

Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
April 26, 2012

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Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Antoinette Angulo
John Barber
Megan Heahlke
Jourdan Keith
Diana Kincaid, Acting Chair
Barbara Wright

Excused:

Brice Maryman

Appointee:

Yazmin Mehdi, Mayoral Appointee

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Eric Friedli, Acting Deputy Superintendent
Sandy Brooks, Park Board Coordinator

This meeting was held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Acting Chair Diana Kincaid called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, welcomed members of the audience, and reviewed the meeting agenda. **Commissioner Barber moved approval of the April 26 meeting agenda, March 22 minutes, and acknowledgment of correspondence. Commissioner Keith seconded. The vote was taken and motion carried.**

Superintendent's Report

Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli reported on the following. To hear the full report, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591224> and move cursor to position 1.56.

Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center (LHPAC): LHPAC's Mock Trial team placed 11th out of 20 school teams in the YMCA King County District Mock Trial Competition on February 25. Thanks go to the sponsors, Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative and Jefferson Community Center Advisory Council, and to the supporters, Volunteer Coach Russell Odell, Julie Kesler and Tom Grant, Tony Innovong, Judge Mary Yu, William Downing, Chris Washington, and Judge Jackie Lum.

Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center Remodel: This project is substantially complete, and included structural strengthening to the building, specifically the dome-roof above the theater; electrical improvements throughout, re-piping of the water supply system, and numerous interior improvements. Staff are beginning to re-occupy the facility and the first production took place on April 14 with the kickoff of the African-American Film Festival. A grand re-opening is scheduled for Wednesday, May 1.

National Walking Day: Seattle Parks took a leadership role in the kickoff of National Walking Day on April 4, holding 30-minute walks (some of them in water at pools) at 18 sites. Parks had great media coverage and great participation.

Green Lake Jamboree: For two days the North District crews focused efforts on Green Lake Park and accomplished an incredible amount of work, including new gravel and striping on the pathways and a great deal of maintenance.

Crown Hill Elementary Park Development: This project is physically complete, with the fencing to remain through spring to allow the turf to get established. The project has undergone a few "tweaks", which will be discussed with the community. Parks is planning an opening celebration in collaboration with Crown Hill Center for May 19.

Golden Gardens Park and Lake Washington Boulevard Landslide Repair 2011: Parks is now in a position to make a formal request for federal funds for slope stabilization related to both landslides. Seattle Department of Transportation is helping process federal paperwork through Washington State Department of Transportation.

Beaver Pond Natural Area Renovation: The final public meeting for the Beaver Pond Natural Area Renovation was held on March 14. This Parks and Green Spaces Opportunity Fund project modifies the existing park, refines and completes channel work in portions of the park by relocating two portions of Thornton Creek, removes invasive plants and restores native habitat. The schematic is complete; between schematic and design development staff will secure grading, drainage, and Master Use Permits from the Department of Planning and Development, and resolve some issues with Seattle Department of Transportation.

Lakewood Moorage: On April 4, Parks staff met with Christopher Schober, concessionaire of both the City's Lakewood and Leschi Moorages to discuss adding dry storage of rowboats at the facility.

Seward Park Andrews Bay Shoreline Restoration: The Conservation Corps has finished up the planting work along the east side of Andrews Bay which was funded by a grant from the King County Conservation District. The Corps removed 16 Lombardy poplars (some were used for aquatic and terrestrial habitat) and planted 16 new trees, 180 riparian shrubs, and 30 ferns. The Corps did a great job!

Jefferson Skatepark: This new skatepark, the first lighted one in Seattle, is now open! Users are already asking for improvements and the design team has made a proposal that Parks has submitted to the contractor for pricing. The opening celebration is planned for July 14 to celebrate the entire park.

University Heights (UH) Open Space Improvements/University Heights Center South Lot Park: Parks staff met with University Heights' key board members to discuss a draft construction/maintenance Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) and will continue the discussions. UH has completed its own site analysis and design revisions they would like Parks to include in the project and are applying for a Neighborhood Matching Fund grant to support some improvements. Parks is completing contract negotiations with Hough Beck and Baird for final project design and with Terracon Consultants for a soils study to support the rain garden design. Parks is in communication with SDOT to clarify any requirements for work in the alley right-of-way.

Rainier Beach Community Center (RBCC) and Pool Partnership Open House: More than 60 community stakeholders and interested organizations participated in an Open House last month to launch the Request for Interest (RFI) announcement that Parks has issued for partnership opportunities at the RBCC. Parks has the opportunity to jumpstart some of the Goals and Priorities outlined in the Rainier Beach Neighborhood Plan Update that Department of Neighborhoods and Department of Planning and Development have been working with the community on over the last year. The RFI is due April 16 at 4:00 pm.

Race and Social Justice Initiative: Parks staff are working on responses to its Race and Social Justice Change Team's concerns about more transparency and better follow-up with unsuccessful candidates in our hiring

processes. Parks also unveiled our new mentoring program where mentors are matched with mentees. From April through October, Parks directors, managers, and strategic advisors will provide mentoring to help make interested and qualified employees competitive in hiring processes.

Tree of Life Sculpture Project: This sculpture project is at 95% construction documents. The sculpture will go in the existing council ring at Victor Steinbrueck Park in September. The Homeless Place of Remembrance committee raised the match for this NMF project, and they will work with the Parks volunteer coordinator on the plant installation work.

Denny Park Temporary Off-Leash (OLA) Area: About 50 people came to the rainy opening of the Denny Park Off-leash Area on Friday, March 30, and about 30 dogs enjoyed their inaugural romp! The new OLA has been busy since. The area is about 4,500 square feet and includes a free-draining rock surface, a drainage system, an automated irrigation system, paw-washing station, and a use counter. Work was completed in record time by Conservation Corps, and Parks drainage, plumbing, and electrical crews. Funding for construction and maintenance of this project was provided by community partners, Vulcan Real Estate and Amazon.

Delridge Community Center Teen Youth Media: Interns at the community center screened "Emerald Concrete" on April 17 at the Northwest Film forum. The documentary is about the construction of the new Delridge Skatepark and skateboarding. Sponsors include the Northwest Film forum, ARC's RecTech Youth Media Interns, Grindline, and James Cheek.

Women of the World Muslim Women's Group: This group is interested in participating in women's only fitness classes at High Point Community Center. Parks staff met with them and gave a tour of the facility, information on building rentals, and the different classes offered at the center. The outcome is an exercise class scheduled for Friday nights from 5:45-6:45 pm for a \$2 drop-in fee. If all goes well and the class is well attended, a second class will be added, with childcare provided. Three of the women also expressed interest in becoming members of the High Point Advisory Council.

Propeller Art Project at North Passage Point Park: The propeller, stolen from the donor and then found a week later after the story caught the attention of the media, was installed on March 2. It is now in its new home at North Passage Point Park and is a beautiful tribute to the maritime tradition of Lake Union. Thanks to all who made this dream a reality for Phil Thiel, professor emeritus from the University of Washington School of Architecture. A celebration is scheduled for Sunday, May 20, 11 am-1 pm.

Carkeek Park Environmental Learning Center (ELC): Parks-staffed public programs at this ELC were discontinued in 2011 because of budget reductions. Parks is now working on a formal agreement with Seattle Audubon to provide environmental learning programs at the site. Staff are updating the building for Audubon's occupancy and expect programs to begin in late fall. Parks continues to work with Seattle Public Utilities to provide the Salmon in the Schools program as classroom and instructor-led park programs.

Seattle Audubon is also a partner with the Green Seattle Partnership and working in concert with Parks' Forest Steward program. This partnership is providing citizen science opportunities to monitor Parks' forest restoration sites to gather data about neighborhood birds for the nationwide Neighborhood Bird Project. http://www.seattleaudubon.org/sas/Portals/0/Science/NBP_Protocol.pdf. Commissioner Keith asked who will staff the facility. Parks staff responded that Audubon will do the programming and staff those. The programming will be similar to the quality provided by Seattle Parks' naturalists. The building will be available for rental through the Parks Department and will have one maintenance labor assigned.

Discovery Park Updates: Demolition of the Capehart military housing is complete and the restoration of 27 acres from military housing to mixed forest and meadow is also complete. The project is now in the establishment and warranty phase. The area will be fenced until the plantings are established (three years.)

Reforestation continues throughout the park through the Green Seattle Partnership and Discovery Park volunteers, and the Landmarks Preservation Board is finalizing guidelines for the five historical districts in preparation of the sale of the Officers' Row and Montana Circle homes to private individuals. The CIP and Washington State Historical Grant project is 99% complete. The Lighthouse and Keeper's cottages have been upgraded to protect them from weather damage and maintain them until further funding is available for complete restoration (new roofs, siding repair, and interior repair of the lighthouse.)

