

# City of Mercer Island

## OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST BOARD

Thursday · January 18 · 2018  
Regular Meeting Agenda

6:00 pm Call to Order & Roll Call

6:05 pm Minutes of November 16, 2017 Meeting

6:10 pm Public Appearances

6:15 pm Regular Business

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Evaluation of Trust Properties      | Alaine Sommargren (20 min) |
| 2. Annual Report and Work Plan         | Alaine Sommargren (20 min) |
| 3. Hatheway Bench                      | Paul West (10 min)         |
| 4. PSE Line Clearance                  | Alaine Sommargren (5 min)  |
| 5. Leap for Green participation        | Rory Westberg (10 min)     |
| 6. Quadrant Reports                    | Trustees (5 min)           |
| 7. Next Meeting: <b>March 15, 2018</b> | Rory Westberg (5 min)      |

7:30 pm Adjournment (estimated)

### BOARD MEMBERS

Rory Westberg, *Chair*  
Robin Christy, *Vice Chair*  
Thomas Hildebrandt, *Secretary*  
David Wisenteiner, *Council Liaison*  
Marie Bender  
Craig Olson  
Geraldine Poor

### STAFF

Paul West, *Parks Operations Superintendent*  
Alaine Sommargren, *Natural Resources Manager*  
Kim Frappier, *Natural Resources Specialist*





# OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST BOARD REGULAR MEETING MINUTES NOVEMBER 16, 2017

## Call To Order:

Vice Chair Westberg called the meeting to order at 6:29 pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 9611 SE 36th Street, Mercer Island, WA 98040.

## Roll Call:

Chair Rory Westberg, Vice Chair Robin Christy, Secretary Thomas Hildebrandt, Trustee Marie Bender, Trustee Craig Olson, and Trustee Geraldine Poor were present. Council Liaison David Wisenteiner was absent.

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

## Minutes:

Trustee Bender requested additional detail be added to the July minutes regarding the discussion on the memorial bench to Pioneer Park NW. Trustee Bender moved and Trustee Olson seconded to:

**Adopt the minutes of the July 20, 2017 meeting with additional detail regarding the reasons for making the decision, the request for symmetry of the benches, and the public benefits of the bench.** Motion passed 6-0.

## Public Appearances:

There were no public appearances.

## Regular Business:

### (I) City Board Training

City Clerk Ali Spietz provided an overview of parliamentary procedure, the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), and minutes. City Clerk Spietz and Trustees discussed when to make a motion, absenteeism, rules for communication outside meetings with other Trustees and City staff, and the number of Trustees required for a quorum. City Clerk Spietz reminded the Board that the Open Space Trust's bylaws specify that five people are required for a quorum. Trustees may discuss this requirement at a future meeting. She also noted that Council Liaison Wisenteiner is a voting member of the Trust Board.

### (II) Bike Trail Resurfacing Update

Superintendent West reported that the bike trail resurfacing project is complete.

### (III) Park furniture installations and repairs

Superintendent West reported that a bench installed as a memorial for Marion Hathaway needs renovation. He explained that the wood is rotting and needs to be replaced and would be a significant costly repair. The bench installed was unique and had original bird art included in its design. City policy dictates that after a donor pays for a bench, the City owns the bench and maintains the plaque, removing graffiti. The City does not replace a bench once it has reached 'the end of its lifespan'. This bench was

installed before that policy was enacted. Superintendent West stated that Parks staff are trying to contact the original donor to see if they want to replace the bench. He asked for the Trust Boards guidance on how they would like to handle this case. Trustees discussed the history of and policies regarding memorial benches in Pioneer Park. Trust Board members agreed to revisit this discussion in January to give staff time to contact the original donor. If the original donor cannot be found or does not want to replace the bench, Trustees will discuss a plan moving forward.

Natural Resources Manager Sommargren reported that the new bench requested for the NW Quadrant near the redwood tree will be installed in seven to eight weeks.

Natural Resources Manager Sommargren provided an overview of a new fencing project in Pioneer Park NW. The area in question, adjacent to the trailhead in the northwest corner, is heavily used which has caused soil compaction. Native vegetation has been difficult to establish. To inhibit foot and dog traffic through the site, staff propose installing a semi-permanent post and rail fence along this section of trail, approximately 130 feet in length. This will be the same style used in other parts of the park. The Trust Board discussed whether to include signage. Natural Resources Manager added that staff would include temporary educational signage on the fence and will plan to incorporate wood chips into the soil to add organic matter.

(IV) Evaluation of Trust Properties – Follow-up

Natural Resources Manager Sommargren reported that Natural Resources Staff are discussing possible recommendations for evaluating Trust Properties. Staff are taking into considering the Boards desire to use photo-monitoring as well as have quantitative data. Staff will provide recommendations at the January meeting.

(V) Quadrant Reports

NW Quadrant – Vice-chair Poor reported that the planting lead by Earth Corps looks good and that they had over 50 high school students at the volunteer event.

NE Quadrant – Trustees reported seeing trees down before and after the recent storm.

SE Quadrant – Trustee Olson reported that horse poop left on the trail is a continued problem.

(VI) Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for January 18, 2018.

**Adjournment:** 7:30 pm

---

Rory Westberg, Chair

Attest:

---

Kim Frappier, Scribe



**CITY OF MERCER ISLAND  
OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST BOARD  
STAFF REPORT**

**Action Item No. 1**

**January 18, 2018**

---

Description:	Evaluation of Trust properties
--------------	--------------------------------

## **BACKGROUND**

The Bylaws of the Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust Board state:

At or before the regular meeting in July of each year, review the status of Trust and each of the Trust properties and report the [sic] City Council on the condition of the various properties with any recommendations concerning how the Trust properties may be managed to preserve them as open space properties and any other recommendations on how the purpose of the trust [sic] could be better accomplished.

In 2016, Trust board discussions about off-leash dogs in Pioneer Park raised a question about the impacts of off-leash dogs to the park. There was no available data to show whether dogs were contributing to the observed degradation of vegetation. This question was moved to the Trust's 2017 Work Plan.

At the July 2017 meeting, staff reported to the Trust that the methods and goals of evaluating the condition of Trust properties have never been established. Annual Reports to Council have typically been focused on activities and actions that have taken place on Trust properties in the previous year: restoration work, trail maintenance, special events, tree removals, and park issues. These reports do not objectively report on the 'condition' of the properties, but provide information about actions that affect the condition.

There have been objective surveys of the condition of Trust properties contained in the 2003 Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan, the 2008 Forest Health Survey and the 2014 Open Space Vegetation Plan Ten Year Update. Forest measurements in these studies have given us objective data on the condition of Trust properties. These surveys have demonstrated a gradual improvement of the ecological condition of Trust properties. However they mostly provide an aggregate analysis of the condition and do not give us the ability to evaluate conditions in a small portion of the park.

At the July 2017 meeting, Staff suggested that the Trust decide if there are certain methodologies they would like to see used to provide objective information about the site of the properties, and could be used in the Trust's Annual Report to City Council. At both the July and November 2017 meetings, Staff and Trustees discussed the importance of defining the goals of

the evaluation. Proposed goals included understanding impacts from various recreational uses, tracking changes in ecological health, and determining larger scale vegetation changes.

Staff has reviewed options for evaluating ecological conditions. They are found in the following table. Plot surveys and Lidar orthophotography are better options for aggregate evaluations. Photo points and time lapse photography are two methods that can be employed to document local phenomena. Photo points have proven to be problematic to use. The view from any photo point typically remains “green” over time, and deciphering the composition of the vegetation is problematic to impossible. Time lapse photography, including cameras that are triggered by motion sensor can show what actions may be contributing to ground conditions. However, these technologies are not reliable in capturing the intended subject. Moving objects are often indistinct or out of range by the time the image is taken. It becomes difficult to draw any conclusions from the images. At the same time, the work to evaluate thousands of images can take hours of staff time.

## EVALUATION METHOD OPTIONS

Method	Performed in past?	Information provided	Pros	Cons
Vegetation plot sampling	Yes	Fine-grain, objective data about vegetation and other ecological factors; includes photopoints	Provides long-term information that tracks progress and can guide decision making	Does not provide year-to-year information about change
LIDAR and orthophotography	Yes	Large-scale evaluation of canopy condition	Provides objective data about canopy changes over time	Expensive; does not provide fine-scale information
Photo points	Yes	Can track change over time in open areas	Can illustrate large changes over time in easy-to-understand format	No objective basis for evaluation; limited value in forested settings; requires regular visits over long term
Time-lapse photography or video	No	Can track park use volume and impacts	Provides immediate information, can target specific areas	Limited objective basis for evaluation

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the current approach to the Annual Report be maintained, to provide City Council with information about activities and work on Trust properties, and notify them about topics that will be addressed by the OSCT Board in the coming year. Staff also recommends that data continue to be collected in vegetation plot surveys. We believe that the best choice would be to continue collecting data from the permanent vegetation plots established for the 2008 Forest Health Survey on a 10-year cycle. This data collection includes two photo points for each of the 56 plots. Over time, the data will provide valuable, objective information about the success of restoration efforts and the ecological health of Pioneer Park. The photo points may also prove to be useful in the long run. The information provided by this study can be added to the Annual Report in the year following data collection.

Given the difficulty of using photography to collect local data, staff cannot recommend time lapse photography or video at this time without better definition of goals and objectives. If the Trust would like to track park use volumes, determine causes of park damage or impacts, or capture wildlife use of Trust properties, there may be methods that can capture useful data, but it will require expertise that staff does not currently have.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

---

Discuss desired goals/outcomes from evaluation. Discuss staff recommendations.



**CITY OF MERCER ISLAND  
OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST BOARD  
STAFF REPORT**

**Action Item No. 2**

**January 18, 2018**

---

Description:	Annual Report to City Council
Exhibits:	1. Draft 2017 Annual Report
	2. Draft 2018 Work Plan

## **BACKGROUND**

The ordinance that established the Open Space Conservancy Trust requires that the Trust report to City Council each year on its activities of the past year and the condition of the Trust properties.

## **PROCESS**

Parks and Recreation staff have drafted a report from 2017 meeting minutes. The Trustees may discuss the report and suggest changes at the January meeting. Staff will finalize the report in conjunction with the Chair. The report will be presented to City Council on the Consent Calendar at the March 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. The report will also include the 2018 Work Plan.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

---

Discuss draft report and work plan, and suggest additions or edits.



# Open Space Conservancy Trust

## 2017 Annual Report to City Council

---

### TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS AND ELECTIONS

In March 2017, Councilmember Jeff Sanderson resigned as Council Liaison to the Trust Board. Councilmember David Wisenteiner was appointed to fill this vacancy. The annual election of officers took place at the July meeting. Vice Chair Rory Westberg was elected to the Chair position, replacing Geraldine Poor who will continue to serve on the Board as a Trustee. Trustee Robin Christy was elected to the Vice Chair position, and Trustee Thomas Hildebrandt to the Secretary position.

### 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  
Andy Prince, Trails and Urban Forestry Specialist  
Hannah Van Pelt, Natural Resources Assistant

### FOREST HEALTH AND MANAGEMENT

Progress continues on the Pioneer Park Forest Health Plan. In 2017, approximately 25 acres of Trust properties received restoration work from combined efforts of the Parks and Recreation Natural Resources seasonal crew, professional contractors, and volunteers.

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

#### Professional contractors

- Invasive removal maintenance 1.6 acres
- Ivy rings 11.6 acres
- Planting maintenance 2.2 acres
- Planting 500 plants installed on 5.5 acres (379 trees/ 120 shrubs)

#### 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.

- Events 7
- Volunteers 100 adults; 268 youth
- Volunteer hours 1,009 hours
- Invasive removal 0.5 acre (IMS event)
- Maintenance 2.5 acres
- Planting 177 total plants (47 trees/ 169 shrubs)
- Ivy Survival Rings 60 trees
- Organizations/companies engaged:

Stroum Jewish Community Center  
Cummins Inc.  
Islander Middle School  
Liberty High School DECA

Microsoft  
Mercer Island National Honor Society  
Eastside high schools (Redmond, Juanita, Eastlake)  
Farmers Insurance

### Natural Resources Seasonal Staff

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. The seasonal staff also supported the Trails and Urban Forestry Specialist with brush cutting along trails, trail maintenance and repairs, and hazard tree removal.

### Tree Survivorship

During the past five years, Natural Resources Staff have observed high mortality rates on planting sites in the NE and SE quadrants. Native trees and shrubs installed during this time received planting maintenance. In 2016, planting sites were watered by professional contractors in the SE Quadrant.

In summer 2017, Natural Resources staff collected soil samples from the SE Quadrant to assess whether soil conditions could be responsible for the low planting survivorship. Soil analysis included an assessment of soil texture, pH, macro- and micronutrients, aluminum and lead content, as well as soil organic matter. Overall, the soil test results did not provide conclusive evidence of potential causes. Texture was categorized as coarse sandy loam with a high sand/gravel content. Since coarse sandy soils are very well draining and do not hold onto water the way finer textured clay soils do, it could explain why young saplings are struggling to establish. The Puget Sound region has also experienced increasingly dry, hot summers since 2013. In response, staff is taking a more conservative, measured approach to planting projects and prioritizing new planting in areas that generally have more moist soils within the NE quadrant. All trees and shrubs installed in 2017 will be watered and receive planting maintenance by contractors during the 2018 summer field season. Natural Resources staff will continue to work on additional strategies for successful seedling establishment during the coming year.

### **LETTERBOXING PROGRAM**

The Letterboxing Program kicked-off during *Leap for Green* on April 1<sup>st</sup> where children learned about letterboxing and made rubber stamps to use during the program. National Trails Day, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, marked the official start to Letterboxing Season. The program attracted approximately 500 participants over the summer. The 2017 Letterboxing Committee consisted of Elizabeth Cross-Nichol, Kim Borden, and Jennifer Gaspers. The OSCT Board held a ceremony at City Hall on November 16<sup>th</sup> recognizing kids who turned in their completed clue books. Each participant received a certificate of completion, their completed clue book, and a small gift of a plant pot with soil and seeds. Refreshments were provided as part of the celebration.

### **LEASH POLICY EDUCATION EFFORTS**

In 2017, Parks and Recreation Natural Resources staff continued public education efforts regarding dog leash policies in Pioneer Park. The following outlines 2017 accomplishments:

- Distribution of “Dog Owner’s Guide to Mercer Island Parks”, a brochure providing park users with information about voice/signal control and location of off-leash versus on-leash parks.
- Educational signs were installed in January 2017 for the NW and NE quadrants with information and guidance about leash policies and multi-use trails.
- Parks and Recreation hosted two free Voice Control classes with Shawn Crincoli, a Certified Professional Service Dog Trainer with PAWS Training Centers. The trainings held in July and August of 2017, were hosted at Luther Burbank Park and Island Crest Park Sports field. The training focused on learning what voice control means, and why having off-leash and on-leash dogs together is an especially tricky environment for dogs. Dog owners learned how to set their dog (and themselves) up for success in public settings. Over 30 dog owners participated in the trainings.

## **TRAILS**

Drainage improvements were completed on water bars in the Southeast Quadrant this year. This work should help to protect trail grades from water damage. A dead-end trail at the Creek Trail in the Northeast Quadrant was formally closed. A small spur trail extends past the bridge for access to stormwater and sewer manholes. Walkers had been continuing on past the dead end over a wetland area and occasionally into neighbors' yards. Large woody debris and native plantings were used to close off this access and restore the area. A large "trail closed" sign was installed to dissuade future off-trail use of this area.

Sixteen feet of new turnpike was added to an existing structure on the Engstrom Loop Trail and drainage ditches were cleaned at multiple trails across Pioneer Park. The Bike Trail along Island Crest Way received asphalt patching over root intrusions that had caused buckling in the trail, substantially improving conditions on this trail.

## **URBAN FORESTRY**

Each year, Certified Tree Risk Assessors on staff evaluate trees along the boundaries of Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space for health and safety issues. Trees with minor defects are added to the monitor list, while trees with substantial risk factors are either pruned, removed, or converted into wildlife snags. In 2017, one large big leaf maple was removed from Engstrom Open Space, and nine trees were pruned, snagged or removed from Pioneer Park, primarily in the NE Quadrant. These were all relatively small, unhealthy trees that presented some risk of failure near roads, gathering areas, or high-use trails. In addition to routine boundary assessments, Natural Resources staff revisited 17 monitor trees, and identified another seven trees for pruning or removal in 2018.



**MERCER ISLAND  
OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST  
2018 Work Plan**

<b>January 18</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><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>Leap for Green:</b> The Trust will discuss participation in this year's event.</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><li>• <b>Quadrant Reports (ongoing item):</b> Trustees will report on the condition of certain quadrants at Trust board meetings.</li></ul>
<b>March 15</b>
<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>OSCT Bylaw Review:</b> OSCT Bylaws require the Board to review the Trust bylaws every four years for possible amendments.</li></ul>
<b>May 17</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><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>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>Off-leash dogs:</b> The Trust will evaluate success of education measures over the past year, and discuss possible changes.</li></ul>
<b>July 19</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Election of Officers:</b> The Trust is required by its bylaws to elect officers at its July meeting each year.</li></ul>
<b>September 20</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Eagle Project recognition:</b> The Trust will recognize Eagle projects that have benefitted Trust Properties.</li></ul>
<b>November 15</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Recognition of letterboxing 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.