

**CITY OF BELLEVUE
PARKS & COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday
March 11, 2008
6:00 p.m.

Conference Room 1E-113
Bellevue City Hall
Bellevue, Washington

BOARDMEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Keeney, Boardmembers Aron, Henrickson, Karle, Maxim, Roland

BOARDMEMBER ABSENT: Vice-Chair Bennett

COUNCILMEMBER PRESENT: John Chelminiak

PARKS STAFF PRESENT: Shelley Brittingham, Patrick Foran, Nancy Harvey, Nancy Kartes, Glenn Kost, Alex O'Reilly, Bob Schafer, Terry Smith, Helena Stephens, Scott Vander Hyden

OTHERS PRESENT: Gary Bloxham, Ruth Chaus, Bob Cromwell, Brenda Gurung, Jim Haskin, Osbaldo Hernandez, Neil Huber, Carolyn Maxim, Hal Scott, Jo Scott, Chester Thomas, Susan Thomas, Daniel Wren, Sabina Wren

MINUTES TAKER: Michelle Cash, *via recording*

1. **CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Keeney at 6:01 p.m.

2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Motion by Boardmember Maxim and second by Boardmember Roland to approve the meeting agenda. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Motion by Boardmember Maxim and second by Boardmember Aron to approve the February 12, 2008 Meeting Minutes of the Parks & Community Services Board as presented. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).

4. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Osbaldo Hernandez, Youth Link Board Co-Chair, 14616 NE 44th Street, #M1, Bellevue, WA
Brenda Gurung, Youth Link Board Co-Chair, 14635 SE 16th, #2, Bellevue, WA

Mr. Hernandez invited Boardmembers to the 10th Annual Gumbo Night on March 12 at the home of David and Sherry Grindeland from 5:00-7:00 p.m.

Ms. Gurung invited Boardmembers to the Youth Involvement Conference on Friday, March 21 from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Meydenbauer Center. There are approximately 400-500 people expected in attendance. Governor Christine Gregoire is also expected to attend the event.

Lastly, the latest edition of *Outspoken* was distributed, which featured the Youth Court program. Mr. Hernandez and Ms. Gurung thanked Boardmembers for their continued support of all the Youth Link activities.

Daniel Wren, 603 – 129th Pl. NE, Bellevue, WA

Mr. Wren urged Boardmembers to keep the BBG as a garden, rather than an educational center. He is concerned that the potential educational center will cause the parking area to be crowded and discourage garden visitors from visiting. He suggested other venues for potential educational programs.

Carolyn Maxim, 12405 NE 2nd Street, Bellevue, WA

Ms. Maxim mentioned she had submitted her thoughts via e-mail regarding the BBG Master Plan Update. She felt there was a mistake when members of the general public, who are unvested in a particular interest, or members of the neighborhood were not included in the task force. She asked if special interests and money provide edges regarding process and projects. She questioned if Boardmembers merely tolerate citizen comments, or if citizens are angry, do Boardmembers become defensive on behalf of staff.

Ms. Maxim wished that those who express concerns could sit next to Boardmembers rather than across from them. In addition, she hopes that the process for handling implementation of plans will be genuine and open. She also hopes that when reviewers hear legitimate points there won't be such inertia in the process that proposals are simply passed on. She requested Boardmembers to question if the proposed plan is the fairest and most sensible plan. Ms. Maxim feels the plan needs tweaking.

Bob Cromwell, President BBGS, 21333 SE 35th Way, Sammamish, WA

On behalf of the BBGS, Mr. Cromwell expressed his support of the Master Plan Update. He reviewed the history of the Garden, attendees, and groups involved. Mr. Cromwell noted that a key component of the update is the need for addressing additional facilities at the BBG. The Master Plan must balance the need for incremental facilities to advance goals for the future, while preserving the peaceful and sensitive nature of the BBG for visitors and neighbors alike.

Mr. Cromwell stressed that education is a primary objective of the Society and is part of the BBG Mission Statement. On behalf of the Society's Board and membership, Mr. Cromwell respectfully asked Boardmembers to support the Master Plan Update.

Sabina Wren, 603 – 129th Pl. NE, Bellevue, WA

Ms. Wren spoke on behalf of the Wilburton Community Association Board, noting the Board opposes expansion of meeting space at the BBG. The WCAB believes that the amount of proposed parking is excessive. The WCAB favors a much smaller expansion of parking, and only if there is a demonstrable need based upon demand for the majority of the time, not just for special events.

The WCAB opposes closing the southwest entrance to the park. In addition, the WCAB requested clear rules concerning public/private partnerships to ensure that the public good takes precedent over the wishes of special interest groups.

Lastly, the WCAB thinks that when there are issues related to facilities in the Wilburton neighborhood, the neighborhood community members should have a full representation at the table.

Neil Huber, 12624 SE 4th Place, Bellevue, WA

Mr. Huber suggested shuttle busses be used to accommodate envisioned parking surges at the BBG. He requested more time and more data for discussing the actual needs for proposed parking and structures.

Susan Thomas, 12635 NE 2nd Street, Bellevue, WA

Ms. Thomas does not approve of the overall BBG Master Plan Update. She thinks Bellevue is trying to make the park into a money-making feature for the City of Bellevue. She inquired why a café is necessary in the garden. In addition, she expressed concern with the closing of the gate in the southwest corner of the property. She feels this limits access to the garden.

Jim Haskin, President of Wilburton Community Association, 460 129th Place NE, Bellevue, WA

Mr. Haskin discussed the stewardship the WCA has provided for various City programs and parks. He does not want to limit the accessibility to community members by commercializing the BBG. Mr. Haskin also expressed his non-support for any additional paving. He noted that traffic calming is critical.

Gary Bloxham, 12654 NE 6th Street, Bellevue, WA

Mr. Bloxham would like to see the BBG as an open facility rather than a locked down facility. In addition, he would like the mission of the BBG to focus on plants and the interaction of people enjoying the garden rather than the garden being developed into a multi-use facility with buildings. Mr. Blackstone is opposed to the increase in the parking facility.

Jo Scott, 360 – 123rd Pl. NE, Bellevue, WA

Ms. Scott expressed her gratitude for allowing further time to review the BBG Master Plan Update. She asked if all of the citizens of Bellevue could be involved in the input process, not just the immediate neighborhood. Ms. Scott called attention to a letter she previously sent to Boardmembers, which discussed the following:

- Housekeeping (i.e. pavers, maintenance of community donations)
- Parking (would like a scientific study conducted)
- Reforestation (pots)

5. CHAIR COMMUNICATION:

Chair Keeney expressed his appreciation for all public comments and input regarding the BBG Master Plan Update.

6. CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS:

Councilmember Chelminiak recently received an honor and was appointed by Governor Gregoire to the State Building Code Council. Boardmembers congratulated Councilmember Chelminiak.

7. BOARD COMMUNICATION:

Boardmember Roland reported that she and Vice-Chair Bennett recently attended the Planning Commission meeting to express Park Board comments regarding the Bel-Red Subarea.

Boardmember Maxim has received many comments from community members regarding the BBG Master Plan Update, which he has forwarded to Boardmembers. He requested that two items be added to next month's agenda:

- Process of signifying donors on structures and monuments.
- Review the relationship with the BBGS (i.e., functions, contractual agreements, fiscal aspects, etc.).

Boardmember Aron called attention to Ms. Alexander's comments at the previous board meeting regarding the absence of young people at Park Board meetings. He would like to invite youth community members to future board meetings.

Chair Keeney reported that the Meydenbauer project is moving along. He also recently attended the Surrey Downs meeting, noting there has been some interaction between boards and commissions in the city and involvement by the public.

8. **CONSENT ITEMS:**

None.

9. **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:**

A. **Bellevue Botanical Garden Master Plan Update**

Mr. Kost reminded Boardmembers that the BBG Master Plan is an update. In addition, he discussed the history of the BBG.

The Mission Statement of the BBG was read. Mr. Kost discussed the key planning issues for the update. He noted there is more discussion regarding infrastructure rather than gardens because the 1997 Master Plan was well planned and there are very few areas of the garden that need to be changed.

Mr. Kost discussed the key pieces of the Master Plan Update. One key area is the visitor center facilities. Mr. Kost discussed the elements of the visitor center facilities, which include:

- Remodel Shorts' House
- Visitor Services
- Education Center
- Existing Office

The building size of the proposed educational center was compared with various centers throughout the community. Mr. Vander Hyden stressed the importance of the education center size noting the proposed center would be able to accommodate the current Living Lab program.

Mr. Kost reviewed the parking needs stressing that the parking lot expansion is not solely for special events. The purpose of the parking lot is to ultimately be able to house the average daily peak use of the garden. The peak use ranges between mid-May to mid-September. Mr. Kost noted that the overflow lots are not available during weekday peak hours.

The relocated entry was discussed as well as the expanded parking area. In addition, Mr. Kost discussed the proposed relocation/expansion for the maintenance facility.

Mr. Kost discussed the various garden areas noting the Ravine Garden would have a modest bridge and a suspension bridge.

Boardmember Maxim inquired how the changes within the Master Plan Update comply with the Tree Canopy Ordinance under current review. Mr. Vander Hyden clarified that the plans have been discussed with PCD and a wildlife study is being conducted. Any changes would conform to the appropriate ordinance.

Boardmember Henrickson expressed his favoritism toward no parking and keeping green areas. He commented that he is a frequent user of the park and has not had difficulties with parking.

He inquired if there has been a formal parking study conducted. Mr. Vander Hyden clarified that the parking plan is based upon parking demands.

Boardmember Aron senses a disconnect with the community, based upon public testimony and questioned where the problem originated. In particular, he wondered about the neighborhood community's feeling of exclusion from the task force. Mr. Kost explained that it would be unusual to have a task force comprised solely of immediate community members. He was surprised that the Wilburton Community Association was in disagreement considering there was a specific meeting with the WCA Boardmembers to address comments/concerns. In addition, there has been a widespread list of meetings for community members to attend.

The task force representatives were discussed as well as the various planning meetings held.

Councilmember Chelminiak questioned the current parking usage and potential usage. Mr. Kost clarified that a parking study is currently being conducted. He added that the first phase of the parking lot would be 30 spots (Miller-Hull study), which would connect two parking areas. Councilmember Chelminiak favors increasing parking within the current footprint of the existing location versus an alternate location.

The southwest entry location was discussed. Mr. Kost explained the reasons for closing off the access point, which included security issues.

The current rental policy for the BBG was discussed. The current facility is used for social use related to the Garden's mission (i.e., garden clubs, etc.). There are no proposed changes for this policy. Mr. Kost also reiterated that the proposed café is a coffee shop rather than a full-service restaurant.

Mr. Foran clarified that the City and the BBGS have an operating agreement. Programming, volunteer coordination, fund-raising, etc. are clarified in the role of the BBGS. Because the BBGS is a partner in the City's operation, there are no rental fees for the facilities utilized.

Boardmember Maxim expressed his concerns with the donations collected by the BBGS at various events and the lack of sharing these donations with the City.

Mr. Foran clarified that both the BBG Task Force and the public have a role in the overall Master Plan Update process. The Task Force is comprised of staff members and people that have a management arrangement with the City. The public process is intended to invite and engage the public. The public should respond during this process. Mr. Foran noted that it is difficult to identify individuals within the community who have the ability to represent the general public's interests. The Parks Board is commissioned by the City Council to listen to the public and render decisions. Mr. Foran added that the process is designed for appropriate representation and appropriate points.

Education has always been part of the BBG's mission. Mr. Foran summarized the various other centers that have educational programs and visitor's centers with a similar purpose.

Mr. Foran stressed that it is staff's responsibility to anticipate the future parking needs of the BBG and to appropriately building a parking solution for the future. The Master Plan provides this solution. He added that there is nothing within the plan that includes or favors commercialism. Mr. Foran does not support this concept.

Boardmember Henrickson expressed his hesitation toward additional parking. However he feels the best solution has been identified. Upon reflection, Boardmember Henrickson is in favor of the proposed Master Plan Update.

Boardmember Roland feels a venue to teach citizens and children of Bellevue is an important aspect of the BBG. She supports the educational facility. In addition, she appreciates the partnership with the BBGS and their long-term commitment. Boardmember Roland favors the plan as presented.

Boardmember Maxim expressed concerns with the southwest gate and suggested the gate should remain open during the day and closed after hours. In addition, he does not support admission fees being charged at the garden.

Boardmember Maxim discussed Graham Visitor Center Arboretum parking area and suggested the proposed parking area at the BBG is not necessary. He feels 1,100 sq. ft. is adequate for an educational facility. Boardmember Maxim compared other parking/educational facilities to the proposed garden facility and does not see a demonstrated need for the increase. He suggested that the Garden d'Lights be moved to the Downtown Park. The Garden d'Lights time period should not be used as a justification for more parking spaces. Boardmember Maxim suggested there are other facilities available for the BBGS to currently meet (i.e., Lewis Creek Park, City Hall, etc.).

Philosophically, Boardmember Maxim does not understand the arrangement between the BBGS and the City of Bellevue. He does not feel taxpayer dollars should be used to increase facilities for special interest groups. He questioned if the Parks staff is capable of picking up the pieces when some of the Garden Society volunteers no longer volunteer or the public is no longer interested in looking at the BBG. Boardmember Maxim does not think the BBG will continue to grow. He suggested the parking area should remain where it currently is until there is a demonstrated need. Then, the parking spaces should be incrementally increased. Boardmember Maxim stressed the importance of permeable materials—not pavement for the parking surface.

Boardmember Aron feels it is a mistake to have a task force that does not have neighborhood observance. He added that there is a disconnect with community members that can have long-term impacts. Boardmember Aron also questioned the relationship between the BBGS, Parks Department, and the Parks Board. Boardmember Aron concurred with Boardmember Maxim suggesting only permeable surfaces should be used for the parking area. He suggested deferring the Master Plan Update decision to allow community members a further opportunity to voice their opinions.

Chair Keeney referred to an e-mail sent by Vice-Chair Bennett expressing her support of the BBG Master Plan Update as presented.

Chair Keeney reiterated that the BBG is not a particular organization's or neighborhood's jewel. It is a community gem that needs to be protected. He suggested parking needs to be provided with minimal disruption to the park. Chair Keeney supports the plan.

Motion by Boardmember Roland and second by Boardmember Henrickson to accept the Bellevue Botanical Garden Master Plan Update in its entirety and recommend approval to City Council. Motion carried (4-2).

Break 7:53 -8:00 p.m.

Motion by Boardmember Maxim and second by Boardmember Roland to extend the meeting until 8:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).

B. Human Services Needs Update

Ms. O'Reilly discussed the 2007-2008 Human Services Needs Update and the impacts of current funding. The top six cross-cutting trends and issues were discussed. They include:

- Affordable Housing
- Healthcare
- Older Adults
- Immigrants and Refugees
- Veterans
- Emergency Preparedness for Vulnerable Populations

Ms. O'Reilly is currently working with Senator Murray's office to obtain accurate veteran information and statistics.

There are many Human Service areas within the community that still need to be addressed. Ms. O'Reilly discussed some of these issues.

Chair Keeney commended Ms. O'Reilly for the great research.

C. TRACKS Program

Mr. Smith distributed a book to Boardmembers, *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv. Mr. Smith explained the concept of TRACKS and the importance of the program. He reviewed statistics of inactive youth and obesity among adults. TRACKS will focus on six key standards. Mr. Schafer explained the standards:

- Teaching
- Recreation
- Adventure
- Competency
- Knowledge
- Stewardship

Mr. Foran explained that TRACKS includes educational principles, opportunities, and standards that groups are encouraged to adopt so there is an organized consistency. Current City programs will integrate the TRACKS messages.

Mr. Smith commented that the program has been tested, and Bellevue was nationally selected to be 1 of 18 cities to be part of a Teens Outside pilot program. In addition, Bellevue was recently selected to present at the National Parks and Recreation's First Sustainability Conference in Portland. TRACKS is not a new program. It is an integration of standards in the services already provided.

Mr. Schafer reviewed the integration process for the standards.

Mr. Foran discussed the huge gaps in high schools with teens. TRACKS is a perfect program for these gaps.

Motion by Boardmember Roland and second by Boardmember Henrickson to extend the meeting until 8:40 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).

10. DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Mr. Foran reminded Boardmembers that there will be a presentation to City Council on Monday regarding the potential voter initiative. He also noted that Governor Christine Gregoire will be at the Youth Involvement Conference.

11. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Boardmember committee/liaison reports

Boardmember Roland reported that she and Boardmember Karle recently visited Portland as part of the Light Rail Best Practices Committee.

12. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Future agenda items

13. OTHER COMMUNICATIONS:

A. Staff Reports

B. CIP Project Report

C. Memo from Park Board to Planning Commission re Bel-Red Draft Subarea Plan

- D. Comments and attachment from Ruth Chaus re BBG Master Plan Update
- E. Letter and attachments from Jo Scott re BBG Master Plan Update
- F. Letter from Neil Huber re BBG Master Plan Update
- G. Letter from David Plummer to City Council re Bel-Red Plan

14. INFORMATION:

- A. List of upcoming Parks special events
- B. April 8, 2008 – next Park Board meeting

15. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ruth Chaus, 13208 - 68th Pl. NE, Kirkland, WA

Ms. Chaus is a volunteer on the Perennial Border Committee at the BBG. She expressed her gratitude for the efforts of the Master Plan Task Force. In addition, she thanked Nancy Kartes for her hard work.

Ms. Chaus commented that the people in NPA considered paying for a greenhouse themselves if they have electricity.

Carolyn Maxim, 12405 NE 2nd Street, Bellevue, WA

Ms. Maxim suggested that a representative from the community be included in all projects that involve a specific community. She suggested clarifying the boundary separating existing garden property and newly acquired park land. She also requested that the minutes reflect the following:

- No commercialization is envisioned in the BBG.
- Access from the south is planned, even though the gate will be closed.
- No formal study was conducted on the number of cars in the garden parking lot; only anecdotal information was provided.
- No data indicated the garden's capacity to handle increased foot traffic.
- No data estimated what proportion of the new traffic future visitors to the garden vs. those using newly-built facilities would generate.

Ms. Maxim did not see any data concluding that the Garden receives approximately 1,000 visitors per day.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion by Boardmember Roland and second by Boardmember Maxim to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).