

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

Tuesday
November 9, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

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

COUNCILMEMBER PRESENT: Councilmember Zahn

PARKS STAFF PRESENT: Pam Fehrman, Mariam Sarwary, Michael Shiosaki, Ryan Walker

OTHERS PRESENT: Lynn Kaner, David Lai,

MINUTES TAKER: Michelle Cash, *via recording*

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

The meeting was called to order by Chair Hamilton at 6:00 p.m.

Chair Hamilton announced that there are a few procedural items that need to be addressed. He 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 Hamilton 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 Synn and second by Boardmember Trescases to approve the meeting agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously (7-0).

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Motion by Boardmember Clark and second by Boardmember Synn to approve the October 12, 2021 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously (7-0).

4. **WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

David Lai

Mr. Lai is the league author of a report on pickleball that was sent to the Parks Board in September, 2021. The report documented pickleball and tennis usage data in the Bellevue area. The findings concluded that there is an acute shortage of outdoor pickleball courts in Bellevue. The report outlined some solutions to alleviate the acute shortage of pickleball courts.

Lynn Kaner

Ms. Kaner discussed the growing population of pickleball players in the community. She would like to see at least 1-2 court clusters (6 or more courts) as part of the long-term plan to accommodate the rapid growth of the sport.

5. **COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL:**

Councilmember Zahn provided the following report:

- The mid-biennial 2022-2022 budget is currently open—the public hearing will be held November 15, 2021.
- The cricket community attended a Council meeting to request a community cricket park using the Bellevue Utilities parcel in Marymoor Park. Council authorized staff to explore the possibilities of cricket at Marymoor Park in further detail.

6. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Mr. Shiosaki expressed his appreciation to Camron Parker for his efforts with the Woodridge Eastrail trail connection acquisition that Council approved.

7. **BOARD COMMUNICATIONS:**

Boardmember Unger enjoyed many of Bellevue's parks and trails during the past month.

Boardmember Synn said that four pickleball courts can be created out of one tennis court, which might help satisfy some of the community demand.

Boardmember Kumar spent time at the Marymoor off-leash dog area. She also discussed the many trails and parks that she visited throughout the Eastside.

Boardmember Trescases expressed her gratitude about the vaccine availability for the younger population and suggested that Bellevue offer vaccine clinics at various community centers.

Boardmember Giampetro called attention to the federal infrastructure bill that was recently passed. She is in the process of dissecting what this means for Bellevue trails, etc.

8. **CHAIR COMMUNICATION & DISCUSSION:**

No report.

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

No reports.

10. **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:**

A. **Aquatic Feasibility Study**

Pam Fehrman, Planning & Development Manager, said that the City Council recently reviewed and provided direction on the Aquatic Center Feasibility Study Update and directed next incremental steps towards evaluating the potential development of a new aquatic facility in Bellevue.

Ms. Fehrman added that Council approved the continued working relationship with SplashForward (SF), noting that public-private partnerships are critical to the future success of the Aquatic Center project. The Council directed Parks staff to develop a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SF to memorialize the partnership. The MOU will establish pathways to assess fundraising potential and support the City's future efforts securing public funds for the construction of the new facility. SF is committed to conducting a fundraising effort, with the initial efforts to be focused on a fundraising feasibility report and marketing and fundraising plan.

Ms. Fehrman noted that the Council unanimously endorsed the Recommended Concept Plan for a 130,000 sq ft facility. Key program elements include a 50-meter pool with movable bulkheads, separate deep-water tank, therapy/wellness pool, a lesson/program pool, and leisure pool amenities. Dry side spaces are included to support both the aquatic programming and community use including, but not limited to: fitness spaces, community use rooms, lockers, lobby, spectator seating; storage, concessions, staff offices, maintenance space, and other flexible use spaces.

Bellevue Airfield Park was identified as the preferred site, as it is the most economically feasible available option, has the space needed to accommodate a comprehensive aquatics facility (10 – 11 acres) and offers opportunities for complimentary recreational opportunities. Ms. Fehrman said that a site on the Bellevue College campus had been considered, but after further discussions with the College, that site is no longer a viable option.

Ms. Fehrman reviewed the estimated project costs, annual operating subsidy, and cost recovery.

Since Bellevue Airfield Park is the preferred site, Ms. Fehrman clarified that it will need to be re-master planned and undergo environmental review. The existing 2012 Council adopted Master Plan does not include an aquatic facility.

Ms. Fehrman said that next steps include:

- Developing the partnership agreement with SPLASHForward.
- Initiating a Bellevue Airfield Park Master Plan Update, with help of the community and Parks Board, to include an aquatic facility.
- Continuing to pursue partnership and planning grant opportunities.

Discussion:

- Can Metro adjust their routes to accommodate people wanting to go to Bellevue Airfield Park? *Response: Public access is part of the items to evaluate (bike, walk, bus). There are currently bus lines that run adjacent to the property.*
- If the Airfield Park project is moved to the next stage, how does it impact the city's other priorities (i.e., Ashwood Park)? *Response: Multi-Department priorities across the city are involved and will need to inform. Ashwood Park is still a priority.*
- Would like to maintain the existing tree canopy; would also like an off-leash area included at the park.
- Will changing the Master Plan contradict what voters were told when they approved the 2008 levy? *Response: Bellevue Airfield Park is part of the 2008 levy, that includes funds for park development.*
- What will be the membership charge? *Response: staff will research this information.*
- Developing Ashwood Park is important; however, if working with limited resources the pool would impact more people in the community.
- How much square footage is the pool versus the entire park area? *Response: Approximately 11 acres is needed for the aquatic center and parking. The entire Bellevue Airfield Park site is approximately 28 acres.*
- Need to focus on community and neighborhood needs in downtown and north Bellevue and simultaneously focus on both Ashwood Park and the aquatic center.
- Traffic mitigation is critical in development of the park.
- Is the cost of recovery formula equitable? *Response: There are many revenue generating amenities that will be available in the aquatic facility.*
- Kudos for partnering with SPLASHForward.

Councilmember Zahn provided her feedback about the aquatic center project.

B. Parks & Open Space System Plan 2022 Update

Ryan Walker, Senior Planner, reminded Boardmembers that Parks and Community Services is in the process of updating the Parks & Open Space System Plan, which is one of the long-range policy planning documents for the Department. The current plan was last updated in 2016 and is on a six-year schedule for renewal and adoption by the City Council.

Mr. Walker continued discussions regarding the Parks & Open Space System Plan. Key elements include (a) an update on outreach, including the parks user survey and (b) a presentation and continued discussion on capital project objectives. Mr. Walker said that the online parks user survey will be open through November. He summarized some of the data collected thus far.

Mr. Walker reviewed the Capital Project Objectives, which include:

- Identify objectives that may continue forward, be added, or be removed/reframed.
- Focus on the big ideas.
- Consider what's missing.
- Take the next step towards finalizing recommendations.

Mr. Walker clarified that the objectives will remain in working form. However, outreach will be concluded soon.

Mr. Walker reviewed the Plan focus areas, including:

- Open Space, Greenways, Wildlife Corridors, and Trails
- Park Facilities
- Active Recreation Facilities
- Urban Park Systems
- Waterfront Access
- Partnership Opportunities
- Historic, Cultural, and Art Resources

Discussion:

- Need a general reference for opportunities for new and emerging sports and activities of interest to the community. *Response: Some sports are identified in the objectives. General reference could be highlighted in the narrative.*
- There are community center needs throughout Bellevue—do the dry services at the proposed aquatic center fit some of these needs? *Response: It could—there are also other elements that the aquatic center can provide (i.e., gathering spaces).*
- Should consider a roofed structure for pickleball and/or leverage shared uses. *Response: Will add additional notation.*
- Might want to indicate a little north of I-90 for the dog park, since Robinswood is also north of I-90.

- There are areas in south Bellevue that are adjacent to the Eastrail with no access—may want to evaluate right-of-way ends to the broader trails.
Response: Will ensure that connections to the whole Eastrail corridor is identified as a need.
- Will the purchased parcel near Weowna Park gain Bellevue access to the waterfront? *Response: There were approximately four single-family lots that were added to Weowna Park along the West Lake Sammamish Parkway. There are additional purchases along Lake Sammamish—still assembling the parcel lots.*
- Glad to see Lake Bellevue considered as an objective.
- Other cities should be added as potential partners.
- Should include “acquire” under the historical preservation reference.
- Need to clarify the “Cultural Arts Center” versus the “Cross Cultural Center.”
Response: Will add more clarifying detail.
- May want to add Tribes as a potential partner.
- How would groups like SPLASHForward be defined? *Response: They are a private non-profit organization.*
- May need additional clarification for private non-profits (i.e., community organization, networks, etc.). There are many organizations that are not a registered 501c3. For example, community based organizations might be preferred terminology.
- Eastrail is a historic rail line; therefore, terms like “story telling” and “interpretive elements” should be used, rather than “art.”
- Ashwood Park should be listed under the underdeveloped section.

A revised version of the Parks & Open Space System Plan will be sent to Boardmembers in the near future.

Mr. Walker noted that there is prioritization criteria listed in the Plan. The information will be forwarded to Boardmembers.