In February the Army Reserve closed its unit located at Fort Lawton. The park continues to be actively used daily. On weekends the parking lots are full before noon, except on the rainiest days. The number of off-leash dogs is epidemic and there is no hope of resolution without enforcement.

The Docent Program has a new name, the Seattle Volunteer Naturalist (SVN) Program. Twenty-one participants are in training to learn how to deliver environmental learning programs to school groups, and another 25 are learning the content and facilitation for public programs. Graduates will provide programs at ELCs and at green spaces such as Northacres, Frink, Leschi, Lower Schmitz, Colman, Mt. Baker, Beer Sheva, and Pritchard Beach parks.

Camp Long: Newly built in 2011, the Challenge Course was funded by a 4-H grant. In 2012 a High Course will be completed with two other grants – a King County Youth Sports Facility Grant (\$50K) and Department of Neighborhoods (DON) Large Matching Fund (\$100K). Parks entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Washington State University 4-H to manage and operate the challenge course. The DON award is building capacity in youth – serving organizations by training their staff and some of the youth who participate in their programs to be certified for facilitation on the course. The challenge course has conducted four trainings and trained more than 40 low-course facilitators, with 12 of those Parks Department employees.

Some 30 groups have spent more than 120 hours on the course, including Peace Trees-Veterans Going Back to Vietnam, a Seattle University Leadership Class, West Seattle and Chief Sealth High Schools; Seattle Girls School and Seattle Lutheran High School (private high schools), Mountaineers; Youth Violence Prevention Initiative youth, and Parks teen programs from South Park Community Center and other sites.

Project design for the High Ropes Course has been submitted. The High Ropes Course project is estimated for completion by October 2012. Camp Long continues to provide programs for elementary school kids through the Seattle Volunteer Naturalist program, and for the Special Populations and Girl Scout camps held each summer.

Families continue to enjoy cabin rentals for overnight camping in the city. The right-of-way between the neighbors on 35th Avenue SW and the western fence of Camp Long is being restored to native plantings. An intern from South Seattle Community College has been maintaining the wildlife garden for the last nine months.

Community Centers: In the 2012 budget, to better align City services and save taxpayers and ratepayers some money, the Delridge Neighborhood Service Center (NSC) closed and has reopened as the new Southwest NSC in the former Southwest Community Center. This "little city hall" is one of six located throughout Seattle that allows residents to conduct a variety of city-related business, from paying utility bills and parking tickets to purchasing pet licenses to applying for passports. NSC customer service representatives also provide information and referrals regarding other services and programs. The Southwest NSC is open Monday through Friday from 10 am to 6 pm; passport applications are accepted until 5 pm each of these days.

At the Service Level 1, 2a and 2b centers, staff are adjusting to new roles and the management model that groups them geographically under the supervision of a Sr. Recreation Coordinator. Attitudes are positive overall, and the centers are functioning well.

Community Center People Counters: All but five are installed. Installation is ahead of schedule and will be completed within two weeks, and staff are undergoing training on the software. Many are functioning now, and the entire system will be operating by the end of April.

Volunteer Park Conservatory: Parks has received the draft consultant report and staff are working with the consultant to finalize it. The consultant will meet with the Superintendent and City Councilmember Rasmussen on April 27.

Madison Park Fence Removal: Last fall the Board of Park Commissioners held a public hearing on the removal of shoreline fencing at Madison Park. The Board recommended to the Superintendent the fence be removed and that Parks Department work with community members to develop a plan. The plan has now been developed, will include plants and a barrier, and be implemented in May 2012.

Occupy Seattle: Real Change applied for a permit to camp overnight in Westlake Park on April 24. Parks denied the permit, based on non-allowance of camping in Seattle's parks. Real Change took out a restraining order against Parks so it would not block the camping. Parks appealed and the judge ruled in favor of Real Change. The judge stated Parks could not enforce camping, in this particular instance.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Keith, Mr. Friedli stated that the ruling is for the April 24 camping event only, with no explanation from the judge. Commissioner Kincaid asked if Real Change has applied for other permits. Mr. Friedli was aware of a permit for a Hip Hop Occupy event the following Tuesday.

Parks Preservation Work Group: Four Park Board commissioners are on this standing committee, which meets at 7:30 am on Fridays. The other commissioners were invited to attend as observers.

Lifelong Recreation: Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli corrected information presented to the Park Board on the Recreation Level of Service. A table showed Lifelong Learning participation that was based on Class (the Department's online scheduling system.) The figures did not include other classes that don't use the Class registration method. The tables have now been updated with the correct information. The Department faces the same challenge in counting its other programs.

Denny Park Off-Leash Area (OLA): Commissioner Barber noted the OLA recently opened. Amazon, the primary funder of the OLA, has asked the City to vacate several streets. He asked if Amazon has been approached to provide space for OLAs, as it encourages its staff to bring their dogs to work. Park land is the South Lake Union, recently opened. Amazon asking to vacate streets. There is a shortage of public park land that can be converted to OLA's.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

The Chair explained this portion of the agenda is reserved for topics that have not had, or are not scheduled for, a public hearing. Speakers are limited to two-to-three minutes each, will be timed, and are asked to stand at the podium to speak. The Board's usual process is for 10 minutes of testimony to be heard at this time, with additional testimony heard after the regular agenda and just before Old/New Business. Eight people testified. A brief summary is included below; to hear the full testimony, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591224> and move cursor to position 18.48.

Linnea Mattson: Ms. Mattson is a member of Lifelong Recreation and sent information to the Park Board earlier this week. She distributed brochures and information on the Lifelong Recreation programs. She asked that the Park Board help protect programming for seniors. Parks are for kids of all ages and abilities, whether they are 10 or 40 or 80 years old.

Sabrina Whaley: Ms. Whaley is Vice President of the Special Program Advisory Council and representing it in her remarks. This group sponsors the Special Olympics and represents the community for special needs

(mental and physical.) Most of the participants cannot attend after school programs and the Special Programs fill in the gaps for youths with disabilities. They accept all youth and adults with disabilities and are the only program to do so. She invited the Park Board to visit for a tour.

Thelma Coney: Ms. Coney stated she is 80+ and has participated in Lifelong Recreation since her retirement and is currently on its board. She also volunteers for Seattle Parks Department. She has attended a number of field trips through Lifelong Recreation and noted that vans with drivers are provided. This is especially helpful for those who no longer drive. The array of services provided by Lifelong Recreation is a revelation to many seniors. She asked the Board to support continued funding for this valuable program.

Sharon Levine: Ms. Levine stated 29% of Seattle's population are 50 above and qualify for Lifelong Recreation programs. This figure is increasing steadily and substantially. Please keep these affordable programs at the community centers, where professional recreation staff are located. She urged that any budget cuts be made equally in all programs.

John Covello: Mr. Covello spoke in support of senior programs. His involvement in the programs has helped him avoid being sad and depressed. He lived away for 40 years and moved back to be near his dad, who later died. Not knowing anyone in the area, he picked up a catalog from one of the community centers and started attending the Lifelong Recreation classes and day trips. Seattle is fortunate to have this program and he asked that its budget not be reduced.

Carol Fisher: Ms. Fisher has previously testified to the Board in support of Lifelong Recreation. She stated she is pleased with tonight's turnout in support of Senior Programs and read a letter of support testifying to the benefits. Please fully fund this program, as a cut to it would be a significant loss to seniors and to the City.

Rene Charoni: Ms. Charoni stated she has three teenage daughters and one has Down Syndrome. Her daughter participated in Special Populations programs for teen and Saturday events, summer day camp and overnight club, and other. There are lots of programs for her daughter and she has made a number of friendships there. Please support full funding for this program.

Jerry Rosso: He is the chair of Special Population programs and has a 47-year-old son in the program. The Special Populations program is unique to Seattle and to Washington State. Without it, his son would be at home vegetating. There is a long waiting list for these much needed programs; it could use more funding to accommodate all the needs.

Commissioner Kincaid asked the speakers and the Department to keep the Park Board informed about funding for these programs and thanked all who spoke.

Briefing: Seattle Parks Planning and Development Division

Michael Shiosaki, Seattle Parks Planning and Development Division Director, presented an overview of the division. To hear the full presentation and Powerpoint and hear the Board's discussion, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591224> and move cursor to position 37.40.

Written Briefing

At the April 26 Park Board meeting, Parks staff will provide the Board with an overview of the Planning and Development Division, including the organizational structure, operating and capital budgets, an update on key acquisition and development projects and recent accomplishments.

Planning and Development Division Structure

- Acquisition and Real Estate Services
 - Land Acquisitions
 - Encroachments

- Seattle Public Schools coordination
- Engineering and Design
 - Landscape Architecture design services
 - Review of project designs to meet standards
 - Parks design standards
 - Construction inspections
 - Survey crew
- Planning/Development/Project Management
 - Implement 2000 Pro Parks Levy and 2008 Parks & Green Space Levy development projects
 - Bond-funded projects
 - Major Maintenance projects
- Seattle Conservation Corps
 - Homeless adult on-the-job training, case management and education program

Capital Funding Sources -2012

Fund type	2012 CIP (\$000's)
Bond	\$ 18,243
2008 Parks Levy	\$ 18,321
Other	\$ 1,085
REET (Real Estate Excise Tax)- Debt	\$ 2,458
REET- Other (Programs & Projects)	\$10,041
Revenue	\$ 2,135
Grand Total	\$ 52,283

Division Operating Budget -2012

Division Operating Budget	
Administration and Major Projects	\$ 1,156,608
Acquisition and Real Estate Services	\$ 936,383
Engineering and Design	\$ 1,840,503
Planning/Development/Project Management	\$ 2,317,330
Seattle Conservation Corp	\$ 3,913,185
Total Division Budget	\$10,164,011
Operating Budget Fund Sources	
General Fund	\$ 1,459,633
Other (Including CIP)	\$ 8,704,378
Total Fund Sources	\$10,164,011

Acquisitions – Recent Accomplishments

Neighborhood Parks

- Phinney/Greenwood area - purchase and sale and leaseback negotiations underway
- North Rainier – 1 parcel acquisition closed, negotiations on another are underway
- International District - negotiations are underway in “Little Saigon”
- University District - negotiations are underway to expand Christie Park
- Morgan Junction (next to Morgan Junction Park) – negotiations underway
- Wedgwood – transfer from City Light to Parks by end of year

Green Spaces

- Puget Creek – parcel acquisition closed December 2011
- Arroyos Natural Area –parcel acquisition closed March 2012
- Mee Kwa Mooks - parcel in negotiations
- NE Queen Anne Trolley Hill Park Addition(5th and Blaine)- appraisal underway

Planning

Large-scale planning

- SR 520 Mitigation
- Central Waterfront Planning
- Asset Management Plan
- Combined Sewer Overflow projects -King County and Seattle Public Utilities
 - Lowman Beach
 - Lake Washington Boulevard
 - Seward Park CSO Tank
 - Martha Washington
- Shoreline Street Ends program
- SEPA reviews

Project Planning

- Named Levy projects
- Opportunity Fund
- Neighborhood Matching Fund Parks projects

Development

Parks & Green Space Levy Overview

- 59 total named development projects in Parks and Green Spaces Levy
- 27 of those were completed by the end of 2011
- 20 more are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2012
- 15 of 23 named Play Area projects are complete
- 13 development projects were funded in the first round of the Opportunity Fund, and 2 acquisition projects.

Key Development Projects

- Reservoir projects
 - Jefferson Park
 - Maple Leaf Reservoir Park
 - West Seattle Reservoir Park
- Rainier Beach Community Center & Pool
- Belltown Community Center
- Play Area renovations
- Bell Street Park
- Spray Parks
 - Northacres Park
 - Georgetown Playfield
 - Highland Park
- Magnuson Park picnic shelter (Skanska partnership)
- Levy Opportunity Fund - Round 2

Recent Project Completions

- Crown Hill Open Space park
- International Children's Park
- Jefferson Park playfield
- Jefferson Park skatepark

- Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center seismic and other renovations
- Northacres Park play area
- Discovery Park -Capehart Habitat Restoration

Other Key Issues

- Department of Justice ADA Audit response

Verbal Briefing and Board Discussion

Mr. Shiosaki reviewed information in the written briefing.

Commissioner Mehdi asked if Parks staff estimate maintenance and operations (M&O) costs as they plan for a new park. Mr. Shiosaki stated that M&O is a major issue now and each new park plan is taken before the Department's ProView team where M&O is part of the review process.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Mehdi whether new parks are designed for safety, Mr. Shiosaki responded they are as part of the review process. Ms. Mehdi asked to review the design standards used by the Department. Mr. Shiosaki stated that staff use some specific standards, while some determinations are based on staff experience. Ms. Mehdi observed that capital funds can't be used for maintenance and safety should be maximized up front, during project design. Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli noted the Department's plumbers, carpenters, and landscapers all consider M&O costs. The public appreciates beautiful shrub beds; however, it requires extra M&O to maintain them. Ms. Mehdi observed that the City's budget is always "boom or bust"; how does the Department develop levels of service and not suffer these highs and lows.

Commissioner Wright stated she loves the Bell Street project. She asked if Parks is considering "pop up" parks similar to those in New York and other cities. These small parks are a surprise and fun – and they encourage people to walk. Mr. Shiosaki responded that Seattle has participated in the parking day park, but hasn't yet gone to the next step of pop up parks. Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli added that the parking day park idea didn't grab hold in Seattle. The Parks Division is now considering a "park in a box."

Commissioner Angulo asked about the Seattle Conservation Corp. Mr. Shiosaki and Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli responded the Corp hires homeless people and provides skills and training. Seattle Parks hires the crews to help with many projects, where they do maintenance, help with project implementation, and learn marketable skills. There are approximately 30 full time Corp members.

Commissioner Keith referred to Seattle Public Utilities and King County combined sewer overflow (CSO) projects and asked if Parks receives any funding for the ones located on Seattle Park property. Mr. Shiosaki responded that Parks receives a fee during the construction. Kevin Stoops, Seattle Parks Finance Director, added that King County has paid several hundred thousand dollars to the City's General Fund to tunnel under Magnolia as part of a CSO project. Responding to a question from Commissioner Kincaid on what compensation will be paid to Seattle Parks for the CSO project at Washington Park, Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli stated it isn't yet known. The CSO work at Volunteer Park will result in \$200-300,000 being paid to Seattle Parks and there will also be mitigation funds from Magnuson Park CSO project.

Commissioner Kincaid thanked Mr. Shiosaki for the briefing and stated it was nicely done. She asked that Parks staff add an update briefing on the SR 520 project to the Board's future agenda list.

Panel Discussion – Seattle Parks' Levels of Service

At its March 8 meeting, Dan Johnson, Acting Parks Division Director, and Leah Tivoli, Strategic Advisor, presented a briefing to the Park Board on the Parks Division Level of Service. To view the full verbal and Powerpoint presentation of that meeting and listen to the Board's discussion see

<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=6092> and move cursor to position 78.20.

At its March 22, 2012, meeting, Sue Goodwin, Recreation Division Director, and Cheryl Fraser, Deputy Recreation Director, presented a briefing on the Division's recreation levels of service, including a detailed Powerpoint presentation. To view the full verbal and Powerpoint presentation of that meeting and listen to the Board's discussion, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=6106> and move cursor to position 54.00.

Tonight's discussion includes those presenters as well as Kevin Stoops, Seattle Parks Finance Director, and Susan Golub, Strategic Advisor in the Superintendent's Division, for a panel discussion with the Park Board.

Panel Discussion

Mr. Friedli introduced the topic. Tonight's panel discussion format is new to the Park Board and is being used to better discuss challenges Seattle Parks faces with its 2013 budget reduction. Commissioners have heard briefings on the Department's current level of services, and the Department has been given its direction from the mayor to cut another \$3-7 million from its 2013 budget. Now, the Board is asked to discuss possible budget cuts in the context of accessibility, opportunity, and sustainability to help the Department determine what must be protected.

The Parks Department and other City departments have now submitted their 2013 budget proposals to the mayor and City Budget Office (CBO) who will develop the City's proposed budget during the next several months and release the information near the end of September. Until the release, the Department's submittals cannot be made public.

Tonight the Board heard testimony from the public on the value of the Senior and Special Population programs and one speaker asked the Department to cut all its programs equally. That is one approach; another is to not cut anything because all the Department's work and programs are too valuable. He asked Board members to consider how various options might affect sustainability for the Seattle Parks' programs. The Department's budget efforts center on three goals: access, opportunity, and sustainability. He noted that closing a comfort station for four months is very different from closing a community center that amount of time. How does each closure affect accessibility?

The Parks and Recreation Division directors made brief comments. Mr. Johnson stated the Parks Division, which provides maintenance and grounds services for the Department, could be viewed as a provider of services and the Recreation Division, which provides the Department's programs, could be viewed as a user of those services. The Parks Division has already cut 45% of its budget; what will it look like if that level of cuts rises to 60%? How will it impact programs? Ms. Goodwin's Recreation Division provides a sense of purpose for many park users, keeps many teens busy and active, and provides youth development. Those types of services can be measured; however, it is much more difficult to quantify services like mowing.

Board Discussion

Commissioner Barber believes one of Seattle Parks' best gifts to Seattle is providing stress reduction. This value cuts across all three values of access, opportunity, and sustainability. Commissioner Kincaid agreed; health studies have shown that stress can contribute to cancers, heart disease, and other medical conditions. Commissioner Angulo asked that the Department also use the Race & Social Justice Initiative values to help make budget determinations. She believes cutting programs equally across the City may not always be equitable to all communities. Commissioner Wright agreed.

Commissioner Mehdi reflected the City will always go through "boom or bust" periods. One approach for the Department is to "trim – don't cut" – services and programs. Continue providing some level of service during lean financial times so the service can be fully funded when the financial situation improves. Other approaches: some programs may handle cuts better than others, and some communities are more negatively impacted than others by cuts to community center programs.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Heahlke on the status of the recently-installed people counters at community centers, Ms. Goodwin answered that Northgate Community Center has been the pilot site for the counters. They will cost \$500,000 annually when installed at all community centers. Staff will provide an initial report in May. The data won't identify who is using the center; but will provide the number of people entering the facility. Commissioner Heahlke asked if the counters should be installed at pools and other sites to determine how many people are using the park facilities. Ms. Goodwin stated there is a counting system already in place for pools. Staff can break down the count by programs, as they have set hours. Staff are also looking at counts for the Environmental Learning Centers.

Commissioner Kincaid noted that Parks has already had significant cuts to its budget, due to the current economic climate and people need its programs even more in a poor economy. She asked if the Department can charge higher fees to those who can afford to pay more, in order not to turn anyone away. Acting Deputy Superintendent Friedli answered that the City Budget Office has given Seattle Parks Department a target reduction of \$3.5-\$7.1 million for 2013. The fees were re-vamped two years ago and have brought in \$1.2 additional revenues. There was some pushback from the community on the increase. Some new fee possibilities are off-leash area use and parking. It is a good time to explore these ideas.

Commissioner Kincaid believes many in the community would donate to Seattle's parks if they are made aware of the need – and the Department hasn't tapped into that. Commissioner Mehdi suggested staff ask, as people are registering, whether they would like to make a donation to help other kids who can't afford to participate in the program. She also suggested the Department sell parking permits that work at all the major parks. Commissioner Keith disagreed with the parking permit suggestion; if a person cannot afford to buy the permit, it restricts their access to a park. Responding to a question from Ms. Fraser about the possibility of making the parking payment voluntary, Commissioner Keith suggested the Department instead install donation boxes.

Commissioner Keith asked for the sources of revenue to Seattle Parks, other than the City's General Fund. Mr. Stoops answered that some revenue comes from community center rentals. And, the golf program pays for itself and provides excess funds to the Department. Over the years, Parks has done a good job of charging fees, if a specific area is used. However, there is no charge for dogs using the off-leash areas. He noted the Department has community centers and it also has 400 parks that have their own fixed costs.

Commissioner Keith asked if the Department can use projected revenues to balance its budget; if so, she suggested it partner with local hospitals. Mr. Stoops answered that Group Health sponsors the Big Day of Play and April Pools. Commissioner Keith appreciates event support, and suggests the Department also look at developing an ongoing partnership with both hospitals and universities for a new revenue stream. Commissioner Angulo is employed in the health care field and stated many hospitals are not meeting the level of public service required to get tax exemptions from the State and are looking for new public service options. This is a good opportunity for Seattle Parks to be at the table to discuss how the hospitals can partner with the Department. She will forward information to the Department.

Commissioner Keith understands maintenance for neighborhood parks is at about 45% and regional parks at 50%. She suggested switching these, as it means a great deal to walk to a neighborhood park. She walks to hers frequently, but she only gets to the destination parks three-four times each year. Maintaining these neighborhood parks has a psychological impact on the park neighbors.

Commissioner Wright stated these budget cuts conversations are very painful to her. She observed King County as it dismantled its park system and it was very dismaying. She doesn't want Seattle Parks to go through the same.

Seattle Parks must decide what its most critical programs are and protect those. Cuts will never be popular, as there is a constituency for every program. The Department must send a message of its guiding criteria and which programs must be cut – and the public should not blame the Department, but rather, should go to the mayor and other elected officials.

Commissioner Wright made additional suggestions: use more volunteers; let grass go native and reduce mowing – a positive can be the return of wildlife to the areas; and ensure both athletic programs and golf fees bring in more than a 100% cost recovery.

She suggested the Department not charge for parking if there is bus service to the park to give people an option. Many who use parking lots at Seattle's parks can afford to pay for parking. Almost everywhere in the City, drivers must pay for parking. Providing free parking encourages a mindset of driving, rather than using public transit or other options.

Commissioner Kincaid stated the Board has previously discussed bus service to the area's regional parks and the City must coordinate parking fees and bus services to ensure the destination park bus lines aren't eliminated during budget cuts. Mr. Stoops added that many parks are located in neighborhoods with free street parking.

