

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

Tuesday
January 12, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

BOARDMEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Trescases, Vice-Chair Hamilton, Boardmembers Clark, Heath, Kumar, Synn, Unger

COUNCILMEMBER PRESENT: Councilmember Zahn

PARKS STAFF PRESENT: Shelley Brittingham, Nancy Harvey, Shelley McVein, Camron Parker, Michael Shiosaki

OTHERS PRESENT: Aayushi Dhebar, Sally Lawrence, Rayma Norton

MINUTES TAKER: Michelle Cash

1. **CALL TO ORDER:**

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

Chair Trescases announced that there are a few procedural items that need to be addressed. She explained that because in-person meetings are prohibited by the Governor's emergency order concerning the Open Public Meetings Act, the Board will be holding its meetings remotely for an unknown period of time. Chair Trescases reminded Boardmembers that the Board's Bylaws regarding remote participation and the order of business have been suspended until such time as the Board is no longer holding its meetings remotely.

2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Motion by Boardmember Kumar and second by Boardmember Clark to approve the meeting agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously (7-0).

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Motion by Boardmember Synn and second by Vice-Chair Hamilton to approve the November 10, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously (7-0).

Motion by Boardmember Kumar and second by Boardmember Clark to approve the December 1, 2020 joint meeting minutes of the Human Services Commission and the Parks & Community Services Board as presented. Motion carried unanimously (7-0).

4. **WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:**

Mr. Parker read the following Written Communication that was submitted, after the packet was published, from Neal Hines, Bellevue Essentials Graduate:

“Thank you with a Capital T and Capital Y for your service and commitment to enhancing Bellevue as “A City Within a Park”. My family has found our Bellevue Parks a treasured refuge during the Covid time and your ongoing service enhances this mission - Again, Thank you! I write to express support for acquiring the Isola Property near Redtown as part of the Bellevue Parks System. The land bridges Coal Creek Natural Area, much of which is in Bellevue, and King County’s Cougar Mountain Regional Park, and is a very heavily used resource (birding, running, hiking, historical appreciation, and wildlife). I realize the developer has just re-submitted the application and know that community response would be tremendous in terms of preserving this space. There are many historical considerations, many benefits as a wildlife corridor, and strong aesthetic considerations as one of Bellevue’s last relatively undeveloped areas. Please consider the Isola property as a discussion topic that would benefit the public immensely, and additionally, as a matter of due diligence in terms of consideration. The significance of this property as an environmental and cultural resource is high and deserves consideration by the Parks Commission as an acquisition. Thanks for your service.”

Aayushi Dhebar

Bellevue College Student

Ms. Dhebar is a student from Bellevue College who is working with peers on a civic engagement project as part of their Chemistry class. The project is to test the effect of the density of trees in an area to the area's CO2 level and if having more trees would reduce the CO2 level in order to have safer air conditions. Ms. Dhebar implored Boardmembers to evaluate the research materials that were included in the Board packet. She also discussed ways the City can help eliminate CO2 emissions.

Sally Lawrence

SaveCoalCreek.Org

Ms. Lawrence discussed the quarterly communication that was recently sent to Council to encourage the City to acquire and preserve the property west of Lakemont Boulevard and adjacent to Coal Creek and Cougar Mountain Parks. She noted that support to preserve this property has gained more than 2,600 signatures.

Ms. Lawrence said that detailed engineering plans were submitted to the City by the developer for review. However, the process has exceeded to this extent without comments from the community. Existing parks would benefit immensely from this property.

5. **COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL:**

Councilmember Zahn provided the following report:

- Thank you for the quarterly update—very informative. May want to consider including this in Council packet.
- Parks Board CIP recommendation—all but one item was included in the budget (Phase 2 of Meydenbauer Bay had a reduction of \$3M in the budget).
- Called attention to the Wildlife Outreach Flyers included in the Board packet.
- In the Parks CIP, some of the Hearing Accessibility items were included.
- Is there an interest in state legislative items? Highlights include:
 - Small and micro businesses and support for these businesses due to COVID.
 - Social and criminal justice—request for state funding to augment local programs.
 - Transportation investments—Mountain-to-Sound Greenway Trail and completion of the east trail.
 - The Capital Budget submitted by the Governor advocates for Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program funding.

6. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Mr. Shiosaki reported that Council approved the 2021/2022 Budget. Due to COVID, revenues are down so it was a challenging budget process. The Human Services needs have increased due to the pandemic so this portion of the budget increased. There were also cuts to Parks recreational programming and ground maintenance—streetscapes being most significantly impacted (approximately 20%).

Boardmember Unger expressed her appreciation to the City for intentionally increasing budgets where needed (i.e., Human Services). Mr. Shiosaki discussed some of the other cutbacks that might be noticed throughout the city (e.g., cutbacks in watering, maintenance, etc.). The irrigation should continue at ball fields and higher use parks. However, it will most likely be decreased or non-existent at community/neighborhood parks.

Vice-Chair Hamilton asked if the community has been engaged to assist with some of the projects where funding has been cut (such as litter pick-up). Mr. Shiosaki expressed some of the challenges and efforts involved with volunteer coordination and safety issues when using community volunteers. Councilmember Zahn said that there has been interest from the community for volunteer efforts.

Boardmember Kumar called attention to the Master Naturalist group that needs to accumulate hours to be certified. Volunteering would give them the hours needed to work toward their certification. She also suggested that a note be added to the City's website explaining that there have been cutbacks so this can encourage everyone to do their part. Boardmember Kumar asked

if removal of downed trees throughout parks has been eliminated from the budget. Mr. Shiosaki said that these types of efforts remain in the budget. However, response times may be increased.

Boardmember Clark asked if there are any long-term ramifications with the drop in funding to the Meydenbauer Bay Park project. Mr. Shiosaki explained that the project can continue and the hope is to find a grant or matching dollars for the project. Completion of the final project may be delayed but the scope and design shouldn't be impacted.

Chair Trescases suggested that staff work with the neighborhood groups to connect with each association board to assist with areas where the City has made cutbacks.

7. **BOARD COMMUNICATIONS:**

Vice-Chair Hamilton congratulated the Parks Department for moving classes online (e.g., SBCC virtual fitness classes, Bellevue at Home options, etc.) He also enjoyed the following parks:

- Coal Creek Trail
- Downtown Park

Boardmember Kumar provided the following report:

- Enjoyed many trails and open spaces throughout the parks—nice to see people respectfully wearing masks.

Boardmember Synn enjoyed parks throughout the community as well as parks in sister-cities.

Boardmember Clark visited the following parks:

- Goddard Mini Park
- McCormick Park
- Ashwood Park

Boardmember Clark also congratulated the Bellevue College students for producing their civic engagement project.

Boardmember Unger enjoyed the following parks:

- Meydenbauer Bay Park
- Surrey Downs Park
- Bellevue Botanical Gardens
- Downtown Park and Gateway Project

8. **CHAIR COMMUNICATION & DISCUSSION:**

Chair Trescases enjoyed many parks over the past month.

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

No reports.

10. **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:**

A. **Park Property Acquisition Program Presentation**

Mr. Parker provided an overview of the property acquisition program for Parks & Community Services. Areas discussed included:

- History of major property acquisitions showing the growth of the park system.
- Acquisition policy and strategy as expressed in the Parks & Open Space System Plan.
- Funding mechanisms often used to support acquisitions.
- Geographic target areas for future park property acquisitions.

Mr. Parker noted that last year (2020) was an active year for property acquisitions with additions to Mercer Slough, Weowna Park and properties on Lake Sammamish.

Mr. Parker explained that the property acquisition program is influenced by the department's mission and vision statements, which the Board helped update last year. Those statements are a forward-looking view to make parks more equitable and accessible to community members. In the Comprehensive Plan, there are policy guidelines regarding property acquisition including:

- PA-1: Establish a coordinated and connected system of open space and greenways throughout the City that provide multiple benefits including preserving natural systems, protecting wildlife habitat and corridors, and providing land for recreation.
- PA-2: Obtain land throughout the community to meet present and future parks and open space needs.
- PA-5: Obtain, for preservation, natural areas that are sensitive to urbanization or represent a valuable natural and aesthetic resource to the community.
- PA-6: Acquire and develop waterfront property to increase public access to Bellevue's lakes.

The 2016 Parks & Open Space System Plan policy guidance states: *Priority will be placed on acquiring land adjacent to existing parkland along shorelines, environmentally sensitive land, or linkages that provide connections between parks and open space areas. Priority will also be placed on increasing park access for neighborhoods with limited access to parks.*

Mr. Parker reviewed results from a 2015 public survey where Bellevue residents were asked: *Given what you know about the parks system, over the next ten years, should City investments be focused more on acquiring parkland and natural areas or focused more on development and improving currently-owned parks?* Mr. Parker reported that the responses had a slight preference to development, but overall were balanced with strong support for continuing to acquire additional park property. The responses were then dissected into geographical areas.

Mr. Parker stated that the goal is for Bellevue residents to have walkable access of 1/3 of a mile walking distance to a park or trail. Mr. Parker showed a map that demonstrated areas that do not have this access.

Mr. Parker discussed some of the common grant funding sources used for leveraging local funding.

Bellevue's acquisition priorities include:

- Fill access gaps in neighborhoods
- Urban Park System
 - Downtown
 - Bel-Red
 - Eastgate/Factoria Commercial Area
- Waterfront Access
 - Lake Sammamish
- Expand existing parks
- Greenways & Corridors
 - Lake-to-Lake Trails
 - Grand Connection
 - Bel-Red Corridor
 - Eastrail
 - West Lake Sammamish

Boardmember Synn called attention to the acquisition priorities, noting that there are a number of priorities that need a sense of urgency. He asked if the Board should consider other ways to conduct acquisitions and the strategies for the acquisitions.

Councilmember Zahn asked if the Coal Creek Natural Area fits into expanding existing parks or in the Greenways and Corridors. Mr. Parker said that this area falls into the Greenways and Corridors category.

Councilmember Zahn said that Council inquired about additional partnership opportunities that are yet to be leveraged. Mr. Parker discussed some of the acquisition conversations that have occurred.

Boardmember Clark asked if the acquisition goals are realistic for today's dollars. Mr. Parker said that it is very difficult to estimate acquisition costs. In addition, property development and acquisition is a slow process. Boardmember Clark would like to discuss the acquisition strategy in more detail at a future meeting.

Mr. Parker reviewed some of the acquisition properties, including:

- Mercer Slough Duff Estate Property
- Series of Lake Sammamish Properties
- Lake-to-Lake Greenway Trail

A map of existing City property and the other acquisitions was shown.

Boardmember Unger asked if there is a plan for the trees on the Lake Sammamish properties. Mr. Parker explained that it will most likely be several years before a master plan for this area is conducted. A site concept that was used for the grant application was shown.

Boardmember Kumar asked if the City has spoken with Forterra about property acquisitions. Mr. Parker confirmed that the City has been in contact with Forterra as well as Trust for Public Land, which helped with the Mercer Slough Acquisition.

Vice-Chair Hamilton asked if state legislators can assist with the State grant process. Mr. Parker explained that the applications are submitted and then ranked. The Sammamish project is currently ranked as #5, which is quite high. However, at the state level, there are also cuts due to the pandemic.

Vice-Chair Hamilton asked if an elevated crossing is being considered to connect the park at Lake Sammamish with Weowna Park. Mr. Parker clarified that it is too early in the planning process to determine if an elevated crossing will be considered. Boardmember Clark expressed his support for an elevated bridge.

Boardmember Clark asked Mr. Parker to identify ideal properties for park development in the Downtown area. Mr. Parker said that the old post office is one of the ideal properties. Boardmember Clark also asked about historical preservation of buildings and how this is incorporated into future property acquisitions. Mr. Parker explained that the City does not have a historic preservation program. However, a 50-year marker is the guideline to evaluate properties for historic preservation. Chair Trescases added that current preservation efforts are thanks to the Parks Department. There is also a preservation document that identifies resources, particularly in the downtown area, however many of the properties are no longer in existence. There are discussions on updating the inventory.

Mr. Parker encouraged Boardmembers to share any potential property acquisitions that they might be aware of with staff. Chair Trescases added that one of the City's strategies is relationships and trust in the City. She applauded staff for their efforts in building relationships. Boardmember Synn echoed Chair Trescases' comments. He also asked if there is a comprehensive socialization plan (i.e., Does the general community recognize that they can help?). Mr. Parker discussed the Your Land-Your Legacy program that is primarily for estate planning.

B. Draft Board Report to Council – 4th Quarter 2020

Mr. Parker called attention to the draft Fourth Quarter 2020 Report and Communication that was included in the Board Packet. Boardmembers expressed appreciation to Vice-Chair Hamilton and Boardmember Clark for assisting with the letter preparation. Boardmember Clark commented that there were a few things that were listed in the City Code that weren't applicable to the current letter (i.e., policy direction, action plans) but could be included in future letters if the Board decided to include one or all of them.

Motion by Boardmember Unger and second by Vice-Chair Hamilton to approve the Fourth Quarter 2020 Report and Communication as written and submit this letter to City Council. Motion carried unanimously (7-0)

11. **NEW BUSINESS:**

Councilmember Zahn talked about the virtual event and health fair event to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. She also noted that 300 Trees is working with the Environmental Stewardship program to plant trees throughout Bellevue. Bellevue needs to plant 75,000 trees during the next three decades to reach its goal of 40% tree canopy coverage.

Boardmember Synn asked if there are any additional safety/security issues being added to Bellevue parks due to the recent unrest. Mr. Shiosaki said that he is not aware of any additional security in the parks.

12. **PROPOSED AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING:**

Boardmember Clark would like to include a discussion on the March Board agenda to include items that should be included in the second quarter 2021 memo to Council. Boardmember Unger asked if a Board retreat will be held in the near future. She suggested any policy discussions be tabled until a retreat is conducted.

Mr. Parker said that there are a few presentations that Boardmembers expressed interest in, including: progress on Eastlink project; update on EastRail Trail project (Wilburton Framework Plan).

Boardmember Clark asked if a background check was conducted on Borghild Ringdall before the park was officially named after her. Mr. Parker will follow-up on the background check as well as the school district's plans.

Councilmember Zahn asked for an update on McCormick Park—other Boardmembers agreed that an update should be provided.

13. **OTHER COMMUNICATIONS:**

- A. Parks CIP Project Status Report
- B. Memo to Council re Follow-Up on Park Board CIP Recommendations
- C. Memo from Staff re Wildlife Outreach Flyers
- D. Email re Trails

E. Email re Lake Sammamish Park

F. Email re Tree Canopy Research

14. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

None.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion by Boardmember Unger and second by Boardmember Kumar to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (7-0).