



OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST BOARD REGULAR MEETING MINUTES MARCH 17, 2016

Call To Order:

Chair Poor called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Roll Call:

Chair Poor, Vice Chair Weiker, Secretary Lanzinger, Council Liaison Sanderson, Trustee Christy and Trustee Westberg were present. Trustee Newman was absent.

Staff Present:

Bruce Fletcher, Parks and Recreation Director
Paul West, Park Operations Superintendent
Alaine Sommargren, Natural Resource Manager
Kim Frappier, Natural Resources Specialist

Minutes:

It was moved by Trustee Westberg, seconded by Trustee Christy, to:

Approve the minutes of January 21, 2016.

Motion passed 6-0.

Appearances:

The following Mercer Island residents spoke regarding the proposed change to the current off-leash dog designation in the NW Quadrant of Pioneer Park.

Marie Bender, 7890 81st Place SE, spoke in support of the current off-leash policy, the need to engage the community in the policy discussion, and expressed concern over having off-leash dogs in the same quadrant as horses. She stated that the NW quadrant of Pioneer Park is the only natural setting on the island where a person and their dog can walk together off leash and encourages the trust board to fully evaluate all variables, including the impacts to the community. She provided an email with suggestions for education and trail improvements.

Peter Struck, 9130 SE 54th Street, spoke regarding the importance of receiving more citizen input and having greater transparency in the policy discussion noting the lack of detail provided in the Board's meeting minutes. Mr. Struck also discussed the legal ramifications of settlements related to off-leash dog incidents and the need for improved public education and code enforcement of existing laws.

Warren Appleton, 2822 60th Avenue SE, is a dog owner who spoke to the 30-year history of Pioneer Park and the collaborative community input used to develop and manage the park over the years. He stated that this precedence is an important thing. He noted that dog owners create additional trails through the woods following their dogs, particularly in the north end of the park. He suggested that dog owners should carry a leash even when their dog is off-leash and the need to limit access to social trails.

Traci Granbois, 8440 SE 82nd Street, spoke in support of the current off-leash policy and the challenging issue of dogs entering private property adjacent to the park with no fencing. She noted that the homes in the northeast area of the north boundary do not have fences and suggested that a fence or hedge be

constructed to delineate where the park ends and private property begins.

David Whitus, 8930 SE 54th Street, spoke in support of the current off-leash dog policy and questioned whether or not the city has studied the type and quantity of park users and the need for further analysis on the issue before a new policy is adopted. He raised concern over having off-leash dogs in the same quadrant as horses.

Bob Stoney, 7920 East Mercer Way, spoke in support of the current off-leash policy and submitted email to board with suggested solutions. He raised concern over being moved into area with horses and the need for some dog owners to better monitor their dogs. Mr. Stoney stated that he would like to see the board take an "intermediate step" to develop a policy that takes into account the needs of the majority of park users and does not completely limit dog owners.

Barry Briggs, 7901 Northbrook Lane, spoke in support of the current off-leash policy. Mr. Briggs shared his experience as a dog owner who visits Pioneer Park each day for the past 8 years. He stated that Pioneer Park is a special gathering place for dog owners and Mercer Island residents to build community and where dogs can romp in the forest. Mr. Briggs stated that he did not understand the negative impacts dogs have on the forest flora and fauna and would like to preserve the current policy.

Roxanne Springwater, 6825 84th Avenue SE, spoke in support of the current off-leash policy. She stated that there is a large community of residents that utilize Pioneer Park. She described her experience as a dog owner who respects the needs of all park users, specifically her efforts to read body language of others using the park and the need to leash her dog when he is too exuberant or not responding to her voice commands. She has not personally witnessed any aggression by dogs in the park and described the health benefits that off-leash areas provide dogs.

Allison Lewis, 4759 Fernridge Lane, spoke in support of the current off-leash policy. She spoke of the value of open space in the city of Mercer Island and why she appreciates the communal atmosphere of Pioneer Park. She visits Pioneer Park 5 days per week. She stated that she has rarely witnessed dogs being aggressive toward humans and believes dog owners are taking responsibility for their dogs including picking up and disposing of excrement. There are other quadrants that could be used by others who do not want to be around dogs. She noted that this quadrant of Pioneer Park is a multi-purpose area and not intended just for walking or running.

Regular Business:

(I) Dog off-leash feedback – Paul West and Trustees

Bruce Fletcher, Director of Parks and Recreation, acknowledged the public feedback received regarding the off-leash dog area and the additional analysis the city will do in the coming months. Bruce reported that the public feedback and analysis will be provided to the city council for their June planning session.

Paul West presented the proposal to hold a public forum in May to gather input and suggestions related to documented concerns about the off-leash dog policy in the NW Quadrant. The board discussed what the process and timeline will be moving forward. The Trust discussed the city-wide survey sent to the community regarding the leash laws. Survey data will also be provided to the City council for the June planning session.

Council Liaison Sanderson asked whether the Parks department will also be examining the issue of off-leash dogs in other city parks and folding it into a city-wide recommendation. Bruce Fletcher reported that the Parks Subcommittee will be reviewing this issue for Mercerdale Park.

Secretary Lanzinger noted the challenge the Board faces in examining this decision since the property is managed as a conservancy and tasked with protecting the natural resources of Pioneer Park, which is somewhat different than other parks in the city.

It was moved by Secretary Lanzinger, seconded by Trustee Westberg to

Hold a public forum in May to further examine the off-leash dog policy in the NW quadrant of Pioneer Park.

Motion passed 6-0

(II) Annual Report to Council – Alaine Sommargren

Alaine Sommargren reported that the 2015 annual report, which includes the 2016 work plan, will be presented on the City Council consent calendar at the meeting on April 18th. Trustees determined that the work plan should be revised to reflect the public forum in May. Trustees decided that the Summer Trail Work Plan and Herbicide Report will remain on the agenda for May 19 and the Root Disease discussion will be moved to July 21.

(III) Leap for Green/Letterboxing – Robin Christy

Trustee Christy discussed the tasks and support needed for the Letterboxing activity at the OSCT table for Leap for Green. Trustees discussed the importance of having youth focused educational activities as well as information for parents on restoration events and invasive species.

(IV) Scout trail signage update – Alaine Sommargren

Alaine Sommargren presented pictures of the Eagle Scout wayfinding signs installed throughout the interior of the NW Quadrant. Secretary Lanzinger will send the Eagle Scout a thank you note on behalf of the OSCT Board.

(V) Quadrant Reports - Trustees

Vice Chair Weiker reported that the Trillium is in full bloom, a little earlier this season. He also asked whether the owl signs should come down in the NW Quadrant. Paul West confirmed that the signs will be taken down.

Trustee Lanzinger reported that the SE Quadrant trail has a lot of ruts and is widening due to the consistent rain and that this will likely clear up as the site dries up. She also reported that cars are pulling into the grassy areas along Island Crest Way and causing muddy ruts. Paul reported that the problem should resolve as the area dries up, but staff and Trustees should continue to monitor this issue.

Adjournment: 7:06 pm

Geraldine Poor, Chair

Attest:

Kim Frappier, Scribe