



Minutes

Board of Park Commissioners and Park District Oversight Committee

100 Dexter Avenue North, Seattle 98109

Thursday, October 11, 2018

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

Commissioners:

Andréa Akita, Vice Chair

Excused, Jeniffer Calleja

Patt Copeland

Jessica Farmer

Marlon Herrera

William Lowe, Chair

Kelly McCaffrey

José Ochoa

Tom Byers

Dennis Cook

Excused, Marc Daudon

Steve Gillespie

Evan Hundley

Mat McBride

Excused, Garet Munger

Excused, Dewey Potter

Welcome and Introductions

The joint meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners and Park District Oversight Committee is called to order at 6:30 p.m. Commissioner Lowe asks for approval of the Board of Park Commissioners' September 27 meeting minutes and the evening's agenda. Commissioner Hundley moves and Commissioner McCaffrey seconds; the Consent Items are approved.

The commissioners introduce themselves.

Public Comment

John Barber – John is the Chairman of the Parks and Greenspaces Committee for the Leschi Community Council – people want local parks well-maintained. Parks maintenance has decreased. The level of expertise via trained gardeners and horticultural experts has decreased. The Park District lacks a funding commitment to take care of parks and boulevards. Mechanized equipment is taking over for staff. Staff claims increasingly operates on a complaint basis and that's not management. Vegetation Management Plans are ignored. Seattle Parks and Recreation needs to increase staff. There needs to be a planning effort to clarify procedures on maintaining edges and other issues in the parks. City charter says SPR budget should be 10% of General Fund.

Superintendent's Report

Presented by Christopher Williams, Interim Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Interim Superintendent Williams responds to former Commissioner Barber to say more density and encampment cleanups means staff efforts go towards garbage clean up and basic maintenance, as opposed to beautification efforts and plantings.

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>

National Recognition – Two SPR employees were recognized by the National Recreation and Parks Association for the work they do.

Lakema Bell was recognized for her innovation for the Get Moving program and Big Day of Play.

Invite Lakema to come to board and show her metrics.

Cindy Sandino-Chang recognized as a young professional.

Seattle Management Association awards – two SPR programs/staff were awarded Seattle Management Association Awards.

- Foundations of Change – Race and Gender equity training for all staff
- Day-long summer schools – Daisy Catague and Lori Chisolm for their programs.

Women of the World Swim – This is a program that takes place at Rainier Beach Community Center - responding to the needs of Muslim women who do not swim with men. The program has been hugely successful. A male person has filed a claim with the Office of Civil Rights, threatening to sue. SPR feels strongly this program should continue.

Detroit City Park Alliance – The City Park Alliance is an organization dedicated to vibrant urban parks. They recently held their annual conference in Detroit. It was a fascinating place with blocks of boarded up houses and then one house with lights on. Detroit has a \$9 million budget for their parks and recreation system. Conversely, SPR has \$252 million budget. They mow their parks three times a year. Deputy Superintendent Williams shares the trends highlighted during the Board meeting:

- Programmed urban parks are more heavily used.
- Partnerships are the wave of the future – this is the salvation of many park and recreation agencies.
- Walking loop trails enhance public use in urban and neighborhood parks
- Marketing/outreach and banners draw 44% more users into park settings

City Parks Alliance hosts the Greater Greener Conference and in 2023 they will be coming to Seattle.

Budget - The Mayor gave her budget speech and talked about creating more efficiencies in local government and becoming leaner. She spoke about prioritizing more Fire/SPD officers, and increased funding for human services.

Interim Superintendent Williams reviews the budget changes.

- South Park Community Center: Expanded hours to include Sunday.
- Added scholarships from Sweetened Beverage Tax Fund;
- Fee increases which will go towards more scholarships for swim lessons.

- SPR cut 11 vacant positions
- Hiring fewer consultants – cut \$200,000
- Shifted tree crew/Green Seattle Partnership to Park District
- Lake City Community Center - Evaluate rebuild of community center for affordable housing on top, which would cost approximately \$25 million
- \$1million for predesign Green Lake Community Center – 2020
- Relocating staff from RDA to 6th and Wall.
- Closing Belltown Community Center because the lease is ending, and it is the most underutilized. SPR will work to create a community center that serves South Lake Union and Belltown using 100 Dexter.
- Focusing SPR staff volunteer support efforts to support communities and neighborhood park volunteers.
- Real Estate Excise Tax – In the 2019 Budget, SPR received \$17 million in addition to the \$10 million received in lieu of General Fund support. SPR received \$40 million in REET in 2018 – SAAM got \$5 million and \$10 million went to the Waterfront Plan. REET typically goes towards maintenance items.

Some positions will be funded by the Park District, these positions are consistent with Park District initiatives.

