

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
July 23, 2015

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>
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<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/watchVideos.asp?program=Parks>

Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Lydia Albert
Tom Byers
Diana Kincaid
Tom Tierney, Chair

Excused:

Antoinette Angulo
Marty Bluewater
Bob Edmiston
William Lowe
Barbara Wright

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent
Susan Golub, Policy Unity Manager
Susanne Rockwell, Strategic Advisor
Leah Tivoli, Strategic Advisor
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

This meeting is held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Tierney calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. There being no quorum, the Commissioners go forward with the Agenda as written.

Presentation and Discussion: Natural Areas and Greenbelts Supplemental Use Guidelines

Presented by Susanne Rockwell, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Written Briefing

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 20, 2014
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Susanne Rockwell, Strategic Advisor
Subject: Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines – Revisions

Requested Board Action

This briefing paper describes proposed changes to the Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines. No action from the Board is requested at the July 23 meeting; staff will request a recommendation from the Board in September.

Project Background

During the review process for the Cheasty Pedestrian and Mountain Bike Trail Pilot Project, it became clear that Seattle Parks and Recreation did not have established criteria to evaluate a use proposed for a Natural Area or Greenbelt. In order to have criteria in place for future proposals, Parks and Recreation initiated the process to develop Natural Area and Greenbelt Supplemental Use Guidelines.

The intent of the Guidelines is to evaluate the potential impacts of uses proposed for Natural Areas and Greenbelts. The checklist proposed for this evaluation requests information in the following categories:

1. Habitat
2. Environmental Preservation
3. Education, Access and Public Safety
4. Recreation, and
5. Acquisition

It is the underpinning of the Use Guidelines that a decision whether to move forward with a proposed use must balance all of these factors.

(Additional information, including a review of the public outreach process, was provided in the June 25, 2015 briefing paper, available at: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks-and-recreation/about-us/board-of-park-commissioners>)

Proposed Revisions

Based on comments received at the Park Board's June 25 meeting, and written comments, staff have revised the Use Guidelines.

Preamble Added: The City has been blessed by the incredible efforts of thousands of volunteers working to restore the urban forest, with over 700,000 hours spent caring for the land. A preamble has been added to celebrate this effort and make clear that Parks and Recreation's promulgation of the Use Guidelines will not detract from past or future restoration efforts.

4.0 Policy Section: This section was revised to state that the Use Guidelines will *not* supersede adopted ordinances or policies. The Use Guidelines add guidance for implementing existing policies/regulations, but do not supersede them.

Process Illustration Added: To help explain the process for approving new uses in Natural Areas and Greenbelts, including review by the Park Board, the Guidelines now include a chart showing the path to approval/denial for a proposal.

Checklist Changes:

- Clarified the proponent's responsibility to provide a detailed proposal description and explain how the "yes" responses are supported

- Added Environmental Preservation Section
- Added criteria to Recreation Section
 - asking about community support for the proposal, and
 - asking if alternate locations have been considered, including non-Parks and Recreation property
 - Regarding alternate locations, the Guidelines state:

If the purpose of the proposed use can be met at an alternate location, then a location in a Natural Area or Greenbelt should be considered only as a last resort.

What Hasn't Changed

A major point of those who oppose the proposed Use Guidelines is that the Guidelines are inconsistent with the City's 1993 Greenspaces Policy. The 1993 Policy allows "low impact activities" in greenspaces, but does not specify what types of uses qualify as low impact. The proposed Guidelines interpret "low impact" to mean those activities with a low impact on the environment, leaving the decision on which uses will be allowed to individual proposal evaluation pursuant to the criteria.

Keeping the door open to a range of uses with a low impact on habitat and forest preservation remains consistent with the Parks and Recreation position, as stated in the proposed Preamble of the Guidelines, to balance:

- Preserving and enhancing forest habitat, tree canopy and water quality,
- Increasing environmental education and stewardship,
- Getting youth engaged and involved in their environment,
- Providing recreation opportunities for our changing needs,
- Ensuring equitable access to all park land, including Natural Areas and Greenbelts, and
- Enhancing positive use.

Schedule

July 23, 2015: Park Board discussion of Natural Area and Greenbelt Use Guidelines

September 10 or 24: Park Board recommendation

Additional Information

susanne.rockwell@seattle.gov

Project web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/NaturalAreaGreenbeltUse/default.htm>

Presentation

The revisions to the Natural Areas and Greenbelts Supplemental Use Guidelines were based on written testimony, the public hearing and Park Board feedback. Parks staff expanded the preamble because they wanted to make sure to communicate the value of the volunteers and the hours and efforts they gave for forest restoration. They updated and changed the following policy sections.

- There was language in the Use Guidelines that said it would supersede policies already existing policies and that has been deleted.
- Added a diagram that illustrates the review process.
- Enhanced the section on the required environmental reviews.

- Added a section on the checklist titled “environmental preservation” and added criteria in the recreation section.
- The new version explicitly states that alternative locations need to be pursued first; considering both park and non-park property. Proposed use should be considered as a last result. New version puts emphasis in keeping natural areas natural.

Parks staff feel they are in compliance with 1993 Greenspace Policy and added a definition for “low impact activities” to mean low impact on the environment.

Parks staff decided to keep the door open on future uses; items listed in guidelines are projects that have been requested in the past but they will keep the language vague since there are uses that cannot be anticipated.

Susan specifies the last resort language – look at the purpose to figure out best location. She mentions the importance of taking into account the cumulative impact of a proposed use and suggests emphasizing that in the checklist.

Susanne points out the map of that shows classified Natural Areas and Greenbelts, the marine reserves, places where Green Seattle Partnership has ongoing restoration work. GSP has projects in every park classification except downtown parks.

Discussion

Commissioner Byers says they have done an extraordinary job to be so responsive to feedback. The preamble goes quite a distance to add context and the diagram helps. He asks what the mechanism is to communicate these changes to the public.

Commissioner Tierney suggests Parks staff reopen the public comment period until September and send out an announcement. Commissioner Byers wonders if staff could get something to stakeholders with the proposed changes.

Commissioner Kincaid compliments Parks staff on the changes to the document and appreciates all the time it took. She suggests the establishment of more wildlife sanctuaries, since there is only the Kiwanis ravine. She questions if research exists that looks at human use in habitat areas. She would like to see more solid information on what is being discussed. What impact do humans have? She mentions the potential unintended consequence of dogs off leash. When a natural area is open to the public, dogs run around and that is not good for wildlife habitat. Susanne responds that the Park District will be funding a dedicated animal control officer in parks in response to public and staff complaints.

Commissioner Byers wonders the extent of knowledge of habitat areas. He is struck at what happened when Seattle Parks and Recreation partnered with Seattle Audubon. Before he had no clue the diversity of bird life at Seward Park, and now they post all these sightings on a bulletin board and it is extensive. Susanne responds that GSP has done extensive mapping on tree canopy and understory. They have data. Parks has Vegetation Management Plans for different areas to look at plants that are currently there and what should be improved. Project level SEPA analysis is when you drill down to slope, hydrology and technical analysis.

Commissioner Tierney clarifies the reason the Park Board chose to do a Cheasty pilot project was to assess the impact from human uses. They wanted a setting to find out if one can have a low impact use in a Natural Area or Greenbelt such that you can declare it low impact on habitat and wildlife.

People supported the Cheasty project because it will demonstrate whether it will be low impact or not. The Park Board has received much feedback from the public requesting SPR put off changes to the Supplemental Use Guidelines until after the Cheasty pilot is done. How does the natural area policy mesh with the pilot? Pilot project is a test of whether a particular use can be in a natural area. SPR might delay some broader policy changes until the impacts of the pilot project have been seen.

Susanne responds that this is a screening tool for future projects. It will be possible to amend the Supplemental Use Guidelines based on the results of the pilot project. Susan adds that if the 2nd phase of Cheasty goes forward SPR would use the checklist.

Commissioner Tierney asks SPR staff to elucidate how these Supplemental Use Guidelines pertain to Cheasty, and how they pertain to the future projects.

Commissioner Byers responds the Guidelines are useful to things not yet imagined. Test case in Cheasty was designed to see if bike trail would work; there may be other proposals that aren't bike trails for which these guidelines would be useful.

Commissioner Kincaid suggests postponing any more bike trails until the results on Cheasty and recommends looking at other outside studies also. She wonders what baseline information is there already.

Lydia asks if the project is meeting the needs of the community and the space. Susan says that was the purpose of the pilot.

Commissioner Kincaid emphasizes the need to look at the cumulative impact system wide and not just at the cumulative impact on one site – ensuring that some natural areas remain non-recreation.

Commissioner Tierney says the 1993 Greenspace policy defines both low intensity and low impact and requests the Supplemental Use Guidelines define both.

Commissioner Kincaid thanks SPR staff for all the work and feels they have had a pleasant conversation.

Jesús is pleased that SPR staff were able to make changes based on feedback. This issue highlights the inherent conflict within SPR -- activation and stewardship – this will only get more difficult as the city gets denser. He's comfortable with taking more time with the Guidelines to ensure it is done right. The Commissioners request another meeting for discussion regarding the Guidelines before making any recommendations.

Update: Magnolia Manor Off-Leash Area

Presented by Leah Tivoli, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Briefing Paper

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 23, 2015
To: Board of Park Commissioners
From: Leah Tivoli, Policy and Performance Unit
Subject: Magnolia Manor Off-leash Area Conditional Approval

Requested Board Action

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) is requesting the board's review and approval of proposed follow-up actions at Magnolia Manor Off-leash Area (OLA). The Magnolia Manor OLA is pending permanent status conditional on changes to the hours, signage and confirmation of a site agreement.

Staff Recommendation

Approve the proposal to change park hours and signage plan to make Magnolia Manor a permanent OLA.

Project Background

Magnolia Manor Off-leash Area (OLA) opened in November 2012. Per Ordinance 118724 (1997), all OLAs start as pilots. Parks is responsible for the on-going monitoring of these sites and a formal evaluation after 18 months of operation. Magnolia Manor OLA evaluation was presented to the Board of Park Commissioners on October 23, 2014 for approval. The motion to make the Magnolia Manor OLA permanent was approved unanimously as long as three conditions were met: site agreement between the site steward and SPR; a change to site hours to reflect the communities' wishes; and signage to address issues such as park hours, noise and community expectations.

Three Conditions

✓ Signed Site Agreement between OLA Steward and SPR

A standard volunteer agreement between the OLA steward and SPR was signed in August 2014 and remains in place until terminated by either of the parties. Every OLA is required to have a signed steward agreement that describes the roles and responsibilities of both OLA and SPR. The core responsibility of the steward is to build community through work parties and be the eyes and ears of the park (see Attachment 1 for Terms of Agreement).

✓ Proposed change to Magnolia Manor park hours

Seattle's Municipal Code Chapter 18.12.245 establishes general park operation hours between 4 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. Chapter 18.12.040 authorizes the SPR Superintendent to establish times for opening and closing of any particular park or park facility in order to provide or restrict nighttime access as he deems appropriate. The Park Operating Hours Policy (Number 0660-P 7.13.0, Effective June 1, 1995, Amended 2009) lays out the following reasons why SPR may make a change to the park hours: threat to public peace, potential for injury to the public, SPR employees or the park, or in the identified threat to public health or safety. In section 4.7, the policy explains that exceptions to the general park operating hours will be limited to 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. unless there are clearly identified extenuating circumstances justifying different hours.

SPR proposes changing the Magnolia Manor Park hours from 4 a.m. - 11:30 p.m. to 6 a.m. - 10 p.m. These proposed park hours extend to the OLA, p-patch and green space.

✓ Proposed signage

Signage is proposed to be placed on the entry gates of the OLA. The signage is intended to address issues such as park hours, noise and community expectations. We designed the signage to be friendly and encourage respectful behavior.



Public Involvement Process

The review includes input from SPR security staff, park resources staff in the Central West district, Citizen’s for Off-leash Areas, Friends of Magnolia Manor Park and the affected neighborhood. Proposed signage and changes to hours were sent out to the listserv used in the original briefings that includes 62 actively involved individuals. Changes were also sent to the Magnolia Voice and Queen Anne Magnolia News. We received 6 positive emails back and two emails requesting a slightly different set of hours. One neighbor requested hours begin at 7am to reduce noise in the morning. One requested summer (extend to 11pm) and winter hours.

Environmental Sustainability

No known environmental issues at this time.

Additional Information

Leah Tivoli: leah.tivoli@seattle.gov

For further details regarding the siting process refer to links below: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/OLA.htm> ; <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2006/10-12-06.pdf> <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/ParkBoard/minutes/2006/10-26-06.pdf>

For further details about the Magnolia Manor opportunity fund project including cost and application:
http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/magnolia_manor/
<http://magnoliamanorpark.org/mission/about-the-park/schematic-design/meeting-3/>
<http://magnoliamanorpark.org/mission/about-the-park/schematic-design/meeting-2-draft-designs-workshop/>
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/magnoliamanorpark/sets/72157629177252058/show/>

Magnolia Manor and Lower Kinnear parks were built in November 2012 and January 2013, respectively.
<http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/off-leash/>

For more information relating to the OLA program visit: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/offleash.asp>

Attachment 1: Terms of Agreement:

In signing the agreement, each OLA steward agrees to the following roles and responsibilities:

Building Community:

- Encourage and develop inclusive membership from your local community. Encourage a co-steward to partner with you.
- Be registered as a volunteer OLA Steward with the Parks Department.
- Abide by all terms and conditions of the Service Agreement and behavior expectations for volunteers.
- Be the eyes and ears of the OLA area and report in directly to appropriate contact.
- Conduct a minimum of four (4) work parties per year. Monthly work parties on the same date would be the best form of building community, if appropriate.
- Attend meetings as scheduled.

Here is what you may do:

- As approved and supervised by District Crew Chief, Sr. Lead or Sr. Gardener:
 - Maintain OLA Area by removal of invasive plants, weeding and mulching.
 - Rake, remove litter and dog poop to create a safe and clean environment.
 - Projects that change the park need full department approval in writing before any action begins. Go through your crew chief and manager. They will direct you to next steps. Plan approval may take a period of time.
 - Do not allow power equipment to be used by volunteers.

Here is how you report:

- Provide your hours and number of volunteers on-line monthly.
- Turn in Group Sign-in sheets after each work party as arranged with the volunteer coordinator.
- Keep your kiosk in good condition; information should be up to date, and display Parks code and rules.

Discussion

Leah is here to follow up on the Park Board's conditional approval of the Off-Leash Area at Magnolia Manor. The OLA was functioning as designed but there were some tangible issues. The 1st condition was the b/w site agreement between the site stewards and SPR that outlines their responsibilities to the off-leash area. COLA is an important partner to SPR; baseline garbage and mulch; support volunteer opportunities. COLA does community building and serve as the eyes and ears of the OLAs and SPR appreciates having them. The Magnolia Manor Off-Leash Area stewards signed the agreement in August 2014. They are not park attendants; they are volunteers who ensure the park is sanitary and looks good.

The second condition for approval of the Magnolia Manor Off-Leash Area was to change park hours to mitigate noise for the neighbors. The original hours were from 4am to 11:30pm and have been changed to 6am to 10pm, which is consistent with SPR Park Hours policy. The proposed park hours would extend to the entire park.

The third condition for approval of the Magnolia Manor Off-Leash Area was to have signage that emphasized community mindedness and addressed themes from the public process.

SPR has not received much feedback since making the changes. SPR staff notified all stakeholders of the changes.

Commissioner Tierney points out that the Park Board cannot vote for permanency due to not having a quorum. Commissioner Albert comments that residences nearby who were concerned about noise complaints went unheeded. Leah responds that it is more enforceable if there are complaints about people who are at the park after hours.

Commissioner Kincaid likes the sign and feels it is effective and friendly. She asks about the nurse who requested a change in the hours to make it later than 6am. Leah waited for comments from more neighbors who were concerned but they have not weighed in on the process. Animal shelter has a database and hoping to do hotspot analysis to find out where activity is and SPR is hoping to measure the impact of that through the Metropolitan Park District initiative.

Commissioner Tierney thanks Leah and states she did a great job. The Board will take it up at a future meeting when there is a quorum.

Superintendent's Report

- Sad news – longtime International District activist, Danny Chin, was involved shot and killed. There is a community in mourning. Danny was a friend of Seattle Parks and Recreation. SPR sends their condolences to his family and community.
- Jesus exercised his authority to change the open hours at Kerry Park – historically, the park has been open 24 hours, but changed due to noise complaints. The pilot will last 270 days after which it will come to the Park Board for a recommendation. The new hours are from 4am to 11:30pm.
- Several fires at Discovery Park – SPR staff are working closely with Seattle Audubon to mitigate fire risk. So far this has been successful at discovery; SPR staff will continue monitoring Magnuson. Superintendent Jesus appreciates the effort of the SPR and Seattle Audubon team to preserve assets and wildlife but keep the system safe.
- Seafair is a big deal and it's coming – SPR staff are getting ready. Bring amenities back to normal use the following day.
- Occidental Park – MID and DSA programming will start at Occidental. It's a different community. SPR is pleased with interactions between the public and our staff and members of DSA. This allows SPR staff to activate other parks since they can shift resources. We're investing \$60,000 and they are investing about \$600,000.
- Toured SPR's summer learning programs that help to mitigate summer learning loss. Enrollment for last week was 1,026 participants and SPR staff were able to take 63 kids off the waiting list and enroll them. Staff is noticing more youth with special needs and that has affected capacity at some camps in order to maintain safe ratios.
- Pianos in the Parks has started.
- Listening Tour – Superintendent Aguirre will be going out to 21 communities to get feedback – created a survey both online and paper; commissioners are welcome to attend.

Commissioner Kincaid says the pianos are a hit. Westlake is impressive. It is full and active.

Commissioner Byers wonders what the next round of downtown park investments might be? Superintendent Aguirre responds that this is a pilot and SPR is not currently planning anything but will look at how this progresses and then move forward. Waterfront Park could have a similar model.

Old/New Business

Partnership Alliance formed out of the Parks Partnership Committee has presented the opportunity to have some of Parks major partners of Seattle Parks and Recreation in the room and are working to ways to make SPR better for all stakeholders.

Communications Committee is putting together a presentation for the Park Board. Commissioner Albert commends Commissioner Kincaid who has done an incredible job of driving this committee.

Get Engaged – The new Get Engaged Commissioner has been chosen and has accepted the position. He is impressive and will lend a unique perspective to the board.

Commissioner Tierney thanks Commissioner Albert for her year on the Park Board as the Get Engaged Commissioner. She has been the best! Thanks her for all the great energy she has brought to the role! Commissioner Albert says it's been a pleasure.

In lieu of an August 10 Board of Park Commissioners meeting, the Park Board will be holding a retreat to work on committee structure and planning for 2016 but there will not be a regular meeting. The Park Board will be back in September.

Commissioner Kincaid moves the meeting adjourn; Commissioner Byers seconds the motion and the motion carries. The meeting adjourns at 7:48 pm.

APPROVED: _____ DATE _____
Tom Tierney, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners