

The Parks & Community Services Board approved these meeting minutes on March 14, 2023.

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

Tuesday
February 14, 2023
6:00 p.m.

Via Hybrid

BOARDMEMBERS PRESENT: Vice-Chair Clark; Boardmembers Clima, Giampetro, Synn¹, Trescases

BOARDMEMBERS ABSENT: Chair Hamilton; Boardmember Singh

COUNCILMEMBER PRESENT: Councilmember Stokes

PARKS STAFF PRESENT: Pam Fehrman, Camron Parker, Mariam Sarwary, Michael Shiosaki

MINUTES TAKER: Michelle Cash

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

Vice-Chair Clark called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

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

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Motion by Boardmember Clima and second by Boardmember Trescases to approve the January 10, 2023 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously (4-0).

4. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

David Lai

David Lai thanked the Parks Department for adding the proposed eight dedicated pickleball courts to the Bellevue Airfield Park design recommendations. The pickleball community would also like to prioritize building a roof over the dedicated courts. Adding a roof and lights will make it possible to play year-round.

¹ Joined via Zoom at 6:09 p.m.

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Ideally, David Lai advocated for 12 covered, pickleball only courts at Bellevue Airfield Park.

Mark Feeney

Mark Feeney expressed support for building an aquatic center at Bellevue Airfield Park, as it will benefit young people and the community.

Kathryn Hill

Kathryn Hill advocated for building an aquatic center at Bellevue Airfield Park. The positive impacts of joining swim teams were discussed. In addition, there are not nearly enough indoor pools to meet the needs of the community. A new aquatic center can meet community needs through year-round use and increased availability of swim lessons for people of all ages.

Kate Sinon

Kate Sinon distributed a handout and spoke in opposition of developing Bellevue Airfield Park, preferring to design and install a food forest with low environmental impacts. The City should be doing more to offset the impacts of climate change.

Laura Loge

Laura Loge spoke in opposition of Bellevue Airfield Park. Concern was expressed about the picnic and parking areas entering the green space—specifically, safety, wildlife displacement, and loss of tree canopy. Laura Loge suggested that parking stalls at some of the surrounding buildings be utilized for aquatic events, rather than dedicating so many stalls at Bellevue Airfield Park.

Court Olson

Court Olson spoke in opposition of the picnic area and numerous parking stalls at Bellevue Airfield Park. The following concerns were expressed:

- Safety. Picnic areas deep in the woods would not be open to public view and that poses a danger to the neighborhood.
- Tree Canopy Loss. Creation of the proposed picnic areas would require cutting down several big trees.
- Wildlife Displacement. The proposed picnic area part of the park is a mini wildlife preserve.

Susan Pappalardo

SPLASHForward

Susan Pappalardo said that the designs for Bellevue Airfield Park are inclusive for everyone. The physical layout of the planned park makes for a fully activated park for park users. This also allows for sustainability and improvements to the site. SPLASHForward is encouraging the progression of the park plans.

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Matt Dekker

Matt Dekker encouraged the city to acquire the West Ravine (Parcel 2024059062), which is located between Woodlawn Park and the Newport Hills Park and Ride lot. Ever since Matt Dekker bought his house in 1992, various zoning changes and development projects have been proposed for the West Ravine. Should the City of Bellevue acquire this West Ravine, it would prevent the above listed problems and provide the Parks Department with the opportunity to expand Woodlawn Park, preserving this green space for future generations.

Emily Tambock

Emily Tambock spoke in opposition to development of Bellevue Airfield Park, due to environmental concerns and impacts brought by climate change.

Alex Tsimerman

Alex Tsimerman expressed frustration with time limits for the oral communications process. He also expressed frustration with other operations within city government.

5. **FROM CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION:**

Councilmember Stokes read a proclamation for Boardmember Giampetro and mentioned the accomplishments made during her time on the Parks Board. Boardmember Giampetro is moving and has resigned from her Board position.

6. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Michael Shiosaki, Parks & Community Services Director, presented Boardmember Giampetro with a token of appreciation. The following items were also discussed:

- Youth Link Gumbo Night will be held on February 15, 2023. All Boardmembers are invited to attend.
- There will be a special event on February 24, 2023 at Highland Community Center for people with intellectual and physical disabilities.

7. **BOARD COMMUNICATIONS:**

Boardmember Giampetro expressed appreciation to fellow Boardmembers.

Boardmember Clima attended the tree planting at Wilburton Hill Park to commemorate Martin Luther King Day. Boardmember Clima also highlighted many of the parks that were enjoyed during the past month.

Boardmember Synn and other Boardmembers expressed appreciation and well wishes to Boardmember Giampetro.

8. **CHAIR COMMUNICATION & DISCUSSION:**

Vice-Chair Clark continues to enjoy Bellevue Downtown Park.

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

No report.

10. **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:**

A. **Bellevue Airfield Park Design Recommendation**

Pam Fehrman, Project Manager, said that staff is seeking the Board's preferred Master Plan recommendation for Bellevue Airfield Park (BAP).

The 27 acre BAP site is located a quarter mile east along a pedestrian path to Robinswood Park, and north of I-90 in the Eastgate area. In 2002, recognizing that the BAP site may represent the last opportunity to acquire a large, undeveloped, relatively flat property in Bellevue, Council authorized the purchase of the properties with the intent of developing an active recreational community park. The site consists of three parcels: 1) the 14.5 acre site purchased from Boeing; 2) a 2.5 acre utilities stormwater basin detention pond; and 3) a 10.5 acre elementary school site purchased from Bellevue School District in the northwest corner of the site. Today, the BAP is currently an undeveloped park site.

The site is well located to support active recreation development. It is located just off I-90, it is surrounded by residential neighbors to the north and west; and office park to the east, south and west. In addition, well-established forest buffers north and west residential neighbors. Vehicular access is from the south, I-90 and through an office park on 160th, while pedestrian trail access is provided from the north and west to residential neighborhoods on well-established trails. Significant to development considerations are the historical operations of the Bellevue Airfield (until 1983) and a municipal landfill from 1951 to 1964. From a development perspective, the site is full of utility system easements (abandoned and operational) such as a landfill gas migration system, ground water monitoring wells, and a major King County Metro sewer line among others.

In 2012, the City Council adopted a Master Plan and name for this undeveloped park site. There was significant participation in that planning process from nearby residents and several interest groups. Most participants in the planning process supported one of the following major park elements: 1) an off-leash dog facility; 2) a little league field complex; 3) an aquatic or major indoor sport facility; or 4) a passive-use meadow. The Board recommended the preferred Master Plan and the name Bellevue Airfield Park. The City Council concurred and adopted the Master

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Plan and park name.. As currently adopted, BAP Master Plan would provide the community with

- Two lighted synthetic turf sports fields,
- Wooded picnic areas,
- Trail connections, playgrounds, restrooms, and parking.

The plan maintains woodland buffers between the park and nearby residences.

In 2021, City Council directed an update of the existing BAP Master Plan to understand community preferences and inform impacts associated with locating an aquatic center at BAP. The BAP site is the only undeveloped city-owned site large enough to accommodate the preferred aquatic facility concept (requiring approximately 10-11 acres). Additional recommended elements include:

- Easy access off I-90,
- Existing shared parking agreements with owners of the surrounding office park and
- The site size that could allow for an aquatic facility and complementary outdoor recreation and open space park development.

An overview of the Council's preferred 130,000 square foot aquatic facility concept would provide:

- Recreation splash family pool
- Warmwater/therapy
- Competition pool
- Spectator seating
- Deep water/dive pool
- Fitness facilities
- Class/meeting/event space

Pam Fehrman shared select park and open space needs relative to this master plan update. The top ranked community amenity preferences based on a citywide statistically valid survey performed for the 2022 Parks & Open Space System Plan were shared.

- Trails
- Beaches and waterfront parks
- Unstructured play/picnic areas
- Parks with display gardens
- Outdoor sport fields/courts
- Swimming pool
- Indoor facilities

During this BAP Master Plan Update, the need for various park amenities have been called into question such as sport fields, picnic shelters, pickleball courts and an aquatic facility.

The park system provides 10 sport fields. Demand for these types of fields outpaces the city's park system's ability to meet the community's needs, during season, when school and workdays have been completed, the fields are fully booked.

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Picnic shelters allow year-round picnicking, providing cover from rain and relief from heat in the summer. The current park and open space system offers 18 picnic shelters. Picnic shelters are used year-round, weekends and weekdays, with the highest use May through September. This park amenity has seen one of the largest increases in use due to Covid. Requests for picnic shelters far exceed the city's ability to meet the community's demand.

The city has also received numerous requests to add pickleball courts at BAP, both during the Parks & Open Space System Plan and during this BAP Master Plan update with a significant jump in interest, since pickleball was identified as the state sport in 2022. To help address recent requests for pickleball, the city has committed to add pickleball lines to existing city outdoor tennis courts when they are renovated if sufficient distance from residences exists.

The need for an aquatic facility development has been informed by feasibility studies in 2009, 2020 and 2021; and a King County 2019 Regional Aquatic Report. With the population of the Eastside communities more than doubling in the last 50 years, no new public pools have been built within Bellevue, Redmond, or Kirkland during that time.

Pam Fehrman said that the pools in Bellevue, Kirkland, and Redmond that were funded by Forward Thrust in the 1960s are approaching the end of their useful lives and need to be replaced. The only existing public aquatic facility in Bellevue – the Bellevue Aquatic Center (BAC) is reaching the end of its useful life. At over 50 years old, the BAC has served Bellevue's population of 60k in 1970 to over 150k today. Its age, capacity, and inability to provide a full range of aquatic programming make it inadequate to meet the current and future demand for swimming facilities in Bellevue.

There have been several community gatherings to help inform the BAP Master Plan. Based on information obtained from community meetings, correspondence and Master Plan survey responses, a few universally accepted themes have evolved. Overall, the park should be:

- Inclusive
- Safe
- Environmentally Responsive
- Active

The following Master Plan alternatives were shared with Boardmembers in October 2022 and with the City Council in December 2022.

- Concept 1: A modified 2012 Master Plan with pickleball courts
- Concept 2: An aquatic facility in the southwest position
- Concept 3: An aquatic facility in the southeast position

Most frequent Community feedback regarding the three alternatives included: 1) there are not enough pickleball courts in any of the alternatives; 2) the next most frequent comment was support for an aquatic facility; 3) not as numerous, however consistent, were comments citing concerns of: loss of trees, habitat, and open space and potential impacts of increased nefarious activities in the park and increased traffic.

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At the October 2022 Board meeting, the Board supported an aquatic facility and pickleball courts. Then, at the December Council Meeting, Council supported an Aquatic Facility, sport fields, off-leash areas and basketball courts.

Elements from each concept were highlighted and compared. Survey feedback was also discussed from the final community workshop.

Vice Chair Clark read the following message from Chair Hamilton:

Park Board Members,

I regret not being able to attend tonight's Park Board meeting. Considering the significance of the Airfield Park master plan the importance of sending our recommendation to Council as soon as we're ready, which I hope is tonight, I am sending along my thoughts by email.

The interest in Airfield Park and the engagement of the community, city council, staff, and Board has been tremendous. The process that has gotten us to where we are is the most robust that I have been involved in during my time on the Board. Ultimately, this process will produce an amazing park that will serve our entire community for many years.

If I were in the room tonight, I would promote the following vision for Airfield Park.

Concept 2 with the addition of the picnic area as shown in Concept 1.

8 new, dedicated, covered pickleball courts that can be used all year would represent a significant addition to the city's supply of courts. We have received a lot of thoughtful feedback from a highly engaged group of pickleball players. I think we should act on it even if we build fewer courts than requested and possibly fewer than can support a tournament. To balance the needs of the entire community, I can't let the appeal of a tournament crowd out other important park features.

I think the northwest corner of the park should include the picnic area. We know we have to build the additional parking to support the aquatics center. It would be a missed opportunity to leave off the picnic area while we are at it. And more activation of that section of the park would help alleviate security concerns that have been raised. The security concerns are legitimate, but they should not derail the picnic area. I know that the Board will want to remain engaged with park neighbors to be sure that the city handles all security concerns that materialize in the same effective manner that it does so in other parks on the rare occasions they occur.

We are on the verge of putting in motion the building of a park facility where the community will connect, learn essential life skills, exercise and have fun. This is exactly what parks do so well. And I hope we move Airfield Park forward tonight.

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*Sincerely,
Dave Hamilton*

Staff responded to various questions from Boardmembers.

Motion by Boardmember Trescases and second by Boardmember Giampetro to recommend that City Council adopt proposed Bellevue Airfield Park Concept #2 with the following modifications:

- **Add picnic shelter included in Concept #1**
- **Evaluate options to include covered pickleball court area**
- **Evaluate options to include full courts for the basketball area**

At the question, motion carried (4-0; Boardmember Synn did not vote as technical difficulties with audio for remote participants limited the ability to fully participate in the meeting

11. **NEW BUSINESS:**

- A. Remote Participation Approval

No requests.

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

Camron Parker said that the March meeting agenda will include an update on the Comprehensive Plan. Boardmember Trescases requested an update on the Grand Connection as well.

13. **OTHER COMMUNICATIONS:**

- A. Parks CIP Project Status Report
- B. Email, RE: Bellevue Airfield Park Community Meeting (01-20-2023)
- C. Email, RE: Support for Aquatic Facility at Bellevue Airfield Park (01-16-2023)
- D. Email, RE: Pickleball Courts at Bellevue Airfield Park (02-06-2023)
- E. Email, RE: Oppose Development of Bellevue Airfield Park (02-07-2023)
- F. Email, RE: Property for Sale in Newport Hills (02-06-2023)
- G. Email, RE: Opportunity: Newly Empty Elementary Buildings (01-14-2023)

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H. Email, RE: Bellevue Golf Course (01-14-2023)

14. **WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

The second Oral Communication opportunity was not held due to exhausting the time limits during the first Oral Communication session.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:**

The next Board meeting will be held March 14, 2023.

At 8:03 p.m., Vice-Chair Clark declared the meeting adjourned.