

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
June 8, 2017

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Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Andréa Akita
Tom Byers, Chair
Dennis Cook
Marlon Herrera
Evan Hundley
Kelly McCaffrey
Barbara Wright

Excused:

William Lowe, Vice Chair
Marty Bluewater

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Jesús Aguirre, Superintendent
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

The meeting is held at 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Byers calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Commissioner Byers calls for approval of the Consent Items: March 23, April 27, May 11 and May 25 minutes, the Acknowledgment of Correspondence and the June 8 Agenda; the commissioners approve the Consent Items.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

Doug Luetjen – Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks (FSOP); Colman Park Restoration project – FSOP is an organization committed to the Olmsted legacy. He recognizes others have different priorities, he feels it is important Seattle addresses the Olmsted legacy. The vistas were created and for neighborhoods and all of Seattle. FSOP asks the city to protect the views as important to the entire city. He applauds the effort by the community group to give back to the city.

Tim Motzer – Requests SPR increase funding to the Park District by capturing the city’s tax base. Petition to increase funding to the Park District because the department does not have sufficient funds to replace the aging facilities. Seattle is growing and more money is coming in than anticipated. Make it work for the residents of the city.

Adam O'Sullivan – Lives adjacent to Colman Park and is disappointed to see SPR muddy the process to restore the park and views. He is a GSP forest steward – leading work parties at Colman Park and there's much support for the restoration.

Karen Daubert – Mt. Baker resident and she urges support of the restoration project. She is a past Board of Park Commissioner. She understands challenges and value of parks and greenspaces. The Olmsteds recognized the beauty of this area and designed the park plan with the views in mind. Look at projects that impact a neighborhood and have citywide importance.

Florence Peterschmit- Resident of Madrona; the City is losing many of its views and sky to construction. Seattle residents continue to support SPR through funding. Private property owners may benefit but the entire community will benefit also.

Gerry Bresslour – In regards to the consultant report on Colman Park Restoration Project – study performed by wetlands expert; the consultant thought the forest was healthy. The community consulted with arborists who said they did not feel the forest was healthy. He states the Scantec report mentioned keeping the Big Leaf Maples on the slope as a reminder of a primeval forest, but this park was designed, not native. He wants the Commissioners to read the report with a lot of skepticism.

Margy Bresslour – She examined the consultant's biography and he focuses on wetlands and streams; the report was heavy on birds and policy. The community hired a Geotech consultant and certified arborist who felt the restoration was feasible. The trees have a shallow root system; do not provide deep soil stabilization. The arborist noted the maples cause too much canopy and no understory. There is quite a difference between the consultants hired by SPR and the consultants hired by the community.

Evan Wright – Colman Park Vista Project – The consultant asked to deliver an opinion instead of a report of scientific information. Evaluated communities plan; SPR interpreted as clear cut for private views. Evan is shocked that public dollars was spent to do this.

Daria and Dr. Melissa Ilgen – They moved to Mt. Baker for safety reasons. The park feels unsafe. The woods are too dense and could result in criminal behavior. Does not feel the consultant SPR hired was qualified to perform an evaluation of the greenspace.

Jared Smith – He supports the Colman Park Restoration Plan. Embrace need for increased density while maintaining great public greenspaces. Parks are the lungs of our city. The community depended on continued maintenance to maintain the views and greenspace. Mt. Baker Park was initiated by community and it has the most amazing views. SPR needs to find a balance between the public need for views and greenspaces.

Randy Richardson – The City is being rapidly built up and infilled and the primary responsibility is for people. He asks SPR to take out sections and restore the view.

Jeff Parke – He would like more pickleball facilities. Everybody can learn pickleball and it's fun.

Joyce Moty – Joyce asks if maintenance crews are cleaning up homeless encampments? What can residents do if it is true? For SPR maintenance crews to get back to maintaining the parks and greenspaces.

Linda Finney – She has lived in the Mt. Baker neighborhood for a long time and has enjoyed the view and gathering area that exists there. The view has disappeared. Among other benefits, views work to decrease car speeds. The community group does not have confidence in SPR staff. They feel SPR is grossly overstating the severity of the count of trees to be removed in the design; over 16% of big leaf maples have single trunks. Douglas Firs and Cedars are not able to exist there.

Superintendent's Report

Regarding Joyce's question about maintenance crews – yes, the maintenance crews are being used as part of the emergency operation in concert with other city departments. This is short-term while they are getting a handle on the problem. However, SPR brought seasonal people in to work in the parks in the interim.

Superintendent Aguirre thanks the community for coming out. Open Space Plan is one plan, but SPR is working on a recreation demand study and will build on the work from the Park District planning process. He hopes the community is engaged to continue to share their ideas about what's next for services.

\$12-16 mill for community center stabilization – walkthroughs of identified community centers to assess the needs and priorities.

Aquatics has ramped up; record attendance at Colman Pool, spray parks and boat ramps. Staff did a great job. They need lifeguards!! Free lifeguard training, ages 16 and up.

Treating milfoil and invasive lily pads in Lake Washington. The first round of treatment is done; SPR staff are working hard to get the beaches ready for summer!

Japanese garden – 68% increase in attendance since last year. They have a lot of great programming and the garden looks great.

SPR events schedulers said they have over 2000 picnics scheduled for this summer.

Soundview Playfield Renovation – The community appreciated being at the project location and being able to point to park components. This is one of several citywide park major maintenance projects funded by the Seattle Park District which will help accomplish SPR's efforts to meet recreation demands. The proposed project includes installation of synthetic field surfacing, lighting, ADA access and site improvements.

Lowman Beach Park Seawall – The Lowman Beach Park seawall is failing and needs to be removed or replaced. SPR received a \$250,000 grant from King County to undertake a feasibility study to look at options for the removal and/or replacement of the seawall. It is SPR's goal to remove the remaining seawall and continue the shoreline restoration

work that began when the south half of the 1950s-era seawall failed in the mid-1990s. SPR staff and a consultant will meet with neighbors at the park within the next month and we anticipate the feasibility study to be complete by the end of August.

Get Moving – To ensure that we maintain effective and meaningful connections with our diverse communities SPR has hired 6 Community Engagement Ambassadors (onboarding 7 more) who speak: Spanish, Tigrinya, Romanian, Moldavian, Somali, Tagalog, Chinese, Mandarin, Eritrean, and Amharic.

Seattle Public Utilities has finished their Combined Sewer Overflow work at Seward Park and the park looks great! The park restoration improvements created more accessible and usable park area that is being enjoyed by many park visitors already!

Music campus at Discovery Park – no one has approached SPR about this yet.

Bicycle Sunday, a program that closes a large portion of Lake Washington Boulevard to cars, has started. A list of the dates and more information available [here](#).

Colman Park Restoration – SPR is working to strike a balance between preserving the legacy, maintain views and restoration work. Superintendent Aguirre is confident the community and SPR can get there and implores them to keep working with SPR.

Briefing: Colman Park Restoration Project

Presented by Kathleen Conner and Jon Jainga, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Kathleen Conner, Planning Manager in SPR Planning and Development Division, provides background information about the Colman Park Restoration Project.

In 2015, the community applied for and was awarded a Neighborhood Matching Fund Grant for \$25,000 and have raised \$23,000. They hired a Geotech study and a report from a certified arborist to help them develop a vegetation management plan (VMP).

The Department of Neighborhoods works in collaboration with SPR to determine project eligibility. SPR staff have been working with the consultants and the community on this project since the beginning.

It is unusual for Vegetation Management Plans to be funded through grant funding because there are many considerations to account for, including the tree policy, view policies, and local ordinances around environmentally critical areas (ECAs).

Project review team (PROVIEW) – The project went through PROVIEW review. PROVIEW is a committee consisting of staff from all divisions – shops, maintenance, landscape designers, arborists, etc...

June 2016 – The community gave SPR staff a draft plan, that showed a clearcut to the top 1/3 of the greenspace. SPR said they were willing to create view windows and more work needed to be done on the planting plans. The community submitted revised plan in late July that had a wide swath of trees removed at the top of the hill. SPR again provided detailed edits in October but, the community group did not like the edits. They offered another study to look at the site. Jon Jainga, Urban Forestry Manager, hired Stantec to do a study.

SPR staff encouraged the community group to apply for viewpoint designation. David Graves has been assigned to assist with that and Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks may apply for it. However, the same standards would apply to the greenspace even if it receives the viewpoint designation.

Sticking points:

Olmsted Preliminary plan showed it as a wide open vista; but the requirements have changed over time, limits of what can be done on steep slopes.

SPR wants to get this done and collaborate with the community. They are willing to work with the community group to frame the views and find a compromise and develop a timeline for the completion of this project.

SPR staff have performed over 100 neighborhood matching fund projects with no difficulty and feel they can turn this project around and have a better experience going forward.

Jon Jainga, Urban Forest Manager, says SPR is working to get everyone back to the table to make this plan happen. Jon acknowledges SPR could have done a better job maintaining the site in the past and feels it is a lesson learned. Let's not let it happen again. This is a Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) restoration site since 2004.

Jon wants to merge the plans to form a compromised plan and work with the forest stewards and community to ensure the greenspace is maintained.

The viewpoint policy is in the process of being updated; part of this new policy will encompass a clear process and criteria.

Colman Park Restoration is designated as phase 1 – removal of invasives and planting new native plants.

It would take approximately 4 years to restore the greenspace.

Meeting with community group on Thursday.

The Commissioners would like to be kept informed about the agreement between the two groups.

The Board would appreciate clarification about steep slopes and the Environmentally Critical Areas policy. They would like to be kept current with the viewpoint application and status. SPR staff say that the viewpoint status does preclude building that would obstruct the view.

In regards to the ECA ordinance – what’s the biggest pill Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) can swallow? SPR staff are working with SDCI to figure out what they would need to do. SPR may be able to obtain an ECA waiver – after performing an environmental impact statement; to remove any vegetation and trees.

Next time: Step by step for viewpoint designation and cost analysis.

Timeline: depends on the community group and SPR staff working to find a middle path.

Bring this back to the next meeting. Commissioner Byers did a site visit at Colman Park and it was illuminating.

Update: 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan

Presented by Susanne Rockwell, Seattle Parks and Recreation

As of this afternoon, Susanne received the following correspondence regarding the draft 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan:

- 27 emails regarding pickleball – increase outdoor courts and look at northend for increased pickleball
There is free drop-in pickleball at 18 community centers and there are 3 outdoor sites with 5 courts. SPR is starting 2 new pilot sites in South Park and Georgetown.
- 1 email on crumb rubber – requesting SPR not pursue for turf fields
- 1 email on Lake City Community Center – draft omitted Lake City Community Center but it has been added and counted.
- 2 emails on walkability;
- 2 emails on cost of land;
- 1 email on SEPA/DNS regarding bald eagle habitat;
- 1 email regarding the concern about lack of maintenance dollars.

Georgetown is included in a wide census block, encompassing much of the industrial land and Boeing field.

Appendix D: Cap projects implementing in 6-year timeframe.

Discretionary funded plan – sports courts and athletic field improvements; could be used for pickleball.

Public Hearing: 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan

Drew Thoreson – Seattle Metro Pickleball Association (SMPA) – the goal is to promote pickleball. Drew requests SPR to add pickleball facilities in 2017 Parks And Open Space Plan. 1) line outdoor tennis courts for pickleball in all Seattle neighborhoods; could amount to 25 tennis courts. 2) Include in plan, construction of dedicated pickleball courts in all Seattle neighborhoods. 3) Dedicated indoor pickleball facility. Lining done within 12 months; many courts are under-utilized and it could be multi-use.

Locations currently available are during the day and not available to families and subject to cancelation for other recreation priorities.

Patrick Johnson – SMPA – thanks everyone for showing up. Need more courts and more court time as the current schedule does not work for his schedule or his family. Resurface underutilized courts and line them.

Tim Motzer – Lake City Neighborhood Alliance – provides a detailed list of errors and omissions from the Open Space Plan. Due to the population growth, Mr. Motzer feels more money should be made available to the Park District to renovate SPR facilities. He thinks the park size of 10,000 square feet should not be enough in areas of greater density like Lake City. The Lake City Community Center is operated like a rental facility with no real programming.

Plan indicates Fix It First but does not include funding for aging community centers.

Jonathan Mark – Protect Volunteer Park – The Plan does not discuss the role of public engagement regarding parks; disappointed no public involvement policy in the plan. SAAM expansion is not suitable for funding in the 2017 Parks And Open Space Plan. Mentions several places in the plan that preclude the funding of the SAAM expansion.

Elaine Ike – Understands the omission of land acquisition for downtown; additional opportunities for public land in downtown area. Open space brings public benefit to the city. Requests someone to talk with Speaker Chopp about funding openspace in the downtown core.

Jerry Kindinger – He furthers the other pickleball people to add more outdoor public pickleball courts. There is demand and it was invented in Seattle. The city should become leaders in the pickleball movement!!! Community and social activity; pickleball is very popular and it creates community. Mission talks about promoting community. Do not waste money on Georgetown pickleball court it's a homeless encampment.

Two others agree!

Margaret Allen – 10-year lag period before action catches up with community need. Misses a part of the need; the lack of pickleball courts was a vital issue yesterday. This should be considered a priority; lines are simple fixes. Vast reward system for the community.

Sharon Best – People playing pickleball are fun and people laugh a lot; multi-use is good.

Victoria Scott – It's cheap to draw lines – She is happy to volunteer to draw the lines on the tennis courts. Feasibility study to do courts on south end and those courts are 2.3 miles apart; nice to have a court on the north end and other parts of the city.

Yim Lee – Georgetown proposal – too far away from pickleball concentration on the north end. Better location would be at Green Lake – more accessible. 3 years ago he met Superintendent Aguirre and told him tennis is declining and pickleball is increasing. Suggests green lake.

Gladys Ruthrauff – There are the same number of facilities for many more people compared to 20 years ago.

Frank Dunlap – Shows picture of pickleball court at Yost Park in Edmonds – convert pickleball court to tennis court does not confuse tennis players. 32 people play pickleball on 2 tennis courts. This project is cheap and they are willing to paint their own courts.

Carol Flanagan agrees with the others but adds that people bring portable nets.

Tom O'Rourke – He seconds other pickleball comments; social aspects are incredible. Reduces local community crime and increases neighborhood cohesiveness.

Sandra Goldade – Her dad is 93 and he's still active and playing.

Jimmy Vernie – Does not want to pit neighborhoods against one another; does not want to pit priorities against one another; easy as lining some courts.

Laura Burns – She plays pickleball all around the U.S. Seattle needs dedicated pickleball courts. It's a happy and fast moving game.

Fran Myer – Agrees with others; easy solution is to stripe tennis courts but have a vision for the future of the sport. Centralia has indoor courts.

Stan Jonasson – There is pickleball in Port Angeles! 6 dedicated pickleball courts with correct surfaces, fences so ball doesn't go all hither and thither; they have a lot of options for pickle ball.

Jesus thanks the community for coming. There is competition between activities, but he acknowledges these are relatively inexpensive fixes. He is willing to work to get some additional courts started.

Discussion: Role of the Board/Strategic Issues

Facilitated by Tom Byers

The matrix incorporates all feedback so is a true representation put forward by the Board. There are emerging themes in the matrix.

Commissioner Byers asks the Board to determine if it is a fair representation of Board views, ascertain what is missing and identify measurable tangible goals for Park Board in collaboration with Park Board staff.

The commissioners like the approach of a simple statement with a few common goals.

Commissioner Wright feels it is important under "Healthy people" to add - have people be healthier, as a goal. Then, add to the end – engage in healthy activities.

Superintendent Aguirre talks about the Healthy Environment Action Team retreat yesterday and SPR staff came up with a long list of things the department wants to do.

General themes -

- Better engagement with communities
- Community connectedness in parks

Kelly will write a bullet about community connectedness in parks. As stewards and visionaries, real success is shared by all users through engagement that builds advocacy.

Partnerships is a thread through all of the themes and is very valuable.

Figure out how to utilize expertise and connections of the Commissioners to help the department.

Public health goals – 2x a year for meeting with other public agencies to set goals; find common work plans and action items.

Radio ads for marketing into recreation opportunities.

Connect with community – social media to work with neighborhoods.

Local athletes have foundations to subsidize programming. Work with them to provide opportunities for youth.

Does department have procedures for leveraging outside resources?
Superintendent Aguirre mentions SPR staff will retreat next week to work on partnerships. Build capacity to leverage partnerships and perform outreach.

One meeting per month should be strategically located in the city; with community leaders – match topics with that particular area and let the community leader speak for 10 minutes.

The Board would like to measure how much follow up and engagement with the Board and the public.

The Board hears much feedback from the community and would appreciate the opportunity to advocate on behalf of the department to City Council. The Board would like to be more tied into other things happening in the city; so they can adequately respond when things are happening.

Challenge to get out into the community; staff and public do not know what the board is or does. Clarify who the board is and what it does and what they think about.

Next Steps: Superintendent Aguirre feels much of the work SPR staff are doing aligns with the themes and goals of the Board. He suggests the Board work with SPR staff to create a matrix to identify where synergy exists between board themes and SPR work.

Old/New Business

There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 8:55pm.

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