Three positions at Magnuson Community Center were cut in the Mayor’s proposed budget. Last year, Councilmember Rob Johnson added one-time funding for the Magnuson Park Community Center. They are not included in this budget. Councilmember Johnson is aware of this. The Board received a letter from former Commissioner Diana Kincaid, and Chair of the Magnuson Community Center Advisory Council, talking about funding the three positions. Selena Elmer, Central Budget Office Analyst, says that the policy is to cut all funding from the fund balance with the hope Councilmembers seek a stable funding source.

Interim Superintendent Williams says that, in a way, the Park District is over-performing from the standpoint that last time SPR took this level of deduction – 203 people lost their jobs. The Park District protects basic operating expenses of the department from ebbs and flows of the city budget. SPR didn’t lose any operating or capital but lost some flexibility.

When the Park District was adopted, the InterLocal Agreement (ILA) specified a level of General Fund support of \$89 million plus inflation. The city has stayed true to this and the level of General Fund contribution rose to \$115-\$116 million. The Mayor’s proposed 2019 budget is rightsizing the commitment to the floor. The Commissioners want to make sure the floor doesn’t become the ceiling. SPR committed Park District funds to a spending plan and specific investment initiatives.

Staff time is used for encampment cleanup. The commissioners are curious about what is not being done because staff are busy with encampment cleanups. Interim Superintendent Williams says the maintenance decrease is exacerbated by the 80,000 new people who live here and enjoy the parks.

Park District fund v. General Fund – SPR will continue to look for ways to get leaner. Staff will look for efficiencies. Think creatively about how to leverage Park District Funding on capital projects, perhaps by using partnerships to leverage how far funding goes.

Discussion: Mayor’s Proposed Budget

Presented by Ben Noble, Budget Director, City Budget Office

Ben Noble, City Budget Office introduces himself to the boards. He will talk about the Mayor’s proposed budget that encompasses 2019 and 2020. The City Council will adopt the 2019 budget and endorse the 2020 budget. The City is facing financial challenges and Ben reviews the funding environment.

In 2018, the city is spending \$85 million on homelessness, but \$15 million was a one-time source. There is a commitment from elected officials to continue this funding and inflation pressures which are increasing. The City is also settling a contract with the Police Officers Guild, which is a considerable sum.

Mayor pushed hard to increase efficiency: 150 positions cut throughout the city; discretionary spending on consultant budgets; and, the city had been over-allocating on fuel which will save money.

Sweetened Beverage Tax is helping to fund food banks and food programs. Starting in 2019, there will be an Airbnb tax which will be allocated to equitable development and affordable housing.

Ben reviews the General Fund realignment from the proposed budget. Park District is primarily used to fund major maintenance and REET funding is limited to capital projects.

The proposed budget reduces \$10 million in General Fund; uses \$10 million Park District money but replaces that with REET. The commissioners ask if that is sustainable. Ben says REET is a growing revenue stream but admits it can be volatile. He emphasizes that the city does not have many other commitments for REET beyond SPR and therefore can continue to support the department with REET funding in coming years.

The Park District funds being used are consistent with its’ investment initiatives.

The General Fund commitment increases over time. There is a drop in General Fund support in 2019, but the city is negotiating with unions and those wage increases are not reflected in the proposed budget yet.

2019-2020 capital investments

Ben shows a table that shows where the City is making key investments in SPR capital projects; Ben reviews the list.

| Description | 2019 Proposed (\$s) | 2020 Proposed (\$s) |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Capital Investments (New REET, beyond \$10 M realignment) | | |

| | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| North Rainier Landbanked Site | \$0 | \$1.3M |
| ADA Compliance - Parks | \$2.0M | \$1.0M |
| South Park Planning | \$1.8M | \$0 |
| Bitter Lake Play Area | \$0 | \$1.0M |
| Yesler Crescent | \$500K | \$0 |
| Lake City Community Center | \$2.0M | \$3.0M |
| Green Lake Community Center | \$500K | \$500K |
| Athletic Field Replacements and Conversions | \$1.1M | \$5.1M |
| Other REET allocations (ongoing programs) | \$21.1M | \$32.5M |
| Total | \$29.7M | \$44.4M |

The Board wants to know how SPR can hold the city accountable to make sure they see that amount of REET and adjusted for inflation. What mechanism would be used to ensure the commitment? The Interlocal would be the most natural place for a written understanding and could be done as the department moves into the next 6-year plan, a share of the operations will be expressed in the Park District Plan.

PDOC member Copeland mentions that the head tax was to address the homeless issues and without that funding, the Budget Office has been very creative.

The Board asks what the mechanism will be to put something in the ILA formalizing the city's intent to continue supporting the department through REET funding. Ben says it is the responsibility of the Mayor's Office to propose an amendment to the ILA.

