

The Parks & Community Services Board approved these minutes on November 13, 2014.

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

Tuesday
October 14, 2014
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113
Bellevue, Washington

BOARDMEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Grindeland, Vice-Chair Evans, Boardmembers George, Kumar, Powell, Van Hollebeke

BOARDMEMBER ABSENT: Boardmembers Heath

COUNCILMEMBER PRESENT: Councilmember Lynne Robinson

PARKS STAFF PRESENT: Shelley Brittingham, Patrick Foran, Nancy Harvey, Kevin Henry, Nancy Kartes, Camron Parker, Terry Smith

OTHERS PRESENT: Denise Lane

MINUTES TAKER: Michelle Cash

1. **CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Grindeland at 6:02 p.m.

2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Motion by Boardmember Van Hollebeke and second by Vice-Chair Evans to approve the meeting agenda as presented.

Motion by Boardmember Van Hollebeke and second by Boardmember George to amend the meeting agenda and add the following Discussion/Action Items:

- **Bellevue Botanical Garden Education Center Naming Opportunity**
- **Approve September 20, 2014 Park Board Retreat Memo to City Council**

At the question, motion carried (5-1) to approve the above amendments to the meeting agenda.

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Motion by Boardmember Powell and second by Boardmember George to amend the meeting agenda and add the following Discussion/Action Item:

- **Review/Approve Draft Memo to City Council RE Mercer Slough**

At the question, motion carried (4-2) to approve the above amendment to the meeting agenda.

At the question, motion carried unanimously (6-0) to approve the meeting agenda as amended.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion by Boardmember Powell and second by Boardmember George to approve the September 9, 2014 Parks & Community Services Board Regular Meeting Minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).

Motion by Boardmember Van Hollebeke and second by Boardmember Kumar to approve the September 20, 2014 Parks & Community Services Board Special Meeting Minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).

4. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

5. CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION:

Councilmember Robinson expressed her concern regarding Boardmember Powell's proposed Letter of Recommendation regarding "Conversion of Parklands of the Mercer Slough Nature Park." She noted that the Park Board has not been asked to provide an opinion regarding the conversion because Sound Transit-related decisions are being made by City Council. She asked Boardmembers to take this into consideration when making recommendations or decisions.

Councilmember Robinson provided a recap of some of the Council's recent discussions, including:

- Ashwood Park Master Plan.
- Funding request from the Bellevue Girls & Boys Club regarding funding for the 100th Street property.

6. **CHAIR COMMUNICATION:**

Chair Grindeland made the following report:

- Attended the EZ Rocks – Skate for the Cure and 20-Year Skate Park Anniversary event at Bellevue Skate Park and Plaza.
- Attended the Norm Johnson Boat Naming Ceremony at Crossroads Park Water Spray Playground.
- Attended the recent City Council meeting.
- Attended the Kelsey Creek Farm Fair.
- Visited Hidden Valley Park.
- Visited Robinswood Park.
- Attended the Old Bellevue Merchants Association meeting.

7. **BOARD COMMUNICATIONS:**

Boardmember Kumar enjoyed the Coal Creek trail hike and commended developers of the MyBellevue App.

Boardmember Powell made the following report:

- Visited the Mercer Slough Nature Park.
- Visited Robinswood Park.
- Golfed at Bellevue Golf Course.

Boardmember Van Hollebeke recently attended the Old Bellevue Merchants Association meeting.

Boardmember George made the following report:

- Visited Airfield Park.
- Visited Robinswood Park.
- Visited Weona Park, which was the site for her son's senior pictures.
- Visited Downtown Park.

Vice-Chair Evans made the following report:

- Visited Downtown Park.
- Visited Meydenbauer Beach Park.
- Visited the new Bellevue Youth Theater location.

Vice-Chair Evans is enrolled in the Bellevue Essentials course. This course provides a general overview of Bellevue city government. Vice-Chair Evans stated that this is an excellent course and should be taken by all Boardmembers/Commissioners, in addition to citizens wanting to learn more about the City of Bellevue.

8. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

No report.

9. **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:**

A. Bellevue Botanical Garden Education Center Naming Opportunity

Ms. Brittingham reminded Boardmembers that in 2008, voters approved the Parks & Natural Areas Levy, which included improvements to the Bellevue Botanical Garden. At that time, the BBGS committed \$5 million towards the overall BBG project through its private fundraising campaign.

Ms. Denise Lane, Campaign Chair explained that one of the incentives that the BBGS used to attract potential donors was the opportunity to name the site of the overall project. The PJA Foundation, a longtime donor to the garden since 1996, is interested in the naming opportunity for the new Education Center, and is proposing the name "The Aaron Education Center." The Hebrew first name "Aaron" means "teacher," "enlightened," and "lofty."

Motion by Boardmember Powell and second by Boardmember George to recommend to City Council that the new Education Center at the Bellevue Botanical Garden be named "The Aaron Education Center." Motion carried unanimously (6-0).

B. Diversity Advantage Plan

Mr. Parker discussed the importance of the Diversity Initiative, which was undertaken in 2011 following Council direction.

Mr. Henry explained that diversity is not just about race but about a number of factors, including language, culture, class, ethnic background, ability, age, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. He provided a historical perspective about the city's Diversity Advantage Plan and discussed the cultural competence of diversity, including individual and organizational.

Mr. Henry described the community's demographics and the layers of diversity including race, age, ethnicity, hearing and vision difficulties, cognitive difficulties, ambulatory difficulties, and self-care/independent living difficulties. He noted that during the 2013-2014 school year, Bellevue School District counted 84 different languages being spoken at students' homes.

Mr. Parker discussed the extensive public outreach activities involved in developing the updated Diversity Advantage Plan, including focus groups, stakeholder interviews, broad community outreach, an internal review of the city's organization, and cultural competence training research on best practices. Some of the themes from the public outreach included shared leadership and collaboration, equitable access, responsive public services, initiative sustainability, outreach and communication, and cross-cultural interaction.

Mr. Parker reviewed the initiative commitments. To keep growing as a culturally competent city, the Bellevue community must:

- Provide safe and welcoming living and working environments.
- Collectively correct systemic inequities.
- Respectfully engage cross-culturally in community life.
- Express diversity through arts and culture.

To keep growing as a culturally competent economy, the Bellevue community must:

- Attract a diverse workforce to live here and work in local businesses.
- Empower entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds to start and grow businesses.
- Provide community services that facilitate and support small business start-ups and operations.
- Make available culturally-specific goods and services sought by the diverse cultures living in Bellevue.

Mr. Parker described implementation activities underway, including cultural competency training for the Leadership Team, adding a Budget Guiding Principle regarding responsive and equitable access to public services, and allocating a budget proposal to implement the Diversity Advantage Plan. Diversity is a key theme in the Comprehensive Plan Update process and in the recently-adopted Economic Development Strategy.

Both Mr. Parker and Mr. Henry discussed some highlights from the action plan as well as the next steps for the initiative.

Boardmember Kumar discussed the diverse population that utilizes the city's park system.

Boardmember Van Hollebeke applauded the City for its efforts. He hopes that the Diversity Advantage Plan becomes part of Bellevue's fabric. He concurred with Boardmember Kumar's observation about the diverse population throughout the city and contrasted it with Seattle's trend of becoming more homogenized. Boardmember Van Hollebeke noted that there is a lack of artistic expression identified in the Diversity Advantage Plan. He also suggested that the demographics of the community be represented within the public safety workforce.

Mr. Foran clarified that the city is looking for a Police Chief who will make diversity a priority. In addition, he noted that there are many other recommendations within the plan. The next goal is to get the community organized around sustainability. Mr. Smith added that the Leadership Team went through cultural competency training, which shows a great tribute to this team.

Boardmember George expressed her concern with the lack of ethnic diversity on the Park Board. In addition, she called attention to the Bellevue School District (BSD) noting that the student population with intellectual disabilities is 100% segregated. Although BSD is one of the best districts in the nation, there is a significant amount of the student population that is being forgotten. Boardmember George supports city government in having a leadership role to ensure all student voices are represented.

Mr. Foran discussed the recommendation up for review by City Council that would establish appointment criteria, including diversity, for Boardmembers and Commissioners.

Chair Grindeland recommended that mental health issues be included as part of the Diversity Advantage Plan. She was impressed to see that there was a year-round homeless shelter established in the community. Chair Grindeland suggested that the Diversity Advantage Plan be presented to local community organizations (i.e., Rotary, Kiwanis, faith-based community organizations, etc.).

Vice-Chair Evans suggested that Boardmembers network with various cultures and diverse groups to obtain feedback about how the Parks Department is doing related to diversity. He challenged fellow Boardmembers to become the liaison with the community and to become more involved with cultural events.

Mr. Henry noted that on October 22, Mini City Hall will mark its 20th anniversary at Crossroads Shopping Center with a celebration beginning at 3:00 p.m. Boardmembers were encouraged to attend.

Boardmember Van Hollebeke suggested that staff explore options for a cultural center in Bellevue that includes focused programming on cultural diversity, traditions, etc.

C. Approve September 20, 2014 Park Board Retreat Memo to City Council

Boardmembers reviewed the September 20, 2014 Park Board Retreat Memo to City Council.

Motion by Boardmember Van Hollebeke and second by Vice-Chair Evans to approve the September 20, 2014 Park Board Retreat Memo to City Council with the following edits:

Page 1, City in a Park, first bullet should read:

“Build off upon the system that we inherited. ~~Keep~~ Conserve, preserve, and maintain the high standards that we currently have, and ensure funding to maintain future development.

Page 2, Healthy Community, 4th bullet should read:

Be a leader in environmental sustainability, *tree canopy retention*, and zero energy consumption.

At the question, motion carried unanimously (6-0) to approve the September 20, 2014 Park Board Retreat Memo to City Council with the edits noted above.

D. Review/Approve Draft Memo to City Council RE Mercer Slough

In regards to the oral communications and information received from Parks staff at the September 9, 2014 Board meeting regarding the conversion of parklands in the Mercer Slough Nature Park for use by Sound Transit, Boardmember Powell suggested that Boardmembers send

a Letter of Recommendation to deny the conversion. A proposed Letter of Recommendation, prepared by Boardmember Powell, was distributed to Boardmembers.

Boardmember Powell recommends that the conversion of parklands in the Mercer Slough Nature Park be denied for the following reasons:

- Rail is not consistent with the plans and principles of the Mercer Slough Nature Park Master Plan and as such precludes using the Park for rail.
- The Parks & Community Services Board has received input from the public raising concerns on the said proposal.
- Alternative rail alignments are available that would preserve the integrity of the Mercer Slough Nature Park.
- The proposed parkland conversion is not in the public's interest or that of the Mercer Slough Nature Park.

Boardmember Powell further added that there are cumulative impacts to the park with access, noise, etc. In addition, when operating at full capacity, there will be approximately 280 trains passing in front of the park each day. Boardmember Powell is concerned about the impacts to the Winters House, water quality, wildlife, connectivity, tree canopy loss, and noise. In addition, she noted that there are other alignment options available for Sound Transit. Boardmember Powell also views the loss of acreage as a significant impact to the park that is not justified by the land conversion.

Although Boardmember Van Hollebeke shares Boardmember Powell's concerns about the impacts to Mercer Slough, he clarified that the Sound Transit impacts to Mercer Slough were debated several years ago. The City Council has already made its decisions about Sound Transit alignment, which includes a Memorandum of Understanding with Sound Transit. Boardmember Van Hollebeke added that any memo or statement from the Park Board to City Council, regarding Sound Transit alignment options, is a moot point.

Boardmember George thought that it makes sense for the Park Board to make a statement regarding the conversion since there is a significant development that is about to occur (i.e., the land conversion). While Boardmember George concurs with Boardmember Van Hollebeke that a memo will not stop the Sound Transit project, she feels that a memo/statement from the Park Board is prudent.

Mr. Parker cautioned Boardmembers about using Section 4(f) as point in questioning the land conversion or Sound Transit alignment route. He noted that Section 4(f) parkland protections and mitigation were included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. The findings were challenged in the federal courts, and the case was dismissed. The Section 4(f) process is over.

Boardmember George questioned why a public comment process was conducted for the land conversion. Mr. Parker clarified that the public comment process was utilized to gather feedback on whether the property substitution was of equal value, size, and function. The EIS process included opportunities to comment on the conversion and making sure it is necessary. However, the EIS public comment period for the land conversion has concluded.

Vice-Chair Evans felt that there were parts of Boardmember Powell's proposed memo that were debatable. In addition, the Park Board was not asked to provide an opinion about the conversion, so he does not favor commenting on the issue. Vice-Chair Evans reiterated that the Park Board's role is to support City Council and its decisions.

Boardmember George noted that various Sound Transit issues have been discussed amongst the Park Board numerous times. However, the Park Board has not had a formal role throughout the process. Since the land conversion is park specific, Boardmember George views the proposed memo as a timely opportunity to reiterate the Board's concerns and priorities.

Boardmember Van Hollebeke cautioned Boardmembers that if unsolicited feedback is provided to City Council regarding the conversion issue, it can undermine the value of the Board. He noted that a Citizens Advisory Committee spent numerous hours providing guidance to the city and Sound Transit. The conversion property is over in size, value, and function. Therefore, the conversion is a prudent action. Boardmember Van Hollebeke is against sending the memo to City Council.

Boardmember Powell clarified that she favors Sound Transit in Bellevue. However, she is trying to consider all options to alleviate impacts to the Mercer Slough Nature Park.

Boardmember Kumar explained that there are many aspects of the Sound Transit project that are not going to be appealing, particularly during construction. She wants to ensure that the Park Board is focused on park impacts, rather than the entire concept of Sound Transit and the rail alignment.

Chair Grindeland favors keeping as much of the park land as possible. However, as a Park Boardmember, she is opposed to sending Boardmember Powell's proposed memo and suggested that anyone wishing to express an opinion is welcome to send a personal memo from a citizen's perspective.

Mr. Parker clarified that in 2008, City Council put together a Light Rail Best Practices Committee before the process commenced. There was a recommendation that encouraged this group to continue with its work; however, the Council decided that it wanted to keep all Light Rail decision making under their authority. Park Boardmembers have been kept informed about the progress of this project, particularly related to park impacts. However, by design, all final decisions have been made by City Council.

Boardmember Powell reiterated that the Park Board should deny the land conversion at Mercer Slough Nature Park and consider other alternatives for the rail alignment to avoid the collective impact on the park. She read the Parks & Community Services Board's Vision as printed in the packets for each meeting:

The vision of our Parks and Community Services Board is to perpetuate an aggressive acquisition and stewardship policy in order to preserve a rapidly declining supply of waterfront, open space and natural resources, to promote socially equitable

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opportunities that educate, motivate and value our diverse population, and to lead in the integration of a regional parks and community services system.

Motion by Vice-Chair Evans and second by Boardmember Kumar to extend the meeting until 8:45 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).

Vice-Chair Evans noted that Bellevue Way has a significant amount of traffic so he views the Mercer Slough Nature Parkland conversion as a benefit to the city/park.

Motion by Vice-Chair Evans and second by Boardmember Van Hollebeke to deny the proposed Memo to City Council RE Mercer Slough and discontinue further discussions regarding this issue. Motion carried (4-2).

10. **BOARDMEMBER COMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORTS:**

A. Bridle Trails Neighborhood Park Update

11. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. Future agenda items

12. **OTHER COMMUNICATIONS:**

A. CIP Project Status Report

B. Memo to City Council from Park Board re 2015-2021 Parks CIP

C. Response to Public Comments re Mercer Slough Nature Parkland Conversion and Replacement (and copies of public comments)

D. Memo re Well-KEPT Program

E. Email from Heather Trescases re Kelsey Creek Farm summer day camp

F. Emails re street side maintenance

13. **INFORMATION:**

A. List of upcoming Parks special events

B. Next regular Park Board meeting—November 13, 2014

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14. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

None.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion by Boardmember George and second by Boardmember Van Hollebeke to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).