



Minutes|Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Zoom

Thursday, August 10, 2023

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

Attendance

Present: Stafford Mays, Phillip Meng, Jessica Farmer, Joshua Seyfried, Marlon Herrera (co-chair)

Absent: Amy Brockhaus, Andrea Stuart-Lehalle, Pasqual Contreras, Justin Umagat (co-chair)

SPR Staff and Presenters: Williams, Hoff, Darcy, Burtzos

Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

Co-chair Herrera calls the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and provides logistical instructions for in-person and remote attendees.

Commissioners and SPR staff introduce themselves around the table.

Herrera reads the land acknowledgement.

Seattle Parks and Recreation acknowledges and affirms the indigenous Coast Salish as the original caretakers of our waters and landscape, who nurtured and shaped today's parkland. We honor their legacy with gratitude and appreciation and will safeguard their knowledge and stewardship as enduring treasures to promote community welfare, cultivate inclusive expressions of nature and recreation, and commit to land acknowledgment for each ensuing generation.

Herrera introduces the consent agenda: meeting minutes from 7/13/23, and tonight's meeting agenda. Meng moves to adopt both items with no debate; Farmer seconds. There is no discussion. The motion passes unanimously.

Adopted: BPRC Meeting Minutes 7/13/23; BPRC Meeting Agenda 8/10/23

Public Comment

Justin Rose – Hellas Construction – The infill that goes into the Seattle Public Schools fields is terrific and organic. The main infill that is used is cork. However, cork is light, and it floats; every field that is more than two years old in Seattle is low on infill. This decreases shock dampening and cleat grip. There is another organic material made by Safeplay, made out of olive pits. This material is heavier – it sinks – and will save the City money in the long run. [Simultaneous buoyancy demonstration]

Williams asks what an estimated price for replacing infill on a standard athletic field with this new material would be. Rose responds that the price is within pennies per square foot of the cost of cork pellets.

Mays asks how durable this infill is when played on with baseball cleats, metal cleats, and/or posts. Rose clarifies that no artificial turf will stand up to metal cleats over a long enough window, but this infill will not negatively impact the longevity of the field.

Hoff asks for clarification as to the infill currently being used by Hellas Construction on their City contract projects. Rose clarifies that the City of Seattle's standard infill is cork, so current projects are utilizing cork infill.

Superintendent's Report

Assistant Superintendent Christopher Williams delivers the report.

Summer Recreation Update

This is one of our busiest summers in recent memory. The incredible weather and the end of the Pandemic have brought back the crowds to our parks, beaches, pools and water features.

We are in the home stretch of our summer programming:

- The Summer Meals and Recreation Program continues this month, Monday through Friday, at 11 park sites until Friday, Aug. 25
- The Summer of Safety recreation program for young people is offered at 7 community centers, weekdays through the end of August
- Summer hours continue at Alki and Golden Gardens beaches through Sept. 4 (closing at 10:30 p.m.)
- Swimming beaches are open through late August or early September. Last month we closed the beach at Matthews Beach Park due to high bacteria levels as sampled by Public Health – Seattle & King County. As a result, we re-opened Magnuson Beach in Magnuson Park for the remainder of the summer.
- Outdoor pools, Mounger in Magnolia and Colman Pool in West Seattle, are open through Labor Day
- Wading pools are open most of August with 3 – Green Lake, Lincoln, Van Asselt, Volunteer – open through Labor Day
- Sprayparks are open through Sept. 4

Boat ramps in Southeast Seattle: In partnership with SPD, starting in late July, the department began a temporary early closure at Atlantic City Boat Ramp, 10:00 p.m., due to recent illegal and violent activity at this park. Previously, the Atlantic City Boat Ramp was open 24 hours. The boat ramp at Stan Sayres Memorial Park will not be closed early despite some complaints by neighbors about noise.

Andrews Bay: SPR recently posted signs with rules for boaters in Andrews Bay on Lake Washington in Seward Park. We've received complaints from neighbors over the years about loud music, drinking, partying. SPD's Harbor Patrol has stepped up its patrol of the area this summer with good success. (Note to CW: the signs have been posted on the land and not in the water on the buoys.)

ARC donation: We are thrilled to announce that our most important community partner, the Associated Recreation Council (ARC), has decided to donate \$500,000 to the department this year.

ARC was hard hit during the Pandemic years with programs and revenues drastically reduced. SPR did a lot to keep ARC afloat at that time. ARC recently received a \$2 million reimbursement grant from the federal government and the ARC Board voted to give SPR a portion of that money. The money will be well spent on Superintendent priorities including:

- Play area renovation projects at Blanche Lavizzo Park
- Pickleball court renovation at Magnuson Park and other locations
- Swim Seattle program
- Seattle Mentors Program
- More scholarships
- Greater & Greener conference

A huge shout out and thank you to our friends at ARC!

Seattle Mentors: As you may know, Seattle Mentors is our new program to amplify services and programs designed for Seattle youth and teens to reach their full potential. Rommell Witherspoon is the program director.

- “Evolving Entourage” is the initiative designed to connect mentors with mentees in the community to foster personal and professional growth.
- On Saturday, Aug. 26 we’ll be hosting an event for teens at Pratt Park. We’ll announce details soon.
- We are excited that Seattle Mentors will launch soon.

Seattle Aquarium Loan: Our long-standing partner, the Seattle Aquarium, is building a major new building on the waterfront called the Ocean Pavilion in coordination with major elements of the City’s Central Waterfront Program. It’s a \$160 million project, and the City committed \$34M to the project when it began. Due to inflationary pressures and related factors, the City loaned them an additional \$20M in 2022, and they are pursuing a loan of up to \$67M to complete the project (\$20M of which will be used to pay back the City’s loan). We are working with the Mayor’s Office, City Attorney’s Office and the City Council to make this happen. Legislation is before City Council now and is expected to be approved later this month.

Coyotes in Arboretum: We have received reports of an individual coyote that has recently shown more aggression in the Washington Park Arboretum. There is likely a den in the area. Please use caution and keep dogs leashed (or leave them at home when visiting the Arboretum). Coyotes are native to this area and are a natural part of the ecosystem and the forests of Seattle. Coyotes can also benefit humans and ecosystems by helping control populations of mice, rats, voles, moles, and rabbits.

Nelson Mandela Day Tree Planting: In honor of International Nelson Mandela Day, SPR crews last month installed a grove of five Freeman Maple trees at Pratt Park. The department responded to the Nelson Mandela Foundation’s call to action on the theme of Climate, Food and Solidarity. Planting trees reflects Mandela’s legacy and our commitment to addressing climate and equity by improving tree canopy in our parks and neighborhoods.

Aspiring Youth at Ravenna Park: SPR crews worked with the kids of Aspiring Youth at Ravenna Park and taught them a little about native plants and trail standards last month. They cleaned up 2 trailheads by weeding, moving brush and downed woody debris. Aspiring Youth works with young people who may need additional help navigating social challenges.

New Synthetic Field Maintenance Machine: New Sport Champ machine helps maintain synthetic fields. The Sport Champ brushes, sweeps and vacuums debris off the field.

Spruce St. Mini Park Ribbon Cutting: On July 29, AP Diaz and community members celebrated the opening of the newly renovated Spruce St. Mini Park in Seattle's Central Area. We have worked with the community since the summer of 2020 on the project, which included play area improvements, an accessible loop trail and a drinking fountain. Community engagement in the planning and design was key to the project's success. Previously, we partnered with the community and Seattle's Office of Arts & Culture (ARTS) to create the mural at the park.

Athletic Field Replacement Projects: SPR continues to lead the way in developing and installing synthetic turf fields by investing in a state-of-the-art synthetic turf system that is safe, playable, durable, and retains less heat in the summer. As part of our asset management plan the synthetic turf playfields are renovated every 10 to 12 years for safety reasons. All synthetic turf fields have lighting which allows these fields to be used year-round.

Below is an update on five field projects:

- Montlake Playfield: Together with our partners, Seattle Prep, we completed this project and opened the field in April 2023.
- Hiawatha Playfield: This field renovation began in early June and will be complete in early September.
- Delridge Playfields: The contractor began work on July 1 and will complete both field renovations in early November.
- Magnuson Park Mickey Merriam Field #5: Construction will begin in mid-August and will be completed by end of September.
- Jefferson Park Playfield Synthetic Turf Replacement: Construction began earlier this month and will be complete in October.

For more information on our field renovations please visit our website.

Shakespeare in the Park: Since 1989, our community partner GreenStage has brought free Shakespeare in the park to Seattle area audiences. Our shows tour to over 20 parks, large and small in and around Seattle. No tickets or reservations are required. Final shows are at Pratt Park and Lower Woodland Park. Visit greenstage.org for show details.

Big Day of Play: Big Day of Play is a celebration of our city's diversity, encouraging neighbors, communities, and families to have fun, build relationships and be active together. Big Day of Play will be held on Saturday, August 19 from 12 to 6 p.m. at Rainier Playfield, Mt. Baker Rowing and Sailing Center, and online. The event is completely free and includes activities for all ages and abilities.

I'd be glad to answer any questions Board members may have.

Mays asks why the Seattle Mentors program is housed in SPR, rather than another City department. Williams acknowledges that other departments, including HSD and DEEL, are involved in this initiative, but that the Mayor gave specific instruction for SPR to lead this program, even before the final direction of Seattle Mentors had taken shape. The relationship between SPR and SPS, as well as budgeting for mentor programming in the Park District funding cycle, made this direction sensible.

Farmer asks about winter weather shelters, particularly in Lake City, following a letter from a group of citizens to the Board this week. Williams clarifies the procedure of emergency shelter coordination from OEM and HSD; SPR does not provide direction, just resources. In Lake City, there are agreements with other organizations, such as churches, that have mutual aid agreements with the City and will likely be tapped to provide shelter space if such a need arises while the Lake City Community Center is damaged and/or under construction.

Herrera acknowledges that the decision to limit access to the Atlantic City Boat Ramp must have been a difficult one, and notes the repeated violent incidents that led SPR to this action. Herrera asks for clarity regarding the differences observed between Atlantic City and Stan Sayres. Williams confirms that while Stan Sayres Park has experienced significant nuisance behavior in recent weeks and months, the concerns at that park have not reached the level of concern surrounding violent incidents that would prompt SPR to alter park access or hours at this time. Herrera affirms that increased harbor patrols, etc. has made a positive difference at Andrews Bay, and commends the Seattle Aquarium not only for the ongoing expansion but also for expanding the Aquarium's mission to include substantial environmental protection and restoration work.

Public Restroom Dashboard

Assistant Superintendent Christopher Williams introduces the presentation.

We are excited to have Kristy Darcy from our Parks & Environment Division brief you on a topic of great interest to both the general public and City of Seattle leaders and staff: public restrooms in parks. Kristy and division staff have worked with our data and technical staff to create a data dashboard to better communicate to everyone which restrooms are open and which are closed, and doing so in a user-friendly, informative way. This is important information that we want to make available to the public, and this project has been a priority for Mayor Harrell.

Kristy Darcy, SPR Strategic Advisor, gives the presentation.

I have been working on this dashboard since April of this year and it seems like it's been active for a long time because it's been so helpful as we've been building it. There have basically been three versions of this dashboard: the first internal version in April, the new internal version in June, and the public version last month. As I go through this presentation, you'll see the acronym AMWO (Asset Management Work Order), which is the system that we track our maintenance requests and time sheets in, and is also the system that updates and populates the restroom dashboard.

The first version of the internal dashboard populated from a spreadsheet that was populated by hand, and helped develop the process of synchronizing information from the district crews, planners, and facilities. This initial attempt at creating a dashboard helped decrease the repair time of restrooms, and helped highlight restrooms experiencing long-term closures.

The new version of the internal dashboard draws information from AMWO and is tied to the assets within that system. We are also able to track status changes better, so we can see how often restrooms experience repairs and closures, and for what purpose. We also added the map overlay of the City's equity index zones, so we are better able to prioritize equity in our repairs.

The new public dashboard looks very similar to our new internal dashboard, but doesn't provide quite the same level of detail. In addition, whereas the internal dashboard divides assets by maintenance districts, this version divides assets by council districts, which is more useful to the public. Finally, the public version does not display our internal notes, which is how our crews communicate service details within our teams. This dashboard is linked from the main seattle.gov/parks website.

We have four main reasons for restroom closures:

- Capital project – includes asset lifecycle renovation and replacement as well as renovations following major damage or arson
- Repair – damage to windows/doors, vandalism, graffiti, stolen plumbing or pipes, damage to pump or plumbing, sewer back-up, etc.
- Season – 60 stations close for winter, others are dedicated to aquatics (showers, etc.)
- Other – tied to event/stadium use, not public (i.e., Metro transit driver use only), or decommissioned due to duplicative or problematic use

I also wanted to share information about our cleaning schedule, since we get a lot of questions about that. We have three different types of cleanings – dry, wet, and deep – and the main difference is whether the cleaning involves hosing down the restroom or pressure washing. All restrooms get a dry clean in the morning and evening. Most restrooms receive a wet clean once or twice per day, depending on park use. Deep cleans happen 1-3x per week, depending on need.

