

Department of Parks and Recreation

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
June 11, 2009

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>
(Includes agendas and minutes from 2001-present)

Also, view Seattle Channel tapes of meetings, June 12, 2008-most current, at
<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/watchVideos.asp?program=Parks>

Board of Park Commissioners:

Present:

Neal Adams, Vice-chair
John Barber
Jourdan Keith
Diana Kincaid
Donna Kostka
Jackie Ramels, Chair

Excused:

Terry Holme

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff:

Timothy Gallagher, Superintendent
Paula Hoff, Strategic Adviser

Commissioner Ramels called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the meeting agenda. Due to illness of the Board's coordinator, there are no meeting minutes or record of correspondence to approve tonight. The May 14, May 28, and June 11 minutes, as well as the record of correspondence will be approved at the Board's June 25 meeting. **Commissioner Barber moved approval of the agenda. The motion was seconded and approved.**

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Gallagher reported on several park items. For more information on Seattle Parks and Recreation, visit the web pages at <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/>.

Rainier Beach Community Center Public Meeting: On Tuesday night, Parks held the kick-off meeting for the schematic design process for the new community center and pool at Rainier Beach. Sixty-eight members of the public attended and offered a number of thoughtful suggestions for the new facilities and asked great questions. Cost estimates to tear down and rebuild the center are \$25 million. For more information on this project, see http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/rainier_beach_cc/.

Jefferson Park: Bids were recently opened for this project and were more than \$2 million under the cost estimates. This will allow Parks to add back several elements that were previously planned into the project this summer. This includes adding a plaza space, as well as the Beacon Mountain development, an extended play area. For more information on this project, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/proparks/projects/JeffersonPark.htm>.

Ballard Public Meeting: Parks staff recently met with Ballard residents to discuss creation of a park exclusion zone. Park neighbors proposed this alternative as a vehicle to help with crime, graffiti, etc. Parks staff discussed ways to activate the parks and draw more people and eyes to them and Seattle Police Department officers attended to discuss enforcement issues. The next public meeting on this request will be held on August 6.

Morgan Junction Park Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting: Everyone is invited to this event on Saturday, June 13, at 10:00 am, to celebrate the opening of this new park. The park opening also kicks off the 4th Annual Morgan Junction Community Festival. The park is located at 6401 California Ave SW in West Seattle and is designed with both plaza and green space elements. It also features an interactive sidewalk chalk gallery with low-profile gallery style frames stamped into the concrete. For more information on this new park, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/proparks/projects/morgan.htm>.

Volunteer Park Encroachments: Parks Survey staff alerted Property Management to a previously unknown encroachment along the westerly boundary of Volunteer Park. A Federal Avenue homeowner has enclosed an area approximately 18' deep into the park and 90' wide with an iron fence and constructed an elaborate, elevated play structure with a zip line. Property Management staff will contact the owner and require removal of the encroachments.

There are additional fences and extensions of private yards along the Volunteer Park boundary from East Galer Street to East Prospect Street that have not been surveyed. Property Management will send a letter concerning encroachments to all these adjacent property owners and eliminate specific encroachments on a case-by-case basis. For more information on this 48-acre park on Capitol Hill, see http://www.seattle.gov/parks/park_detail.asp?ID=399.

Woodland Park Cherry Trees Removal: Superintendent Gallagher reported that the removal of the cherry trees along the perimeter of the Zoo has been put on hold.

The Park Board's May 28 meeting was held at the Activity Resource Center at the Zoo and was preceded by a tour of the proposed West Entry project site and the new penguin exhibit. Commissioner Ramels commented that the tour was wonderful but she was disappointed that the trees proposed to be removed were not included in the tour, as the fate of the trees has generated some interest and controversy in recent weeks.

Budget Update: Superintendent Gallagher reported that the Department submitted its proposal for the 2010 budget, which included approximately 64 changes. Almost all the proposed changes were accepted. The Superintendent believes the Department can continue to maintain its current level of service.

Park Closure Modifications: The Department's current standard for park closure hours is currently at 11:30 pm and opening is at 4:00 am. There are a number of parks in our system that have modified hours because of past neighborhood concerns. We are reviewing whether curfews are still needed at certain parks, or whether the parks can have standard operating hours. If it is determined that modified hours are needed, the closure hours would be from 10:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m. In addition, we are looking at granting authority to the Police Department to shut down parks because of a particular incident or incidents. Seattle Police could then formally request that Parks close a certain park or parks at sunset to deter problematic behaviors. These closures would last six months and then be re-evaluated. Commissioner Adams asked several questions about park exclusion zones.

Commissioner Ramels commented that the Admiral Greenbelt, located in West Seattle, looks great. The improvements to this public space were part of the Green Seattle Partnership.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

The Chair explained that this portion of the agenda is reserved for topics that have not had, or are not scheduled for, a public hearing. Speakers are limited to two minutes each and will be timed. The Board's usual process is for 10 minutes of testimony to be heard at this time, with additional testimony heard after the regular agenda and just before Board of Park Commissioner's business. No one signed up to testify.

Briefing: Seattle Parks Summer Programs

Sue Goodwin, Seattle Parks' Recreation Division Director, gave an overview of the numerous programs the Department is sponsoring this summer. Commissioners did not receive a written briefing prior to the meeting; however, Ms. Goodwin subsequently forwarded a substantial amount of information on the programs to the Board, at their request.

Verbal Briefing/Discussion

Ms. Goodwin introduced herself and reviewed information on the summer programs and events sponsored by the Department. For more information on the Department's programs and activities, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/activities/default.htm>.

Ms. Goodwin gave additional information on the following events:

Special Olympics Day, June 23: Free drop-in care will be provided at every community center and pool. A former Olympian will attend the summer day camps to talk with the kids.

Second Annual "Healthy Parks, Healthy You" event at Seward Park, August 22: Parks staff and vendors will give free demonstrations on how to get active and become more physical. Children's Hospital has donated \$1,000 to the event, and a local radio station has volunteered to be a sponsor. Bring the entire family for a day of fitness demonstrations, healthy activities, and information booths, a 5k and 10k run/walk, guest speakers, and a concert. For more information on this event, see <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/healthyparks/>.

Summer Streets Program: Several park roads will be closed on designated days to vehicle traffic. People are encouraged to walk and bike the roads on those dates. The popular Bicycle Sundays on Lake Washington Boulevard have been expanded to every Sunday this summer. Other parks with road closures include Discovery, Carkeek, Seward, and Magnuson. For more information, see <http://www.seattle.gov/mayor/newsdetail.asp?ID=9577&dept=40>,

Other events include the 5th Annual Green Lake Swim and the Department's extensive summer day camp program. Ms. Goodwin invited the Commissioners to stop by any of these events.

Board Discussion

Commissioner Barber asked why some wading pools will not open this summer. Ms. Goodwin explained that the Virginia Graeme Pool Safety Act provides that all pool drains must be replaced, which is a major project at each of the City's pools. Some of the wading pool drains are being replaced this summer. Parks staff worked to keep wading pools open in each area of the city, while this work is being accomplished. For more information on the Safety Act, see <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/poolspa/pdf/VGBFAQ.pdf>.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Keith on the Seattle Youth Violence Initiative, Ms. Goodwin answered that there are three funded positions in the Parks Department for this interdepartmental effort to reduce teen violence by providing programming and resources to young people during the day and on into the late nights. The initiative will target 800 at-risk teens, as identified by certain agencies, and will begin in July 2009. Responding to a question from Commissioner Ramels, Ms. Goodwin stated that the programs will be at Garfield Community Center, Rainier Beach Community Center, and Southwest Community Center. Parks will have additional staff and they will be available until 5:00 a.m. in the morning. These employees will be working with the Community Center staff and other network providers. This is a citywide effort, with the Department of Human Services leading the effort.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Adams about summer day camp programs, Ms. Goodwin responded that the Department gives numerous scholarships. Earlier this spring, there was a \$250,000 backlog of scholarship requests that the Department couldn't fill. However, the Department has received \$100,000 which helped take a number of kids off the waiting list and register them for day camp. In addition, the Associated Recreation Council may be able to help with the remaining backlog.

Commissioners thanked Ms. Goodwin for the briefing.

Briefing: Seattle Aquarium Management/Operation Agreement

John Braden, Seattle Aquarium Director, briefed the Board on the plan for Seattle Aquarium Society to take over management and operation of the Aquarium. No action is requested of the Board at this time. Prior to tonight's meeting, the Board received a written briefing, included below in these minutes. Mr. Braden also gave each Commissioner a copy of the 2009 Summer Beach Naturalists program schedule, the Aquarium's "Explore Our Beaches" guide, and a "Puget Sound Tide Tables 2009."

Written Briefing

Requested Board Action

This briefing is for informational purposes only.

Project Description and Background

Working with the Executive and City Council central staff, we are developing an Agreement between the City and the Seattle Aquarium Society (the "Society") to transfer management and operations of the Seattle Aquarium to the Society. The Agreement is expected to be submitted to the City Council in early September; Council action to approve this Agreement via ordinance is expected in the fall of 2009 with the actual transition occurring sometime during 2010.

Over a decade ago, the City provided direction for nonprofit management of the Seattle Aquarium. Resolution 30737 (adopted by the City Council February 7, 2005) set forth the policy and conditions for future management and operational transition of the Seattle Aquarium. Resolution 31080 (adopted by the City Council August 18, 2008) requested the Executive to evaluate the prospects for successful long-term transition of the management and operation of the Aquarium to the Society, and to develop a long-term Lease, Management and Operation Agreement for City Council review and approval.

Strategic Action Plan

This Agreement is not included as a specific part of the Action Plan, but it is consistent with Goal 6A5: "Identify opportunities to partner with organizations that can more effectively provide services by leveraging skills and resources".

Public Involvement Process

In 2005, the City Council held a public hearing on long-term plans for development and operation of the Aquarium. No one spoke in opposition. Additionally, there were opportunities for public testimony during both the City Council Parks Committee meetings (2005 and 2008) where the relevant Resolutions were considered; no one spoke in opposition to the transition plans. We anticipate that City Council will have a public hearing on the final Agreement during the fall of 2009.

Issues

Over the summer, efforts will focus in three major areas:

- (1) Determining the condition of the Aquarium's physical assets which will serve as the basis for assigning responsibility for the Aquarium's major maintenance costs to either the City or the Society;

2) Ensuring fair and equitable treatment for employees, in particular their ability to remain in the City's Retirement System. We will be requesting letter rulings from the IRS and the Department of Labor to determine whether the Aquarium employees can stay in the City's retirement system without jeopardizing the plan's status. Our initial legal research by outside counsel indicates that based on previous Department of Labor rulings, given the small number of employees, Aquarium employees could remain in the system. The IRS has not issued any recent rulings and may apply a different standard.

(3) Determining what personal property (animals, vehicles, phone systems) could move to the Society after the transition and which would revert to the City.

Environmental Sustainability

Consistent with the City Council Resolutions, the Aquarium will continue to focus on its mission of marine conservation and education with an emphasis on Pacific Northwest and/or Puget Sound aquatic ecosystems, as well as continuing to include sustainable practices in its operation.

Budget

Based on the current analysis (10-year business pro forma), no operating subsidy is required from the City's General Fund and the Lease, Management and Operation Agreement will reflect that. The City will remain the owner of the Aquarium facility as well as Piers 59 and 60 and so will be responsible for the maintenance of those structures. We are currently assigning responsibility for the Aquarium's major maintenance costs to either the City or the Society.

Schedule

It is anticipated that the Agreement will be presented to City Council in early September 2009, with Council action expected sometime in the fall. The actual transition would occur in 2010.

Additional Information

Contact: John Braden, john.braden@seattle.gov; 386-4334.

Verbal Briefing/Board Discussion

Mr. Braden introduced himself and briefly reviewed the information in the written briefing. He stated that the principal reason for the transition is that a non-profit operator (the Society) can more successfully raise funds for the Aquarium than the City can. The Society is a non-profit that has supported the Aquarium since 1980. He added that Seattle currently has the only stand-alone Aquarium operated by a City government. There are many challenges in this operation and management transition of the Seattle Aquarium to the Seattle Aquarium Society.

The Aquarium is built on Pier 59, which has all new pilings. The Aquarium's current condition does not lead the Society and City to believe there would be huge maintenance costs up front; however, maintenance costs are higher on facilities that are built over water, as is the Aquarium. The City is responsible for the building structure, while the interior functions and displays will be the Society's responsibility.

The City and Society will continue development of the agreement over the summer and present it to the Mayor and City Council. Employee transition is a critical element, as the Aquarium employees want to remain in the City's pension system. The transfer of specific assets must also be determined.

A major question is whether a non-profit can successfully operate the Aquarium. The Society does not believe it will need any City subsidy for the operations. With acceptance of the agreement, the transition would occur in 2010.

Commissioner Adams wants assurance that admission to the Aquarium stays affordable, that the Aquarium's current mission will be carried out by the Society, and that the taxpayers are getting good value from this transition.

Commissioners thanked Mr. Braden for the briefing.

Update Briefing: Strategic Action Plan

Brenda Kramer, Seattle Parks Strategic Advisor, gave the Board an update briefing on the Department's Strategic Action Plan. Prior to tonight's meeting, Commissioners received a written briefing paper, which is included below in these minutes. No action is requested of the Board at this time.

Written Briefing

Requested Board Action

This briefing is for informational purposes – to provide the Board with an update on progress implementing the Strategic Action Plan.

Project Description and Background

Parks and Recreation's Strategic Action Plan (SAP) is a five year plan finalized in September 2008 after an extensive public and staff planning process. The Plan is organized into six goals that identify areas where Parks will dedicate energy over the next five years. The first four goals are externally focused:

Goal 1: Steward Seattle's Parks and Open Spaces for Long-term Sustainability;

Goal 2: Provide Recreation and Learning Opportunities;

Goal 3: Actively Engage and Build Relationships with Seattle's Diverse Population;

Goal 4: Maintain Parks and Recreation's Land and Facilities.

The remaining two goals are more internally focused on staff and organization structure:

Goal 5: Develop Team Capacity and Organizational Culture;

Goal 6: Strengthen Organizational Systems and Structures.

Public Involvement Process

Parks and Recreation held 35 public meetings from November to December 2007, reaching 574 people, and offered an online survey that garnered 1,500 responses. Approximately 850 Department staff met during the same time. Input from these meetings and the survey led directly to the Draft Plan. A second round of 35 public meetings in April 2008 drew 193 people and provided an opportunity for the public to give feedback on the Draft Plan by completing a comment card. Comment cards were also available on the Parks website, and we received more than 400. Comment cards were filled out by 810 Parks staff, resulting in over 200 typed pages of feedback. The second round of public meetings, while not as well attended as the first round, gave us valuable feedback on the first draft.

Extensive outreach occurred, including efforts to reach non-traditional park users. Meeting information was translated into Amharic, Chinese, Oromo, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tigrina, and Vietnamese. The Department of Neighborhoods' 13 Neighborhood Service Center Coordinators sent the meeting information to their e-mail lists and Parks facility coordinators sent meeting information to their e-mail lists, hung posters, and some put the information about specific meetings on outdoor reader boards, put out drop boxes for surveys, and put information on their bulletin boards. Based on responses from facility coordinators, translators were provided at certain meeting sites.

Plan Implementation

In order to retain multi-level staff involvement that occurred during SAP development, staff teams were formed around each of the six goals. The teams are comprised of a facilitator, note taker, Race and Social

Justice Team member, two content experts and line staff. The groups meet at least monthly and provide a quarterly report to a SAP implementation executive committee.

Since the Plan went to print in September 2008, the City began to experience a difficult economic climate. In some areas the Department was successful in budget requests for Plan implementation. Many other plan elements are funded through Parks base budget and are underway. The Department received funding to contribute toward the Mayor's Youth Violence Prevention Initiative, and voters approved the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy, which will enable us to make progress on capital projects. However, we will not be able to develop a Strategic Asset Management Plan or a Management Information System at this time.

Attachment A provides a detailed look at selected items from the Plan. It notes items that we have been able to expedite, those that are on schedule and those that are delayed. These items have been selected as a cross section of examples of plan implementation.

Additional Information

Brenda Kramer: Brenda.kramer@seattle.gov; 386-9094

Information about the Strategic Action Plan is available at <http://seattle.gov.oarks.projects/default.htm>

Board Discussion

Ms. Kramer introduced herself and reviewed the information in the written briefing. She presented a Powerpoint presentation that summarized accomplishments during the first quarter's work on the Plan. Commissioner Adams stated that he is impressed with Plan's scope. Commissioner Kostka asked what kind of system is in place to get regular feedback on the implementation. Ms. Kramer explained that much of the Plan is employee driven and a number of the Department's staff members are on the six goal teams. Some of the team members attend staff meetings to share information on the implementation. In addition, the teams post information on Sharepoint software, that is accessible to staff.

Commissioners thanked Ms. Kramer for the update.

Briefing: Summary of Superintendent's Trip to Russia

Superintendent Gallagher presented a slide show and gave a brief summary of his recent trip to Khabarovsk, in Southeast Russia. City officials there are refurbishing their waterfront parks and historical areas. They invited the Superintendent to give advice and meet the governor and other dignitaries. Commissioners asked several questions about the trip and thanked Superintendent Gallagher for sharing some of his experiences.

Old/New Business

July 9 Meeting: The Board's July 9 agenda has a number of agenda topics. The coordinator has requested that the meeting be extended to 9:30 pm.

New Agenda Items for Consideration: Commissioner Ramels is interested in the Board having a discussion on whether to have a public hearing on banning smoking in Seattle's parks, following Councilmember Rasmussen's remarks at the Board's May 28 meeting. Superintendent Gallagher noted that the State of California implemented a law for no smoking within 100 ft of its parks. A number of Washington and California cities have also implemented this ban. Peer pressure can change behavior – and enforcement isn't always necessarily required.

Commissioner Adams stated that he would like to consider the broader issue of Commissioner's suggesting public hearing topics. Commissioner Ramels responded that the Board has already held some discussions on this. Commissioner Adams would like more background information from Parks staff to consider before the Board decides to hold a public hearing on a topic. The Park Board has the power to call for a public hearing on topics and should only do so when it has adequate information on a given topic. Commissioner Ramels pointed out that the board also has the power to make recommendations to the Superintendent.

Commissioner Keith suggested that Board members could independently research topics of interest to them

and present them to the other Board members during old/new business. The Superintendent offered a suggestion to have board members e-mail to him those topics about which they feel particularly moved. The list will be compiled and considered during new/old business. The point is to create a forum for Board members to make independent suggestions for agenda items. The Board will schedule 10 minutes or so at an upcoming meeting to discuss this topic and how the Board can most effectively suggest agenda/public hearing topics.

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
Jackie Ramels, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE _____