



# Minutes|Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

100 Dexter Ave N/Kenneth R. Bounds Boardroom

Remote accessibility via Zoom

Thursday, October 24, 2024

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

## Attendance

Present: Diamond, Meng, Flinn, Leonor, Baum, Lerer, Mays, Umagat (co-chair), Brockhaus (co-chair), Haile-Leul, Chisholm-Clare

Absent: Seyfried, Nakamura

SPR Staff and Presenters: Williams, Blackshire, Farmer, Haugen, Diamond, Gaubatz, Judd, Witherspoon, Hoff, Burtzos

## Welcome, Introductions & Land Acknowledgement

Brockhaus 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.

Brockhaus reads the land acknowledgement.

Brockhaus introduces the consent agenda: 10/10/24 BPRC Meeting Minutes and 10/24/24 BPRC Meeting Agenda. Umagat moves to adopt both items; Lerer seconds the motion. Brockhaus calls for a vote. The vote is unanimous in favor of passage.

***Adopted: 10/10/24 BPRC Meeting Minutes***

***Adopted: 10/24/24 BPRC Meeting Agenda***

## Public Comment

Public comment is offered on the following topics:

- Opposition to Magnuson Park pickleball development proposal;
- Concerns about Denny Blaine Park use;
- Concerns about Wallingford athletic field development;
- Advocacy regarding youth athletic permit fee increases

Christopher Williams, Senior Deputy Superintendent & Chief of Staff, briefly responds to public commenters.

## Superintendent's Report

Christopher Williams delivers the report.

## ***Department Update***

**Park District Board Meeting:** On Oct. 15, as part of the annual budget process, City Councilmembers convened as the Park District Board to review the 2025 Park District budget. As you heard at the Oct. 10 BPRC meeting, a big part of our 2025 budget proposal is making use of the flexibility of Park District dollars to support citywide General Fund issues. The Park District Board will meet again on Nov. 21 to pass the 2025 Park District budget.

**Ft. Lawton Redevelopment:** In 2019, the City Council agreed to redevelop Fort Lawton, a 34-acre former military site that became part of Discovery Park in 1972. The current plan is to build as many as 500 new units of housing and add 22 acres of parkland. The new homes will be for:

- Homeless seniors, including veterans
- Families and working people
- Low-income families

Public meetings on the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) were held by the Office of Housing and other City agencies earlier this month.

**Magnuson Park Public Safety:** Security issues, including the long-term parking of RVs in the park, have raised concerns at Magnuson Park. Interested members of the community and Magnuson Park constituents met with City and park staff earlier this month to discuss these issues and possible solutions. We may restrict parking in certain areas of the park and ask SPD to enforce the 72-hour limit on parking.

**Workday:** In September of this year, the City of Seattle's new online human resources system made its debut. Workday has generally worked well but there also have been some major challenges. You may have heard stories about some staff not receiving paychecks in the Seattle Police Department and other City departments – including Seattle Parks and Recreation. The good news is that our staff and City HR and IT staff are working hard to resolve these issues.

## ***Parks & Recreational Services: Parks and Environment/Facilities***

A few highlights from our hard-working Parks & Environment and Facilities Divisions:

**Junior Ranger!** (photo) Our Park Rangers were excited to strike a pose with this very stylish Junior Ranger who they met “patrolling” at Carkeek Park. This young Ranger has toured parks all over the state, and always makes a point of wearing his vest and hat.

**Wheelchair Mat** (photo): A Mobi-mat system was recently installed at the Magnuson Park Off Leash Area Beach, creating an accessible pathway to the beach and water for individuals with mobility challenges.

**Fleet EV Charging Infrastructure** (photo): Our Sustainable Operations Team are busy installing electric vehicle chargers for fleet vehicles at many SPR facilities. They are very close to achieving their 2024 goal of installing over 50 new chargers at 10 locations citywide.

**Autumn Leaves** (photo): Tis the season! Staff are working hard to pick up leaves throughout the parks system. Pictured here is Laborer Peter Amituanai at Lakeridge Park.

## ***Planning & Capital Development Projects***

**Georgetown Flume Off Leash Area** is advertising for construction bids which will be open on Oct. 23. We are collaborating on this project with the Seattle Department of Transportation, which will lead the construction process. The Flume site was formerly owned by Seattle City Light. City Light gave the eastern piece of the property to SPR and SDOT as part of a public benefit package.

**Magnolia Community Center Stabilization Project:** Construction of a project to partially renovate Magnolia Community Center is under way. Pictured is progress on the renovation of the gym. Construction completion is expected by fall 2025.

### ***Upcoming Events***

**Magnuson Haunted House:** Friday, Oct. 25 and Saturday, Oct. 26, 5-10 p.m. Join us for a spooky walk through the depths of Magnuson CC.

**Halloween:** Please check our website for dozens of other Halloween events throughout our system over the next week.

**Senior Fair:** The 1st Annual NE Seattle Senior Resource Fair is on Tues., Oct. 29, 11 a.m., Hangar 30, Magnuson Park. More than 90 organizations and businesses will share resources and services tailored for older adults.

## **Debrief of Athletic Fields Summit**

Williams introduces the presentation.

No parts of our parks and recreation system are more well used and well-loved than the dozens of athletic fields located throughout the city. The high demand for field time brings up significant challenges in our scheduling of these facilities. On Oct. 9th we held a very successful and well attended Athletic Field Summit at Magnuson Park bringing together Seattle Parks and Recreation leadership and maintenance staff, City Councilmembers and staff, and most critically, athletic field user groups – the people who play and practice on the fields.

A lot of great ideas were generated at this event; one idea that I want to highlight that came out of the summit was the idea of the community and the neighborhood making investment in their local sports field. Following this summit, we've asked Andy Sheffer and his team to be available to create a process to intake ideas.

We are pleased to present tonight a high-level summary of this Summit.

Markeith Blackshire, Parks and Environment Division Director, delivers the presentation.

About the Summit

Who attended?

- City Councilmembers
- Parks and Recreation Executive Staff
- Recreation Teams / Organizations
- Park Professionals

What content was presented by subject matter experts?

- Budget Update

- Athletic Field Scheduling
- Planning & Capital Development
- Maintenance/Field Labs Virtual Experience

The summit also included time for Q&A and networking. At least 80 guests were in attendance.

Lisa Nielsen, Athletic and Event Scheduling Manager, provides overview of key takeaways and next steps from the summit discussion.

#### Scheduling Concerns

- User groups want SPR to create a forum where users can connect with each other
  - Bi-annual playfield user forum (twice per year)
- Limitations with only one rugby field in our system
  - Rigidity of historical use scheduling
  - Magnuson Field 12 – potential future incorporation into rugby asset
  - Evaluating use of Field 5 particularly in fall for non-rugby use
- Concerns about user groups hoarding field time and not using it
- Process for choosing synthetic replacements, conversions, field improvements
  - Team evaluating Joint Athletic Facility Development Plan and will connect with Planning & Capital Development with updated knowledge and expertise

Seattle Public Schools – concerns related to potential school closures and impacts on playfield availability

- Currently only 5 schools on list, did not specify which, as that could still change.
- Will let users and SPR know what decisions are made in light of this.

Bill Farmer, Friends of Athletic Fields, shares his perspective on the summit.

Farmer notes the importance of holding face to face conversations between sports league organizers and SPR staff to build relationships. Farmer emphasizes the importance of athletic play to the physical and mental wellbeing of children and adults; since SPR provides the physical space for these activities, the department has an important part of this partnership.

Farmer specifically mentions the following advocacy points:

- Athletic field use fee increases – advocates for incremental yearly increases to fees instead of larger increases at less-frequent intervals
- Maintenance schedules on synthetic turf fields
- Upgrading irrigation systems and field maintenance for natural turf fields

Williams thanks Farmer for his work in community-building, and for the work all the sports leagues do in building future leaders.

#### Grounds Maintenance Issues and Discussion

Is there anything more that user groups can do to help with the upkeep of the fields? With the limitations of not being able to use power equipment it makes it difficult to help efficiently, as the tasks take longer.

- Director advised scheduling meetings between user groups and grounds leadership to discuss this.
- Can we restart the program of soil drops prior to season starts for user groups to help?

#### Future Planning Issues

- Any plans on turf conversion for Green Lake Cloverleaf fields?
- Question about order of synthetic turf projects.
  - Why prioritize communities that already have other fields before communities that have none? Magnolia and Queen Anne are the communities in question with none.

Blackshire shares several photos from the summit and thanks SPR staff and community partners who helped with the event. Williams thanks Blackshire for his hard work in making this event a success.