Commissioner Barber believes the boating program should also pay for itself and asked if the Department has other sources of untapped revenues. He asked the Department to look at efficiencies that would lower costs: clean comfort stations every other day instead of daily; reduce mowing cycles; and continue negotiations with unions to allow more use of volunteers.

Commissioner Kincaid noted the Parks Division has already taken significant cuts to its maintenance program, and asked when an asset that isn't being maintained reach the point of no return. Ms. Tivoli gave turf compaction as an example. If the turf continues to get a small amount of maintenance, it can limp along. If maintenance is stopped, eventually the turf will require replacement. The impacts of no maintenance often aren't seen for the first few years. Staff must try to determine how long assets will last without maintenance before they are lost. This is difficult to determine, as Seattle Parks hasn't had to stop maintaining assets before.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Keith on fundraising for the Department, Mr. Stoops answered that Seattle Parks Foundation (SPF) does most of the fundraising and it doesn't want to give that responsibility to the City or the Department. Non-profits, like SPF, are more likely to be successful. The City frequently cuts marketing staff when times are bad. Parks had a small marketing staff, which was eliminated in a budget cut.

Commissioners Keith and Angulo urged the Department ensure its major stories are shared with the public in a more effective way. Commissioner Keith stated she often hears comments such as "this is an amazing program but I had never heard of it"

Commissioner Mehdi recommended that SPF raise funds for maintenance and operations, as well as new projects. She noted that Parks staff voluntarily took furloughs, and those are the types of cuts that can be restored when the budget improves. She also believes the Department shouldn't have to sustain any further budget cuts and that the Park Board should send that message. It is important that the public see what has already been cut and that cuts hurt. In addition, the State's tax system must be fixed and the public must stop approving Tim Eyman initiatives. Commissioner Keith suggested the Department sell ads in its brochures and on its website.

Commissioner Wright summarized this is a daunting task and one that Parks staff do every day. The Park Board will continue these discussions. Commissioner Kincaid agreed, and stated the Department has a great deal of support from the Park Board.

Acting Deputy Superintendent asked Commissioners to send additional ideas to him. He heard several helpful ideas tonight: stress reduction; equity; fees; how to make cuts and do so within the values of the Department; and just say no to cuts. Tonight's discussion was a good first run and these discussions will continue.

Old/New Business

Letter to King County: There was some discussion on a pending letter the Board agreed to write to King County re: bus service to Seattle's destination parks. The Board will discuss re-writing the letter, as Metro retained some of the bus service that Commissioner Barber believed was being cut., and scheduling a discussion with King County re: regional parks.

Elect Chair and Vice-Chair: Elections were held for the position of chair and vice-chair of the Board, with terms ending on March 31, 2013. **Commissioner Barber moved that Commissioner Kincaid be elected as chair and Commissioner Keith as vice-chair. Commissioner Angulo seconded. The vote was taken and unanimous in approval.**

Park Board Operations: Earlier this week, Commissioners received a briefing paper from Susan Golub, Seattle Parks Strategic Advisor, reviewing the Board's operations. Recently, Commissioners Keith, Kincaid, Maryman, and Wright attended five meetings of the Parks Preservation Work Group (PPWG) and other commissioners will begin meeting with representatives of the Associated Recreation Council (ARC) and Seattle Parks Foundation. Commissioners requested that any recommendations from PPWG be distributed to the entire Board.

Commissioners have asked for a briefing on the State's Open Public Meetings Act and this will most likely be scheduled for a fall mini-retreat.

Commissioners serve on a number of committees, as part of their role on the Park Board. Current committees include:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| • Associated Recreation Council (ARC) | Commissioners Angulo & Keith |
| • Central Waterfront Committee | Commissioner Kincaid |
| • Golf Steering Committee | Vacant |
| • Magnuson Park Advisory Committee | Commissioner Barber-alternate |
| • Parks Levy Oversight Committee | Former Commissioner Holme through 12/31/2012 |
| • Parks Naming Committee | Commissioner Keith |
| • Seattle Parks Foundation | Commissioner Maryman |
| • West Point Settlement Oversight | Commissioner Barber, to be succeeded by Commissioner Heahlke |

The Board's next public meetings are scheduled for Thursday, May 24 and June 28.

There being no other business, **it was moved, seconded, and approved to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 pm.**

APPROVED: _____

Jourdan Keith, Vice-chair
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE _____