

Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
October 13, 2011

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Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Antoinette Angulo
John Barber
Terry Holme, Chair
Jourdan Keith
Diana Kincaid, Vice-chair
Donna Kostka
Jackie Ramels

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent
Sandy Brooks, Park Board Coordinator

This meeting was held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Holme called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and reviewed the meeting agenda. **Commissioner Barber moved approval of the October 13 agenda, August 11, September 8, and September 22 minutes, and the record of correspondence, as corrected. Commissioner Kostka seconded. The vote was taken and the motion carried.**

Superintendent's Report

Acting Superintendent Williams reported on the following topics in both a verbal and written report available to the Board and audience. To listen to the report, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591176> and move cursor to position 5.00.

Occupy Seattle Update: Occupy Seattle set up 'camp' in Westlake Park two weekends ago. There are several issues for the Parks Department including the violation of the park operating hours (it is closed 10pm to 6am), holding an event without a permit, and placing structures in the park. Parks has been very aware this is a first amendment activity. The Mayor's office has been actively engaged in discussions with the protestors since their occupation to try and find an accommodation that preserves their free speech rights and accommodates their desire to 'occupy' Seattle in some way. He has offered them space at City Hall Plaza to camp over night and has been clear they are free to protest at Westlake Park during the day. The Department's park rangers and grounds maintenance crews have done exceptional work collaborating with the Seattle Police Department (SPD) to help keep the park clean and safe during this time.

It is a real challenge to get someone to apply for a permit, as there is no clear leader of Occupy Seattle. Commissioner Keith asked if a permit would allow them to be there during the day time. It would and they could also have a tent for first aid and to distribute brochures. It would not allow them to camp overnight.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Kincaid whether Occupy Seattle has Port-a-Potties, Acting Superintendent Williams responded that Target Store Retailers, which is opening a downtown store near Westlake Park, had a permit to use Westlake all day on Sunday, and had Port-a-Potties delivered for their use. They allowed the Occupy Seattle protestors to also use the facilities.

Green Seattle Partnership Stakeholders Meeting: 128 “investors” in the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) attended a shareholders’ meeting at REI’s headquarters last night to review successes for the last five years, examine the current budget, and review the potential funding difficulties for the program after 2013. Participants included forest stewards, non-profits, schools, corporations, and donors at all levels. Earthcorps, Nature Consortium, and Goodwill provided personal perspectives on the successful partnering with the GSP. All 128 participants then broke into groups to provide input on improving outreach, increasing efficiencies, and alternative funding. The Parks and Greenspaces Levy funded \$3 million to the Cascade Land Conservancy Green Seattle Partnership. The successful program sunsets in 2013 with no plan in sight to continue its funding. Parks staff are discussing this with the Mayor and City Council.

Community Center Reorganization: Parks Department and City Council staff worked with members of the public during the first part of 2011 to propose a new model for the Department’s community centers. Nine models were developed and, from those, the team recommended a geographic model. On October 7, the Recreation Division held a retreat with management and frontline staff to begin planning for the new model. Teams were formed and will identify and prioritize the work required for implementation. Senior recreation program coordinators will lead the work of the teams as well as hold 27 public outreach meetings at the various community centers, scheduled October 17-November 9. The public meetings will be in a world café format to gather input on programming, hours of operation, etc.

Magnuson Park Advisory Committee: The Magnuson Park Advisory Committee (MPAC) held its monthly meeting on October 12, and would like to begin discussions soon to explore the idea of Magnuson Park being managed by a non-profit organization, similar to The Presidio in San Francisco and various other large parks around the country. Representatives from some of these organizations will be brought in to talk with MPAC for a big picture discussion. The concept will also be vetted with Councilmember Bagshaw and Mayor McGinn, then taken to the larger community. Commissioner Ramels commented this is good to look at as an exercise. Acting Superintendent Williams added that, in some areas, a group of smaller parks are batched together as a conservancy and managed by a non-profit.

MPAC remains enthusiastic and supportive of the Mayor’s budget proposal for debt financing and general fund support for Building 30, and plan to contact Councilmembers voicing their support. They also voted to support an October 29 Cyclo Cross event at Magnuson Park. MPAC also wants to work with the City’s Landmarks staff to ensure that new Design Guidelines for the Historic District address the issue of colors and materials for signs.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Kincaid whether the General Fund support will help with event scheduling for building 30, Acting Superintendent Williams responded this will help get the building back to its 100+ annual events.

Montlake Playfield: Tonight is the second of two public meetings on a proposal from Ohno Construction Company to donate and install synthetic turf on the football field area at Montlake Playfield. The University of Washington, which is better funded than Seattle Parks, is a member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association and as part of its Assets Management Program, must replace its synthetic turf every 3-4 years and is in the process of doing so. Ohno will bring the turf, which is still in good condition, and install at Montlake Playfield for free. The existing field has been a muddy mess for most of its past forty-years, due to the fill soils at the site and very intensive use. The synthetic turf would accommodate the intensive use and avoid the ongoing turf management that has been incurred on several occasions in recent years when we have tried to renovate this field. No lights are involved in this proposal and field use would continue to be similar to the use in recent years. A drawback is that there are no funds to replace the synthetic turf if it should fail.

Commissioner Kostka asked if any other athletic fields with synthetic turf used by Seattle Parks don't have field lights. Commissioner Holme responded that McGilvra Playfield and Franklin High School, which has a joint use agreement with Seattle Parks, do not have field lights. Commissioner Kostka cautioned the Department to treat field lights at Montlake as a separate issue and Acting Superintendent Williams agreed. Commissioner Holme noted that if the UW turf has lines marked on it, it could affect the field's use.

Montlake Park Donation: Seattle Parks has declined to accept two land parcels owned by the Montlake Community Club and dedicated as open space. An initial site assessment reveals the potential for these to have contaminated soils due to past site use. Seattle Parks has high standards for public parks and does not have the funds to de-contaminate the area. Responding to a question from Commissioner Keith about Montlake Community Club, Acting Superintendent clarified it is a neighborhood club.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

The Chair explained 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-to-three minutes each, will be timed, and are asked to stand at the podium to speak. 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 Old/New Business. No one signed up to testify.

Briefing/Public Hearing: South Lake Union Neighborhood Temporary Off-Leash Area

Brenda Kramer, Seattle Parks Strategic Advisor, presented a briefing on the concept of a south Lake Union Neighborhood Temporary Off-Leash Area, which was immediately followed by a public hearing. Prior to the meeting, Commissioners received a written briefing paper, which was posted to the Board's web page and provided to the public at tonight's meeting. To hear Ms. Kramer's presentation, the Board's discussion, and the public testimony, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591176> and move cursor to position 28.30.

Written Briefing

Requested Board Action

Staff will provide a briefing on the status of locating a temporary off-leash area in South Lake Union, and public testimony will be heard. The Board is scheduled to discuss the off-leash area and make a recommendation at the November 3 Board meeting (special meeting date).

Staff Recommendation

Parks staff examined possible locations for the off-leash area, and have determined that there are three possible sites in the South Lake Union neighborhood. This temporary off-leash area will be removed once a permanent off-leash site is developed, which is now expected to take three to five years.

Project Description and Background

The 2004 North Downtown Park Plan, which includes the South Lake Union neighborhood, projects 11,000 new housing units and 23,000 new jobs by 2025. There has been significant growth subsequent to the 2004 plan which, in turn, has led to expanding demand for dog off-leash areas (OLAs). Amazon, which leases building space from Vulcan Real Estate in the South Lake Union neighborhood, has a policy that allows employees to bring their dogs to work; currently this equates to 300 dogs per day. In addition, the majority of condominiums and apartment buildings in South Lake Union are pet friendly, and currently account for approximately 613 additional dogs. An estimated 913 dogs now reside in or "go to work" in South Lake Union.

Currently, there are no off-leash sites in the North Downtown area. Off-leash sites approximately one-half mile from the neighborhood include: Denny Regrade in Belltown, Plymouth Pillars Park on Boren and Pine, and I-5 Colonnade, which is northeast of South Lake Union under the I-5 freeway.

The North Downtown Plan calls for one OLA site in each of the three sectors of the planning area (except for the western sector of Denny Triangle, which is in close proximity to Belltown's Regrade Park). At the present time, there are three parks in the planning area: Denny Park, Cascade Park and Lake Union Park.

Community roundtable discussions regarding an off-leash park identified:

- A growing need for off-leash sites in the planning area to attract residents;
- A desire for small sites oriented towards neighborhood use; and
- The OLA could be combined with other facilities.

Park and Recreation's goal is to provide a temporary off-leash area until a permanent site is located. The Department is pursuing a permanent off-leash area on property owned by City Light known as the old Greyhound Bus site. The Greyhound site requires demolition of existing structures and remediation to remove cement, oil, and other chemicals from the soil. A new City Light substation will be built on a portion of the property. Use of the remaining property will be determined by community need. Dog owners in the South Lake Union neighborhood are an active constituency promoting the use of the site as a permanent off-leash area and City Light is aware of Parks interest in developing a permanent off-leash site on the Greyhound property.

Public Involvement Process

In August 2011, Parks staff attended a South Lake Union Chamber of Commerce meeting, a South Lake Union Community Council Policy and Planning Committee meeting, and a Cascade Community Council meeting to discuss the idea of an off-leash area in the neighborhood, and the pros and cons of a temporary off-leash area at Lake Union, Cascade, or Denny Park.

Vulcan Real Estate has been very involved in the development of an off-leash area in South Lake Union, discussing the issue with neighborhood businesses and has offered to contribute \$50,000 for fencing, maintenance and/or restoration of the temporary site. A community activist created a new South Lake Union dog park blog and has offered to steward the temporary off-leash area. Citizens for Off-Leash Areas (COLA) supports the creation of a temporary off-leash area and a permanent area. The Denny family was contacted, and is supportive of an off-leash area in Denny Park.

Potential Sites

Below is a description of the proposed off-leash areas under consideration and the pros and cons of each site. Information on the pros and cons came from the three meetings cited above and from interviews with park maintenance staff.

Denny Park

Description: If selected, the temporary off-leash area would be created by fencing a portion of Denny Park, shown in the following picture.



The site is directly north of the circle on a rectangular block of grass that is approximately 5,370 square feet. Currently there is one small tree on the site, which could be moved for the duration of the temporary off-leash area. Fencing is recommended to avoid damage to wildlife, sensitive plant areas, and co-mingling with other activities in the Park. A 16-foot wide access gate in the fence for maintenance vehicles would be required. Once the grass is gone, surfacing would need to be added either with wood chips or granolithic gravel. Additional trashcans, a kiosk, and signage would be needed.

Pros:

- Convenient site for both businesses and residential community;
- Park is becoming more activated and the addition of an off-leash area could increase park safety after business hours;
- The Denny family supports using site as an off-leash area; and
- Denny Park provides a nice buffer from residences and busy streets.

Cons:

- Denny is an Olmsted-influenced park – it was existing at the time the Olmsted Plan was made and was included in the Plan;
- The Park has large trees and is carefully landscaped with grass and an assortment of plantings and these could be compromised in the off-leash area;
- There is a children’s play area, benches, and recently installed lighting and many consider Denny Park a small oasis amid a busy urban environment; and
- Many Parks employees do not want to see an off-leash site opened in Denny Park due to its historical significance. Denny Park was created in 1883 and is the City’s oldest park.

Cascade Park

Description: If selected, the recommended temporary site would be in the southwest corner of the grassy area. There are doggie bag dispensers already installed and no trees or plants are in this area. A temporary fence would mark the off-leash area and separate it from the sidewalk that circles the perimeter of the park, the children’s play area and basketball court. A 16-foot wide access gate for maintenance would be required. The off-leash area would use approximately one-third of the grassy area in the park. Once the grass is gone, surfacing would need to be added with either wood chips or granolithic gravel. Additional trashcans, a kiosk, and signage would be needed.

Pros:

- Cascade Park is conveniently located for both the business and residential community;
- Traffic volume in the area is low; and
- The area is grass which would be easy to fence, thus separating other park activities such as the playground and P-Patch from a dog area.

Cons:

- Currently, this area is used for a couple of organized annual community events and a kickball league, which would need to be re-located to a different part of the park or a new location;
- A fenced off-leash area would minimize neighborhood activities in the park;
- There are currently problems with dogs urinating in the P-Patch and frequent off-leash use;
- An off-leash area would decrease passive use; and
- Neighbors want Cascade to remain a neighborhood park.

Lake Union Park

Description: If selected, an off-leash area at Lake Union Park would open the entire park for off-leash use during designated hours in the morning and afternoon. There would not be any fencing.

Pros:

- May help reduce goose population; and
- Convenient location to South Lake Union businesses.

Cons:

- Heavily-trafficked nearby streets;
- Plants and grasses in the Park are still in plant establishment period and could be destroyed;
- Dogs would likely get in boat pond requiring additional chemical use to treat the water and more maintenance;
- Health Department may not let fountains operate because dog urine would get into the holding tanks which are under the pavers;
- Environmental concerns with dog feces entering the lake; and
- Pedestrians and cyclists are not separated from the off-leash area.

Budget

It is estimated that a temporary off-leash area would cost around \$10,000 a year to maintain. Vulcan has agreed to contribute \$50,000 for fencing, maintenance and/or restoration, and Parks will seek sponsorships from other businesses to help pay for maintenance.

Schedule

October 2011 – Park Board Briefing on the project and public hearing

November 2011 – Park Board recommendation to the Superintendent

November 2011 – Superintendent's decision on temporary off-leash area

Additional Information

Brenda Kramer

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Seattle, WA 98109 Brenda.Kramer@seattle.gov

Discussion

Ms. Kramer, who began managing the Department's off-leash sites earlier this year, introduced herself and reviewed information in the written briefing paper. She noted that the development of a new off-leash area is community driven, and there are more dogs living in Seattle than children.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Barber on the Downtown Plan, Ms. Kramer responded that the Downtown area is divided into three sectors and calls for one off-leash area in each sector. Ms. Kramer included a photo of the proposed Denny Park OLA in the briefing paper. Commissioner Kostka requested she provide diagrams of each park showing where the OLA would be located. Commissioner Ramels asked that Ms. Kramer also include the square footage of each OLA, with these diagrams posted to the Board's web page. Ms. Kramer agreed to do so and added that the size of the OLA at Cascade Park is similar to that at Denny Park. The South Lake Union Park OLA would comprise the entire park, with restricted hours.

Ms. Kramer stated the Department is not making a recommendation on the three possible sites. Instead it is presenting the possible location of an OLA at each of the only three parks in the sector and asking the Park Board to consider them and make a recommendation to the Superintendent on November 3.

Commissioner Keith asked what it would involve to remove the temporary OLA once a permanent site at the Greyhound Bus site opens. Ms. Kramer answered that the signage, fencing and gates would need to be removed, and the area re-grassed.

Commissioner Kincaid asked how likely it will be that a new off-leash would remain temporary. It may be that one of the park sites will be more convenient to many users than the Greyhound site. Commissioner Holme referred to the OLA at Volunteer Park, that was removed. The new OLAs start as pilots to determine if there are unintended consequences to the location. Once the pilot is complete, the Board can make a recommendation to the Superintendent whether the location should be continued. He reminded the audience that the Board is advisory to the Superintendent.

Commissioner Kostka asked why Parks staff are proposing that all of South Lake Union Park be considered for an off-leash area, rather than just a portion. Acting Superintendent Williams responded that it would be open for an OLA before 8:00 am and after 7:00 pm. This would help with the geese problem at the park and give more eyes on the park. Commissioner Holme cautioned that the park not be looked at as a water access for dogs. Ms. Kramer added that the park also has spray features and a model boat pond where children play. These present a health issue if dogs urinate/defecate in the water.

Public Hearing

The public hearing began. Commissioner Holme instructed speakers they have up to two minutes to speak and should come to the podium. In the interest of time, if another speaker has already voiced the speaker's sentiments, please state agreement with those, rather than repeating the same message. Twenty two people testified.

Loretta Vosk: *Supports OLA in South Lake Union area.* She is a South Lake Union resident, formerly of the Greenwood neighborhood, and is spearheading this effort. Her previous neighborhood had a convenient off-leash area and there isn't one in the South Lake Union area. An off-leash area helps building community, allows both people and dogs to socialize, and received Neighborhood Matching Fund support. She has volunteered to serve as the lead steward for a new OLA. She is in this for the long haul and stated the OLA will be organized and well maintained.

David Bird: *Supports OLA in South Lake Union area.* He voiced big thanks to Brenda Kramer for the new surface at the Magnuson Park OLA, as well as new obstacles for the dogs and suggested some solar lighting be added as additional security. He believes an OLA gives extra eyes to a neighborhood and will be good for the South Lake Union area.

Giacomo Cicciardi: *Supports OLA at Denny Park.* He is not a dog owner, but lives in South Lake Union area. He supports dog owners and believes Denny Park is here to serve children and families and dogs are part of the family.

Francesca Licciardi Tucket: *Supports OLA in South Lake Union area.* She recently moved to the area and is a dog owner. Walking pets is positive for the community. She believes a new OLA will help the community grow.

Jim Felber: *Favors an OLA at Denny Park.* He has lived in the South Lake Union area for four years. There are many other newcomers and many senior citizens and many dogs. Dogs increase socialization between residents. It will be extremely beneficial to the community to have a safe and lighted OLA at Denny Park.

Lori Melitor: *Favors an OLA at Denny Park.* She is a resident of South Lake Union and a dog owner. She is an architect and designed an off-leash area in the Dallas area. She addressed concerns of dog waste runoff and damage to the grass. Changing over to an off-leash area is a good opportunity to add a surface that treats and filters bacteria before it goes into storm drains. The City could use filters and "Bacterra", which would eliminate 99% of the e-coli and other bacteria. She also recommended installation of nice, aesthetic fencing.

Dave Gens: *Favors an OLA at Denny Park.* He is a resident of South Lake Union. Previously, Vulcan allowed the public to use a grassed lot [just east of Denny Park] but has since closed it to dogs. He runs with his dog and has met many neighbors that way. He also sees dog feces all along the streets. He believes if the dogs have a designated area, their owners will dispose of the feces properly.

Russell Harley: *Favors an OLA for the South Lake Union neighborhood.* He is chair of the Citizens for Off-leash Area (COLA.) COLA does not have a preference for the OLA site; (however, he personally believes Denny Park is the most sensible choice.) He thanked Ms. Kramer and Acting Superintendent Williams for considering a new OLA. COLA will be the fiduciary agent for the site and would give oversight to the new OLA, which would be the City's 12th OLA.

Douglas Jackson: *Opposes OLA at Denny Park.* He is a landscape architect and past president of the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks. Locating an OLA in Seattle's oldest park is a bad idea. There are already other intrusions in it – the parks administration building, its adjoining parking lot, and a children's play area. The OLA would be 50' wide by 100' long. That is a small area, adjacent to the children's play area and he believes that is a site conflict. Cascade Park is more centrally located to the various homeowners. He believes an open run at South Lake Union Park would work best. He referred to the grassy area owned by Vulcan previously used as an off-leash area. He questioned why Vulcan doesn't create a temporary OLA there.

Commissioner Kincaid asked about Vulcan property referenced by Mr. Jackson. [Located directly east of Denny Park, across 9th Ave.] Ms. Kramer and a Vulcan representative stated that Vulcan signed a short-term lease with Morning Star Academy to use the field for children to play. Morning Star then voiced concern that dogs were playing on the field where the children play, and it then terminated use of the area as an OLA.

Commissioner Ramels asked if Mr. Jackson represents Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks' official stand on an off-leash area at Denny Park; it does.

Jim Gale: *Opposes Denny Park being used for an OLA.* He is also a member of Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks and agrees with comments made earlier by Doug Jackson. Denny Park is over 100 years old and its purpose is to be a passive space in the city. He is not against dogs; however, he urged that Denny Park not be selected for an OLA.

Pearl Leung: *Favors OLA in South Lake Union Area.* Ms. Leung represented Vulcan, which supports projects that are meaningful to the community. Vulcan is aware that the South Lake Union neighborhood is very diverse and not all who live there have children. It is proud to partner on this new OLA and has committed \$50,000 for a temporary site.

Lloyd Douglas: *Supports South Lake Union OLA, but opposes it being situated in Cascade Playground.* Cascade Park supporters have invested \$500,000 into making it a neighborhood park and want to keep it that way. It is a small park and the site where the OLA would be is used by the community for other purposes. He suggested

that Denny Park or South Lake Union Park be used for a temporary OLA. If South Lake Union is chosen, he recommended the dogs be kept away from the spray feature and boat pond.

Margaret MacDonald: *Supports OLA in South Lake Union Neighborhood.* She lives and works in the area and thinks it is great the neighborhood is coming together on this issue. She meets many people out walking their dogs and she has become very involved in the neighborhood. She believes people out walking their dogs increase safety, as they are on the streets even when it is rainy/dark.

Ali Aranda: *Supports an OLA in all three sites, if there is fencing at South Lake Union Park, but most favors Denny Park.* She has lived in the neighborhood for two years. An off-leash area is a badly needed infrastructure for the community as there are nearly 1,000 dogs living there. She believes Denny Park is gross and scary and does not go there.

B. Larson: *Supports OLA at Denny Park, but wants it enlarged.* He is a professional dog walker. He urged that an off-leash area not be established without fencing as the dogs will run not only geese, but bicyclists, joggers, etc.

Francois Asenshort: *Supports OLA at Denny Park.* He is a neighborhood resident and dog owner. He takes his dog to Denny Park 3-4 times daily. He does not support an unfenced OLA at South Lake Union Park. He observed that dog owners will create their own off-leash area if one isn't provided. Having an established one helps drive behavior.

Ann Morris: *Supports OLA at Denny Park.* She is a three-year resident of the neighborhood. She believes Denny Park is ugly and scary and will not walk there. However, if an OLA were built, she would walk there. She observed that non-dog owners also like to visit OLAs to watch the dogs at play. Denny Park will still be historical, even if an OLA is included.

Kim Justice: *Supports OLA at Denny Park and not at Cascade Park.* She is president of the Cascade Community Council. Earlier this year, they had a well-attended meeting and there is strong support for an off-leash area at one of the other sites. Cascade is the smallest of the three possible sites and has lots of neighborhood use already. There is a lot of support for siting the OLA at Denny Park and not at South Lake Union Park, due to the lack of fencing.

Donna Hartmann-Miller: *Supports OLA, but not at South Lake Union Park.* She wants off-leash dogs in a fenced area.

Nic Tucker: *Supports an OLA at Denny Park.* He believes Denny Park is currently only used by dog owners and transients. He stated his dog eats goose droppings at South Lake Union Park.

Stefan Williams: *Supports an OLA at Denny Park.* He is a native New Yorker and now lives in South Lake Union area. He questioned the meaning of an Olmsted-influenced park. Acting Superintendent Williams responded that the Olmsted designs inspired the design of Denny Park. Mr. Williams stated that are dog parks in Central Park and other Olmsted parks. There is a great deal of support to site the OLA at Denny Park.

Sara Kimmel: *Supports an OLA for South Lake Union area.* She is a professional dog walker and urged that the Board not consider adding an unfenced off-leash area to any downtown park.

The public hearing concluded. Written testimony will be accepted through Friday, October 28.

Additional Discussion

Commissioner Kostka asked if consideration has been given to a rooftop OLA on private property, such as Amazon's [new office buildings in the South Lake Union area.] Acting Superintendent Williams responded that

he has discussed some OLA alternatives with Seattle Department of Transportation, such as closing lower-use streets in the area at certain times, for use as off-leash areas. SDOT was not enthused about the idea.

Commissioner Ramels questioned why the Vulcan property that was formerly used for an off-leash area is no longer used for that purpose. Vulcan's representative stated that Vulcan supports an OLA on public park land in South Lake Union. It signed an agreement with Morningside Academy and both parents and teachers complained of dogs using the area.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Ramels, Acting Superintendent Williams stated that Parks wants the Board to weigh in on whether adding an off-leash area to one of these three sites is a good idea and, if it is, where.

Commissioner Angulo stated she runs in the South Lake Union Park and is concerned with dogs being off leash. Commissioner Barber commented that temporary OLA's, in general, appear ugly to him and don't fit in with other park elements. How would an OLA at Denny Park be designed so it would look like a natural part of the park. Ms. Kramer responded that using park furniture and a synthetic turf rather than the usual pea gravel or wood chips, would help with this. When questioned about the fencing by Commissioner Kincaid, Ms. Kramer added that the OLA's are usually surrounded by cyclone fencing to keep the costs down. If Denny Park is selected, better fencing would be considered.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Ramels why a temporary site is needed, Ms. Kramer answered that it will take 3-5 years to develop the old Greyhound bus site, including soil remediation and a new substation to be built in the corner of the property. Commissioner Ramels stressed that the public must be very clear that this would be a temporary OLA and not permanent. Commissioner Kincaid asked if Parks is certain it can build a future OLA at the Greyhound site. Ms. Kramer responded that Seattle City Light is waiting for City Council to approve its moving ahead, then Mayor McGinn wants a public process to determine the best use for the property.

Commissioner Keith asked several questions: are there any real figures to substantiate whether walking dogs/OLAs reduce crime and increase public safety? Are there any statistics on how much open space is needed for 1,000 dogs? Are the statistics the Board is hearing tonight accurate? Ms. Kramer responded that counters have been installed at OLAs to determine use at each one. Acting Superintendent Williams stated that four of the OLAs were installed to help alleviate some negative behaviors (Northacres, Denny Regrade, Central Woodland, and Jose Rizal Parks.)

Commissioner Holme expressed strong concerned with the City's decreasing budget. He understands that Vulcan has offered up \$50,000 to help pay for the installation; however, he wants more detailed information on what it will cost to install and maintain the site. The extra funds needed to "gild" it should not be spent if it isn't going to be a permanent OLA. Developers should carry their share of responsibility for added use of the City's facilities such as street use and infrastructure. He wants to ensure that the promoters who are bringing the new residents and their dogs to the area are carrying their weight on this proposal. Acting Superintendent Williams added that Parks has no funds for the maintenance and operation of the temporary OLA and that is a big concern.

Commissioner Holme asked that any additional lighting costs for the OLA also be provided to the Board. Acting Superintendent Williams stated that a lighting project for the Denny Park pathways was recently completed and cost \$100,000. Commissioner Angulo wants to hear more about financial commitment from the area developers.

Commissioner Holme asked that any additional Board questions be sent to Ms. Kramer. He noted that several people testifying tonight complimented Ms. Kramer's work on off-leashes and thanked her for the good presentation.

Briefing: Seattle Parks Proposed 2012 Budget

Carol Everson, Seattle Parks Finance Director, presented a briefing on the Mayor's Proposed 2012 budget for the Parks Department. Prior to this meeting, Commissioners received a number of budget updates, including information from Parks and the City's Finance Director.

Written Information

Prior to the meeting, Commissioners were directed to the Department's budget submittals to City Council, as well as the Superintendent's letter to Parks staff which gave an overview of the proposed 2012 budget. At the beginning of her presentation, Ms. Everson distributed two documents: Parks Financial Update 10/13/11, General Fund to All Departments, and Mayor's Proposed DPR 2012 Budget Issue Paper Submittal. She next presented a Powerpoint titled "Parks Financial Update 10/13/11." To hear the full budget update and the Board's discussion, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5989> and move cursor to position 9.30.

Update Briefing: Seattle Parks Foundation Park Funding Study

Becca Aue, Policy and Program Director for Seattle Parks Foundation, presented an update briefing on the Foundation's Park Funding Study. Prior to this meeting, Commissioners received a written briefing paper, which was available on the Board's web page and copies made available to members of the audience.

To hear the full presentation and the Board's discussion, see

<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5989> and move the cursor to position 43.00.

Written Briefing Documents

Sustaining Seattle's Park System

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS (as of September 27, 2011)

NOTE: As folded into a final report prepared by Cedar River Group, these Recommendations will include an estimate of the annual cost to maintain Seattle's parks, what is currently spent to do so, the current deficit, a statement about the increasing competition for general funds, and the inescapable conclusion that this deficit will grow over time. Although we will highlight the importance of a new infusion of tax revenue, we will insist that it alone will be insufficient to create a sustainable system. We will recommend how the public, nonprofit, and private sectors can do things differently, and outline how all sectors can reduce costs, increase revenues, and develop new ways of doing business. Final recommendations will include quantitative targets, or at least ranges for revenue generation and cost savings.

Create a New Dedicated Source of Public Funding

- The Mayor and/or City Council should commit to putting in front of voters a series of special purpose levies dedicated to park maintenance and operations, or a resolution to create a Metropolitan Parks District to capture additional property tax revenue solely dedicated to improving the park system. Whichever strategy is adopted, the City should continue to dedicate significant General Fund resources to parks maintenance and operations and significant REET funds to pay for the growing backlog of major maintenance projects. The system cannot be sustained unless new, dedicated resources are committed plus existing funding continued.

Ensure System-Wide Accountability

- The Mayor and City Council should appoint an independent "Accountability Board"—or empower the existing Parks Board—to monitor and report annually to the public the progress the City and the Department have made toward achieving a sustainable parks and recreation system, including implementation of the recommendations in this document. The Board should include civic leaders, park and recreation advocates and outside experts. As part of original capital planning, develop an array of mechanisms—including levy set asides and private sector philanthropy and partnerships—to provide reserves or ongoing support dedicated to operations and maintenance for planned new parks.

Achieve Cost Savings through Efficiencies and Innovation

- The Parks Department should achieve annually a minimum 1% (of total budget) cost savings through efficiencies and innovation by implementing best management practices and methodically experimenting with new approaches to meeting service requirements.
- The Parks Department should work with private and public sector partners to increase investments in long-term conservation and efficiency efforts that reduce costs across the system. Cost savings achieved through conservation should be reinvested back into the park system. The City should consider utilizing the assets of the parks system to achieve environmental goals of other City agencies or other overarching City goals such as achieving carbon neutrality. The parks system should be fully compensated for any such benefits and the activity should not diminish park use.

Expand Use of Volunteers

- The Parks Department should increase volunteer participation from 350,000 hours per year to 500,000 hours per year over the next decade. With input from existing volunteers, the department should develop a specific plan of action, with annual measurable targets.
- The Parks Department's Joint Labor and Management Committee should ensure City work rules and union contracts facilitate and support volunteers' ability to work in parks and conduct a full range of stewardship functions.
- The City Council should fund Green Seattle Partnership and other parks volunteer programs to leverage significant additional volunteer services.

Solicit and Support More Partnerships to Reduce General Fund Expense and Increase Revenue

- The Mayor, City Council, and Park Department should issue a statement of policy that unambiguously promotes the city's commitment to mutually beneficial engagement of private and nonprofit partners as funders, activators and beneficiaries of the parks system.
- The Parks Department should
 - Seek new partners to maintain and operate selected park assets. Expand the responsibility of existing partners to take on even more responsibility. Conservancies, Business Improvement Areas, existing non-profits, Public Development Authorities, etc. are current models that should be considered. For major new parks (such as along the waterfront), identify partners up front who will assist in park maintenance and operations once the parks are developed.
 - Build on current activation and programming efforts in parks with the goal of recovering a greater share of costs through fees, charges and concession agreements,
 - Reduce barriers to partner engagement and investment across the system, including delegating more flexibility to the Parks Department to negotiate short to medium term agreements.

Increase Philanthropic Support

- Seattle Parks Foundation should
 - Significantly expand its philanthropic role in supporting and promoting community stewardship of parks and green spaces
 - Develop a joint marketing initiative with other nonprofits that raise monies in support of the parks system to build greater awareness about the role of philanthropy in parks and create more and easier ways to donate to these organizations.

Briefing and Discussion

Ms. Aue and Thatcher Bailey, Seattle Parks Foundation Executive Director, last presented to the Park Board about a year ago, just prior to the Park Funding Study. She stated that Ms. Everson just gave a great description of the Parks Department's current budget situation. While the Department is doing the best it can in a dire situation, it doesn't have the resources to take care of Seattle's parks. Ms. Aue next reviewed information in the written briefing paper and next steps the Foundation and its partners will take.

Commissioner Kostka asked what steps it would require for the Board of Park Commissioners to be empowered to hold the Department accountable. Acting Superintendent Williams responded that in the 1960s the citizens of Seattle voted to amend the City charter to take authority from the Board of Park Commissioners, make it an advisory body, and give authority to the Park Superintendent. In addition, labor relations have also changed and will not allow volunteers to supervise City employees.

Commissioner Holme stated that, in the context of accountability, the Park Board would be linked tightly to a Metropolitan Park District, rather than holding the Department accountable. Ms. Aue agreed; this would give more transparency whether funds are being spent wisely and correctly. Commissioner Barber added that a very real solution is in the tax situation resulting from Tim Eyman initiatives, which must be fought legislatively. Ms. Aue agreed; however, it is quite a battle.

Commissioner Ramels commented that the report is lovely work and a breath of fresh air. This should become a Metropolitan Park District Class 101 to educate the public about this issue.

Commissioner Keith asked if the Foundation has considered pursuing tribal partnerships and nonprofits which have more resources than Parks. While their budgets are also shrinking, the study should consider how to get more funding from them.

Commissioner Holme believes any positive results coming from the study will be good; however, this is really a long-term plan. If a recommendation from the study goes to ballot, he urged the Foundation and its partners to do polling so the best strategies come forth to voters.

Commissioner Kincaid noted the City budget is not working as it is currently structured. When Public Development Authorities (PDAs) are looked at, be sure they are sustainable. Ms. Aue agreed that the City's General Fund can never sustain its park system.

Commissioners asked for an update briefing in the near future to continue this discussion and thanked Ms. Aue for the update.

Old/New Business

To hear the Board's discussion, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5989> and move cursor to position 69.00.

New Agenda Topic: Commissioner Barber asked that Parks staff prepare a briefing to evaluate the 10-year-old policy that allows individuals to request a park permit to trim trees in parks.

Annual Retreat: Responding to a question from Commissioner Kostka on the Board's annual retreat, Commissioner Holme stated that staff had difficulties finding a time that worked for the retreat this fall. In addition, three of the seven commissioners terms' expire at year end and legislation is being considered to expand the Board to nine members. To make the best use of the retreat, it will be scheduled after the positions are filled.

Commissioner Kincaid voiced strong concern that three commissioners' terms will expire at year end (Holme, Kostka, and Ramels) and the Board will have four experienced commissioners and five new ones. She asked that the three outgoing and experienced commissioners be invited to the retreat to speak to the new commissioners.

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

APPROVED: _____

DATE _____

Terry Holme, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners