

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

Tuesday
July 11, 2023
6:00 p.m.

Via Hybrid

BOARDMEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Clark, Vice-Chair Clima; Boardmembers Chou, Hamilton, Valverde¹

BOARDMEMBERS ABSENT: Boardmembers Kronoff, Trescases

COUNCILMEMBER PRESENT: Councilmember Stokes

PARKS STAFF PRESENT: Shelley Brittingham, Camron Parker, Mariam Sarwary, Stacy Stenslie, Michael Shiosaki, AnnaMarie Solomonson, Colin Walker, Ryan Walker

OTHERS PRESENT: Heidi Dean, Alex Tsimerman

MINUTES TAKER: Michelle Cash

1. **CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:**

Chair Clark called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Motion by Vice-Chair Clima and second by Boardmember Hamilton to approve the meeting agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously (4-0).

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Motion by Vice-Chair Clima and second by Boardmember Hamilton to approve the June 13, 2023 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

4. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

Chair Clark reviewed the guidelines for Oral Communications noting that no election related topics may be discussed during oral communications or other public participation portions of the agenda.

¹¹ Arrived at 6:04 p.m.

Alex Tsimerman

Alex Tsimerman expressed dissatisfaction with the government, in particular Iran's government, what he termed the local democratic mafia, Russia, and several others.

Heidi Dean

Heidi Dean invited Boardmembers to the Newport Hills Community Ice Cream Social on July 21 at 6:00 p.m. The social will be held at Newport Hills Woodlawn Park.

Concerns were expressed about the parking situation at Newport Hills Woodlawn Park. There was also a discussion about dogs getting sick at the park from an unknown cause.

5. **CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION:**

Councilmember Stokes welcomed newest Boardmember Michelle Valverde to the Parks Board. Boardmember Valverde is filling the seat vacated by Eric Synn.

6. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Michael Shiosaki, Parks & Community Services Director, provided the following report:

- The 31th Annual Bellevue Family 4th of July celebration was a great success with approximately 50k people in attendance. Special thanks was extended to Mike Ogliore (BDA) and Jera Gilmore (Parks Department) for helping to make the event such a success.
- A new Parks registration system is underway. Kudos to Angela Ferguson and the Recreational staff for their efforts with the transition. Additional staff will be on hand to assist with the registration process.
- Community members are enjoying the three off-leash pop-up dog parks (Wildwood, Crossroads, Wilburton). Two additional pop-up dog parks will be added this summer (near City Hall, and Lincoln Center). The pop-up dog parks will be in place until at least mid-October and potentially longer.

7. **BOARD COMMUNICATIONS:**

Boardmember Hamilton said that the speaker during Oral Communications crossed the line by discussing political matters. He would like the City Attorney involved to evaluate the situation and determine the line between freedom of speech and discussing political viewpoints at city meetings—other Boardmembers agreed.

Boardmember Hamilton expressed his appreciation to staff for putting on such a great 4th of July celebration. He also visited the dog park at Crossroads, Newport Hills Woodlawn Park, and the connector bridge at Totem Lake.

Vice-Chair Clima enjoyed the 4th of July celebration with the additional food vendors. The Piloti event was also enjoyed, which marked the completion of the Northeast gateway entrance.

Boardmember Chou attended the 4th of July celebration and appreciated the organization and planning that went into the event. Boardmember Chou also attended the Piloti event. Lastly, Boardmember Chou asked for additional clarification on the focus groups for tennis/pickleball courts.

Boardmember Valverde enjoyed the 4th of July celebration.

8. **CHAIR COMMUNICATION & DISCUSSION:**

Chair Clark expressed appreciation to staff for their efforts with the 4th of July celebration.

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

No report.

10. **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:**

A. **Kelsey Creek Farm**

AnnaMarie Solomonson, Supervisor at Kelsey Creek Farm, presented information about Kelsey Creek Farm programs, events, history, and facilities. AnnaMarie Solomonson has worked at Kelsey Creek Farm for 38 years.

The mission of Kelsey Creek Farm is: To preserve and interpret this historic farm and its natural resources through a variety of programs and experiences that maximize the full potential of the site. To provide agricultural, educational, recreational, and community-building opportunities to a diverse population. To share the site's small family farm atmosphere by creating space for visitors to connect with nature, the animals, our land, and each other.

The Kelsey Creek Farm used to be an area that was logged and then became a historic dairy farm. It was bought by the City of Bellevue in 1968, and subsequently opened as Kelsey Creek Farm Park in 1972. It is a 150-acre park with a lot of open space and amenities. This unique park has provided opportunities for people of all backgrounds and ages to learn about agriculture, experience farm life, and enjoy a variety of recreational activities. The programs and events attract thousands of people each year and the park's animals are available for viewing every day of the year.

Kelsey Creek Farm has many partners, contractors, sponsors, supporters, and grants. Many of these were highlighted during the presentation. A unique project that was recently funded by the Neighborhood Enhancement Program and an Amazon grant was a one-of-a-kind observation

hive. This was a result of a community request. Appreciation was extended to Tom Purcell and park planners for their assistance with the bee project.

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and grants are all part of consideration and training efforts at the farm. AnnaMarie Solomonson discussed some of the adaptations that have been made to include people with all abilities. In addition, some of the special events at the farm were highlighted. These include:

- Sheep Shearing
- Farm Fair
- Trick-or-Treat with the Farm Animals
- Barn Lighting

Kelsey Creek Farm was a popular place for families during the pandemic because they could safely be outdoors and recreate. Some of the ways the farm responded to the pandemic were discussed. The future plans and renovations for the farm were also summarized.

Kelsey Creek Farm is active on social media, with hopes to grow the fan base. It is one of the more unique parks within Bellevue's parks system.

Discussion:

- What has been the biggest change over the years? *Response: The growth of the day camps. The pollinator program is also a great addition. The Parks Department was also originally headquartered at Kelsey Creek Farm.*
- What else could be added to the farm? *Response: Grants and sponsorships. Also need to consider the neighborhood impacts and be a good steward. At one point, there used to be a youth symphony in the park, which was popular.*
- What are the safety protocols in place for the animals and visitors? *Response: There is fencing in place to protect the animals and people. Staff also works with the animals to be sure they have the right temperament to work around visitors. The farm is a peaceful place but there is a volume of people so the animals need to react well with the public.*
- What types of bees are in the pollinator program? *Response: The bees are honeybees. The NEP project focused on pollinators and honey.*
- How many teen volunteers does the farm have? *Response: Approximately 55 volunteers are trained for the summer programs.*

B. Recreation Plan Update

Shelley Brittingham, Assistant Director/Parks & Community Services Department, and Ryan Walker, Senior Planner/Parks & Community Services Department, explained that Parks & Community Services is in the process of updating one of its long-range policy documents, the Recreation Program Plan. First developed in the late 1990s, the Recreation Program Plan guides the department's investment in recreation programming. The Plan iterates the vision for recreation programming in the city and establishes goals, strategies, and actions to implement that vision. Additional elements of the plan, include a summary of community feedback on programs, identification of recreation trends locally and nationally, and a community profile.

Parks & Community Services is one recreation provider among many in Bellevue, and the Plan defines the city's role within this larger system.

Recreational trends show the highest priority for community members is visiting parks. The city's programming is based on health and well-being, building community connections, and environmental stewardship. It's much more than structured sports.

A slight increase for program roster spots is anticipated in 2023. Overall, Bellevue's day camps serve about 2,700 roster spots post pandemic. Pre-pandemic, Bellevue was accustomed to serving approximately 6,000 roster spots.

Participant surveys show 93% rated overall satisfaction with summer camps as excellent or good. The net promoter score measures customer loyalty from all recreational participant surveys. Bellevue's score was 74, with the average being 32. A score of 75 is considered world class.

The Recreation Plan is a required document of the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), under which Bellevue Parks & Community Services is an accredited agency. Under recently updated CAPRA accreditation requirements, the Recreation Program Plan shall be updated every 2-3 years (the prior standard was about every 5 years). The current Plan dates from 2020 and was updated significantly at that time, including extensive community outreach. The 2023 update is seen as an interim update. The core tenets of the current Plan remain relevant. This update provides an opportunity to assess progress and consider pertinent changes.

The Recreation Plan is one of the Parks Department's suite of planning documents to guide delivery of parks and community services. The city's role is to fill gaps, not compete with other providers.

A key role of the Recreation Program Plan is "to offer accessible, equitable, and inclusive programs and services" and provide safe and gracious spaces where the community can connect."

In prior plan updates there was interest in:

- Increased opportunities for unstructured play, drop-in time.
- Cultural and multi-generational activities.
- Health focused programs.
- Programs that focus on non-dominant cultures (e.g., those with disabilities, immigrant communities, and so forth).
- Programs to develop youth skills and leadership development.
- Specific sports facilities requests.

The 2023 Plan update timeline was summarized, as well as some of the outreach efforts.

Ryan Walker reviewed the following goals and strategies:

Goal 1: Ensure that every Bellevue resident can access recreational opportunities and community services.

Shelley Brittingham said that each year, the recreation staff fills out a survey to determine how staff helps advance the goals and strategies. This year, there was also a retreat with community services managers and supervisors to discuss the accomplishments. Some of the selected accomplishments for 2022 were highlighted.

Discussion:

- Is there any type of data gathering information that would be useful?
Response: There are several different data sources that are evaluated. One is registration data. A historical gap has been identifying communities that are unaware of programs and services or unable to access the programs and services. This is not an automated process—need to determine who is not being served and why.
- Are the goals identified to fill gaps or are they for demographics? At what point are things a gap? *Response: Bellevue is one of many recreational program providers within the city. Don't want to compete with the other providers but want to play a role in providing services that are not offered from other providers. Also trying to identify programmatic gaps.*

Goal 2: Offer programs and services that are consistent with our guiding principles and reflect the community's interests and needs, specifically those of underrepresented groups.

Discussion:

- Strategy C highlights the partnership with Bellevue School District. However, some students live in Bellevue but go to different school districts. Has this been evaluated? *Response: This has not been evaluated in the past and is a good point—will evaluate the data.*
- Is the database for vendors and programs available to citizens? *It is included in the Plan.*
- There is a lack of access to water. *Response: It is the goal to develop a more robust swim lesson program. However, there are staffing shortages with swim instructors, particularly post-Covid. This is a critical program for the city to be offering. The aquatic center has been identified as a need within the city.*
- Does access to water need to be listed more specifically in the plan?
Response: The facilities portion is tied to the Parks and Open Space System Plan. On the programming side, may want to discuss drilling down further.
- May want to evaluate the accomplishments more frequently.
- The database doesn't provide the intelligence—need to have staff with the skills to build business intelligence with the database. Does Goal 2, #1 action need to identify how to use the data? *Response: There isn't a specific business intelligence team.*

Goal 3: Promote community wellbeing through programs and services that instill a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Discussion:

- In regards to natural trends, the topic of gender identity and sports comes up a lot. Does the document talk about this? *Response: Inclusion is discussed. Programs are open for all. All are welcome. These are not competitive programs—they are more recreational.*
- How did the accomplishment ideas come about? *Response: Conversations with staff work teams, retreats, Recreation Program Plan discussions, outreach to communities, etc. Each work group assists with prioritizing, along with a lot of feedback and conversation.*
- Is there room for recreation that targets helping with mental health or is it more of a human services intersection? *Response: There is definitely intersecting mental and physical health. This is an item that staff has discussed as a potential opportunity. The plan doesn't specify cognitive/behavioral issues. There is also an inclusion plan and process at Highline Community Center. Crossroads Community center works with YES, which is an example of intersectionality.*

Goal 4: Foster individual health and wellness through opportunities for structured and unstructured play, exercise, and recreation.

Motion by Vice-Chair Clima and second by Boardmember Valverde to extend the meeting until 8:40 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Discussion:

- May want to mention hydration.
- Wellbeing is referenced in many of the goals. As goals are set for engagement, is there data that shows other jurisdictions and possibilities? *Response: There is an opportunity to do more national research on trends. Staff at North Bellevue Community Center are in a network of other programs that support older adults to share information.*
- Seniors have a difficult time with online registration. *Response: People can call and staff can assist them over the phone. They can also register in person.*
- There needs to be more engagement with older adults.
- It's hard for people that are new to the city to navigate Bellevue. There is a need. *Response: There is the Bellevue Essentials class, and the Bellevue by the Numbers guide.*
- Are there classes that are language specific? *Response: There aren't language specific classes but there are interpreters. It could be something to explore.*

Motion by Boardmember Hamilton and second by Vice-Chair Clima to extend the meeting until 8:50 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

To meet CAPRA requirements, the Recreation Program Plan update will need to be completed by end of year 2023. Staff will continue to gather feedback, including meeting with additional boards and commissions, and draft updated material in line with CAPRA accreditation requirements. This is the first of two sessions with the Parks & Community Services Board. Staff intends to return in the fall to present the primary outcomes of the update process and request an endorsement from the Board. This Plan does not require City Council adoption.

C. Parks Board approval of second quarter 2023 report and communications to Council

Motion by Boardmember Hamilton and second by Boardmember Valverde to extend the meeting until 9:00 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Boardmember Hamilton would like the Second Quarter 2023 Report and Communication to Council to specify, in the second to the last paragraph, that Eastrail and Grand Connection are more than linear parks, and also include a vision for Lincoln Center to be developed as a park. Boardmember Hamilton would like maximum activation for the Eastrail project.

Motion by Boardmember Hamilton and second by Boardmember Chou to authorize the Board Chair and Vice-Chair to finalize the Second Quarter 2023 Report and Communication to Council with the clarification noted above.

Councilmember Stokes suggested a friendly amendment to the main motion to include a connection between parks and the arts. Boardmember Hamilton declined this friendly amendment.

At the question, motion carried (4-1, with Boardmember Valverde opposed) to approve the main motion, with the clarification noted above regarding the Eastrail and Grand Connection.

11. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Remote Participation Approval

No requests.

12. PROPOSED AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING:

Camron Parker said that the September meeting agenda will include a presentation about North Bellevue Community Center.

The Parks & Community Services Board approved these meeting minutes on September 12, 2023.

The Parks & Community Services Board approved these meeting minutes on September 12, 2023.

13. **OTHER COMMUNICATIONS:**

A. Parks CIP Project Status Report

14. **WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

None.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:**

The August meeting is canceled. The next Board meeting will be held September 12, 2023.

At 8:57 p.m., Chair Clark declared the meeting adjourned.