



JOINT CITY COUNCIL/PARK BOARD STUDY SESSION

11 a.m. Thursday, May 20, 2021
WebEx virtual meeting

City Council

X Breean Beggs – President/meeting chair
X Kate Burke
X Michael Cathcart
X Lori Kinnear
Candace Mumm (absent)
X Karen Stratton
X Betsy Wilkerson

Park Board Members

X Jennifer Ogden – President
X Bob Anderson – Vice President
X Garrett Jones – Secretary
X Nick Sumner
Rick Chase (Absent)
X Greta Gilman
X Sally Lodato
X Gerry Sperling
X Barb Richey
X Hannah Kitz
X Kevin Brownlee
X Michael Cathcart – City Council liaison

Staff

Jason Conley
Jennifer Papich
Al Vorderbrueggen
Angel Spell
Fianna Dickson
Nick Hamad
Amy Lindsey
Katie Kosanke
Lauren Schubring
Erik Poulsen
Brian McClatchey
Hannahlee Allers
Shauna Harshman
Pamela Clarke

Agenda

1. **Roll call:** See above
2. **Introductions:** City Council President Breean Beggs welcomed attendees and kicked off the popcorn-method introductions.
3. **Park Board President's report** – Jennifer Ogden
 - a. Appreciation to council – Ms. Ogden thanked City Council for their support and funding in covering damages incurred by the January 2021 windstorm, contributions helping Parks open city pools this season, and providing funding to purchase playground equipment at various neighborhood parks, including A.M. Cannon and Logan Peace parks.
 - b. Parks and Natural Lands Master Plan – Parks is in the process of developing its 10-year master plan. Currently in Phase I of the four-phase plan approach, the Project Advisory Committee has been formed. It consists of representatives from City Council, Park Board, Mayor's office, Parks and city staff, and Spokane Public Schools. The PAC is reviewing and accessing inventory and recreation programs, identify focus and stakeholder groups, and undergoing an extensive community

outreach program. Much of the focus will be placed on neighborhood parks. Equity is a key component in the master plan. Data will be compiled and reviewed regarding which locations in the city meet certain service standards and which areas are underserved. The group will then identify opportunities and strategies to best serve these neighborhoods where inequities are identified.

- c. Riverfront Park North Bank grand opening – This week’s festivities will culminate with the ribbon-cutting ceremony at 11 a.m. tomorrow. This area of the park features the Ice Age Floods playground, a wheels park, a signature basketball court and the Roskelley Performance Climbing Boulder.
- d. Partnerships – Ms. Ogden explained partnerships with businesses, civic groups and individuals will continue to be the foundation of how Parks moves forward and grows to meet citizens’ needs.
- e. American Rescue Plan – She urged council to consider steering some of the American Rescue Plan funds toward bridge renovations which will allow Parks Funds to be used to improve the community’s neighborhood parks.

4. **Park Board committee reports**

- a. Golf Committee – Committee chair Gerry Sperling presented updates relating to the city’s four golf courses. One of the major strengths of the city’s courses involves the programs and opportunities for all ages of golfers. The Junior Golf program is experiencing rapid growth and participation is up 160%.
 - 1) Irrigation improvement project – In 2018, the Park Board took out a \$7.5 million SIP loan in order to replace the irrigation systems at each golf course over a four-year period. Irrigation systems have been installed and are fully operational at Indian Canyon and Esmeralda. Improvements are slated to begin at Downriver this fall. Qualchan will be the final course to complete irrigation renovations.
- b. Land Committee – Committee chair Greta Gilman presented updates on Park Operations activates, the Parks and Natural Lands Master Plan and capital projects.
 - 1) Park Operations activates – Staff was commended for their work on clean-up and repairs following the damages from the January windstorm. Bids for some of the contracted work have gone out and work is expected to begin soon. Some of the repairs will continue through mid-summer. Staff is currently working on opening some park restrooms for the first time since the pandemic began. Because the facilities have been closed for so long, quite a few repairs and additional work are required prior to opening the restrooms this season.
 - 2) Parks and Natural Lands Master Plan – The project officially kicked off in January and is scheduled to be completed February 2022. This long-range planning tool is designed to determine service gaps and identify opportunities for improvements. This visionary document sets the values and goals for Parks for the next six to 10 years, and offers staff and the community an opportunity to weigh in on the future of the city’s parks and natural lands. It is expected to be a more outward facing plan in comparison to the 2010 plan. Primary focus will be to identify the public’s priorities for the park system. Parks also hopes to establish policies on how to better evaluate park property for acquisition and conservation, allowing easements for public and private access, permitting park property to be used for non-park related activity, and the development of park lands.
 - 3) Capital projects – Parks and the Water Department have partnered on a water conservation project at Japanese Garden in Manito Park which is estimated to save about 17 million gallons of water, improve the water quality and provide a healthier environment for the koi. There are three bridge repair projects

underway, including the north suspension bridge, the Don Kardong Bridge along the Centennial Trail and the south suspension bridge. These bridge projects are taking the majority of Parks capital funding for the next couple of years; subsequently, not leaving much funding for capital improvements at the city's neighborhood parks.

- c. Recreation Committee – Committee chair Sally Lodato presented an overview of the Recreation Department.
 - 1) Summer programs – Programs offered this season include: youth summer camps, therapeutic recreation programs, art camps, outdoor recreation activities, adult sports leagues and a variety of aquatic classes and programs. Classes and are filling quickly. Parks is hoping to increase program capacities as restrictions are lifted.
 - 2) Aquatics – Pools will be open for the first time since 2019. Witter Aquatic Center opened May 10 to be the first to open. To date, 265 have citizens have registered for lap swim. On June 21, the remainder of the pools will be open and the Free Swim program opens July 5. Splash pads are scheduled to open mid-June with capacity limits in compliance with health guidelines.

- d. Riverfront Park Committee – Committee chair Nick Sumner presented updates relating to Riverfront Park.
 - 1) Redevelopment project – With the opening of the Providence Playscape and the North Bank, the redevelopment project is very close to completion. The park is ready to fulfil the vision set forth for the new Riverfront Park.
 - 2) Pop-up vaccine clinics – Two clinics have been held, so far, in partnership with businesses and agencies. More than 100 people were vaccinated at these clinics. A third clinic, in partnership with MultiCare, is also planned.
 - 3) Programming – Staff is scheduling a variety of activities to activate the park, including: high school graduations and concerts at the Pavilion, Riverfront Eats Food Truck series, Story Walk reading program, Pavilion Beer Festival coming in 2022, and 13 Shakespeare in the Park events this summer.
 - 4) Supporting community – More than \$10,000 in grants have been awarded to businesses and organizations, and fees are waived for non-profits and small businesses to use park amenities. These efforts are designed to support a thriving and healthy economy for Spokane.

- e. Urban Forestry Tree Committee – Jennifer Ogden presented updates relating to Urban Forestry.
 - 1) January windstorm restoration and clean-up efforts – Urban Forestry partnered with Lands Council on a tree restoration project which includes tree plantings at Comstock and Audubon parks which were among the hardest hit by the storm.
 - 2) SpoCanopy – In collaboration with The Lands Council, Urban Forestry continues to work with residents and volunteers to reach the goal for every neighborhood in Spokane to have a 40% canopy cover by 2030.
 - 3) City-wide planting plan – Urban Forestry is working with the city's Sustainable Action Project subcommittee to establish a city-wide planting plan.
 - 4) Pacific Education Institute – Efforts are underway with the institute to increase street tree planting, and provide education outreach relating to tree health and the benefits trees offer to the health of the community.

- f. Finance Committee – Committee chair Bob Anderson presented an overview of impact the pandemic had on Parks financial picture and the division’s plans to maintain financial stability.
- 1) Core service model – The fiscal environment created by the Covid pandemic presented an opportunity for Parks to rethink their budget and financial planning process. Instead of using the prior years’ allocations as benchmarks, Parks utilized a core-service model. This methodology is much like the way many people manage their personal finances – what you spend is based on what you earn.
 - 2) Aquatics program – Following the core service model, Parks budget could only support a limited aquatics program for 2021. Thanks to the funding support of City Council, Parks was able to offer the community a more vibrant aquatics program closer to what was available prior to the pandemic in 2019.
 - 3) Moving forward – For the first quarter of this year, each department is positioned to prosper as the pandemic-related restrictions are lifted. In budgeting for 2022 and beyond, Parks will continue its budget planning utilizing the efficient core services model. Developing enhancing partnerships will be key to providing the services the community desires. The Parks and Natural Lands Master Plan offers the opportunity for community participation in providing guidance for setting priorities and achieving these goals.
- g. Development and Volunteer Committee – Committee chair Bob Anderson presented an overview of the newly formed Development and Volunteer Committee designed to increase the opportunity for community involvement and for residents to be able to take ownership of their neighborhood parks.
- 1) Purpose – The key goals for the DVC, include: 1) guide and support Parks and Recreation’s capital and programming fundraising priorities; 2) serve as an umbrella over friends groups; and 3) foster the creation and growth of new friends organizations. This committee will serve as a direct link between citizens and the Park Board.
 - 2) DVC/Citizens Advisory/Friends groups structure – The DVC will be comprised of 50% Park Board and 50% non-Park Board community members. There will be four Park Board members, one representative from a Citizens Advisory Committee, and three business/community members. The CAC is comprised of representatives from friends groups, and Community Assembly/neighborhood councils.
 - 3) Friends groups – In addition to supporting existing and new friends groups, the DVC is currently recruiting citizens to lead and develop a Friends of Riverfront Park.

5. **Question/answer period**

- a. Parks and Natural Lands Master Plan – Council member Cathcart encouraged citizens to become involved in the development of the master plan. Council member Kinnear also encourage City Council to become involved early in the process.
- b. Maintenance of city right-of-ways – Council member Kinnear asked if Parks is taking on the responsibility of maintenance and planting for the Utilities Department. Garrett Jones explained discussions are underway between Parks and Utilities in consolidating the right-of-way maintenance under one umbrella which is seen as the most efficient way to manage these areas.
- c. Walking distance to a park/equity – Council President Beggs provided suggestions regarding equity and citizens’ ability to be within walking distance of a park. He

urged utilizing median income data from census tracts when prioritizing walkability to a park. By utilizing this data, priority can be given to those citizens with the least ability to drive to have the opportunity to walk to a park.

- d. American Recovery Plan – Council President Beggs explained they are currently in the process of working on the American Recovery Plan to determine where those funds will be allocated. Beggs requested Parks provide net figures on what revenue, less the cost of delivering those programs, Parks would have received had there not been a pandemic/shutdown. He would also like to see projections for 2022 and 2023, since this will be when Parks will feel the impact of the reduced revenue from the General Fund.

6. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 12 p.m.

Approved by: _____
Garrett Jones, Director of Parks and Recreation