot into a fenced off-leash area.

Michael Adamson - his family and two poodles have used the park at least one hour daily for the past four years. He urged that the off-leash area be expanded out into the trails. He believes humans cause much of the erosion in the park by going off the trails and suggested volunteers could build trail-protecting boardwalks like those in the Olympic National Forest. He is also concerned with tents in the park, where people appear to be living, and believes the trails that are made to these tents damages the natural vegetation. He also believes that men using the south area woods for illicit sexual activity cause more damage than dogs.

Ron Prince - is a nearby homeowner and has noticed that dog owners in the park have been more respectful for the past couple of months, for which he thanked them. He urged any off-leash expansion to be fenced to protect the habitat. He believes dog owners have driven the illicit activity to the south end of the park, near the Seattle Police Department horse patrol barn.

Jerry Malmo - is chair of COLA. City Council directed the Parks Department to explore the option of making Westcrest Park's 81 acres off-leash and he believes the designers have done a good job. Lots of volunteer hours and thousands of dollars go into re-seeding the off-leash areas, which saves Parks Department funds. This isn't a new concept - Northacres Park is a forested off-leash area park, and the concept works well there. The 15-space parking area is inadequate and the off-leash area should be moved away from the children's area.

Mary Bicknell - became involved with Westcrest Park to get the SPD horse patrol barns moved away from the forested areas of the park. She recently visited the large off-leash area of Magnuson Park and observed that all vegetation is now gone from the area.

Cindy Dout - has lived in South Seattle for two years, is a dog owner, and a self-proclaimed "goody two shoes" in her use of the park. She stays in the off-leash boundaries and has not observed dog owners all over the park, just mostly in the north end. She believes dog owners use the park up to 18 hours per day and are there, rain or shine.

Ira Sucharoff - has been involved since the beginning in the Westcrest Action Plan Steering Committee and has attended 150 meetings regarding use of the park. This plan is not what the Steering Committee or community wants. There were six public meetings, not three as stated earlier by Parks staff. Each meeting was adequately advertised. The Steering Committee recommended fencing along Cloverdale and fencing to keep dogs off the trails.

Vivian McLean - believes dogs can dig under any fencing, that the meadow has already been destroyed, and that Parks Department has inadequate funding for fence installation. Irresponsible dog owners aren't at this meeting. She has worked for five years helping clean Westcrest Park and has never seen anyone having illicit sex. She suggested that audience members plant trees in the park, which are available at no cost.

Deborah Rabano - is a new member of COLA, a dog owner who wants to obey the off-leash boundaries, and an Audubon supporter. She suggested that the Audubon Society donate funds to help pay for fencing the off-leash area to protect wildlife. She believes there are some discrepancies in park usage, e.g., in some areas where swimmers aren't allowed, jet skiers are. She asked whether Park Board members have visited the site and if not, to please do so. There is beautiful vegetation in the park and she will volunteer her labor to help protect it.

Mike Payson - is a dog owner and uses the park every day of the year. Dogs in the off-leash areas are moving through the park - they are not in a contained fenced area - and consequently they aren't trying to dig under the fencing. The proposed addition to the off-leash is approximately another 2.5 acres. He believes Northacres Park is a good comparison.

Alexandria Pye - supports using the minimum amount of park land for an off-leash area. She uses the trails everyday and believes that it isn't dogs destroying the trails, instead it is kids on bikes who destroy the plant life by making their own trails. The local wildlife is accustomed to having dogs in the park.

Carol Furuya - has two dogs she takes to the off-leash areas and they stay near her. The dogs really enjoy walking through the woods. Some dog owners who previously used Westcrest Park no longer take their dogs to the off-leash area there, due to the current controversy. She, too, has observed kids jumping their mountain bikes in the park.

Kristine Ashcroft - adopted a high-energy dog from an animal shelter and it needs space to run. She urged the Board to not take away the off-leash area.

Mike Marsh - is a member of the Washington Native Plant Society. He suggested that there be many other off-leash areas all over the city.

Linda Pierce - asked that wheelchair access to the park be kept in mind.

Public testimony was completed. At the June 27, 7:00 pm, Park Board meeting, the Board will discuss the topic and make its recommendation. This is a public meeting and all are invited to attend.

West Raye Vegetation Management Plan - Discussion and Recommendation

At its May 23 meeting, the Board heard a briefing from Parks Department Project Manager Mark Mead and heard public testimony on the proposed West Raye Street

Vegetation Management Plan (VMP). Mark attended the June 13 meeting to answer questions from the Board, prior to its recommendation.

The Board received a number of written and e-mailed comments on the VMP. Unfortunately, these comments had not been forwarded to Mark and he could not comment on them.

Kathleen asked what happens after the three-year permit expires. According to Mark, this will depend on the terms of the first permit. Maintenance in the first phase will be funded by the permittees. Based upon the success of the first three years, another permit could be issued, assuming the permittees wish to pay again.

James asked about slope stability. Mark stated he is a forester, not an engineer, but believes removal of invasive plant materials is the most likely to impact slope stability. During the rainy season, more rain will hit the surface due to stem removal. In summer, tree leaves draw water from the ground and since there will be fewer leaves on the trees, less water will be drawn from the ground.

James asked about the springs on the site. Mark stated there are one or two and there should be no net increase in water on-site.

James asked if the canopy would be reduced/increased? Mark answered that the canopy volume will be decreased. Big Leaf maples will probably re-grow to their previous size in 3-5 years. Contractors would be creating "holes" in the canopy and conifers will eventually grow through the canopy.

Sarah and Kathleen visited the site and thought that much of the growth is non-native. Sarah thought that even if a percentage of the tree tops are removed it wouldn't increase the view, the site is some distance from Perkins Lane where most of the complaints are coming from, and stated she was confused after viewing the site. Kathleen didn't think removal of 30% of the vegetation would be a great impact to the area and saw lots of ivy and other invasive plants on the site visit.

Mark said the original plan requested total tree removal to give an unobstructed 180-degree view. After public input, the project was scaled back, then scaled back again after additional public input. He stressed that this is not a view plan, it follows Parks VMP, and it deals with invasive plants. Parks Department cannot sign off on damage possibilities when vegetation is removed, as slopes may slide due to other unrelated factors.

Kathleen asked about the lack of notification to area residents. Mark said there was a glitch in the information delivery process. The hearing was advertised in area newspapers as public hearing and staff decided to go ahead. Kathleen thought the posted signs describing the proposed project were small. The larger project signs cost \$300 each and as this was not a Parks project, there were no funds for the larger signs. Mark also stated

that public process, as outlined in the Tree Policy and other related policies, had been exceeded for this project.

James moved to approve the plan. Kathleen seconded the motion. There was further discussion. Since Parks adopted its current tree policy, VMP's have been developed at both Sand Point and Kerry Viewpoint parks. When asked if Parks Department would assume additional risk/liability if the VMP was applied, Ken answered that the answer is difficult - Parks has been sued in the past for taking trees out and sued for not taking them out. Liability would have to be determined case-by-case to determine if Parks did anything to cause the risk.

James had two concerns: 1) that the work is being financed with private funds and 2) if vegetation is removed and a slide follows, is Parks more exposed to lawsuits? Mark has worked with Parks slope staff and no problems were found in removing the vegetation. He has also asked for comment from Shannon Wilson regarding the changes in the vegetation plan.

Yale asked how the project would be re-evaluated at the end of the three-year permit. Parks staff will evaluate with criteria laid out in the VMP. If the first phase is successful, more tree stems would be removed for safety purposes in the second phase. This depends on additional funding from the permittees. Yale asked about the consequences of walking away from the plan in three years. Mark stated that it is hoped Parks' budget will be healthier in three years and its forestry program is stronger.

The vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

High Point Community Center Addition - Briefing

Parks Department project managers Mark Johnson and Erin Devoto came before the Board to give a briefing on the proposed addition to High Point Community Center. They requested a presentation to the Park Board in August for the schematic design, with an additional briefing at some date after that.

History: High Point Community Center has a minimum of amenities and consists of the gym, lockerrooms, and office area. Most new community centers are double its size. The proposed expansion will provide a full service community center. Improvements will include a fire sprinkler system and storm water for the entire system. Streeter and Associates are the architects.

Several options were looked at, with the favored plan adding an additional area at the south side of the building. Parks staff are working to 1) stay within the budget and 2) reduce the operating costs (especially staffing costs.)

The community center will close in early 2003, when construction begins, and will reopen in January 2004, when construction is completed.

Public Involvement: The public process began in November 2001 with a meeting with nearby Seattle Housing Authority residents. A questionnaire was printed in seven different languages and distributed. In March 2002 a public meeting was held in the community center gym and a June 25 meeting was held there to present the schematic design to the public. The meetings have had low turnouts, but there has been good community consensus on the single-story addition. Parks staff updated the High Point Community Center Advisory Board in April. Mark doesn't believe there is community controversy regarding the project and that a public hearing is not needed at this time.

Parks staff will keep the Board informed and answer any questions. The community may have more input when the actual construction begins.

City Light gave the project a \$15,000 grant for sustainable construction, which may be used for solar panels. Parks is also allotting \$15,000 from the project budget for sustainable construction to reduce the life cycle costs of maintaining the building.

Park Board Business - None

New Business/Old Business:

Items of Interest:

- After visiting the West Raye Street project, Sarah believes the yellow project notification signs are too small and suggested that project signs be posted at the rainbow entrance sign area. Bruce said some people complain about not having lots of signage regarding projects happening in the parks.
- Kathleen reminded members that the Ted Houck rowing regatta is being held at Greenlake this weekend.
- The City Council public hearing on ballfields is scheduled for July 24.
- Ken reminded the Board of its meeting with Mayor Nickels on June 20.
- Park Committees: Board members asked that the list be mailed in the June 27 agenda packets.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 pm

APPROVED: _____ DATE _____

Bruce Bentley, Chair