### Park Activation Update

Next is a presentation on our highly successful and ever-expanding park activation program, which brings positive and engaging activities and events to our parks during the summer and throughout the year. This began as an effort to revitalize our downtown parks and was a key part of the Mayor's Downtown Park Activation Plan, but the program has extended far beyond the downtown core.

Monica Haugen, Center City Coordinator; Tom Diamond, Neighborhood Parks Coordinator; and Elise Gaubatz, Program Support Coordinator, deliver the presentation.

Gaubatz explains the vision statement of the Park Activation unit.

- Through active and passive park activation, the Park Activation Unit:
- Provides positive park programming
- Increases community involvement and thus park safety
- Increases diverse social and community connections
- Leverages public and private partnerships

Brief delay for technical issues.

Chisholm Clare asks if neighborhood groups pitch ideas to SPR for activities. Haugen affirms, but notes that SPR's resources are finite, so there is a limit to what can be accommodated.

Haugen describes operations at Center City parks. Center City Parks are selected downtown parks. Some of the parks are programmed in contracted partnership with Downtown Seattle Association (DSA), Freeway Park Association, and Interim CDA. Our program supports programming at other locations as well.

Diamond notes that neighborhood parks include all other locations in the city, focusing on community-based activations, capacity building, consultation on process, funding and fee waivers. Part of the goal is leading to neighborhood sustained activation/leadership/initiative. 2024 priority locations include:

- Ballard Commons Park
- Cal Anderson Park
- Be'er Sheva Park
- Lake City Mini and Albert Davis Park

- Various parks throughout the City in smaller capacity

Center City Cinema, which is no longer just in the center of the city but citywide, is one of the larger event series we operate. We showed 37 movies from April to August, with 3 canceled due to weather. The program grew from 12 parks to 17 parks for summer and we expanded the program this year to include community center sites for our 8-week Harry Potter Series. We totaled over 9,000 attendees; the largest audience was 1500 for Mamma Mia! at Cal Anderson Park, with 1200 also attending Rocky at Cal Anderson. Last year we hosted 20 movies during the same period with total attendance of 5386. Increased attendance due to enhanced social media reach, media coverage, word of mouth, movie selection, advanced in park marketing, etc.

Haugen and Diamond show images from successful park movie nights.

Haugen introduces the Dancing 'Til Dusk program. This program has operated since 2008 at Freeway Park and includes 1 hour of dance lessons and 2 hours of open dancing. These events attract a diverse range of performers and attendees and is an inter-generational program. This year we held 15 Events with 3750 attendees. 1 event was canceled due to weather. Hagen and Diamond show images from other events.

Other activation updates:

- In partnership with Windz of Change, we provide Indigenous programming at City Hall Park which includes music, storytelling, drumming, dancing and art.
- Bike Works, which has offered services at City Hall Park, provides free repair of bikes, and free bikes to those in need.
- The Be'er Sheva Cultural Stage provides a space for the neighborhood to plan, schedule, and host community-led cultural events at Be'er Sheva Park; this is the culmination of long-standing advocacy from community partners.
- Festivals at Othello Park and Cal Anderson Park represented another kind of community-led activation in our park.
- Ballard Commons Park hosted yoga and HIIT classes in partnership with Praxis Yoga in July and August. This is another way that partnerships can support the activation of our parks.

Enhanced by biweekly meetings with the Park Activation team, Park Rangers play an active role in our park concierge training series by presenting and increased collaboration. Ranger support also includes park activation locations on daily patrols and increased patrols in priority locations.

A key facet of downtown park activation is the Park Concierge Program—a partnership between SPR and the Associated Recreation Council to staff several center city parks.

This year, concierges had a presence in six parks: Ballard Commons Park, City Hall Park, Denny Park, Freeway Park, Hing Hay Pay, and Pioneer Park. Concierges activate parks through setting up tables, chairs, and outdoor games, and by supporting events. They also serve as a friendly face in the park, providing information, and tracking and reporting maintenance issues, doing their part to keep the space clean and welcoming.

In 2024 concierge staff have:

- administered Narcan 8 times
- 4 CPR administrations
- Called 911 38 times

We get more requests for concierge presence than we are funded for. Concierges are seen as part of the park, their presence has been transformational at Ballard Commons Park, according to CM Dan Strauss. This is a limited resource that has a dramatic impact on how people view the park.

The Park Busker Program is another partnership with the Associated Recreation Council. Buskers are performers (musicians, acrobats, dancers, etc.) who perform 2 hour sets during lunchtime hours in the park. They are independent contractors through ARC that audition through an annual audition process. They perform at 8 park locations on a regular basis (daily for most locations). Our group of about 30 buskers is culturally and racially diverse and perform in a variety of languages. Concierges are onsite at most busking locations to support performances and safety. These free lunchtime performances can completely change the park environment into a safer, more welcoming space.

Haugen notes that Karl Fields, Park Activation Unit Manager, is not present at tonight's meeting but shares in the work and successes of the group. Haugen turns the floor over for questions.

Lerer asks how many total events SPR hosted through this program. Haugen notes that SPR hosted over 75 events, not including the events at the Be'er Sheva Cultural Stage events, including over 15,000 participants. This number might increase by the end of the year.

Haile-Leul, Baum, and Flinn note their appreciation for the work of this unit.

## Recreation: Summer Programs Overview

Williams introduces the presentation.

Our summer recreation programs and activities are at the heart and soul of our mission at Seattle Parks and Recreation and we are very proud and pleased to present the results of this past summer! I think it's safe to say that this is the first year we were full capacity and strength since the pandemic year of 2020.

Brian Judd, Interim Recreation Division Director, delivers the presentation.

Judd provides overview of enrollment and participation in summer day camp programs, summer youth employment programs, outdoor recreation and nutrition programs. [Please see presentation for further information.]

Judd highlights the Teen Summer Musical in particular. 71 participants, including 16 young people with disabilities, collaborated to perform *Snow Whyte & the Seven* at Benaroya Hall. This program culminated with 5 performances and drew a total audience of nearly 5,000.

Another signature event, the annual Big Day of Play, drew over 4,200 attendees and 97 vendors. A new event this year was the Mile Fun Run.

Judd provides brief overview of three additional recreation programs:

- Specializes Programs provides recreation opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities, as well as internships and employment opportunities;
- Lifelong Recreation offers programs specifically for adults aged 50 and over;
- Environmental Education offers nature day camps and additional educational opportunities through hubs at Discovery Park and Carkeek Park.
- [Please see presentation for further information.]

Meng asks if the teen internships are paid positions; Judd confirms that they are. Meng laments that he was unaware of this program during his high school years!

Meng asks about “Program Impacts” metric on Lifelong Recreation presentation slide. Judd notes that the Lifelong Recreation unit wanted to highlight that their achievements in 2024 were accomplished with a decreased capacity due to budget constraints.

Romell Witherspoon, SPR Strategic Advisor, presents the 2024 accomplishments of the department’s Seattle Mentor’s program.

Seattle Mentors is a mayoral initiative; the Mayor did not want any youth to feel that they had to leave Seattle in order to be successful.

We have four different cohorts in our Seattle Mentors program:

- Evolving Entourage Cohort
  - Self-directed (what do you want to learn?)
- Visionary Voices
  - One-off events, lectures, speakers
- Empowerment Exchange Cohort
  - Small group (no more than 6), ongoing mentorship
- Feels Like Summer event
  - Professional Development (59 youth Every Friday for the summer at Garfield High School)
  - Partners with: Urban League, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Mentor Washington, Converge

Our Visionary Voices speakers include:

- David Washington, SFD
- CM Joy Hollingsworth
- Angela Rye
- Dr. Alvertis Brooks, Jr.

Other community engagement opportunities have included field trips to Microsoft headquarters and the Seahawks facility, and Dwayne Eskridge of Seattle Seahawks came to RBCC monthly to mentor a small group.

I want to leave you with three questions that guide our work with Seattle Mentors: What do you want? What’s in the way of getting what you want? And what will you do to get it? Those are called stakes. And that, in a nutshell, is how we mobilize the Mayor’s vision for this program.

## Old & New Business

Brockhaus reminds BPRC members of upcoming 11/14/24 retreat at Seattle Aquarium.

Flinn asks if event information for Gas Works Park can be made more available online pursuant to public advocacy. Williams asks Hoff to investigate possibilities for this and to coordinate with SPR events staff.

Chisholm Clare asks about additional information regarding the Ranger program. Williams notes that a presentation from that unit and its manager, Jon Jainga, would probably be beneficial soon.



Brockhaus adjourns the meeting at 8:17 PM.