C. Proposal to rename the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center

Ms. Fehrman explained that Council has asked the Parks Board to recommend whether to rename the Mercer Slough Environmental Center (MSEEC) to honor Jim Ellis, Jim and John Ellis, or the Ellis Family.

Ms. Fehrman said that on September 14, 2021, Councilmember Lee provided a Management Brief to the City Council asking the Council to consider renaming the Mercer Slough Environmental Center (MSEEC) in honor of Jim Ellis. Councilmember Conrad Lee additionally provided a biography summary of Jim Ellis to Council. Councilmember Lee stated that Jim Ellis’ contribution to the region is “profoundly positive and enduring”. Specific to the MSEEC, in 2006 Jim Ellis committed to support the development the MSEEC and co-chair the private fundraising campaign. Jim Ellis is currently recognized for his contributions on a commemorative plaque with other funding contributors at the MSEEC.

At the Council meeting, all Councilmembers were appreciative and recognized the incredible contributions of Jim Ellis to the region and MSEEC and felt naming the facility in his honor could be warranted. Council further discussed the care needed when naming places after people and questioned the rename from a perspective of ensuring diverse and equitable representation in place names. Council further recognized the need to update the park naming policy, however agreed a policy update should be considered as a separate issue.

All Council Members supported the motion to transmit to the Parks Board a request for a recommendation to the Council whether to rename the MSEEC in honor of Jim Ellis, Jim and John Ellis, or the Ellis Family. The name options are:

- Jim Ellis Environmental Education Center at Mercer Slough
- Jim and John Ellis Environmental Education Center at Mercer Slough
- Ellis Family Environmental Education Center at Mercer Slough

Ms. Fehrman reviewed Bellevue's Park Name policy considerations.

Per Camron's fresh listen notes from here on out.

Mr. Shiosaki discussed a recent conversation that he had with John Ellis.

Motion by Vice-Chair Unger and second by Boardmember Synn to extend the meeting to 8:40 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (7-0).

Motion by Vice-Chair Unger and second by Boardmember Trescases to not recommend renaming the Mercer Slough Environmental Center any of the options provided at this time.

Vice-Chair Unger expressed her concern with any name changes and possible confusion within the community if the MSEEC is renamed. There does not appear to be a major driver to change the name.

Staff noted that driving force is Councilmember Lee's proposal to rename the MSEEC to memorialize Jim and John Ellis who were very important to the community.

Boardmembers spoke both for and against the motion. Questions and concerns were voiced about precedent setting and the desire for a more thorough public process before considering a different name.

Chair Hamilton reviewed Resolution No. 8229 and the requirements for renaming a park. Jim Ellis is most deserving of recognition. However, he called particular attention to the community process that is referenced in the policy when naming a park. He thinks that renaming the MSEEC without conducting a community process does not properly honor Council, the Resolution, the residents of Bellevue, or Mr. Ellis. If a name change is recommended then a formal public process should be conducted.

Motion by Vice-Chair Unger and second by Boardmember Kumar to extend the meeting until 8:45 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (7-0).

Councilmember Zahn said that Council was not aware of the plaque at the MSEEC when they voted to send the consideration to the Parks Board.

Motion by Boardmember Clark and second by Boardmember Synn to extend the meeting until 8:50 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (7-0).

Boardmembers discussed their interpretation of Council direction and noted ambiguity in the direction given. Councilmember Zahn explained that Council received the information in the Council packet and there was a desire to honor Jim Ellis. She thinks that there is more information included in the Parks Board Packet than what was presented to Council.

Motion by Boardmember Clark and second by Boardmember Trescases to extend the meeting until 9:00 p.m. Motion carried (6-1).

Mr. Shiosaki suggested that Councilmember Zahn discuss the Parks Board discussion with Council to obtain additional direction on whether additional public process is desired or not.

At the question, motion failed (3-4) to not recommend renaming the Mercer Slough Environmental Center any of the options provided at this time.

No other motions were proposed.

11. **NEW BUSINESS:**

None.

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

Mr. Shiosaki said that there will not be a Parks Board meeting, including the joint Parks Board and Human Services Commission meeting in December. The next regularly scheduled Board meeting will be held on January 11, 2022. The agenda will include continued discussion of the Parks & Open Space Systems Plan and Capital projects.

13. **OTHER COMMUNICATIONS:**

- A. Parks CIP Project Status Report
- B. Email, Re: In gratitude (10-22-2021)
- C. Email, RE: Recommended Development Plan for a New Bellevue Aquatic Center (10-17-2021)
- D. Email, RE: Airfield Park vs a Neighborhood Eastgate Park (10-28-2021)

14. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

None.

15. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion by Boardmember Synn and second by Boardmember Kumar to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (7-0).