You can't talk about restrooms without talking about sani-cans! We use sani-cans when there is a shortage of permanent restrooms. There are four basic categories of sani-can usage:

- Long-term – no available infrastructure to support restroom
- Temporary – events
- Temporary – repairs
- Temporary – seasonal

Future restroom dashboard plans

- Adding status updates to work orders (facilities staff working on repairs can update when entering their time)
- Improved updating with AMWO/GIS Integration
- Dashboards for similar assets (drinking fountains, irrigation systems)
- Using status updates data to track average closure times by reason, location, district
- Adding labor data into internal dashboard
- Sani-cans

Seyfried thanks Darcy for the presentation and commends her for making a presentation about restrooms both engaging and forward-thinking. Seyfried notes that this information addresses some equity concerns, and emphasizes the importance of transparency when sharing this information with

the public. Darcy reiterates that the dashboard is live for the public now; in addition, SPR is developing means to communicate the dashboard to the public at large, including QR codes on fliers posted on restrooms when they are closed.

Meng echoes Seyfried's appreciation, and expresses that a QR code (or similar) seems like a great idea to connect park users with this tool. Meng asks if any other steps are being taken proactively to guide park users to the nearest open restroom. Darcy is not certain about any current or ongoing outreach efforts, but there were social media posts when the dashboard was first launched. Possible advertising locations could include community centers.

Farmer suggests that a link to the dashboard could be integrated into the Find It, Fix It application. Darcy agrees that this seems like a logical addition to the application.

Mays notes that Darcy hinted that some restrooms are open 24 hours a day. Darcy clarifies that there are some restrooms that are not locked at night. Mays asks if unauthorized use of these restrooms outside of park hours is tracked. Darcy points out that if the restroom is open to use, there isn't much that the district crew can or should do, unless there is a significant hygiene or safety concern. That said, each crew will track incidents in their district, and ongoing issues at the same location could lead to changes, such as adding a lock to a restroom door that was previously unlocked 24/7.

Hoff and Williams commend Darcy for her success on this project. This has been a multi-year focus for the department, and it is exciting to see it come to fruition. Herrera notes that a lot of people say you can judge a person by their bathroom. Mays contends that he does not know anyone who has said that. The Board agrees with Herrera's overall point. Darcy reiterates the importance of restrooms to the work of SPR and the public's enjoyment of the parks and open spaces of Seattle.

Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners Subcommittee Assignments

Paula Hoff, SPR Strategic Advisor, gives the presentation.

As the commissioners all know, because I reached out to each of you, each BPRC member will be serving on at least one subcommittee this year. We just wanted to walk through that a little bit and let you know what to expect.

Park District Subcommittee

- Herrera, Brockhaus, Meng & Stuart-Lehalle
- Park staff contact: David Takami

Park CommUNITY Fund Subcommittee

- Umagat, Farmer, Seyfried & Mays
- Park staff contact: Rachel Banner/Shaquan Smith

Park Naming Subcommittee

- Farmer & Herrera
- Park staff contact: Paula Hoff

In the next few weeks, your SPR staff contact will be reaching out to you. The subcommittees must be of a certain size to avoid establishing a quorum during subcommittee meetings.

The Park District Subcommittee will take a deeper dive into Park District data and program performance. Items may include:

- Cycle 2 Ramp-Up Plan
- Park District Lines of Business and Metrics
- 2023 Annual Report
- Reporting out to BPRC at Board Meetings

The Parks CommUNITY Fund Subcommittee will support development, review, and approval of the Park Community Fund applications. This includes:

- Involvement in the program planning
- Project Review
- Recommending the list of projects to be funded

Finally, the Park Naming Committee is composed of two BPRC members and a community representative. Their work includes:

- Reviewing proposed naming suggestions for Seattle parks
- Applying the Park Naming Policy criteria when reviewing proposed names
- Making formal naming recommendations to the Superintendent

Mays asks if the Park Naming Committee is primarily concerned with new SPR properties, or renaming existing ones. Hoff clarifies that most of the work of this committee concerns new assets and properties, but there is some discussion regarding how to allow for the changing of an existing name. Burtzos notes that this process recently occurred with Pathways Park (formerly Burke-Gilman Playground Park).

Farmer notes that the subcommittee process seems like a great way to accomplish the oversight tasks assigned to the Board that had been part of the responsibilities of the Park District Oversight Commission (PDOC).

Hoff notes that all members of the Board can also reach out to her with recruitment suggestions.

Old & New Business

Herrera notes that the South Lake Union Block Party is going on nearby.

Gratitude & Adjourn

There being no other business, Herrera adjourns the meeting at 7:44 pm.