



Minutes

Board of Park Commissioners
100 Dexter Avenue North, Seattle 98109
Thursday, October 10, 2019
6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Commissioners:

Andréa Akita, Vice Chair	Tom Byers
Dennis Cook	Jessica Farmer
Marlon Herrera	Evan Hundley
William Lowe, Chair	Kelly McCaffrey
Eliza Ramsey	

Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Lowe calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm; the board introduces themselves. Commissioner Lowe asks for approval of the consent items; Commissioner Akita moves to approve and Commissioner Cook seconds, the Board approves them unanimously.

Public Comment

Ellen Taft – She thanks the department for the new coach at Mt. Baker Rowing and Sailing. The new coach is a dream; he is wonderful and efficient. His leadership has created better teamwork. Deputy Superintendent Williams arranged for signage saying No Dogs and it has taken care of 99% of the problems. She thanks Christopher. She gives credence to putting up signs. She requests that the department do something about the cannabis smokers in the parking lot at Mt. Baker.

Miriam McCall – She loves our parks; gives thanks to the Board for enabling public comment. She came to the meeting to represent Friends of Ballard P-Patch. They are engaged in building support and funds to buy the property on which the Ballard P-Patch is located. It has been leased to the city for \$1 for over 40 years. The landowners are looking to sell the land and would like to sell it to the City to keep it a p-patch.

Mayor Durkan is suggesting \$3million Sweetened Beverage Tax for the p-patch program; they are asking for \$250,000 of that to use towards purchasing the land. She asks the Board to support their request to the City Council.

Superintendent's Update

Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Ballard P-Patch – The money through the sweetened beverage tax is not affiliated with Seattle Parks and Recreation, it is part of the Department of Neighborhoods. The Ballard P-patch is not in a high needs area for SPR. The Board is welcome to support this and send a letter to City Council.

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>

Commissioner Akita asks if there are other privately-owned spaces leased by the City and if they are looking at how that could impact various groups in the future.

Biennium Budget – The bulk of any new dollars are in the Mayor’s proposed budget for programming, encampment removal, and Summer of Safety from the sweetened beverage tax.

Personnel changes – Planning and Development Division staff changes to help with project delivery and community engagement. SPR hired a consultant to help figure out best practices and another staff member to help ensure project completion and timeliness.

Occidental Park – SPR was granted a Revocable Use Permit for the installation of a tiny house demonstration at Occidental Park; it will be there for 30 days. There is also a plan for a new timber pavilion and it will recognize and honor the Native Americans.

Theft of wire at Athletic Fields – people stealing the copper wire. City light and SPS are also being victimized. Trying to mitigate and weld things to keep people out of it, but it is challenging.

Ballard Commons Portland Loo – SPR started a pilot project to provide 24-7 restroom access.

Roller Derby Ribbon Cutting – SPR will paint lines on 17 gym floors. Thank the roller derby for communicating well with the department.

Green Seattle Partnership – SPR is moving \$800,000 from capital to operating to maintain restoration work.

Commissioner Hundley asks if SPR staff will brief the Board on how SPR and the City will respond to another snow event.

Eliza Ramsey, our new Get Engaged Commissioner, introduces herself. Commissioner Ramsey pursued her bachelor’s degree in public health and works at the Urban Indian Health Institute. She is a park user and is very excited to be on the Board.

Partnership Spotlight: Lid I-5

Presented by John Feit, Lid I-5

They are a small non-profit looking to cover I-5 from Denny Way heading south and encompassing Freeway Park to create a 40-acre lid. They have hired a consultant to daylight technical and feasibility issues. This is a long-term campaign. It is coupled with the rebuilding of I-5. They are meeting with members of the City and Washington State legislature. As the technical and feasibility study finishes, they are starting to think about next steps and management structure. They are not advocating for any particular use, but definitely want an expanded openspace. They have been

researching case studies on different lids and their management structure. After they receive the results of the feasibility study, they will start playing with design ideas. They will continue to have conversations with community groups.

Commissioner Herrera saw the Seattle Times article and was wondering if he could share anything from the feasibility study. John responds, it is possible to build over I-5. When WSDOT rebuilds I-5, it will allow for reconfiguring the access. During the negotiations with WSDOT, the UW included an endowment for maintenance and Commissioner Herrera suggests they consider doing the same. John says yes, they are thinking about this already and hope to have private developers to assist with this.

He's hoping they can gather a broad coalition to advocate for fixing I-5 in downtown Seattle.

The lid would have to fit in the same corridor on the East-West axis.

The lid has the potential to do so many things; provide housing, water filtration. The Lid I-5 would love to expand the lid to much further north of the city.

John says he spoke with Marshall Foster from Office of the Waterfront about ownership of the property. Many of these lid parks are owned and operated by non-profits. WSDOT is looking for alternative ways to fund highway projects; private or public uses could provide funding for this.

The videos on the website help visualize the project; but they are aspirational designs. The website can be found [here](#).

Presentation: SPR's Role in Encampment Cleanup

Presented by Donna Waters, Encampment and Special Teams Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Charles Ng, Strategic Advisor, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Superintendent Aguirre provides context. He reminds every one of the Seattle Parks and Recreation mission. The citywide response to homelessness is part of that.

SPR serves homeless in many ways:

Every day community center and parks staff interact with homeless individuals. SPR provides showers at some community center sites. The Conservation Corps providing training for people experiencing homelessness. They do a lot of work maintaining the I-5 lid for WSDOT. SPR opens shelters for homeless during the snow events; provides scholarships for families experiencing homelessness; and clean encampments.

Parks and Community Centers are open to everyone.

Background

- In 2015, Mayor Murray declared homelessness a civil emergency
- In 2019, more than 11,200 people on a single night count in January were experiencing homelessness across King County.
- One major impact: more people are living unsheltered on public lands, including parks and natural areas.
- In 2018, Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) formed a 12-person Encampment Team to assist in the cleanup of unsanctioned encampments on public property.
- SPR's Encampment Team is a key partner that works with the City's Navigation (NAV) Team and other City departments in the cleaning of unsanctioned encampments.

City's Navigation Team (headed by Human Services Department): multi-agency team formed in 2017 to address unsanctioned encampments on public land.

SPR Encampment Team: supports NAV team focusing on cleanups in parks and other public lands. 8% decrease from the previous year due to the efforts of the Navigation Team.

Role of Navigation Team – Address number of homeless individuals connecting them with resources and housing services. Donna's team works with Navigation Team to clean the encampments. SPR staff do not do outreach.

Encampment Cleanup Work: The Basics

Large Encampment

The Multi-Departmental Rules (MDAR) guide encampment clean up. More information about Seattle's response to the homelessness can be found [here](#). SPR follow these rules with every clean: 72-hour notice must be posted for the homeless individuals. They post on all structures, tents, and trees. During the 72-hours before the clean and on the day of the clean, the social workers offer shelter services. Seattle Police Department is present at every clean. There is a hazardous waste company that deals with waste and propane. The Field Coordinator will contact each person, inventory the possessions using photographs, and label those possessions. Then, the belongings are sent to the Human Services Division storage facility and remain for 70 days. The Field Coordinator will post signs that notifies encampment residents that the area is clean and providing a phone number for homeless individuals to call to get their items returned.

Tents or Restrictive Access

SPR works closely with the Navigation Team, contractors and SPD for outreach and encampment removal. They do not have to provide 72-hours' notice, but when the field coordinator goes to assess the encampment, they will usually tell people what is happening. There is an inspection done first to assess the conditions and if there are any pets there.

SPR encampment teams have spent 55% of their time on smaller encampment cleanups.

RV Remediation – SPR helps clean up six RV sites a month; SPU requested two more days a month to clean.

Crew – Small, but mighty. 12-person team with a crew including safety specialist, laborers, truck drivers, construction maintenance equipment operators.

Funding from General Fund and SDOT Commercial Parking Tax

Challenges

- Repopulation of clean sites
- Clean up safety – There is always a possibility of unearthing hazardous waste. They have personal protection equipment and grabbers. All staff on this team completed homelessness 101 about what they may experience in these encampments. Field coordinators also go through mental health first aid class.
- Scheduling: managing expectations; meet weekly to discuss locations for clean up the following week.
- Special equipment and supplies – heavy equipment – excavators and bobcats to move larger structures; steel-toed boots, grabbers.

The clean-up crews work seven days a week. They try to arrange the schedules, so people can have one day off. Charles and Donna are working on some performance management goals and outcomes.

Budget

SDOT provides \$1.3million in reimbursement. SPR provides \$700,000 a year. Mayor's budget includes another \$100,000 for RV remediation funding.

Donna is proud and humble for the work they do. They work to allow for days off. They use temporary help sometimes to alleviate some of the pressure.

Commissioner Lowe commends the small, but mighty team and says they are doing a remarkable job.

WSDOT provides heavy machinery for the crews. It is a partnership.

Commissioner Herrera mentions the innumerable work hours and funds used to clean up encampments.

There is a different standard for large encampments versus single tents. Although they do not have to post on SDOT Right-of-Way or SPR property, they try to give people a heads up.

Commissioner Akita asks how the schedules are created. Are they complaint driven? Donna says some of them are from community members, but many are prioritized based on slope hazards, traffic issues, rodent problems. Some communities do not complain so they can't be based on the complaints alone.

When there is a scheduled event, they will move tents out immediately.

Regional response – in a perfect world what would SPR be doing? The citywide response is housing but that is not SPR's focus, SPR provides support and clean up.

Donna mentions her hope that the Navigation team budget will stay with the City. Mayor submitted budget to the City Council. The City Council is reducing the funding for the Navigation Team; if this happens, parks will look drastically different.

SPR has not been collecting a lot of the data. Much of the data is being collected by Human Services. Charles and Donna are working to figure out the data. Navigation Team collects data about the outreach information. Some information they are thinking about is: how often are encampments cleaned up and how often do the homeless people return.

There are Councilmembers looking to reduce some funding. SPR and other city agencies are discussing ways to demonstrate what cutting the funding would like.

How are you doing and how is the team doing? Her team likes food and she cooks for them. She tries to meet with them every other month. Commissioner Lowe asks Donna to invite the Board to come and celebrate the Small, but mighty team.

Commissioner Lowe wants the Board to be briefed on this more frequently and keep updated on the budget issue with the Navigation Team.

Yesler Crescent Update

Andy Sheffer, Planning and Development Division Director, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Andy describes the location of the Yesler Crescent. He provides the history of City Hall Park. At some point, King County moved the entry to the side, so the King County Courthouse does not open into the park anymore.

This is the location of the Battle of Seattle in 1865.

Prefontaine Fountain was a gesture to Father Prefontaine who built the city's first Catholic Church.

SPR to implement immediate gains to inform long-term actions; SDOT is creating a public life study. SPR is proud of their involvement with planning, design, activation and maintenance.

Enhanced maintenance – SPR cleaned the globes, removed some benches; coordinated the installation of festival lighting; planning of electric panel replacement

Enhanced site activation –

- Park concierges
- Concierge kiosk
- Brochures
- Maps
- First aid
- Moveable bistro furniture
- Adirondack chairs
 - Lawn games
- Lunchtime food trucks
- Buskers
- Noon to 4pm through June
- Noon to 6pm beginning in July
- Activation Events
- Weekly concerts (July-Aug.)
- Painting (July-Aug.)
- National PARKin Park (July)
- Chess tourneys
- Pilot closure of Dilling Way in July (determined to be premature and cancelled after 1 month)
- Festival Lighting

They will wait for analysis from public life action plan for next steps and coordinate with SDOT and King County.

Victoria Schoenburg, SPR City Center Parks Manager, put in a lot of time to activate this area.

Commissioner Lowe loves the fountain and asks what it would cost to restore it. Andy says it would cost \$700-800,000 to remodel it. This fountain is a focal point. He also mentions the lighting needs to come across the street.

Public life study objectives – Measure the use of public space in Yesler Crescent, including patterns of users and activities.

Open House - Discuss high-level findings; identify design challenges and opportunities for each site; receive input from the public

Public Action Plan - Identify strategic actions to enhance the experience and utilization of public spaces for all users

SDOT performed intercept surveys to meet with businesses and talk with park patrons, many are waiting in line for services.

Takeaways from the data – SDOT did a lot of analysis of pedestrian traffic. Women tend to walk along Jefferson as opposed to along the southern side of the parks on the sidewalk. Andy says where women will go is an indicator of perceived safety.

Commissioner Lowe mentions that it was great King County Metro moved the bus stops to disperse large groups of people.

Commissioner Lowe brings up the safety issue. The people there know which way the patrols are coming through to determine where they sit and do their illegal activities.

Recommendations –

“Moving activity” by park visitors is relegated to the edges of the space, including Jefferson Alley, 3rd Ave. and 4th Ave. There is no central anchor to give it a sense of place or make the space welcoming.

Plan Recommendations

- Explore removal of Prefontaine Fountain. It is not functional.
- Explore reconfiguration of internal circulation patterns in the park to emphasize desired lines of movement (southwest to northeast) and to bring activity to middle of park.
- Explore tie-in to the entry of King County Courthouse along Jefferson Alley.
- Remove and/or re-orient dense clusters of seating, especially when they provide hidden corners.
- Take advantage of ample, underutilized public space on south end of site (both ROW and parks) to establish a destination for the neighborhood. The space and be considered a second bookend. More people walk through Jefferson Alley than City Hall Park; this trend is especially true for women, indicating that the park is not perceived to be safe or pleasant.

Improve pedestrian experience of Jefferson Alley by:

- Removing fencing separating park from alley
- Improving surface treatment
- Adding more pedestrian scale lighting (e.g., uplighting courthouse)
- Thinning and pruning the tree canopy along Jefferson Alley
- Adding retractable bollards at east and west ends of the alley to emphasize pedestrian prioritization

Circulation to and through Prefontaine Place should be maintained and emphasized. Look to the Parks and Gateway Plan for guidance on redesign of Jefferson Alley.

King County will not turn the entry back to the original because it would cost millions of dollars.

Commissioner Akita asked about traffic patterns within the alley; she says SPR has done a great job and the changes have been dramatic. She suggests SPR work with County about the vehicles there that are parked there.

Commissioner Herrera notices in the pedestrian patterns is that there is no southwest to north east – the rapid ride stop is on Prefontaine and Yesler.

Commissioner Farmer is glad to see that pruning and thinning is letting light in; trees make it more comfortable and more welcoming.

SDOT is thinking of creative ideas for Dilling Way.

Old/New Business

Future agenda – The Board discuss the future agenda. They ask Superintendent Aguirre if they can provide input for agenda topics and create a plan into the future. Superintendent Aguirre says that there are things SPR wants the Board to hear; but yes, they can offer topics.

Park Board/PDOC - Commissioner Byers and Commissioner Farmer will work with Paula to come up with alternatives for the Park Board/Park District Oversight Committee structure.

Superintendent Aguirre spoke with the Mayor’s Office and brought up the Park Board/PDOC structure. The mayor’s office is supportive. They spoke about the timing of that with the 6-year financial plan; consider doing it concurrently.

City Leadership Academy - Two new members from SPR: Daisy Catague and Lakema Bell. Congratulations to them!

There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 8:30pm.

APPROVED: _____ DATE _____

William Lowe, Chair
Board of Park Commissioners