

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
January 11, 2018

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Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Andréa Akita
Tom Byers, Chair
Dennis Cook
Marlon Herrera
Evan Hundley
William Lowe, Vice Chair
Kelly McCaffrey
Rachel Anne Williams

Excused:

Barbara Wright

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator

The meeting is held at 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Hundley calls the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Commissioner Hundley calls for approval of the Consent Items: the January 11 agenda; Commissioner McCaffrey moves, Commissioner Herrera seconds and the Consent Item is approved unanimously.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

Donald Harris – Parks Advocacy – The city is emphasizing increased density and housing and Parks are being put on the back burner. The City Council Committee that leads on Parks issues took Parks out of the name. There seems to be a lack of respect and viability of parks and openspace with the new Council and Executive. Voters have been asked 5 times when to take park land for other projects and rejected all proposals. The Park Board needs to ensure parks value is emphasized with the City Council. A high-density city needs park land more than anything. Parks serve has the backyards for those who live in apartments.

Recognition for Donation – Acting Superintendent Williams invited representatives from Amazon, Vulcan and Clise Properties to attend the meeting in order to publicly thank them for their generosity. They each donated \$45,750 for lighting at Denny Park. Early last year we renovated the park with upgraded electrical, landscaping, irrigation, and repaving. The lighting was unbudgeted and they donated the money. Phil Fuji negotiated this behind the scenes. The new lighting transforms the park in the evening increasing safety and discourages unwanted and antisocial behaviors. Acting Superintendent thanks the partners and presents them with a certificate for their legacy contribution.

Superintendent's Report

Presented by Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Acting Superintendent Williams reviews the new administration priorities:

- Affordable housing agenda
- Seattle Promise – free college admission for any person who completes 12th grade in the city.
- Protecting Seattle workers
- Solving transportation issues
- Criminal justice reform
- Healthy environment

Superintendent Aguirre's last day was today; January 18 will be a going away party from 3-5pm at Belltown Community Center.

Golf Course Study – There is a nationwide trend of declining interest in golf; the golf courses are going into debt. SPR cannot maintain them without incurring debt. There is no revenue opportunities from the public schools. A lot of kids are not signing up for golf as a recreation program. SPR hired a consultant to help the department determine next steps.

Seattle Public Schools – Parks and Recreation is working closely with Public Schools to renovate Cleveland High School's athletic field in Georgetown. They are pretty close to coming to agreement around cost sharing. This will be a synthetic field, which will help with field issues.

Viewpoint taskforce – They will be tasked with ascertaining how to maintain viewpoints, consider Environmentally Critical Areas ordinance and other ordinances and safety issues. This would be a Park District funded option and would alleviate miscommunications with the public about viewpoints.

Olmsted Parks – The Seattle Parks and Recreation system was founded by the Olmsteds back in 1903. SPR wants to ensure the legacy is protected and expanded to other parts

of the city. SPR staff are assembling a steering committee to work to protect and preserve Olmsted legacy. Acting Superintendent Williams would like to recommend a level of funding for future years to enable the department to transfer the theme/vision to parks all over the city. The Committee will be up and running by the end of March. He will ask them to make a presentation. He asked Commissioner Byers to serve as co-chair on this committee.

The Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks feel the viewpoints merited their own committee and would like to have a less distracted conversation regarding the Olmsted legacy. There will be a public testimony component and staff will come to the Board for recommendations. Commissioner McCaffrey asks that the 2 communicate since they are related.

Queen Anne Skate Park – SPR is looking for a location to relocate the skate park at Seattle Center. City Council has budgeted funding for this but there isn't room on Queen Anne. They may do a skate dot instead. The terminus of the tunnel is impacting the skate park which is why it needs to be relocated.

Skate Board Advisory Group, chartered by SPR, may reach out to the Board.

Magnuson Park – SPR received feedback from residents at Magnuson Park that the gym at the community center was so heavily programmed that youth didn't have access. SPR will relocate one activity to Building 30 which will open up several hours a week. This has highlighted the tension point between conflicting interests in available space available.

Acting Superintendent Williams and Commissioner Byers are going to Magnuson to talk with members of the community to discuss their concerns in the management at Magnuson.

Acting Superintendent Williams suggests they invite the Mayor to a meeting.

Openspace is not a mayoral priority. How would the department like the Board to be better advocates? Build affordable housing above community centers; will tee up a feasibility to figure out whether there is enough partners/funding to create a community center with affordable housing. It will cost a lot to build the community centers that are in need of renovation.

SPR is doing a lot to better the city. They offer summer school for Seattle Public Schools students and are the youth intervention experts for the city.

The Board agree to do the letter to the Mayor to educate and advocate on behalf of the department.

Update: Lake City Community Center

Presented by Kelly Guy, Recreation Division Director

Kelly Guy, Recreation Division Director briefs the Board on the status of Lake City Community Center. They have 4 funded positions – recreation program specialist, recreation leader, recreation attendant and a 1/2 time custodian. The facility is looking great. The staff working in Lake City are experienced and live in the community. Mark Mendez has been doing work there with teens for several months already and is integral to the success of the operations there. They will have the same operating hours. They are working with community members to ensure a positive experience and level of service.

Commissioner Byers points out that Seattle Parks Foundation has been doing work in that part of town and Kelly says she will talk with Thatcher.

During budget process, City Council added \$5million to the Lake City Community Center with the idea that a gym would go where there is currently Albert Davis Park. SPR would like to use the resources to be thoughtful and intentional about it and not take away openspace.

The commissioners are curious how the district elections will impact of district elections the next 6-year cycle of funding for the Park District.

Capital budget – Magnuson also received \$1million in additional funds – the Planning and Development Division is assigning a project manager.

Partnership Spotlight: Friends of Denny Park

Acting Superintendent Williams introduces Tim Gaydos, who formed Friends of Denny Park and is pastor of the church across the street. Tim says he formed Friends of Denny Park to create a more vibrant neighborhood park. He mentions this park was originally a cemetery for 21 years.

He runs a startup church at Denny Park Lutheran and pulled together with local businesses and nonprofits to bring new life to a brand-new neighborhood with increasing density.

There is a “Manhattanization” of Denny Way with 14 buildings in construction.

The Friends of Denny Park are working to activate the park. Over the summer, they organized events over the summer; such as, concerts, food trucks, and buskers.

Friends of Denny Park is comprised of over 40 different groups, including business and nonprofits.

Their goal is to provide positive legitimate uses for the park through partnerships in activation and programming.

They have not applied for any grants, but they are looking into it.

The Commissioners ask what they would do with another round of funding? Tim replies he would like to hire a consultant to have a strategic planning process.

The Commissioners wonder if the Friends of Denny Park have thought about other areas for parks and greenspaces in the ever-densifying South Lake Union neighborhood. Tim responds that they have tackled the idea that Denny Park is too small for all of the growth and are interested in some of the more creative solutions that are floating around, like LidI5 and Recharge the Battery.

>>>>The Board would like to hear presentations from Recharge the Battery and LidI5.

The Commissioners thank Friends of Denny Park for changing the way people think of the park.

Presentation and Discussion: Park District Planning

Presented by Susan Golub, Policy Unit Manager

Acting Superintendent Williams introduces the topic. SPR feels the need to do a more short-term plan than originally thought. They are trying to figure out what to call this plan.

The plan approach will get direction on the plan from the Mayor. Need, gaps, and need v. aspirational planning

Fix-it-first was the driving value of the previous plan. This plan will be linked to the next 6-year spending plan.

Susan Golub manages the Policy Unit of SPR. Every 6 years, SPR committed to the voters to start a new 6-year financial plan. The next 6-year cycle starts in 2021.

January 2021	Second 6-year financial plan cycle begins
November 2020:	Park District Board (City Council) adopts second 6-year financial plan
March 2020:	SPR includes financial plan in budget memo to Mayor
November 2019:	Park District Oversight Committee (PDOC) recommendation

Sept. – Oct. 2019: Second round of public outreach
 June-August 2019: Develop draft plan per public input
 April-May 2019: Public outreach on financial plan priorities
 Jan. – March 2019: Work with PDOC to refine financial plan priorities from
 PlaySeattle!
 2018 PlaySeattle! Programming and Facilities Plan developed

At this point, SPR has 2 years to have the plan completed.

This plan will build on previous planning efforts:

- Legacy Plan – Set the stage for the Park District by assessing the condition of all aspects of our parks and recreation system
- Community Center Strategic Plan –
 - Established operational and facility
 - priorities for 27 community centers
 - Facility improvements focused on 8 of our 27 centers which had not been recently improved
 - The new plan will build on this analysis
- 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan – assessed open space needs and metrics

Want to ensure SPR uses the best analysis and input from a robust community process to inform the new 6-year cycle. In the first 3 years SPR has not diverged from the plan at all.

Major maintenance backlog has increased to over \$400million. The Asset Management Work Order System has given SPR a better understanding of needs and condition assessments and will help establish priorities since SPR can't do everything.

PlaySeattle! Program and Facilities Master Plan will have 4 major elements:

- Inventory – to include programming, facilities and recreation trends
- Public Involvement – to include a statistically valid resident survey, focus groups, community meetings and inclusive outreach
- Analysis – to identify opportunities and service needs for programming and facilities; and future financing opportunities
- Future Needs Assessment – scenarios will be developed to identify facility needs to meet resident's desired future programming.

The new 6-year plan will include a robust inventory from a facilities and programmatic standpoint.

Analysis – many amenities are provided by other entities depending on what is already in a neighborhood

New Superintendent and new Mayor – assessing where the department is. Kathleen Conner, SPR planning manager, will work out-of-class to lead this planning effort. SPR is revising consultant request for proposal – to change scope. Going to the Mayor next month to see what she feels the planning process should look like.

15-member Park District Oversight Committee – their work is prescribed through the Interlocal Agreement. Confusion about what issues go to which Board? The Park District funds all aspects of SPR; who should be involved in this planning process?

Susan says the staff and public are trying to figure out the roles of the two boards. They want to make sure SPR is using the volunteers' time well.

The first 6-year plan focus was on the major maintenance; the need is bigger than once thought. Whether SPR continues this focus on major maintenance will be decided during the planning process. The commissioners express concern over the huge amount of maintenance backlog while asking for more money.

SPR is not talking about increasing the tax; but they want to talk with the voters and the Mayor about whether the rate should be increased.

Need-based versus an aspirational plan – the idea of fix-it-first – was put in place when this city was not thriving. Commissioner Byers suggests developing an incremental plan with different versions of the plan based on the tax rate for the voters to decide.

The Commissioners caution the regressive taxes are making it unaffordable for people of color and they are moving out.

The Commissioners feel it will be important to show the public when the community centers will be renovated.

Originally, this plan was going to be a long-term study that would encompass the next 20 years of growth. The department has decided to make the plan more short-term instead of tying the hands for the next 20 years.

What impact will districts have on this? Will there be named projects? Partner organizations were restricted in the current plan. The plan size will drive expectations and there's tension there between need/wants and what the city can afford.

SPR is committed to phase 2 of the Lake City Community Center. There is a morass of ideas and issues that go on behind the scene.

Commissioner Hundley would enjoy reading the briefing papers for PDOC. Susan mentions SPR staff are trying to figure out the roles the different Boards will have in the planning process for the new spending plan.

Commissioner Akita says the differences between the bodies is confusing and SPR should think about the public first when considering the structure.

PDOC are responsible for the Park District Annual Report, grant allocations, and the Major Projects Challenge Fund.

PDOC would make a very specific list of investment initiatives to the Mayor, Council and Superintendent. The Park Board would be asked to recommend the plan.

Leveraging partnerships is important. SPR wants to get the Mayor's feelings on size/scale of the plan, debt financing, partnerships, etc... SPR staff will have a briefing with the Mayor to get her feelings on a host of issues and ideas.

The Park District Oversight Committee and the Park Board are confusing to members and the public. SPR staff are thinking about how to streamline this. One solution is to merge the PDOC into the Park Board – it would be easier for people to understand.

Commissioner McCaffrey feels there are specific tasks for each Board and this should be made more clear.

Old/New Business

Elections – Commissioner Byers is limited to 2 terms and his term will end at the end of March. The commissioners need to assess their capacity to fill the role and who people want to support as chair and co-chair.

The Board discusses holding an event to introduce themselves to the Mayor and Councilmembers. SPR staff will work on this with the Board and other major partners.

Commissioner Wright's term on the Board will end in March. Commissioner Byers volunteers his house for her celebration.

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

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