



Minutes|Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Zoom

Thursday, December 14, 2023

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

Attendance

Present: Marlon Herrera (co-chair), Stafford Mays, Justin Umagat (co-chair), Jessica Farmer, Lauren Lanham, Amy Brockhaus

Absent: Pasqual Contreras, Joshua Seyfried, Phillip Meng, Andrea Stuart-Lehalle

SPR Staff and Presenters: Christopher Williams, Mike Schwindeller, Stephanie Shelton, Ben Burtzos

Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

Umagat calls the meeting to order at 6:35 pm and provides logistical instructions for in-person and remote attendees.

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.

Commissioners and SPR staff introduce themselves around the table.

Umagat introduces the consent items for approval: tonight's meeting agenda and the meeting minutes from the 11/9/23 BPRC meeting. The motion passes by unanimous consent.

Adopted: BPRC Meeting Minutes 11/9/23

Adopted: BPRC Meeting Agenda 12/14/23

Public Comment

Kathy Colombo – I have spoken to you before as a member of the Beacon Hill Council as well as with the William “Bill” Wright renaming committee. We had an event on October 10 with over 55 people who are very excited about renaming Jefferson Park Golf Course to the William “Bill” Wright Complex. I would like to share some information about Bill. Did you know that in the 1950s, people of color had limited access to Seattle Parks' public golf courses? Did you also know that Bill Wright played several sports when he lived in south Seattle, but fell in love with Golf, and also had limited opportunities to participate and compete in the sport he loved? He still practiced and perfected his skills. In what is now the USGA tournament, Bill was not permitted to compete because he did not have a handicap, and could not get one because he was not allowed to join the white-only golf clubs.

Bill's parents, along with other golfers in the South End, started First State specifically for young people to be able to participate in tournaments. Still, Wright was not allowed to play at Jefferson Park Golf Course until then-Governor Rosellini intervened and scolded SPR for restricting his access.

Jennifer Beetem – Last month the Board heard many stakeholders who want the Black Lives Memorial Garden to stay at Cal Anderson Park, in the Sun Bowl. I support the garden for its historic importance, its value to the neighborhood, and region. The garden arose from the brave actions of working class people seeking to access natural spaces. Neighbors of all classes come together in the garden to engage with the land, learn and care for one another. In warm months the stewarding community grows plants and in the cold months makes medicines from them and plans next year's plantings. I also want Parks to stop sweeping my unhoused neighbors, particularly during the winter cold. Parks is neglecting infrastructure, but spending big sweeping Cal multiple days a week without meaningful housing outreach. In canned responses to community members and City Council member Mosqueda's office, Parks continues to cite the flawed late 2020 public feedback and not specify alternative location offers. My public records request for this location list will be not met until the end of February. Cal Anderson's Sun Bowl was designed for impromptu performances that can share space with the garden. The 1998 park master plan asserts that "a variety of dynamic spaces and uses which can accommodate passive or unscheduled active activities makes the park a more usable and welcoming space". The Shelterhouse is designed for gathering, but Parks continues to keep it locked and inaccessible to the neighborhood - after recently spending funds on renovation. The 1998 Capitol Hill Neighborhood plan calls for strengthening informal sources of support and socialization, and developing community gathering places to promote connectedness. BLMG has been delivering on long unmet community needs at the garden, sharing food, social support and environmental education from season to season. The Board of Commissioners web page asserts that Black Lives Matter, however a statement without continued action is performative at best. Any changes to the garden location must come from an inclusive public engagement process. UW professor Jeff Hou is teaching a course on BLMG in Winter 2024 that will include data collection and the BLMG collective has also begun a community feedback process. I call for public clarity on Parks' plans for community feedback.

Elisa Chavez – I spoke at a previous meeting to express my support for the Black Lives Memorial Garden staying in its current location. At that meeting, the Board mentioned receiving hundreds of letters of support for the BLMG from across Seattle. However, there has been no indication that Parks is willing to alter its policy towards the garden. If a community outcry of this level isn't considered significant enough to save the garden, I'd like to learn, as a community member, what is enough? Do we need to send thousands of letters? Start a ballot initiative? Or maybe offer a substantial anonymous donation? At the last BPRC meeting several Board members made a point of thanking the Parks department for their sensitivity and responsiveness to the community regarding BLMG. This puzzled me. The Parks department has been asked about their BLMG community engagement process and has been unwilling or unable to release an engagement efforts that date later than 2021. I'm sure this is not what the Board considers "responsiveness," but this appears to be the case. I'll end with this story from BLMG. Last week, after complaints and right-wing trolling concerning the public bathrooms at Cal Anderson, Parks sent workers to weld them shut. I can't think of an apter metaphor for how Parks has handled BLMG and its supporters; they've literally closed the

door on community members who rely on our public spaces for connection, dignity, and safety. I think that we deserve a little transparency and a genuine response from Parks on this issue.

B – My name is B, that's all you'll get from me as far as identification. Commissioners, I address you – not you, but the sweep teams, whose behaviors in which you are directly complicit. I implore all of you to look me in the eyes as SPR enters the Black Lives Memorial Garden every single day to steal tents, throw away clothing, and arrest our community members, and tell me you are doing the right thing. Do you go to sleep at night thinking you've made the world a better place? When you wake up in the morning for another so-called "sweep" of a place where living, breathing human beings are simply trying to exist, as you have every single day for weeks now, what do you tell yourselves to justify taking away everything our community members have? You've attempted to bulldoze a garden that provides food and medicine and community without thought to its existence or even any offer to feed the people that it nourishes. The garden is a place of protest, and every day you return to destroy it, and those who call it home, you justify its existence.

Dee Powers – First off, I'd like to thank you for protecting the interests of the queer community by halting installation of the playground at Denny Blaine. That park has historically been a clothing-optional gathering place for naturists since the '70s, and protecting the diversity and character of this city is important as we move into the future. Along similar lines, I have a request to save another historic space in Capitol Hill. The BLMG is a community space that sprung up organically in 2020 as a safe area to recharge and learn something new. The garden at Cal Anderson, much like the beach at Denny Blaine, are now colorful and unique parts of Seattle's history, and neither deserves to be gentrified out of existence. When I went to sign in to comment today, I found a letter supporting the Black Lives Matter movement at the very top of your meeting page. In that document you asked, "How can we best invest our dollars to support equity, justice, and inclusion?" My answer is, how about taking away the dollars you're wasting repeatedly trying to destroy a garden and using it somewhere more constructive? You also said that your 2020-2032 Strategic Plan is embedded in pathways to equity and dismantling white supremacy culture. Well, that culture includes demolishing the BLMG because you don't want to use Cal Anderson's north meadow for events. White supremacy culture also includes trying to relocate that garden to the south end of the city. Do better, please. Please leave the BLMG right where it is. That garden is a resource hub and gathering place for many, and is a net positive for the character of our community.

K – This morning, I went to bring some breakfast to folks at Cal Anderson BLMG. I arrived around 7:45. At 8:05, the cops entered the space with the Parks department. At 8:10, they established a perimeter; there were 10+ community members that were in the perimeter zone when they first arrived, when they first put up the perimeter. By 8:12, two of my friends and neighbors were violently arrested, shoved to the ground for not moving out of the perimeter zone within two minutes; one of those people was disabled. So within 10 minutes, Seattle Police Department had escalated to use of force that reportedly caused a disabled friend to be hospitalized. I say "reportedly" because this friend has still not been located. Then, SPD and the Parks team took critical infrastructure, including the only source of reliable heat in the space, and a variety of coverings to prevent rain, and personal property including a cart that I use every day to bring food and laundry to people living in the park and living in the encampment around the park. They repeatedly refused to give forms to people to reclaim their possessions; I have no way to reclaim my cart. Furthermore, SPD once again forced people living in tents and the park to move and threw away their personal belongings for the third

time this week. The shelters are full, so sweeps solely serve to rob disempowered and marginalized people of their belongings without giving them any alternatives. Sweeps kill, especially in the winter. My question is: what is Seattle Parks Department's plan to de-escalate tensions and work with the community at Cal Anderson BLMG? And, for sweeps in general: how will you de-escalate sweeps now that the shelters are full and the weather is deadly? Stop the sweeps.

Erica Weiland – I'm here to support the BLMG continuing to remain in its current location at Cal Anderson Park. This garden has been a hub of mutual aid, native plants, food plants, and community since 2020. Specifically to the BPRC: in your 2020 letter on the Black Lives Matter movement, you pledged not to forget, "...Black & Brown lives lost to a racist criminal justice system here in Seattle. We admit that our institution is complicit in that system, and we know we can do better." Commissioners, if you believe those words that were written, speak up against Parks' plan to destroy the one physical manifestation in Seattle parks of the movement for Black and Brown lives of 2020: this garden, which is a memorial for Black and Brown lives lost. In that letter, you also invited Seattleites to come to parks to "grieve, to make yourself heard, or to find a moment of peace." In addition to the many beautiful plants in this space, that is exactly what the BLMG is for. So let the garden stay. Use your voice. To any Parks officials that are here tonight: please put the kind of genuine effort into community engagement and listening for BLMG that you did with Denny Blaine. Public surveys from 2020 or 2021 that no one involved with the garden community ever took are not representative. Your daily sweeps of homeless people trying to find respite in the garden, along with destruction and confiscation of people's personal property, as you have heard, are not conducive to building that community engagement. Listen to people who use this space. Let Black Lives Memorial Garden stay.

Ella Gomez – Black Lives Memorial Garden is important to me as a constituent because it is a communal space to steward native and edible plants. It's been a source of joy for me and many others during the summer and fall days, and it represents a reclaiming and rematriating of land in an urban landscape that does not require me to apply for P-Patch approval. It's accessible to those unhoused and housed folks. It represents the remnant of summer 2020, when George Floyd was murdered by the state, and it remembers his life and many other Black and indigenous people. It's a testament that as people we can bring awareness to the past so the future does not repeat itself. It's relevant for future constituents to witness a wild garden instead of a manicured, colonial aesthetic that deems it an annoyance and ugly. BLMG provides events and food for everyone; we storytell, we grieve, and we rejoice. I need this space in my life since living in Capitol Hill. Removing the garden and those who camp beside it would be displacing and dehumanizing our right to accessible, edible plants and community. This is my home, and to many others. So please, make a decision, and consider continuing to keep the garden in the space where it is. This is part of our identity in the city.

Williams responds to Kathy Colombo's public comment, affirming that SPR also believes that renaming the portion of Jefferson Park in question is a good idea and will garner community support. The renaming process has several steps and could take some time, but this is on SPR's radar.

Williams notes that SPR is considering a town hall style meeting in January as the next step in the discussion and process pertaining to the Black Lives Memorial Garden.

Williams further notes that the public restrooms in Cal Anderson Park were vandalized to such a great extent that repairs would exceed SPR's repair budget, and the decision was made to secure those restrooms and temporarily provide portable restroom and sanitization stations. This is why the doors to the restrooms in that park are currently welded shut.

Finally, Williams asserts that SPR understands and is sensitive to the passion and the issues animating the Black Lives Matter movement and the BLMG. Homelessness is a separate issue outside of the direct control of SPR, and has a citywide set of policies that we follow and answer to.

Superintendent's Report

Christopher Williams, Senior Deputy Superintendent, delivers the report.

Happy Holidays! Happy Holidays to you and your family. Seattle Parks and Recreation celebrates the holidays with many special events and programs – some of which we will share at the end of this report. We also provide many beautiful decorations and symbols of the season. Some examples include:

- Denny Park lights
- Volunteer Park Conservatory
- Green Lake Pathway of lights last Saturday

Wet Weather: This is also the season for heavy rains and wind. Our crews have been busy responding to landslides on the Burke-Gilman Trail and Lake Washington Blvd., and clearing numerous downed trees and tree branches in more than a dozen parks.

2024 Budget: Earlier this month, Mayor Bruce Harrell signed the 2024 mid-biennial budget as approved by the City Council, totaling \$7.8 billion. The budget adopted by the City Council reflects the core priorities of Mayor Harrell's proposed budget including over \$300M to support Seattle Parks and Recreation comprised primarily of General Fund, Seattle Park District, Real Estate Excise Tax, and other smaller funding sources.

Council Committee Meeting: SPR staff and I gave two presentations at the Dec. 6, 2023 meeting of the Public Assets and Homelessness Committee:

- SPR's 2022-2023 RSJI Report
- King County Magnolia Pipeline Easement Ordinance

Both presentations were very well received; the easement ordinance passed unanimously out of committee and was approved by the Full Council earlier this week.

Denny Blaine play area proposal: You may have heard about this in the news. After hearing from many community members who participated in the community process on the proposed play area project at Denny Blaine Park, the department has decided not to move forward with the play area project at Denny Blaine.

While this area of our city still lacks accessible play equipment for kids and families, we understand the feedback that this particular park is not the best location, and we will evaluate other location alternatives. Several hundred people attended last week's public meeting on the project. Many

members of the public spoke to the importance of this space and use as a beach, and the cohesion it has brought within the LGBTQIA+ community. Additionally, community spoke of the unintended consequences adding a play area to this beach site would possibly bring. This is why we have a robust community engagement process, ensuring all people – including those who have been historically marginalized – have their voices heard and perspectives considered.

SPR is planning to meet with leaders in the LGBTQIA+ community to better understand the importance of this beach to the community and the hopes for future uses. We are grateful to all the community that shared their input on this project.

Cal Anderson Park and Black Lives Memorial Garden: We are contemplating holding a public meeting in mid-January on to update the public on our plans for BLM Garden and other issues related to Cal Anderson Park. We don't have any firm dates, but I think Superintendent Diaz would like to do that.

Winter recreation programs: Seattle Parks and Recreation's Winter 2024 program brochures are now available, with in-person, drop in and virtual opportunities galore and something for everyone. Registration opened December 5. Visit www.seattle.gov/parks for details.

Winterization: Routine winter preparation began in late November with many Seattle Parks and Recreation bathrooms and drinking fountains closing for the winter season to prevent pipes from freezing. We will begin reopening bathrooms and water fountains in March 2024. As part of the Park District 2023-2028 Financial Plan, Seattle Parks and Recreation is working to make all 129 public restrooms available for year-round use by the end of 2028.

Mural at Sandel Park in Greenwood: Part of our efforts to address and prevent graffiti includes hiring artists to paint murals on our facilities in parks, including the restroom building in Sandel Park. Murals will be painted at 18 park locations in 2024.

Field drop in: We are offering our Free Athletic Field Winter Drop-In Program through February 25, 2024: This program provides community members (households or groups of 5 and under) with the opportunity to drop-in for free at designated athletic fields to play unscheduled games with their friends and family. Normally, field use requires a paid reservation, but SPR has dedicated a number of athletic fields this winter for open community drop-in. For more info, visit parkways.seattle.gov.

Here's a sampling of recent grounds maintenance work in our beautiful parks [shows sample pictures].

Gas Works Kite Hill turf and erosion restoration crew project with assistance from the Turf Crew, moving 100 yards of topsoil onto the heavily eroded slope.

Before and after photos of restoration work at Genesee Playfield Playground at Rainier Community Center.

The litter pickup volunteer work party with the UW Medicine IT services team was hugely successful at Golden Gardens last month; the volunteers collected over 600 pounds of trash!

The Tree Crew planted a total of 16 trees at Flo Ware and Sandel parks.

Upcoming Events

December: Holiday lights at Westlake and Occidental parks through Jan. 9

Various dates in December:

- Tuesdays: Merry Movie Matinees at City Hall Park. Movies begin at 12 noon. 11/28, 12/5, 12/12, 12/19.
- Wednesdays: Holiday Buskers in Westlake Park. 11 am-1 pm. 11/22-12/27.
- Wednesdays: Denny Park buskers. 12/6, 12/13.
- Thursdays: Holiday Busking at City Hall Park, 12-2 pm. 11/30, 12/7, 12/14, 12/21.
- Thursdays: Fire Pit at Pier 62. 3-6 pm. 11/1-12/31.
- Fridays: Festive Friday Concerts. 4-5:30 pm. 12/1: Dancer & Prancer · 12/8: Payge Turner · 12/15 The High Seagrass.
- Saturdays: Sweet & Snowy Saturdays at Occidental Square. 12-2 pm. 11/25-12/16.

December: This month we continue with the annual Seattle tradition of Christmas ships. A parade of brightly-lighted boats cruise from Puget Sound to Lake Union and out to Lake Washington. Stopping at pre-planned locations, the lead ship hosts an onboard chorus singing Christmas carols for neighbors and community to watch from shore. www.argosycruises.com

Jan. 1 Polar Bear Plunge: Also an annual tradition is our New Year's Polar Bear Plunge into Lake Washington at Matthews Beach Park in northeast Seattle. At 12 noon on Jan. 1, join hundreds of people for the first dunk in the lake of the new year.

These events and more are listed on our website www.seattle.gov/parks.

I'll pause right there to take any questions.

Mays asks if SPR held a town hall regarding the Denny Blaine playground proposal. Williams confirms that a public outreach meeting did occur, and was advertised in advance on the SPR website.

BPRC Subcommittee Report Out

Umagat gives brief report on the work of the Parks CommUNITY Fund Subcommittee. The subcommittee met in October to discuss and become oriented to community partners, project goals, and project selection criteria. In upcoming meetings, this subcommittee will be finalizing its selection processes and begin bringing recommendations to the January 25 BPRC meeting.

Herreraprovides brief report on the work of the Parks Oversight Subcommittee. Herrera notes that this subcommittee derives its responsibility through the Park District specifically. This month, the subcommittee was oriented with the City's Race & Social Justice Initiative and other equity toolkits, and also reviewed the planning processes that resulted in the creation and planning of the Park District. The subcommittee discussed developing measurements and performance indicators, and developed a work plan for 2024.

Umagat recognizes that both BPRC members and SPR staff are giving additional time for these subcommittee meetings.

Tree Canopy Ramp-Up Briefing

Senior Deputy Superintendent Williams introduces the presentation.

I'm excited to introduce Stephanie Shelton who will provide a briefing and overview of how the department is working hard to enhance and expand Seattle's tree canopy. SPR is the largest owner of public land in the city, and we are stewards to hundreds of thousands of trees, so we are well positioned to do this work. Stephanie is the Manager of our Natural Resources Unit, or NRU, which is part of our Parks and Environment Division. Besides tree canopy work, NRU oversees our specialty gardens (Arboretum, Japanese Garden and Kubota Garden), the Volunteer Park Conservatory, the Jefferson Greenhouse and our Trails Program.

Stephanie Shelton, Natural Resources Unit Manager, delivers the presentation.

Hello I'm Stephanie Shelton, NRU manager for about the last 14 months. My office manages citywide services across several programs including Urban Forestry, Trails, Horticulture and Specialty Gardens, Heavy equipment and Turf, and the Ecology team, including the Green Seattle Partnership, which guides community-based forest restoration.

Every 5 years the City assesses canopy cover. The study published in February 2021 indicated a net loss of 1.7 percent during the previous five-year period. This is an area roughly the size of Green Lake – about 260 acres. Within Parks, the biggest losses are in “natural areas” (5.2%). We are also seeing a drop in tree cover in our developed parks.

And while we continue to appreciate trees for their beauty and aesthetic qualities, we know they also are a critical part of our infrastructure, providing ecosystem service. These are critical functions for humans to live that we can quantify, such as stormwater retention, carbon sequestration, heating and cooling, and air quality. More tricky to quantify but increasingly an area of focus and interest is the role of trees holistically in human physical and mental health and wellness. And we know these services have not historically been distributed equally across our City.

Canopy loss is not happening equitably. Neighborhoods impacted by racial and economic injustice not only started with less canopy, but also lost more than the citywide average. While there were some canopy gains in environmental justice priority areas attributed to forest restoration programs, the losses outpaced the gains.

The city aims to prioritize urban forestry efforts in low-canopy areas, many of which are in low-income and BIPOC neighborhoods. OPCD produces the Race and Social Equity Composite (RSE) Index, which includes data on race, language, origin, socioeconomic disadvantage, and health disadvantage. This RSE Index divides census tracts into quintiles based on their level of disadvantage. The areas within the two highest levels of disadvantage are prioritized in our urban forestry work.

So the WHY of canopy loss is complex. The City has been working to address canopy loss intentionally for over a decade, so why are we seeing these trends. Exploring the nuances of this would take a few hours or more. At a very high level, we know there are a number of factors. In our Parks system we have an aging urban forest seeing losses that are exacerbated by climate change, including new pests and diseases.

So the corollary to loss is, why aren't we seeing more gains? While we've benefited from investments, we did not have targeted tree planting and stewardship programs in some areas of our parks. New trees were typically added to Parks either as seedlings planted in natural area restoration, or when new parks were built or renovated as part of Capital Improvement Projects. We also lacked directed funding or programming to track and manage young/newly planted trees, nor did we prioritize them for targeted care during the first five years following planting.

So what are we doing about it? In 2023, the Parks department received over 2 million dollars of dedicated funding to address tree canopy and urban forest care. I'm excited to provide some highlights around our accomplishments in 2023.

In my unit, Urban Forestry happens largely in 2 teams – our Urban Forestry Team, AKA Tree Crew or Arborist Crew, and the Ecology Team, which manages forests in our natural areas and which includes the Green Seattle Partnership program.

A quick overview of our Urban Forestry team: this is our arborist/tree crew. The bulk of their work program includes hazard tree removals, tree inspections, and, to a lesser degree, structural pruning and preservation. We are also a resource to Capital projects, helping with tree protection during construction. Tree planting has NOT historically been a part of this program, as we lacked the resources. And follow-up care to new planted trees was also something we weren't able to provide adequately.

With the Park District funding this year, we focused on 2 programs where we felt we could see the biggest benefit. First, our Urban Forestry team of arborists. In Q1 we hired and onboarded 4 Maintenance Laborers to form a brand new tree planting crew. This crew works under one of our Arboriculturists, who organizes the program. We set measurable targets annually – we have targeted a minimum of 300 trees annually, and 80% of these planted in High Priority zones, and metrics around tree care. We also established monitoring goals; we want to know what's working and we want to be accountable and have reportable results. Finally, we've set up systems to code and track our work activities so that we can collect this data, review and iterate. So we are tracking all these targets and in future years we are tracking survival, so we can see patterns and iterate the program.

We are smack dab in the middle of our planting season – the current numbers also reflect some trees planted in early 2023 Jan/Feb when we were piloting some tree planting. We'll be well over 300 by the March of 2024.

Young tree care and stewardship is a really critical piece. The biggest boost and management change from this program is around increasing young tree survival. In the past we invested in tree planting. We know now that to invest in successful revitalization of our urban forest, we need to invest in tree establishment and care. It's nearly 70% of the cost, but the payoff is worth it.

2023 Tree Stewardship – Results

Performed

- 256,530 gallons
- 8551 watering events
- 503 trees watered weekly

- 17 weeks of summer watering

Delivery

- Seattle Conservation Corps
- In-House tree crew
- 3 Contractors

Tracking

- Dashboard and GPS field tracking and work coding

We're also focusing on increasing tree canopy through the work of the Green Seattle Partnership program. Through GSP, we co-sponsored a number of events:

- Arbor Day Planting Event at Jefferson Park with Mayor Harrell
- Dr. Blanche Lavizzo Park – Tree planting event as part of KABOOM playground build
- Piloted interagency coordination through the citywide Urban Forestry Core team, presented planting plans to LAs, districts, and others

With GSP, partners play a critical role in sparking community support through their unique missions. The organization scopes focus on engagement in restoration through paid job pathways programs, volunteer opportunities, educational activities, and other community-driven programming. Last year, GSP contracted with 14 partner agencies.

Green Seattle Partnership 2023 Operations Approach & Ramp Up:

- Increase professional crew services to 2018 levels, return to past sites, district priorities, climate response, riparian refugia, trails, food systems
- Expand contracts with community-based organization that reflects Revisioning priorities, including building new partnerships with BIPOC-led organizations, paid roles, job connections; Seattle Parks Foundation collaboration

Green Seattle Partnership 2023 Accomplishments:

- 30 new acres, 250 acres of establishment, 15 acres of long-term stewardship
- >60,000 plants installed, including 10,000 trees

Finally, I want to share our final hire of the 5 MPD cycle 2 funded positions to support Tree Canopy in Seattle. This hiring was completed this early fall when Danielle Devier joined the Ecology/GSP team. Danielle has two graduate degrees, one in ecology with a climate change focus, and one in landscape architecture with an urban ecological design focus. She has most recently worked as an ecological designer restoring Pacific Northwest rivers, streams, and floodplains.

The return of funding has been a boost to GSP programming in 2023. We were able to return to Pelly's Place in SW Seattle; this site saw restoration and a visit from Nobel Laureate and famous tree planter Wangari Maathai way back in 2007. Contracted crews have done some heavy lifting this year, including initial weed managing in advance of planting at Interbay. This project has seen coordination the adjacent p-patch and golf course staff in a site that needed "activation" after camps were moved out, and offers an important chance to add canopy in an extreme high heat/low canopy

area of the city. Also, a reminder that it's not all about the trees, we are doing restoration that returns diversity to many habitat types.

GSP has been working towards 2023 goal of expanding relationships and contracting with community-based BIPOC-led organizations. Serve Ethiopians Washington is the site steward at Be'er Sheva, supporting improvements to the wetlands and creek. Futures Rising LLC was started by Shameka Gagnier to expand the GSP work at Daybreak to other sites citywide. 2023 locations include Kubota Gardens Natural Area, Frink Park, Marra Farm, and Maple Wood Playfield. Parks were selected to grow connections with BIPOC organizations and individuals nearby.

Tree Canopy Ramp-Up Summary & Key Accomplishments

- Hired and onboarded 5 FTEs
- 4 MLs and 1 Urban Ecology Analyst
- Initiated Tree Planting team (TC+)
- Planted 227 trees (...annually to date)
- Watered over 500 trees
- Met or exceeded mulching/pruning targets
- Added 30 new acres to GSP zones
- >50,000 plants installed, including 9,000 trees
- Collaborated with Citywide departments and non-profit partners in support of Tree Canopy Network

Shelton thanks the Commissioners for their time.

Umagat thanks Shelton for the presentation and notes the emphasis on data collection. Umagat notes that transit agencies also reckon with establishment periods for new plantings, and asks for clarification regarding age and condition of trees that are used for this program. Shelton responds that the Mayor's executive order specifies 5 years of establishment care for new trees, and for SPR that will mean 2500 trees in the establishment program at any one time (5 years of 500 trees each). This differs from other municipalities where care for trees stops after planting.

Williams asks Shelton to speak to the department's policy regarding tree replacement. SPR recently approved a policy that tree removals must be replaced at a 3-1 ratio; hazard trees (sick or dangerous removals) must be replaced 2-1. We haven't done a great job historically tracking tree removals, so we're doing a better job tracking that to make sure we're accountable. Additionally, there is a lag period between tree planting and achieving the kind of canopy that we want from those trees.

Herrera asks Shelton when she foresees the City turning around the loss of canopy. Shelton acknowledges the difficulty and importance of the question, especially given that over 50% of Seattle's land area is non-public. Shelton has heard 20 years as an estimate for tree plantings to start contributing to canopy, although depending on species, it could be 30-50 years. The actions taken now will pay off decades down the line. Herrera notes that with inclement weather, the winter is also a difficult time for tree crews; Shelton affirms.

Brockhaus thanks Shelton for the excellent presentation, and notes the difficulties involved with planting and caring for large trees, as well as NRU's focus on disinvested communities citywide.

Capital Project Plan Briefing

Senior Deputy Superintendent Williams introduces the presentation.

One of the critical parts of our organization is the team that plans, designs and constructs capital projects. Mike Schwindeller is our Deputy Superintendent of the Planning and Capital Development Branch. Mike will present a broad overview and update of the many projects that are under way and recently completed.

Mike Schwindeller, Deputy Superintendent, Planning & Capital Development Branch, delivers the presentation.

Thank you Christopher. Happy to share the progress of our team. I want to start with the public engagement and grants teams within our planning unit, as well as our project construction, ramp up and hiring, and share some program highlights.

Our planning unit has grown to be nearly 20 strong including our communications team. This year we held 8 ribbon cuttings and ground breakings, 18 community events and 28 open houses/public meetings. We collect feedback and try to gather that data, and then really make it clear how that feedback is incorporated into designs.

We also want to make sure the community knows all the work that's coming their way, so we are expanding our project signs on site, using graphics and project renderings when possible, to try and highlight that work. We also use these graphics in grant applications, and we've had a lot of success there.

I want to briefly highlight the Park CommUNITY Fund; I know you have been partnering with us on this. Thank you for the subcommittee, and helping bring that lens and for walking through the development of that program together. I'm excited to see as that launches.

One of our other initiatives is our Elevate Design Initiative. Elevate is SPR's initiative to diversify the platform of opportunity for everyone. It aims to strengthen the connection between design and the community it serves, by rewarding vision and purpose, and by providing support throughout the creation of new and vital parks designs. We want to take some of what we learned through this process this year and apply it to a new site in 2024.

I want to talk a little bit about grants. We've had a lot of success, and 2022 was a banner year for grants. We are aligning our schedules for projects with different grant schedules. I think we're going to continue to see progress and continue to align those schedules moving forward. We had \$14M in grants in 2022, and we expect 2024 to also be significant, and to really help us expand what we can deliver to our communities.

We have met our capital project spending goal for 2023; the goal was \$90M, and I just checked today and we have spent over \$95M. Related to that, we have put out 21 projects for public works bid. This year we started doing more packaging of projects, for instance, three play areas packaged in one public works contract.

Overall, our budget differential for the year is net \$1.1M. When we're talking a total of about \$95M, that's a pretty good percentage, and we have the contingency to be able to address that.

[Schwindeller shares a number of before and after photos and updates of current projects]

Projects anticipated for completion in 2023:

- Green Lake Community Boathouse (Small Craft Center)
- Washington Playfield Emergency Repairs
- Accessibility and Parking Repairs associated with Delridge Playfield (turf is done and RR demolition will go into 2024)
- Judkins Multi-sport lighting conduit

We are happy to share a preliminary overview of our project completions, including:

- 5 synthetic turf replacements
- 6 play area renovations
- 2 large emergency repairs
- 3 accessibility projects
- 2 athletic lighting replacement projects
- 3 drainage improvement projects
- Other improvements
 - Pratt Fine Art Center Re-roof
 - Magnuson Community Center Improvements
 - Off Leash Area Study
 - Kubota Gardens Restroom
 - Magnuson Park E4 Accessibility Improvements
 - 6 tennis courts / 4 pickleball courts resurfaced
 - P-patch Improvements at Longfellow Creek
 - Improvements at 5 Dog OLAs
 - Repaving at 4 sites

Ramp Up and Program Highlights:

- Development of Park District project implementation strategy
- Utilizing Alternative Project Delivery Methods
 - GC/CM General Contractor Construction Mgmt
 - Design Build
- Project Packaging for Efficiency
 - By geographic location, site specific, or asset type
- Increase Program and Project Reserves (10% in programs, 5% in projects)
 - Previously a single point for reserves + savings; now for each program
- Stage Gate Oversight Committee Schematic Design Review as Needed
 - Allows leadership input early
 - Opportunity to adjust scope

Are there any questions from the Board?

Mays and Herrera acknowledge the hard work that Schwindeller and his team have put in this year. Herrera notes that the discrepancy between estimate and bid cost is quite small for 21 projects, which

reflects high quality planning. Herrera asks, what are you doing right? Schwindeller laughs, and replies that after seeing a few bids come back over estimate, SPR revised its process to better anticipate cost escalation; specifically, any consultant bidding on a contract over \$750k would be required to employ a cost estimator on their project team. Schwindeller believes this practice has helped.

Umagat echoes Herrera's kudos for the capital projects team. With large project portfolios, it can be easy to lose track and wind up overspending, and it's good to see that the appropriations are on track. Umagat notes that District 1 and the South Park neighborhood really deserves the investment and love from the department.

Umagat asks if the BPRC could receive regular updates, perhaps annually, on capital projects. Williams agrees, and suggests that even quarterly updates might be helpful.

Umagat asks what the biggest challenges Schindeller and his team have faced so far this year. Schwindeller notes that coordinating major projects, such as the Green Lake boathouse, has been a challenge. This kind of project has a number of moving parts, and it is very easy for minor delays on small pieces to add up into major delays of weeks or even months.

Umagat asks if ongoing capital repairs (non-emergency) are also in Schwindeller's umbrella of work. Schwindeller confirms. The planning team and facilities teams coordinate, using the Asset Management Work Order (AMWO) system to help prioritize what assets are in need of capital repair or replacement.

Farmer notes that both presentations tonight reflect a great amount of on-the-ground work. The Board receives a lot of communication and the news shows a number of Parks issues, and those issues deserve adequate attention and space for public input. At the same time, we recognize the tremendous amount of work that's happening across a really big system that's serving a really big population in this city, and how important that is.

Old & New Business

Williams thanks the BPRC members and SPR staff for making it to tonight's meeting, and thanks Burtzos for resolving some technical issues to make tonight's meeting possible.

Lanham asks for clarification from Umagat regarding the schedule for the Park CommUNITY Fund subcommittee. Umagat clarifies that the subcommittee will meet after the new year but the schedule is not finalized.

Burtzos introduces the proposed BPRC meeting schedule for 2024. As traditional, the BPRC will meet on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, with the following exceptions:

- January 11: No meeting (Winter Break)
- June, July, August: No 4th Thursday meeting (summer schedule)
- November 28: No meeting (Thanksgiving)
- December 26: No meeting (winter holidays)

If there is no objection in the room, Burtzos suggests that the Board operate under the proposed schedule for now and communicate offline regarding any upcoming meeting.

Farmer asks that SPR keep BPRC members informed regarding any public engagement surrounding the Black Lives Memorial Garden at Cal Anderson Park so that members can participate between this meeting and January 25. Burtzos and Williams agree.

Brockhaus questions why the BPRC would meet once in January and once in December, when it appears that the December meeting is the difficult one to get people to attend. Burtzos agrees that attendance for this meeting is low, but notes that this is only a proposal and is ultimately the Board's calendar to decide on. Williams concurs and notes that there is no pressure to decide anything; the Board could decide in October to change the December meeting schedule. Burtzos affirms that the specifics of the BPRC's meeting schedule are not governed by legislation, so the Board has some leeway here. Umagat asks that the Board reviews the proposed schedule and provide feedback.

Commenter K asks for and is granted time to address Williams directly. K asks what SPR's plan is to de-escalate the tactics and confrontational nature of the encampment clearings/sweeps at the Black Lives Memorial Garden. Williams declines to give a comprehensive answer at present. This is an issue that extends beyond SPR, and is impacted by citywide policies affecting several departments, of which SPR is a small part. Parks cannot simply stop engaging in a citywide policy. K emphasizes that they witnessed and experienced significant violence at the BLMG in the course of the City's encampment removal just this morning; is Williams saying that SPR is unable to make a call about not sweeping the BLMG? Williams answers yes and no; SPR operates within the "One Seattle" guideline, meaning in coordination with other city departments. Williams also notes that the Office of Police Accountability (OPA) is specifically tasked with investigating and addressing abuses like those K is describing. K continues to ask – what does yes and no mean? We do and do not have the power to stop? Williams notes that he believed K was going to make a comment, and that it is not appropriate to have a back-and-forth exchange in this forum. Williams affirms that he and the department hears K's concern but has no further comment at this time.

Commenter Jennifer Beetem adds that for the public meeting and listening session Williams mentioned earlier to be successful, it needs to be inclusive of the Capitol Hill community, both housed and unhoused. Beetem also challenges Williams to provide a plan to integrate community feedback in a meaningful and inclusive way. Williams notes that these are great comments but does not have an answer at this time; SPR will be prepared to address those points when we have a town hall.

Umagat thanks everyone once again for coming to tonight's meeting. There being no further business, Umagat adjourns the meeting at 8:12 pm.