The Board appreciates the table and looks to Ben for advice on how to ensure the General Fund floor doesn't become the ceiling. His team identified risks to the budget forecast and the city is heavily driven by the tech economy, but CBO doesn't feel there is a risk SPR will lose General Fund support to that level. Ben acknowledges that Seattle Parks and Recreation is viewed in more discretionary terms than other departments. The Park District provides a cushion.

| Year | General Fund Requirement Inflated Annually with CPI | CPI Change | Parks Adopted/ Proposed GF Budget | Difference |
|-------------|---|------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Base | | 1.40% | 88,977,317 | |
| 2015 | 90,222,999 | 1.40% | 92,852,624 | 2,629,625 |
| 2016 | 91,486,121 | 1.90% | 96,498,348 | 5,012,227 |
| 2017 | 93,224,358 | 2.80% | 103,265,524 | 10,041,166 |
| 2018 | 95,834,640 | 3.20% | 107,162,958 | 11,328,318 |
| 2019 | 98,901,348 | 3.20% | 101,531,711 | 2,630,363 |

Maintenance short falls, staffing stretched too thin, serving the growing population; is there any hope that General Fund will increase? Ben says the best hope for increased funding would be through increasing the Park District and it is a property tax source, which is a regressive source. He emphasizes partnerships and other sources of revenue; a model that has worked in other places.

Were proportional cuts made to other city departments? There were other cuts but cannot guarantee they were proportional.

Police and Fire are half the budget because a growing population needs increased emergency services.

The Commissioners recognize the SPR maintenance team is stressed because they are overworked, performing encampment cleanups, and know the deferred maintenance will continue to grow. The maintenance back log was the impetus for the Park District, but the department is trending backwards to less maintenance. The Commissioners are wondering whether SPR will get more money for encampment cleanups. Ben reiterates that any more funding for maintenance will need to come from the Park District.

How is REET allocated across the City? There are standing commitments:

- SPR – 34% (Aquarium, waterfront plan)
- FAS – 25% (fire stations debt service)
- SDOT – 22% (sidewalk repair, potholes)
- Seattle Center – 13%
- Homelessness – 1%
- Other departments – 5%

The Board ask Ben about the tax assessment rate for the Park District to ensure an appropriate level of funding. Ben replies if the City specified a specific tax rate it would have escalated a lot and questions the appropriate level of funding. This would have resulted in no predictability for the residents.

He stresses that significant accountability is needed because residents were resistant to the Park District. The tax rate could become more dynamic, but the City would need an answer from the people collectively about how to determine the amount.

The city wants to be reliable.

More people and less maintenance – what does that mean for the overall health of the parks? Interim Superintendent Williams says the maintenance standard is clean, safe parks. SPR has an ethic of environmental stewardship. Parks are going to be used heavily by the public. Staff are working on how to manage expectations, best practices, and being good environmental stewards of the department; asking questions, such as, how does SPR manage climate change in a preventative and proactive way.

The Commissioner asks Ben his recommended funding sources for community centers. He mentions that last time community center renovation came through a levy, but there are 27 community centers, and several have not been touched in 30 years. There is a potential for debt finance, but he is wary because there will always be major maintenance.

Property taxes are not a progressive source of income and there is concern in the City about voter fatigue. Levies significantly support the library system and the public-school system.

None of the departments wants to have their budget reduced; the more prosperous the residents in Seattle are, the less affordable the city becomes.

Ben says there is debate about how to address homelessness; the City has been clear it is not permissive of people living in parks.

Ben said \$10 million REET financing is as much as he was comfortable doing. There was not a magic number, but he felt \$10 million was sustainable and it freed up General Fund for other areas of the City.

What happens when the City plateaus? Revenue streams are plateauing and Ben doesn't think it will increase much. Being honest and direct with the Board, Ben says he doesn't see another income stream coming.

Commissioner Herrera points out that the "lean" management strategies involve bottom-up improvements and require instilling a culture of continuous improvements across the organization. He encourages the department to think of it in terms of a cultural shift.

Commissioner Byers says Ben has done a fabulous job. He takes issue with the rate of taxation under the Park District. He hears from Seattle residents that they want to see production. He says people are dependent on parks and openspaces because of the growing density.

Does the city have a budget for climate change and mitigation? What does that budget look like? Commissioner Ochoa suggests the City consider using part of that towards parks. Ben says there is no specific budget toward climate change. SPU and SCL are also concerned about climate change mitigation because the snow pack provides water. They are looking long-term because natural storage is disappearing. The waterline around the Duwamish is going up.

The City is trying to mitigate through Finance and Administrative Services to install charging stations for electric vehicles, not through a separate budget but working in the space. SPR would need to do the same.

PDOC member Copeland mentions that many homeless people have mental health issues and other disabilities and will require more care and different solutions. Affordability, mental health and drug use are factors, the City is working with regional partners for a strategy on homelessness.

The pressures on the City budget is much more because of a lack of federal government support and legislating some of the national policies coming out of Washington D.C.

Ben thanks the Board for their work. The Board thank Ben and invite him to return.

Interim Superintendent Williams is preparing to have a conversation with the Mayor regarding the Park District Mid-Cycle Report and will report the outcome of that conversation with the Mayor.

Update: Renewing Our Legacy Strategic Plan

Kathleen Conner, Center City Parks Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation

The City has seen an increase of 50,000 new people in the last 2 years. This strategic plan will build on what was done in the past.

Susan retired; Kevin, Libby and Fuadi Said joined the team to focus on outreach. They will use different staff on the outreach and work with the Change Team to complete the Racial Equity Toolkit.

Developing the Engagement Approach

- Prepared the initial Racial Equity Toolkit and worked with the SPR Change Team and the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs.
- Use SPR Community Ambassadors, Department of Neighborhoods (DON) Community Outreach Liaisons, and Other Interpreters. Lakema created a team of SPR community ambassadors and they have been highly successful in the past and SPR will be using them for this process.
- Build on existing SPR and City relationships with communities.
- Use Tools such as DON's Neighborhood Snapshots and Office of Planning and Community Development Equity Map. Department of Neighborhoods is a wealth of resources and has community outreach liaisons for homeless and Native American contacts. They will build on existing SPR and city relationships.
- Meet with PDOC and Board of Park Commissioners.

Race and Social Equity Index – Tool to aid in identifying city planning, programming and investment priorities

Includes - Heat Map

- Race, English Language Learners and Origins
- Socioeconomic Disadvantages
- Health Disadvantages

Multi-Faceted Draft Engagement Approach
Online Engagement

- SPR Website
- Survey Monkey

Media and Social Media

- Blogs, Facebook, Twitter Town halls
- City Communications
- Neighborhood Blogs
- Seattle Channel, Podcasts, Ethnic Media

Work Closely with Community Partners

- El Centro de la Raza
- Seattle Parks Foundation
- Somali Community Services
- Lake City Future First

Everyone should have the opportunity to engage with this process.

Events, Workshops, and “In-Reach”

- Make “In-reach” presentations at existing meetings and events, including youth and young adults, special populations, and the LGBTQ community
- Set up “Pop-Up” tables at youth basketball games, farmers markets, holiday events, libraries, grocery stores, etc.
- Attend worksite meetings such as Good Will and tech companies
- Host a speaker’s forum/workshop with Parks Foundation and other partners; Seattle Parks Foundation works with over 100 nonprofit organizations.

Present to City Commissions, Boards and Committees

- Immigrant and Refugee Commission
- DisAbility Commission
- Youth Commission
- Board of Park Commissioners
- Park District Oversight Committee

Develop & Administer a Statistically Valid Survey

Repeat the 2017 Statistically Valid Survey

- Collect opinions on quality of life, parks usage, demands and needs, etc.
- Compare the 2017 and 2019 Surveys

Administer a Second, Non-Statistically Valid Survey

- Meet with community-based organizations, partners, and key leaders to help determine ways to survey in areas with high “Limited English Partners” (LEP) populations and in higher disadvantaged areas
- Website, hard copies of survey distributed in communities

Engagement Underway

- Four SPR Task Forces – Lead Ongoing Meetings
 - Athletic Fields

- Olmsted Legacy Parks
- Recreation
- Viewpoints
- Presented at Two Associated Recreation Council (ARC) Presidents Meetings
- Presented at the Parks Foundation Board Meeting

Internal City Engagement Underway

- Met with staff from 11 City departments.
- Collaborated and discussed potential partnerships
- Attend the City Capital Cabinet and Livability and Affordability Subcommittee.
- By year end, all 900 permanent employees will have had an opportunity to weigh in on the Strategic Plan via meetings and a survey.

They are creating a database for contact information and adding comments and input

- They will synthesize the comments and collected input to identify common themes, issues, opportunities, needs and interests
- Use the data to develop the Strategic Plan
- Provide periodic updates on the SPR website.

Commissioner McCaffrey says that greenspaces/trails communities are not captured in the four categories. Kathleen says they could have focus group with forest stewards.

PDOC member McBride recommends changing the categories to reflect the demographics. People need places to recreate for free; as SPR staff go into communities, know in advance what needs are for certain populations.

Old/New Business

Letter written on behalf of the Board of Park Commissioners asking King County to provide activation funding for City Hall Park.

Commissioner Byers moves to approve the letter with additional copies of the letter to the King County Council, Seattle City Council and the Mayor. Commissioner McCaffrey seconds. The Board votes unanimously to distribute the letter.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 8:50pm.

APPROVED: _____ DATE _____
 William Lowe, Chair
 Board of Park Commissioners