

# City of Mercer Island

## OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST BOARD

Thursday · March 21 · 2019

Regular Meeting Agenda

6:00 pm Call to Order & Roll Call

6:05 pm Minutes of January 17, 2019 Meeting

6:10 pm Public Appearances

6:15 pm Regular Business

- |                                           |                            |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Staff changes at Parks & Recreation    | Jessi Bon (5 min)          |
| 2. 2018 Annual Report &<br>2019 Work Plan | Alaine Sommargren (5 min)  |
| 3. Deed restriction research update       | Paul West (10 min)         |
| 4. Letterboxing program support           | Alaine Sommargren (10 min) |
| 5. Parks & Recreation Commission          | Jessi Bon (30 min)         |
| 6. Quadrant reports                       | Trustees (10 min)          |
| 7. Next Meeting: <b>May 16, 2019</b>      | Chair (5 min)              |

7:30 pm Adjournment (estimated)

### BOARD MEMBERS

Rory Westberg, *Chair*  
Marie Bender, *Vice Chair*  
Thomas Hildebrandt, *Secretary*  
David Wisenteiner, *Council Liaison*  
Carol Lynn Berseth  
Craig Olson  
Geraldine Poor

### STAFF

Jessi Bon, *Parks and Recreation Director*  
Paul West, *Parks Planning Manager*  
Alaine Sommargren, *Interim Parks Operations Manager*  
Kim Frappier, *Natural Resources Specialist*





# 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

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Marie Bender, Vice Chair

Attest:

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Kim Frappier, Scribe

## Open Space Conservancy Trust

### 2018 Annual Report to City Council

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#### TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS AND ELECTIONS

Councilmember David Wisenteiner served as the Council Liaison through March 2018. Councilmember Bruce Bassett took this position beginning in May 2018. Vice Chair Robin Christy ended her service on the Board in May and was replaced by Trustee Carol Lynn Berseth. The annual election of officers took place at the July meeting. Chair Rory Westberg was reelected to the Chair position for a second term, Trustee Bender was elected as Vice Chair, and Trustee Thomas Hildebrandt elected for a second term as Secretary.

#### MERCER ISLAND PARKS AND RECREATION, NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM

The Natural Resources program is tasked with implementing the Pioneer Park Forest Health Plan as well as all trail building and maintenance on Trust properties. Natural Resources Staff include:

Alaine Sommargren, Natural Resources Manager  
Kim Frappier, Natural Resources Specialist  
Andrew Prince, Trails and Urban Forestry Specialist  
Hannah Van Pelt, Natural Resources Assistant

#### FOREST HEALTH AND MANAGEMENT

The Open Space program continues to implement the recommendations outlined in the Pioneer Park Forest Health Plan (FHP) adopted in 2008. Implementation of the FHP slowed in 2015-2016 compared to previous biennia. Restoration efforts in the park are overall on track, particularly regarding invasive tree treatments and ivy ring creation. Some area units required replanting and additional planting maintenance in addition to what is called for in the FHP benchmarks. This was due to high plant mortality and site conditions. Between 2009 and 2014, the Open Space program was able to get ahead of schedule due to a favorable bidding climate and lower contracting costs. In 2015, the regional demand for qualified restoration contractors increased and restoration costs increased significantly. Natural Resources staff continue to advance restoration priorities while addressing challenges and making effective use of available resources. The following outlines actual progress made to date versus proposed benchmarks outlined in the 2008 FHP:

**Table 1. Forest Health Plan Cumulative Progress in Pioneer Park, 2009-2018**

Restoration Task	Proposed (acres)	Actual (acres)
Invasive tree treatment	93	105
Invasive tree treatment maintenance	60	4
Ivy ring creation	56	76
Tree planting	79	70
<i>Replanting due to high mortality</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>14</i>
Plant maintenance (1 year post-planting)	72	66
<i>Additional plant maintenance due to site conditions</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>70</i>

#### Forest Health Survey – 10-year data collection

The Pioneer Park Forest Health Plan specified that data be recollected every ten years, to track changes in ecological health. In summer 2018, the City hired two field technicians to collect vegetation data in the plots established for the 2008 Pioneer Park Forest Health Survey. The new data will be analyzed in early 2019 and results will be presented to the Open Space Conservancy Trust Board in the second quarter of 2019.

## 2018 Accomplishments

In 2018, approximately 38 acres of Trust properties received restoration work from combined efforts of the Parks and Recreation Natural Resources seasonal crew, professional contractors, and volunteers.

### Professional contractors

- Invasive removal maintenance 2.6 acres
- Ivy rings 7.8 acres
- Planting maintenance 20.5 acres
- Planting 700 plants installed on 5.8 acres (495 trees/ 205 shrubs)
- Watering 500 plants on 5.3 acres

### Volunteers

Mercer Island Parks and Recreation contracts with EarthCorps to lead volunteer stewardship events at Pioneer Park as well as conduct outreach in the community to engage and educate Mercer Island residents about forest restoration. Most of EarthCorps' work this year focused on maintenance sweeps along 84<sup>th</sup> Ave SE in the NW quadrant, first-time invasive removal of ground ivy, and planting.

- Events 6
- Volunteers 161 adults; 425 youth
- Volunteer hours 1554 hours
- Invasive removal 0.78 acre
- Maintenance 1.5 acres
- Planting 177 total plants (74 trees/ 314 shrubs)

### Organizations/companies engaged:

Beaver Lake Middle School	Islander Middle School
Bellevue College	Kenworth
Cascadia College	Liberty High School DECA
Farmers Insurance	Mercer Island High School
Girl Scouts	Microsoft
Heatherwood Middle School	University of Washington
Holy Names Academy	

In addition to EarthCorps volunteers, Forest Steward James Rollo and volunteer Jenny Rietzler volunteered 15 hours in the park this fall removing invasive plant species in the NW and NE quadrants. Additionally, this volunteer team replanted the area adjacent to the NW kiosk and the PSE trail corridor in the SE quadrant.

### Natural Resources Seasonal Staff

In 2018, the Natural Resources seasonal crew consisted of three field staff. Under the direction of the Natural Resources Specialist, the crew conducted noxious weed monitoring, mapping and treatments, maintained plantings, and performed invasive tree treatments on English holly and cherry laurel. In addition, the seasonal crew completed comprehensive invasive removal through the PSE trail corridor on the north side of the SE quadrant.

## LETTERBOXING PROGRAM

The Letterboxing Program kicked-off during *Leap for Green* on April 14<sup>th</sup> where children learned about letterboxing and made rubber stamps to use during the program. National Trails Day, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, marked the official start to Letterboxing Season. The program attracted approximately 600 participants over the summer. The 2018 Letterboxing Committee consisted of Elizabeth Cross-Nichol, Kim Borden, and Jennifer Gaspers. The OSCT Board held a ceremony at City Hall on January 17, 2019 to recognize kids who turned in their completed clue books.

Each participant received a certificate of completion, their completed clue book, and a small gift. Refreshments were provided as part of the celebration.

## LEASH POLICY EDUCATION EFFORTS

In 2018, Parks and Recreation Natural Resources staff continued to publish and distribute the brochure “Dog Owner’s Guide to Mercer Island Parks” which provides park users with information about voice/signal control and location of off-leash versus on-leash parks. The brochure is distributed at the Pioneer Park kiosk as well as park kiosks across the City and the Mercer Island Community and Events Center.

## TRAILS

The Natural Resources team continued to manage trails for safety and access in 2018. Trails are brushed a minimum of two times during the growing season with an emphasis on proper pruning techniques on larger woody plants. Fall leaf drop was blown off major trails to prevent organic muddy material from building up on trails. More substantial trail tread improvements were also completed in 2018. The Horse Trail in the NW quadrant received a new gravel coating and substantial work to build grade dips that would drain water off the trailway. Finally, with the help of Parks Maintenance staff, sixty tons of gravel were spread over the NW quadrant Perimeter trails to mitigate winter puddling and refresh the firm walking surface.

### Volunteers

Mercer Island Parks and Recreation contracts with Mountains to Sound Greenway (MTSG) to lead volunteer restoration and trail events across the City. In 2018, MTSG lead volunteers in trail maintenance work on sections of the Woodpecker and Alder Trails. Supplemental gravel was spread to eliminate deep muddy spots.

- Events 2
- Volunteers 5 adult; 25 youth
- Volunteer Hours 139 hours

Organizations engaged: Overlake School  
LEADprep

## URBAN FORESTRY

Tree risk mitigation is the focus of our Urban Forestry efforts in Pioneer Park. Certified staff arborists make decisions each year to remove dead, dying, or structurally defective trees to lessen the risk of trees falling on people, property, or causing interference with utility lines or roadways. It is our preference to retain trees through corrective pruning or as wildlife snags when possible, but tree removals are occasionally necessary. In the case of whole tree removals, we keep the wood from the tree on site as habitat and so its decomposition may improve the soil.

This year, the City contracted the removal of eleven trees as risk mitigation and had one tree pruned for retention. Total area of Pioneer Park assessed in 2018 was down substantially from previous years. In 2016, staff completed a full boundary assessment of Pioneer Park, and partial boundary assessments were performed in 2017 and 2018.



## MERCER ISLAND OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST 2019 Work Plan

January 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Recognition of 2018 Letterboxing program participants</b></li><li>• <b>Annual Report to Council:</b> The Trust is required in its by-laws to report to City Council each year on the status of Trust properties.</li><li>• <b>Work Plan:</b> The Trust develops a list of topics that it intends to address during the year (this document). This work plan is submitted to City Council with the Annual Report as a courtesy.</li><li>• <b>Open Space Management overview:</b> Staff will provide information about current vegetation management practices in non-Trust open space properties.</li><li>• <b>Rotary Peace Pole project:</b> Staff and/or Rotary representative will present information about the project and request the placement of a Peace Pole on Trust properties.</li><li>• <b>Quadrant Reports (ongoing item):</b> Trustees will report on the condition of certain quadrants at Trust board meetings.</li></ul>
March 21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>MI Open Space Deed/Plat Restrictions:</b> Staff to report on restrictions on non-Trust open space properties</li><li>• <b>Letterboxing (ongoing item):</b> The Trust board will continue to sponsor and support an annual Letterboxing program for youth on Mercer Island.</li></ul>
May 16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Restoration Work Plan:</b> City staff report to the Trust its planned restoration activities in the spring of each year, and recap work completed in the previous year.</li><li>• <b>Summer Trail Work Plan:</b> City staff report to the Trust its intended maintenance activities in the spring of each year, and recap work completed in the previous year.</li><li>• <b>Forest Health Survey Data Results:</b> Staff to report on results of 10-year data collection efforts and changes since initial data collection in 2008.</li><li>• <b>Off-leash dogs:</b> The Trust will evaluate success of education measures over the past year and discuss possible changes.</li></ul>
July 18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Herbicide application report:</b> The Trust adopted an herbicide use protocol that requires City staff to report on the use of herbicides on Trust properties each year.</li><li>• <b>Election of Officers:</b> The Trust is required by its bylaws to elect officers at its July meeting each year.</li><li>• <b>Island Crest Way North-South Bike Facility:</b> If applicable to Trust properties, Trust will provide feedback on modifications to bike route.</li></ul>
September 19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Eagle Project recognition:</b> The Trust will recognize Eagle projects that have benefitted Trust Properties.</li><li>• <b>PROS Plan feedback:</b> The Trust will provide feedback to the Parks and Recreation department regarding the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan draft.</li></ul>
November 21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Recognition of 2019 letterboxing program participants</b></li></ul>

Note: The listing of an item under a particular month means that the item will be introduced at that meeting. There will be follow-up discussions and decisions at subsequent meetings as directed by the Chair.