



Special meeting of the Spokane Park Board

9:00 a.m. Thursday, March 16, 2023
In-person at The Pavillion

Park Board Members

- X Bob Anderson – President
- X Gerry Sperling – Vice President
- X Garrett Jones – Secretary
- X Nick Sumner
- X Greta Gilman
- X Sally Lodato
- X Jennifer Ogden
- Barb Richey-absent excused
- X Hannah Kitz
- X Kevin Brownlee
- X Christina VerHeul
- X Jonathan Bingle – City Council liaison

Parks Staff

- Jason Conley
- Al Vorderbrueggen
- Carl Strong
- Rich Lentz
- Jonathan Moog
- Jennifer Papich
- Fianna Dickson
- Nick Hamad
- Katie Kosanke
- Ryan Griffith
- Angel Spell
- Amy Lindsey
- Kris Behr

Guests

- Greg Forsyth
- Matt Santangelo
- Ashley Black
- Paul Christianson

MINUTES

1. **Roll Call:** Bob Anderson
The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m. See above for attendance
2. **Additions or deletions to the agenda:**
 - A. None
3. **Public comment:**
 - A. None
4. **Special discussion**
 - A. Welcome and goals for the day – Garrett Jones
 - a. The goals for the day are open communication, discussing lessons learned from 2022, the potential impact on the community, and what can be done better in 2023.
 - B. Park Board goals, priorities, and roles – Bob Anderson and Gerry Sperling
 - a. Bob Anderson
 - i. Greatest achievement: Don Kardong bridge; completing on time and under budget; using proper partnerships and effective planning.
 - ii. Lessons learned: Riverfront Park Dog Park; using the Forestry Center; budget far exceeding expectations.
 - iii. 2023 goal: to develop other sources of Parks funding.
 - b. Greta Gilman
 - i. Greatest achievement: completion of the Master Plan; knowing what people want; helpful tool to acquire funding.
 - ii. 2023 goal: develop a policy for partnerships where everyone would benefit, even

100 years from today. The Board's job is to consider what is best for the Parks, not other departments, which have proposed improvements on City-owned Park land because it is "free". She feels a policy as such would alleviate this.

- c. Sally Lodato
 - i. Greatest achievement: policy partnerships and actions taken with land use; pleased with the Podium partnership.
 - ii. 2023 goal: connect gaps, such as Fish Lake Trail to Riverside State Park; solving land policy by getting rid of excess land to generate revenue.
- d. Kevin Brownlee
 - i. Greatest achievement: adapting plans and huge commitments.
 - ii. 2023 goals: a better understanding of Board processes.
 - 1. Concerned things are being decided outside of meetings, i.e.: the confusion at the 3/9/23 Park Board meeting, citizens stating, "they had heard Lincoln Park was back on the table as a possible dog park site". Garrett explained this was strictly rumor, addressed the situation with Bob, who felt it did not warrant full park board discussion. Kevin suggested regular informational "do not reply" emails, ensuring all were fully aware. Gerry Sperling encouraged members to visit other committees or seek out the chairs for specific concerns.
 - 2. Also concerned bad press and erroneous information could "hold Park Board hostage", swaying a decision prior to hearing all the facts.
- e. Hannah Kitz
 - i. Negative takeaway from 2022: not fully understanding how Park Board policies work; inability to locate current policy documents.
 - ii. 2023 goals: a better understanding of policies, such as easements and rulemaking.
 - 1. Jennifer Ogden stated Park Board is unique in their ability to write policy. She also stated all policies are available online, but there is no policy for easements. Garrett said these policies should be organized and reviewed more frequently. Bob stated much of what has been done is based on precedent and suggested the Bylaws Committee may be able to index and distribute the policies to the Board. Nick Sumner suggested the policies be searchable, and version controlled and stated the Bylaws Committee only comes together when there is a problem. Bob suggested making this a quarterly commitment.
- f. Gerry Sperling
 - i. Greatest achievement: Reflecting on 2022 as Golf Chair, the completion of irrigation projects with Indian Canyon, Esmeralda, and Downriver course renovations. Capital projects invested with improvements, repairs yet keeping prices competitive. Construction began SIP projects in 2019 and completed in 2022. Tree work at all courses, Downriver roof repair, and Indian Canyon roof, pro shop and clubhouse in 2021. IT online tee-time credit card processing is now live and noticeable customer and golf shop communications is improved. Looking forward to the 2023 season and special thanks to the patrons who continue to support golf in the Spokane Community!
 - ii. Goals for 2023: to continue working with Al Vorderbrueggen, Fianna Dickson and Kevin on the Parks Naming Policy. Policy for Spokane Parks and Recreation is gaining in popularity and will be reviewed regarding Sponsorships, Donations, Naming Recognition of Parks and Areas or Facilities. This entity is primarily funded from the City's general fund. In recent years demands upon these funds have increased, a trend that is expected to continue. Parks and Recreation is actively seeking to establish revenue streams and resources to be able to deliver services to the community. The policy has not been reviewed for five [5]+ years and Table of Contents and all Definitions, and Fulfillment need to be addressed.

- g. Nick Sumner
 - i. 2023 goals: prioritize safety and security within the Parks
- h. Jonathan Bingle
 - i. 2023 goals: more money for Parks; better communication about many moving parts.
 - 1. He indicated it is easier for City Council to allocate project funds if Parks comes in as close as possible with a dollar amount.
- i. Christina Verheul
 - i. 2023 goals: a better sense of orientation as to Park Board functionality; huge opportunities with Expo+50 marketing.

C. Parks and natural lands Master Plan implementation – Garrett Jones

- a. 2023 goals to a strategic implementation
 - i. Invest in community; acquisition of new land
 - 1. Land~Water~People~Legacy. Nick Hamad would like to see neighborhood investment a priority.
 - a. 75% of the budget spent on special use (aquatics, sports facilities, etc.).
 - b. Since 1999, 20% of the budget has been spent on neighborhood parks, and during that time, over half of the parks have had zero investment.
 - c. Many restrooms cannot be winterized, have no ADA accessibility, and are in dire need of paint. 40 restrooms need to be replaced entirely.
 - d. 10 parks are still being manually irrigated.
 - e. City Council will be investing \$1.3 million to renovate Grant, Cowley and Minnehaha Parks.
 - f. Current renovation projects are Wildhorse and Liberty Parks.
 - g. Al Vorderbrueggen stated the Park Operations budget has not increased in 7 years. During that time, minimum wage was increased 21% and materials costs have increased 43%.
 - h. As revenue decreases, there is a push for increased bond funding, collaboration with businesses, and matching grant funds as the last effort.
 - i. Angel Spell also has a very small budget, yet there is an increased interest in natural and conservation land. There has been a push for more trails, weed control and ecological restoration.
 - j. The aquatic facilities are also in need of minor maintenance before they become major repairs.
 - k. Hannah stressed the liability due to lack of maintenance. Operations has had to close and remove playgrounds to prevent injury. She indicated only 8% of the City Council general fund is dedicated to Parks.
 - l. Nick S. suggested partnering with businesses; naming a playground or sports field, etc. He also reminded of the Citywide effort to increase staff, ranger and/or police presence in the parks with more authority to open and close gates, removing people from and closing restrooms, and the ability to hold and detain suspect individuals for 15 minutes.
 - 2. With the growth in Latah Creek, land acquisition in Meadow Glen, Shiloh Hills, Hangman Creek, and Qualchan Hills area would be beneficial but too costly.
 - 3. To adhere to the “park within a 10-minute walk” policy, Garrett and Nick pointed out there is a gap in Lincoln Heights, Garden District, and east of Freya.
 - 4. Per the Master Plan, citizens would like to see more investment in dog parks (at least one per district), ADA water access (a low barrier indoor pool would be a low priority), and a sports field in District 1.
 - 5. Levy versus bond proposal for 2023
 - a. Per Garrett, bonds are generally used for lower tier capital projects. A 10-15-year levy of \$7-10 per month per household (\$3.2 million per year from

- every 10 cents) could add \$7-10 million, a 20-40% increase to the budget.
- b. 2023, an election year, is best. The RFP process should ideally begin in April. The pandemic brought a historic number of people back to the parks. The further away from the pandemic, the less relevant this proposal will be in the minds of the average community member.
- c. Jonathan B. warned there may be levy proposals for police, schools and jails, so the marketing team will have to really sell this. The marketing should indicate how much will be invested in the neighborhood park. Bob suggested involving the DVC and DVCAC to generate neighbor backing.
- d. Several Board members agree with this proposal; Jennifer O. stated the Board also needs to look at long-term revenue generating ideas.
- ii. State of the City priorities, both proactive and reactive safety implementation.
 - 1. Dutch Jakes example: highest number of 911 call in the City prior to renovation. Neighborhood investment results in improved safety. Riverfront Park's north bank is an example of re-energized playgrounds and trails followed by an improvement in safety with decreased itinerant activity.

D. Recreation cost recovery and fee structure – Jennifer Papich

- a. SPRD has the largest recreation program in the nation; many subsidized programs; shapes early childhood development; supports economic growth; first job for many Spokane residents; many full-time Parks staff began as temp seasonal employees.
- b. The 2007 cost recovery policy was updated in 2012; 2009-2023 averaged 45-50% cost recovery; 44% revenue decrease during pandemic; post-pandemic seeing record-breaking numbers; 2023 recovery has almost been met in Quarter 1 alone.
- c. A plan was adopted, lowering enrollment fees for programs with broader community benefit; higher dollar programs, such as wine tours, are geared towards individual benefit; many park systems throughout Washington have adopted this model.
- d. Jennifer is developing a public survey which should be ready this spring, concerning types of programs citizens would like to see; a more program specific cost recovery policy should be completed in 2024.
- e. Parks is gaining patrons after the County discontinued many recreation programs, with more focus on natural lands; collaboration with county rather than both offering the same programs; collaboration with Spokane Valley.
- f. Other options suggested were specific program offerings based on socioeconomics of the neighborhood; facility-based pricing; year-round scholarship opportunities; rounding up at check-out in Civic Rec, which would be applied to scholarships; partnering with Kiwanis International for scholarships.

E. Current projects update – Nick Hamad and Greg Forsyth

- a. The new South Hill Dog Park has garnered more public interest than any one single project in Parks history. Nick and Greg met with Friends of the South Hill Dog Park last Monday. To clarify, although building of the new middle school has begun, the unofficial South Hill Dog Park adjacent to Mullen Road Elementary, never completely closed. A large area remains available until they are ready to build the athletic fields.
- b. Size is still a priority, especially for pet safety. Six county sites were explored and found to be non-conducive. Three other sites are being studied.
 - i. The current High Bridge Dog Park
 - 1. Zero cost to add fencing
 - 2. The presence of the new American Indian Community Center will bring about a positive influence in the area, lessening nefarious activity.
 - ii. Spokane Public Schools (SPS)-owned lot north of the Moran Cemetery, adjacent to the Mullen Road Elementary School
 - 1. SPS will develop this into a smaller dog park.

2. The land would be deeded to the City.
3. It would be maintained by Parks.
4. No residential neighbors on either side.
- iii. Upriver Drive near Shields and Camp Sekani Parks
 1. Would require major improvements; fencing; parking; lighting; security; a possible 7 figure investment.
 2. Top tier of Master Plan for areas of improvement.
 3. Overwhelming support by Friends of South Hill Dog Park members (76%).
 4. Many felt it was too far to travel.
 5. The Board was in favor of pursuing this further.
- c. Hannah suggested a possible revenue stream to fund the dog park; selling logo Frisbees, toys or pet "bling"; naming rights to the park, etc.
- d. Several critics suggested environmental studies be done on proposed areas prior to bringing to the public, which would be extremely cost and time prohibitive.
- e. The Board agreed there will be no perfect solution; the process, although painful, is working; stay within the agreed upon parameters; make decisions based on facts, not peer-pressure; critics only see a small piece of the puzzle, not the entire picture.
- f. Can a dog park exist on conservation land?
 - i. The definition of natural land is vague.
 - ii. Restrictive covenants or deed restrictions could be placed on natural land, but those could change after 10 years.
- g. Riverfront Dog Park update
 - i. Original location was the forestry shelter; however this is a historic location which should be preserved, especially in light of the upcoming Expo+50 festivities.
 - ii. This is a \$1.3 million dollar project and to date, zero dollars have been raised. The forestry shelter is proving to be far too expensive.
 - iii. The options moving forward: continue with original plan; move out of forestry shelter but stay in Riverfront Park; move out of Riverfront Park altogether. The consensus is to remain at Riverfront Park.

F. Expo+50 update - Garrett Jones and Matt Santangelo

- a. Matt grew up in the Portland, OR with no deep roots to Spokane; he was executive director of Hoopfest for many years and has created lasting relationships with many stakeholders; he has been working as the program manager for 9 weeks, using the Hoopfest structure, working from the top down.
- b. He would like to piggy-back on the passports used at the '74 Expo, which were stamped at each site/event, generating anticipation to visit every area.
- c. He is working out the details for a master event calendar, indicating the MAC has already gathered 300 boxes of artifacts over the last two years, hoping to fill empty sites throughout the skywalk system with historic collections on loan from the public.
- d. He would like to work with members of the Spokane Tribe, sprucing up Havermale Island and arranging for volunteers to share Tribal history.
- e. He is planning a formal announcement/kickoff in early May. Bob suggested involving the DVC and DVCAC committees to generate excitement among their neighborhoods.
- f. Please feel free to contact Matt at spokaneexpo@gmail.com or (509) 954-5032.

G. Podium Partnership – Jennifer Papich, Ashley Black and Paul Christianson

- a. The arena and the Podium have a similar surface assembly, taking several days to swap out the flooring based on the type of activity. Because of the delicate nature of some of the surfaces, heavy foot traffic is prohibited.
- b. The arena historically hosted larger community events, such as graduations. Because of the time and money involved in swapping out flooring, the arena was losing money. The Podium was proposed as an alternate venue, which has a much larger 75,000 sq.

ft. competition floor without the massive seating area of the arena, enabling the arena to host larger, high dollar events. This has been a successful partnership for both venues.

- c. To capitalize on the existing surface, the Podium attempts to schedule like-events, stacking them into seasons. Because of its unique structure, the programming can change significantly from year to year.
- d. The Recreation team is aware of these “seasons” and schedules programs accordingly. Unlike previous years, they are unable to forecast their programs too far into the future.

H. Other Discussion:

- a. Park Board meeting public comment policy limited to agenda items – As there was no time to discuss, Bob would like to add this to the agenda at the next Special Park Board Retreat.

5. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 2:14 p.m.

Minutes approved by: *Garrett Jones*
Garrett Jones, Director of Parks and Recreation