



# Minutes

Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

Via WebEx/Kenneth R. Bounds Board Room

Thursday, June 9, 2022

6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

## Attendance

Present: Herrera, Umagat, Farmer, Brockhaus, Watts, McCaffrey, Contreras, Mays

SPR Staff: Williams, Hoff, Burtzos

## Welcome and Introductions

Co-chair Herrera calls the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. Introductions of Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners and Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff.

Consent items: June 9 agenda; May 12 meeting minutes; May 19 meeting minutes. Commissioner Farmer moves to approve all items, Commissioner Umagat seconds. There is no discussion. Commissioner Herrera calls for a vote. The motion carries by unanimous consent.

*Adopted: June 9 meeting agenda; May 12 meeting minutes; May 19 meeting minutes*

## Public Comment

Amy Avnet – Green Lake Inner Path – About 87,000 children under 18, including 7,000 children with disabilities, are now excluded from riding on the inner loop path at Green Lake. Green Lake now is boring and empty. Please visit and see how the Park’s vitality has suffered.

Jim MacConnell – Green Lake Inner Path – Advocating for inclusion of diverse path users. The process of outreach on this issue has been characterized by deception and obfuscation. The linking of SDOT’s commuter bike lane, COVID-19 restrictions, and the Green Lake inner path seem to support this characterization. I urge SPR to reverse the wheels ban and reinstitute dual use on the lake path, or at least some real public outreach.

Mychal Mitchell – Green Lake Inner Path – Specifically told that no decision concerning banning wheels at Green Lake would occur until Spring of 2023, so was distraught when new signage was posted. Very few good places for skaters to go. Banning wheels makes the path less “recreational”.

Mike Shaughnessy – Save the Stone Cottage – The cottage is in storage in Port of Seattle property. Two months ago, Deb Barker asked for an SPR contact person to help manage this project. We are not in Phase 2, looking for funding to relocate this structure to Alki Beach near the bathhouse.

William Yardley – Green Lake Inner Path – Son uses an adaptive cycle, and the current restrictions are discriminatory against children and adults who use adaptive cycles. But more than that, the new policy harms the diverse community of path users, including skaters, skateboarders, cyclists, and others. Please restore wheels to the Inner Path of the lake.

Tim Motzer – Lake City resident – Offers critique of final PD Planning proposal. First, the new proposal did not employ a consistent tax rate, nor amend the interlocal agreement. Second, there was no discussion about accepting the recommended baseline funding levels. Third, there was little to no discussion about the impact of debt financing. Fourth, there was little effort to combine the various funding proposals into a cohesive plan.

Don Loseff – Green Lake Inner Path – Asks for Superintendent to immediately remove wheels ban from inner loop path at Green Lake. Green Lake is a rich and vibrant community, but the ban threatens this rich community. I've invited the Board and SPR staff to come join and see what has been going on at Green Lake.

## **Superintendent's Report**

We are sensitive to comments regarding Green Lake. In July we will come back with a comprehensive report for the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners for discussion; we are waiting on the results of an SDOT study, which will then inform additional decision-making by the Board.

Regarding the Stone Cottage, we will ask David Graves to take the point on that for the Department.

I also want to celebrate the current Board. You have successfully waded through two months of very intensive work to produce a Park District budget recommendation that we passed along almost perfectly intact to the Mayor's Office. Tonight, we had a dinner to celebrate that accomplishment, and I just wanted to make sure the public knew that.

The Board chairs raised the question regarding the Superintendent hiring process and I wanted to give an update here. There are three priority hiring processes before the Superintendent position. This includes the OPA Director, the Chief of Police, and SDOT Director. The reality is that we are probably in a holding pattern until at least December.

We met this week with the Seattle Times Editorial Board for a factual meeting, just so everyone is on the same page regarding what the Park District is and what the funding for it means. Kind of a "Park District 101." Part of the desire for this meeting was triggered by the Green Lake story [*"Seattle isn't going to build a new community center at Green Lake, after all, Parks Department says" 6/1/2022 – BMB*]. We also met with the Green Lake Advisory Council to talk through why the department did not have room for a \$120 million rebuild in this budget. As Marlon may have pointed out in a previous meeting, the greenest building is the building already exists.

We submitted our 2023-2024 Proposed Budget to the Mayor's Office last Friday. Review by the Mayor and City Budget Office will continue concurrently throughout the summer. The City Council will vote on the final package in November as part of the City budget.

SPR extended park closures last week at Ballard Commons Park and City Hall Park. At Ballard Commons, we continue to assess park needs and are developing an activation plan involving a variety of City departments. At City Hall Park, the new Mayoral administration is reviewing the transfer of the property to King County. In the meantime, SPR crews are maintaining the grounds including litter pickup and mowing.

At Woodland Park, restoration continues and has included trash pickup, graffiti removal, turf restoration, cleaning and repair and opening of restrooms. We're working with community partners on activating the park.

Starting Saturday, May 28, designated fire pits have been available for beach fires at Alki Beach and Golden Gardens Beach on a first come, first served basis. As a pilot project, we will be closing both parks early this summer at 10 p.m. with fires extinguished by 9:30 p.m. This change is designed to support those communities prior to evening shift change.

Hiring continues to be a challenge but we are making some progress. SPR is teaming with the YMCA of Greater Seattle on a series of job fairs this month. We are still looking to fill positions that serve youth in the Seattle area, especially around water-related activities and day camps that provide childcare for parents this summer.

Summer day camps are open for registration at many locations. Bicycle Weekends return to Lake Washington Blvd. this summer on two weekends per month through September. Big Day of Play will be on Saturday, Aug. 20. Come join us at the Rainier Community Center and Playfield.

Among the recently opened spray parks is the newly renovated Pratt Spray Park in Seattle's Central District neighborhood. In addition to the water play features, the spray park includes a new restroom building, adult fitness equipment, and site furnishings. A community celebration and ribbon cutting will be held on Friday, June 10.

Board members should have received an outline of the 2021 Park District Annual Report. Last year, like 2020, was not typical for the department, mainly because of continued COVID response. The report will continue the transition from summarizing only Park District data and accomplishments to a more comprehensive report that includes results organized by our lines of business. The Park District is one of many funding sources for SPR operations and projects.

Seattle Parks and Recreation will have three items on the agenda for the City Council's Public Assets and Homelessness Committee on June 15: An overview of the Seattle Park District Cycle 1 (2015-2020), an ordinance authorizing an agreement with Seattle Prep to replace the synthetic turf at Montlake Playfield, and an ordinance for a concession agreement to provide vending machine services in SPR facilities.

I'd be glad to answer any questions Board members may have, but before I do, I wanted to mention that Andrea Akita has finished her term on the Park Board. We recently heard the very good news that she will re-joining the City of Seattle as the Deputy Director for the Office of Housing. Previously she'd been a manager at the Human Services Department.

Andrea isn't here tonight, but I wanted to congratulate her on her new position and thank her for her wisdom and work as a member of the Board, including several years as co-chair. She first joined the Board in 2016. Most recently, she served on one of the 3 subcommittees that prioritized funding proposals for the next cycle of Park District funding.

Another long-time Board member, Kelly McCaffrey, who also joined us in 2016, is finishing her term. Kelly is here tonight and I want to thank her personally and wish her well. Kelly is a mother of several school-age children and I have always appreciated her perspective on and advocacy for programs for youth. Kelly, thank you for a job very well done! We appreciate you!

## **Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners Roles and Responsibilities**

Williams outlines the purpose of having a Board of volunteer commissioners to advise on controversial issues, highlighting the Green Lake Inner Path, Lake Washington Boulevard, and the Stone Cottage as three potential issues that may be on the horizon. With so many new Commissioners, we want to take the time to make sure that everyone understands how the organization is put together and functions.

Along with other advisory groups, BPRC is right at the top of citizen input to the Department. BPRC is guided by SPR values: Healthy People, Healthy Environment, Strong Communities. Considerations should always include equity, opportunity, access, and sustainability within the context of urban growth, increased density, climate change, homelessness, and racism.

Williams gives brief history of Park Board beginning in 1887. As currently formulated, SPR is part of the Executive. BPRC gives recommendations to SPR, who in turn report to the Mayor's office. The Mayor's office and City Council then work directly on legislation.

The Department is not looking for members of the Board to bring any expertise to their roles. The aim of the Board is to offer thoughts on what "seems right" from the perspective of the community, without relying on any specific expertise. This is a time-intensive Board and we want you to bring your passions! We had a Park District Board and a Parks Oversight Board, and recently merged the two to facilitate discussion.

Some of what the Board does is provide advice and guidance on Park rules and use. Examples include park hours, smoking ban, Loyal Heights Playfield resurfacing, etc. Finding a balance between new uses and traditional activities in the parks can be a tricky line to walk. The Loyal Heights Playfield provides an example of a compromise that the Department made with a neighborhood in service of a policy goal.

Board members advise on proposals that affect park use, bring their unique perspective and passions, listen to public comment and peers with an open mind, engage with the community, and suggest topics to discuss. Reminders: we work in a political environment, and quick resolution is not always possible.

The BPRC decision-making process generally involves a presentation by SPR staff at one meeting, discussion by the Board at a second meeting, and a vote at a third meeting. This procedure allows three opportunities for public comment and gives the Board a very deliberative process.

The Board will be involved in establishing Equitable Park Development Fund, beginning in 2023. The Board will review proposals and make recommendations for funding.

Brockhaus thanks Williams for the guidance and clarification, and voices interest in Board members conduct Park visits as part of the Board's work. General agreement with this suggestion.

Herrera emphasizes the importance of the Board's decision, emphasizing the importance of remembering the current place in time relative to both ancestors and descendants who share in Seattle's Parks land.

Watts inquires about potential conflicts of interest regarding Board members. Williams clarifies basic guidelines but emphasizes that the City Attorney's office eventually will offer some guidance there. Hoff notes that the bar for a conflict is fairly high; simply living in a neighborhood that is being discussed is not a conflict.

McCaffrey notes that as membership in the Board changes, knowledge of institutions changes as well. Perhaps there should be a recorded webinar or similar to help onboard new members.

Farmer points out that the Commissioners bring their own network and communities with them into discussions, and that is in itself part of the mission of the Board.

Mays acknowledges that the Park District prioritization process was a steep learning curve but that it was broadly positive.

### **Old/New Business**

Farmer reiterates that Board should review 2021 Park District Annual Report and offer feedback to David Takami.

Burtzos checks in regarding shared documents file for Board correspondence.

McCaffrey thanks Williams and the Board for the support and collaboration, and advocates for continued support of children and youth through Departmental programs and policy.

There being no further business, Herrera adjourned the meeting at 7:35 pm.