



Minutes|Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Zoom

Thursday, September 14, 2023

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

Attendance

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

Absent: Amy Brockhaus, Andrea Stuart-Lehalle

SPR Staff and Presenters: Christopher Williams, Elena Arakaki, Paula Hoff, Ben Burtzos

Attendees: Sonia Doughty, Sally Kinney, Lauren Lanham, Jin Zhang, Carice Nolen, Rebecca Bear, Máire Sogabe, David Takami (SPR)

Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

Umagat 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.

Umagat 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.

Umagat introduces the consent agenda: meeting minutes from 8/10/23, and tonight's meeting agenda. Meng moves to adopt both items with no debate; Seyfried seconds. There is no discussion. The motion passes unanimously.

Adopted: BPRC Meeting Minutes 8/10/23; BPRC Meeting Agenda 9/14/23

Public Comment

Carice Nolen – Magnuson Off-Leash Group – I am here to caution about the \$3.6 million proposed for 2 new dog parks and 1 additional dog park design. This is not because Seattle doesn't need them; it especially needs more than one large dog park with water access. Completely bypassed are the dire needs presented in the existing 15 dog park system now, some of which are in dangerous disrepair where basic life safety concerns are raised. All the dog parks suffer from inattention and overuse. In fact, at Magnuson in June a porta potty and 2 storage sheds were lost to arson. In many ways the dog park system is still functioning much the same as in 1998, 25 years ago, in a city with 250,000 less people and maybe 250,000 less dogs, too. What is needed still is a master vision for

the next 25 years of Seattle dog park recreating, a proactive plan to communicate accurately with the public and express stated goals to them. Dog parks themselves should be considered a “point of purchase” type operation and a great place to transmit an overarching message. For these and other reasons, please pause any consideration or planning for \$3.6 million. All solutions for improvement must be on the table, especially those addressing the need for greener parks and ideally some plans will include some innovation putting Seattle in the spot it should be: top dog. If the political apparatus can not meet the needs of the existing parks then discussions about different revenue streams must be pursued also. Other recommendations will most likely include: development of a new supervisory board; a new disease tracking program, and the hiring of at least one more employee, one of which might be funded under the new ranger hire program.

Superintendent’s Report

Assistant Superintendent Christopher Williams delivers the report.

Williams thanks everyone for making it to the meeting, despite the ongoing Beyoncé concert and protests against SPOG making traffic difficult in the neighborhood. Williams also updates BPRC members that SPR is not ready to present on the updated Downtown Seattle Association agreement; that presentation will move to the next meeting.

Mayor’s Proposed Budget: On Tuesday, Sept. 26, Mayor Harrell will announce his 2024 Proposed Budget. We don’t anticipate any major additions or reductions for Seattle Parks and Recreation. The City Council will review the budget during October and early November including opportunities for public comment. Final approval for the Budget is expected by the end of November.

Fall Transition: Although the warm weather continues, our summer programs, activities, life guarded beaches, wading pools, spray parks and beach fires have officially ended. It was a very busy summer! For instance, by the numbers this summer, our Event Scheduling office permitted 1,803 picnics, 385 outdoor events, 130 ceremonies, 168 indoor rentals, 77 film permits, and 27 summer-long day camps.

We are now transitioning into fall programs, many of the programs started last week or this week, including

- Drop in programs
- Environmental Education
- Lifelong Recreation
- Special Populations
- Aquatics
- Sports
- Childcare

For a full listing of programs please see our website at seattle.gov/parks

Denny Awards Return: We are reviving the annual Denny Awards for volunteer service this fall in a celebration that will take place this December 6 at the Seattle Asian Art Museum. Due to the pandemic the last volunteer award celebration was in 2019. In 2023, the event will recognize awardees in the following five categories, and recognize youth who have provided volunteer hours over the past two and a half years:

- EQUITY CHAMPION
- HEALTHY PEOPLE
- THRIVING ENVIRONMENT
- VIBRANT COMMUNITIES
- SUPERINTENDENT AWARD

More details will be available soon about nominations. We hope you can join us at the ceremony.

Stan Sayres Boat Ramp Early Closure: Beginning Sept. 1, we began a temporary early closure period from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. at Stan Sayres Boat Ramp on Lake Washington to help address recent illegal and violent activity that has taken place at this park. Previously, Stan Sayres was open from 4 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. These hours will be in place for the next 90 days, at which time we will review the effectiveness of the early closure hours. In addition, the temporary hours change at Atlantic City Boat Ramp will be extended an additional 90 days.

Troll Resident in Lincoln Park: We are pleased to welcome a new resident to Lincoln Park: a troll named Bruun Idun! Danish Environmental Artist Thomas Dambo, Seattle Parks and Recreation staff and volunteers created this sculpture from recycled materials. This ambitious public art project is presented by [Scan Design Foundation](#). There are six giant hand-built troll sculptures around the Pacific Northwest. The precise location has not publicly shared but that is part of the adventure... visit nwtrolls.org

South Park Community Center Programs Continue through Temporary Closure: On Sept. 1, South Park Community Center closed for a major building renovation, which will address maintenance, accessibility, and program needs to extend the life of the facility and increase programming potential. Most of community center programming has moved to nearby Concord International Elementary School. The entire community center will re-open in spring 2025. The community center renovations project is in conjunction with the playfield and surrounding park area redevelopment which will include a spray park, play area, picnic area, lawn, extended parking, off-leash area, a full-size multi-sport court. Additionally, the project includes an all-season synthetic lit turf field with a circular walking trail created in partnership with Seattle Academy (SAAS).

Tree Crew: The SPR Tree Crew recently removed a diseased tree along Mt Baker Blvd. The crew was in full PPE with respirators and Tyvek suits due to the respiratory hazard from the spores of the fungal disease. Refer to photos.

New ADA Parking & Accessibility Ramp at Magnuson Park :The SPR Metal Shop worked with crews from the Seattle Conservation Corps to construct a new parking and accessibility ramp at the Magnuson swim beach just west of the public restrooms and provides access to the restroom, swim area and path along the waterfront.

Our Planning and Capital Development Division is busy as usual in many areas of the city!

B.F. Day Play Area: The newly renovated play area at B.F. Day Playground in Fremont recently opened. The new play area provides several “nature play” elements which have been carefully chosen for this site including balance beam logs, a wood seesaw and mushroom topped stools.

Hiawatha Playfield: Also re-opening recently is the re-surfaced Hiawatha Playfield in West Seattle. This project replaced the aging synthetic turf at the field with markings for baseball, soccer, football and softball, and resurfaced the rubberized three-lane running track.

Ballard Commons Play Area: Construction has begun for the new play area at Ballard Commons Park in the heart of the Ballard neighborhood. The new play area is nautical-themed with play equipment that will offer climbing and sliding opportunities. A new seat wall, trees and utility updates will all be added to the park during this project. The new play area will open in early 2024.

North Rainier Landbank Park: Construction has begun on Rainier Landbank Park in southeast Seattle. There was a slight delay as we worked to acquire an additional 1.2 acres of land to create a larger park for this densely populated neighborhood. The new multi-generational park will be completed in late summer 2024.

Blanche Lavizzo Play Area: Design for the new play area in the Central Area neighborhood is under way. This renovation project will replace the play equipment with new play structures. We anticipate construction starting in October with completion by the end of the year 2023.

King County Parks Levy: King County recently announced nearly \$30 million in King County Parks Levy funding for 53 projects that will build and upgrade aquatic facilities, enhance parks and trails, protect and restore river corridors, and make access to healthy recreation more equitable. Four SPR projects will be funded:

- Garfield Superblock
- Rainier Beach Skatepark
- Little Brook Park Renovation
- Kubota Garden Visitor Facility planning.

SPR Financial and Performance Dashboard: Our public-facing financial and performance dashboard portal has been updated and published last month to include 2023 Mid-year (January through June) actual revenues, expenditures, and key performance indications (KPIs). Community members can access this on our department's website: seattle.gov/parks and click on About Us

Sept. 16-17: We're partnering with the Seattle Parks Foundation to present Pickleball for All, September 16 & 17 including FREE clinics, round robin play, and wheelchair pickleball! Registration is now closed for this popular event but we're expecting quite a crowd. This is part of Mayor Harrell's Downtown Activation Plan.

Last weekend was Seattle Parks and Recreation's other signature event downtown: the Seattle Slam Showdown youth 3-on-3 basketball tournament on downtown streets on September 9 – 10. This event was highly successful.

Sept. 24: On Sunday, Sept. 24 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. come to the Washington Park Arboretum's FREE public opening of "Union," a stunning largescale outdoor sculpture created by one of the world's leading contemporary artists, Seattle-based John Grade. The sculpture will be suspended from two large nets spanning more than 100 feet between eight cedar trees just west of the Magnolia Collection.

Farmer asks if the Lincoln Park troll is a permanent installation. Williams confirms that this is a permanent feature of the park, and that the artist has agreed to assist with maintenance. Farmer also highlights art installations at the Arboretum and City Hall Park.

Umagat commends Michele Finnegan and the SPR staff who helped create the financial performance dashboard; this project took a lot of hard work and allows for a great deal of public oversight, especially regarding key performance indicators. Williams concurs, and notes that the first presentation to Council will likely be in November.

Report Out on Swim Seattle Program

Elena Arakaki, Mayor's Office Fellow, gives the presentation.

I am one of 9 Mayor's Fellows this summer. I found out about the position through a friend who works at the City, and it was advertised in my graduate programs. I had worked on issues related to parks at my last job, and I thought this position would be good experience to learn what it looks like on the government side. I also did my practicum with Public Health – Seattle & King County earlier this year on unintentional injury prevention, including drowning prevention. My project with SPR this summer aligns well with what I worked on at the Public Health department, so it was cool to carry this project across positions and organizations.

The Mayor's Office Fellowship used to exist under Mayor Nickels in 2007-2009, then Mayor Harrell picked it back up again this summer. There are 9 of us from various graduate programs. It's called the public policy fellowship, but not all of us are policy students. We had masters and PhD students in public health, urban planning, social work, economics, and organizational psychology too. Two weeks ago, we presented to the Mayor and his cabinet at City Hall, and he was really enthusiastic about all our projects. This is the presentation I gave to him.

Swim Seattle was launched in April of this year as a pilot program to provide kids with free swim lessons. The first cohort of kids went through lessons this summer, and 195 participants registered for free lessons. The opportunity to participate was given to families who were already receiving scholarships for swim lessons, and they were allowed to register one week earlier than the general population. Swim lessons fill up very quickly, so priority registration was an important way to increase access.

I want to talk about why swim lessons are so important. This data draws on my previous work with PHSKC's Violence and Injury Prevention team.

Here are some recent trends for background:

- Preventable drowning deaths are on the rise
 - Over past 5 years, we've seen 135 unintentional deaths with an increase since 2019
 - Recent heat waves since 2020 contribute to this increase – more people looking for refuge in the water
- Over half of these drownings were in open water, which is why water competence is especially important here in the Puget Sound region
- Studies have shown that swimming lessons are a protective factor against drowning, so Swim Seattle hopes to reverse these trends long term

- There are also racial disparities in drowning rates
 - Black and American Indian/Alaska Native residents are overrepresented in unintentional drownings

These disparities exist for a variety of reasons, from historic racism in pools to intergenerational water trauma to barriers like the cost of swim lessons. Swim Seattle tries to close these racial gaps by eliminating the cost barrier for families of color.

This summer, we had 195 participants and most of the cohort that we have data for have been children of color. You'll see that we have 41% of participants who we don't have race data for. We're looking to fill these gaps with a new survey. In terms of age, it's mostly younger kids for beginning swim lessons, then participation drops off in teenage years. I will be coming back to this point in my recommendations.

When I came on, I was tasked with identifying success measures for the program, which also meant pinpointing goals that everyone could agree on. I needed to know what are we trying to accomplish with this program and how would we know if we were successful.

Here are the deliverables from my project:

- Logic model to show connections between activities and goals
- Final learnings and recommendations report

I won't go into the details of my logic model, but it shows the inputs needed to make the program successful, what activities and outputs would be carried out, and what outcomes these steps would work towards.

After meeting with staff and partners, our team agreed on three goals to work towards:

First, increasing access to swim lessons as a short-term goal for BIPOC communities, families with low incomes, and areas with low swim participation. I identified these populations because of the racial swim disparities, the financial burden of swim lessons on low income families, and wanting to bring in new participants who haven't taken lessons before

Second, increasing water competence as a medium-term goal. This part is important because we can reduce barriers to lessons, but it won't matter if kids don't show up or they don't improve. So this measures skill progression and attendance.

And third, reducing drowning deaths and racial disparities as long term goals. It was helpful to identify these outcomes first and then work backwards to think of activities that would get us here.

With these outcomes in mind, my first recommendation is to host water safety workshops to improve water competence for Swim Seattle participants. Water competence is a combination of Swim skills + Knowledge + Attitudes. Free lessons covers the skills part, and these workshops would address knowledge and attitudes.

These workshops would talk about things like the importance of pool supervision for kids, how to fit a lifejacket, how to respond to common drowning situations, and share community partner resources.

Studies show that parents significantly overestimate their child's swim ability, and most child drownings happen when parents aren't supervising, so these workshops would emphasize parents' role in water safety.

My second recommendation is about teens. The summer cohort participation dropped off at age 14, but teens are the second highest age group at risk for drowning after toddlers. This recommendation brings teens to the pool for Late Night teen-only programming and offers job pathways to become lifeguards and swim instructors. There's a severe aquatics staffing shortage right now, so this would create more career opportunities for youth within the system.

My third recommendation is overarching and will drive the success of all the other activities, which is building community with partner organizations. We already have a great coalition of partners listed here, and I recommend deepening them and expanding to include more community-based organizations that could help build trust with people and bring new participants into the program.

Again, here are my priority recommendations that will further the short-, medium-, and long-term goals for Swim Seattle while building water safety skills, knowledge, partnerships, and employment. I believe that Swim Seattle is a promising initiative, and these recommendations will improve the program to push for equitable access to lessons, increased water competence, and drowning prevention for Seattle residents.

Williams asks Arakaki to expand a bit more on the importance of swimming competency to mitigate risks for teens, particularly teen boys. Arakaki reiterates that teens are at the second-highest risk of accidental drowning by age group, and the risk for teen boys is particularly high due to risk-taking behavior and substance abuse coupled with swimming and other water activities. Swim competency is part of the picture here, but education about these other risky behaviors is also necessary.

Farmer and Herrera thank Arakaki for the excellent presentation and recommendations from her report. Umagat specifically notes that early registration for scholarship students is a huge benefit for families who are already struggling to sign up for swim lessons. Umagat also mentions that lifeguarding and aquatic recreation, especially during teen years, can foster lifelong friendships and generate employment and recreation opportunities well into adulthood. The culture of swimming and lifeguarding is a strong force.

Williams notes that Swim Seattle is a top priority for both Superintendent Diaz and Mayor Harrell.

Umagat reminds the Board that the presentation of the Downtown Seattle Association Contract Renewal has been moved to a later meeting. Umagat reintroduces Williams for the next item on the agenda.

Agreed Order with Department of Ecology

Assistant Superintendent Christopher Williams gives the presentation.

Thank you for the opportunity to present today on the Agreed Order Between Seattle Parks and Recreation & Washington State Department of Ecology relating to Duwamish Waterway Park. With this presentation, we are hoping to cover three things: 1) Provide an overview of the legislation; 2) provide background on related properties; and 3) provide an overview of next steps.

The pending legislation does two things:

1. Authorizes Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) to sign Agreed Order with State Dept. of Ecology (DOE)
2. This legislation commits SPR to certain remedial environmental investigations and actions and makes SPR eligible to apply for grants to support this work (up to 50% reimbursement).

The agreed order area includes:

- Current Duwamish Waterway Park (including adjacent Seattle Dept. of Transportation Right of Way and Port property)
- Park “addition” property still operated under commercial lease

Duwamish Waterway Park is located at 7900 10th Ave. S in the South Park neighborhood along the Lower Duwamish Waterway. Seattle Parks and Recreation has been operating the park on King County property since 1975. Based on significant community interest in retaining this greenspace and access to the waterway for recreation, this property was purchased from King County in 2019.

During the purchase of the property, environmental testing identified arsenic and lead and therefore in preparation for construction, SPR submitted a soil remediation plan to the Washington Department of Ecology. In July 2020, we entered their Voluntary Cleanup Program, and in September 2020, the park renovation project began, primarily supported by funds raised by the Seattle Parks Foundation and Friends of Duwamish Waterway Park.

Park improvements included:

- More welcoming park entries,
- An all-ages accessible playground, and
- New park furnishings.

Environmental remedial actions included

- Selective soil excavation, removal, and replacement with clean fill,
- Construction of concrete pathways and placement of vegetation and laying sod material, and
- Installation of capping technologies

In 2022, DOE moved the site from the Voluntary Cleanup Program to their formal program referencing the complexity of the site. The adjacency to the river and the Superfund site is part of that complexity.

Another complexity, is that concurrent with the park improvement project, in 2021, an adjacent site was acquired by the City. This site had been identified by the community as a location to meet many of the goals identified as part of the City’s Duwamish Valley Program (DVP) to support equitable opportunities and mitigate displacement pressures.

While SPR acquired the property, OPCD continues to work with community to lead site planning that advance community priorities for developing community-supportive spaces and open space, increasing access to the Duwamish River, restoring aquatic habitat, creating a network of connected open spaces along the Duwamish River, and expanding opportunities for cultural activities and uses

for the site. Concurrently, SPR is managing the lease with the existing tenant and is reserving lease revenues for future site expenses.

As mentioned, the Agreed Order does not identify the clean up plan – it sets forth the process to develop and implement such a plan. The next step in the process, after this legislation is approved and the Superintendent signs the agreed order, is the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study Phase. We anticipate this to take about 18 months, and we will learn much more through this process.

Based on what we know now, we estimate clean-up to be about \$1.2M. We've identified approximately \$500,000 to date and plan to hone our budget and apply for grants as the process moves forward. One important note throughout this whole process is that DOE is responsible for the public engagement process – though we of course participate and collaborate in these engagements.

We wanted to end this presentation by discussing the current use of the park. A small area of the park remains fenced from community use. No remediation work was done in this fenced area during the park improvement project in part because of the proximity to the shoreline, the potential impact to existing trees (soil removal might require tree removal or negative impact), and because this area includes Port property.

Umagat thanks Williams for the presentation and acknowledges the difficulty of the project.

Herrera notes that the Superfund designation is reserved for the most polluted areas of the country, and stresses the importance for all stakeholders to work together to clean up this area. Herrera also congratulates Williams and SPR on the cost-sharing agreement.

Williams notes that the timing of the agreement is a bit unusual; usually, consent decrees are entered along with the purchase of a property. However, the complexity of this site contributed to the delay.

Farmer asks if there are other public riverfront properties near the site. Williams clarifies that there is public access to the Duwamish that is owned by the Port of Seattle. Additionally, several other public City properties abut the river.

Seyfried notes that available land in the city at this point is likely to be jeopardized due to actions of past generations, and that cleanup costs would be a good thing for SPR to consider when making future acquisitions. Williams concurs, and notes that part of the goal in future acquisition negotiations may be to have abatement and clean-up costs folded into the purchase agreement. Seyfried is confident that Seattle is in good hands, learning from the example of Gas Works Park. Herrera adds that Lake Washington, too, used to be unswimmable, but concerted effort has significantly restored that body.

Old & New Business

Hoff notes that Lauren Lanham, the newest BPRC member through the Get Engaged program, is sitting in on this meeting. Lanham takes over this seat from Meng, who will move to a three-year seat representing another City Board and Commission [Meng also serves on the Community Technology Advisory Board].

Gratitude & Adjourn

There being no further business, Umagat adjourns the meeting at 7:35 pm.