



OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST BOARD REGULAR MEETING MINUTES January 17, 2019

Call To Order:

Vice Chair Bender called the meeting to order at 6:20 pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 9611 SE 36th Street, Mercer Island, WA 98040.

Roll Call:

Vice Chair Marie Bender, Secretary Thomas Hildebrandt, Trustee Geraldine Poor, Trustee Craig Olson, Trustee Carol Lynn Berseth, Council Liaison Bruce Bassett. Chair Rory Westberg was absent.

Staff present were Paul West, Park Operations Superintendent, Alaine Sommargren, Natural Resources Manager, and Kim Frappier, Natural Resources Specialist.

Minutes:

Trustee Poor motioned and Council Liaison Bassett seconded to: Approve the September minutes. Motion passed: 6-0.

Public Appearances:

There were no public appearances.

Regular Business:

(I) Rotary Peace Pole Project

Superintendent West provided a summary of the discussion from the September Open Space Trust meeting regarding the Peace Pole Project. Representatives from the Rotary Club, Elizabeth Baska (Community Chair) and Carol Friends presented on the vision of the project and the plan to hold a "Walk for Peace", where participants will walk from pole to pole throughout the City. Ms. Baska provided potential locations for the Peace Pole (attachment included with minutes). Trustees discussed the pros and cons of each location and suggested an alternative location on the Southwest corner of the Northwest quadrant. This location would allow more people to congregate near the pole without impacting fragile forest vegetation. The Rotary Club representatives agreed with this recommendation.

Action Taken:

Trustee Hildebrandt moved and Council Liaison Bassett amended and seconded that: **The Trust Board shall direct Parks and Recreation staff to choose the exact location of the Peace Pole, in the Southwest corner of the Northwest quadrant.** Motion passed 6-0

(II) Open Space Program Overview

Natural Resources Manager Sommargren presented an overview of the Open Space Program to provide context into how the Parks and Recreation Department manages city open spaces, in relation to Pioneer Park. Superintendent Paul West provided additional information on the program history and budget, including information on levy funding. This presentation was made at the request of Trustees to further the discussion as to whether or not additional open space properties should be under the jurisdiction of the

Open Space Conservancy Trust. The presentation included a history of the Natural Resources program, an overview of the 2018 budget, an analysis of the budget since 2008, and references to the city plans that guide and govern the work. It also included two case studies demonstrating the restoration work accomplished in other open spaces: Island Crest Park and Cayhill Open Space. She noted that the restoration management approach does not differ greatly between Trust and non-Trust properties. Due to budget constraints and rising contractor costs, the program has been in a maintenance-only management strategy and not undertaking any new comprehensive projects.

Natural Resources Manager Sommargren noted that the discussion of whether additional open spaces should be under the jurisdiction of the Trust is only one piece of a larger discussion. The Parks Director, Jessi Bon, plans to participate further in this discussion when she returns from maternity leave in early March. Other issues that affect this conversation include: 1) The City Council has recently approved the creation of a Parks and Recreation Commission which will serve in a policy advisor role beginning this coming June. What is included in their oversight may have an impact on the decision to add additional open space to the Trust; 2) Creation of the upcoming *Parks and Recreation and Open Space Plan* (PROS Plan). This is an important plan that guides the work of the department and qualifies the city for important state funding.

Natural Resources Manager Sommargren added that Natural Resources staff continue to work on researching the deed restrictions on all open space properties and will report out on this at the March meeting. This will be another important piece of information that will inform this discussion.

Discussion: Trustees inquired into more details about the creation of the Parks and Recreation Commission and how that body will interface with or impact the work of the Open Space Conservancy Trust. Trustees raised the issue that open space management and conservation requires a different set of expertise than developed parks and recreation programming. Trustees agreed that they would like to have the Parks and Recreation Director back for further discussion on this issue.

(III) Contracted Restoration and Prevailing Wage Change

Natural Resources Manager Sommargren presented information about the change to prevailing wage rates set by the Washington State Labor and Industries and how this is expected to increase costs for contracted restoration work.

(IV) 2018 Annual Report and 2019 Work Plan

Natural Resources Manager Sommargren presented the draft 2018 Annual Report and draft 2019 Work Plan. Natural Resources Specialist Frappier provided clarification on the difference between invasive tree treatment and invasive tree treatment maintenance. She also provided information about the new forest steward, James Rollo, who has been volunteering in Pioneer Park. Natural Resources Manager Sommargren provided clarification on the boundary tree assessments completed in the park. Trustees asked to have staff add more detailed trail volunteer information to the annual report similar to how it is outlined in the Forest Health and Management section.

Regarding the 2019 Work Plan, Trustees asked when they could expect to provide feedback on the PROS plan. Staff reported that this would be no earlier than September. Staff will add this to the September work plan. Trustees also asked about the new north-south bike facility. Superintendent West and Council Liaison Bassett provided additional information on the proposed project. Trustees asked to add Letterboxing preparation to the March meeting.

No Action Taken

(V) Quadrant Reports

NW Quadrant: Trustee Berseth and Trustee Bender

No report

NE Quadrant: Chair Westberg, Council Liaison Bassett, and Trustee Poor
No report

SE Quadrant: Trustee Hildebrandt and Trustee Olson
No report

Trustees noted that they were pleased with how the parks staff cleaned up after the storms we experienced last week.

(VI) Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for March 21, 2019.

Adjournment: 8:16 pm

Marie Bender, Vice Chair

Attest:

Kim Frappier, Scribe