

Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC) Minutes Graham Visitors Center – March 12, 2014

The Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee is a Joint effort of the Arboretum Foundation, Seattle Parks Department, and the University of Washington, and designated by Seattle City Council Ordinance 65130, approved December 27, 1934, and Ordinance 116337, approved September 8, 1992.

Voting Members

Arboretum Foundation

- Paige Miller, Arboretum Foundation Executive Director
- Craig Trueblood, Arboretum Foundation Board President

City of Seattle

- Kenan Block, Mayoral Appointee
- Jack Collins, Mayoral Appointee
- Michael Shiosaki, Seattle Parks, Projects & Planning Division, Director

University of Washington

- *Excused*, Theresa Doherty, University of Washington, Asst. Vice President for Regional Affairs
- Sarah Reichard, University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG), Director
- *Excused*, Iain Robertson, University of Washington, Associate Professor, Dept. of Landscape Architecture

Washington State

- *Excused*, David Towne

Other Staff Present:

- Fred Hoyt, University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG), Associate Director
- Andy Sheffer, Seattle Parks, Senior Project Coordinator
- Rachel Acosta, Seattle Parks and Recreation, ABGC Coordinator

Standing Committees

Building Committee:

AF: Paige Miller; City: TBD; UW: TBD

Partners Committee:

AF: Paige Miller & Craig Trueblood
City: Donald Harris & Christopher Williams
Michael Shiosaki & Leah Tivoli
UW: Tom DeLuca & Sarah Reichard

Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG): AF: Paige Miller & John Wott

City: Michael Shiosaki (lead) & Andy Sheffer

UW: Fred Hoyt & Sarah Reichard

SR520 Technical Committee:

City: David Graves; UW: Theresa Doherty & Fred Hoyt

Opening Items

The March meeting of the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee is called to order at 8:32am. Jack makes a motion to postpone the partner updates in order for Julie Meredith to get on her way.

Everyone agrees. The February minutes will be approved at the next meeting since not everyone had a chance to review them.

Discussion: SR520 – Proposal to save existing columns

Presented by Julie Meredith, WSDOT

Kenan hands out a brief packet with letters of support and information on the history of the “ramps to nowhere” and why there is a movement to see a part of them protected as a memorial to the activism that stopped the RH Thomson expressway from construction.

Julie Meredith explains she was asked by Seattle City Council to weigh in on what steps would need to be taken in order to retain remnants of the “ramps to nowhere.” She reviews the steps WSDOT has already taken that helped them reach their decision to remove the ramps. Outreach on SR520 over the course of years has lead WSDOT through extensive environmental processes, mitigation with the Arboretum and other agencies, and permitting agencies to remove the ramps that function and don’t function. The City Council has weighed in many times, all of which is committed in the record of decision to remove the ramps. WSDOT has made commitments to the state and the city that the ramps would be removed. If it was decided to keep remnants of the “ramps to nowhere” in the wetlands, WSDOT would have to address all those commitments that were previously made. There are also other areas of concern such as: structural stability and a timing issue because the construction bid is going out next month. The board wonders what would this memorial in the wetlands look like in the future and who would maintain it? WSDOT has done many years of public outreach and how would that be addressed if this was reconsidered. WSDOT is asked to consider this and report back to Councilmember Licata. WSDOT is the decision-maker in this although they are seeking input from the ABGC. They feel their commitments to remove it reflects the stakeholders wishes.

Jack provides backstory for those that were not a part of the original decision to remove the ramps; quotes 10/13/2010 meeting minutes which states “ABGC strongly supports removing the ‘ramps to nowhere’ from the Arboretum.” Jack reads the following from the 11/10/10 minutes: “ABGC has been adamant with WSDOT that the large concrete ramps be removed from the Arboretum and – the public would be surprised by a sudden change in this direction. ... The proposal would require a new environmental impact study. Saving these ramps would be a constant reminder of the original damage to the Arboretum from the SR 520 project.”

The idea of saving columns in the wetlands was considered and Parks went through a public process to make the decision to remove them. Michael adds Parks has discussed saving a column for a design in the north entry. The folks that fought to terminate the RH Thomson expressway should be honored somewhere in the north entry but not by leaving cement in the wetlands.

Kenan counters that there was a group of activists and citizens who fought to stop the construction, brought a community together and changed the shape of the city. Kenan thinks the columns left would be a great memorial. The community groups have been very enthusiastic and there’s a lot of public support. He urges the ABGC to go through the public process and study the feasibility of keeping the arch.

Jack clarifies that the ramp in question is one of the “ramps to nowhere”. Fred adds that ABGC did decide this wasn’t the direction they were going. There is a way to recognize this large group of people. He sees it as ironic that the ARCH group is trying to leave something in the wetlands when originally that is what they were trying to avoid. Sarah adds a more powerful way to have people enjoy the contributions of the activists is to have a visual at the viewpoint that shows what it would look like if the RH Thompson had been built.

Julie mentions the website 520history.org which recognizes the work the city did and gives a history of the area.

Andy mentions Parks went through a thorough public process – 16 meetings and 4 public meetings; there was one comment in the pages of minutes that denoted a conflict between some of the public wanting to keep it but there was a lot of support to stay true to the Olmsted legacy. There’s a reason for the direction for the design to remove the columns. Parks staff listened and incorporated the comments from the public meetings. If this is entertained, it would definitely have to be weighed in by the general public and other stakeholders. Paige adds that the Arboretum Foundation board has not weighed in on this. Personally, she thinks the support the idea has received is impressive. Paige notes that none of these people have come to the public meetings or weighed in at the public meetings on the design of the north entry project. She is interested in learning more about the idea.

Craig is looking at it from different angles and he empathizes with WSDOT because they’ve already done so much permitting. Craig also doesn’t know where the board is; he feels it is a good idea to have something to commemorate the passion and commitment to what happened but doesn’t have an answer as to what. Jack feels strongly a decision has already been made and reviewing the decision creates havoc with the permitting agencies and the public who helped make that decision. Jack doesn’t get the connection between leaving columns in the wetlands – the community that fought the RH Thomson did not want concrete in the wetlands. People driving by will have no idea what the columns are doing there. The process went through 4 years of negotiating a mitigation agreement. Montlake Community Council, Madison Park, Olmsted Group all were there and they supported getting rid of all the concrete in the Arboretum. Jack sees that the change in thought or leadership has brought this idea back to the table. Craig wonders if there is a plan to commemorate the conclusion of the RH Thomson Expressway.

Andy says that at the north entry the high point is a good place for interpretation because one could see and understand the impact of the RH Thomson. Michael wants to make sure that the ramps get out as a part of this project; he wants them removed from the wetland! He feels the emphasis should be on the beauty of the wetlands. Jack suggests a public meeting opportunity to express their opinions, at the same time, he feels passionate enough about ramp removal that the ABGC doesn’t need to.

Kenan expresses his wish to preserve the Arboretum as his first and most important job on the ABGC. He understands the concerns and points made by the ABGC but he feels like a public meeting is a good idea. Sarah doesn’t think a public meeting is a good use of time. She suggests a subcommittee that gets together and thinks about what would be an appropriate way to honor this. Michael asks Julie what happens with cost increases and how complicated it would be with

permitting? If process went through, there would be a change order in permitting; they received credit for removing the ramps from the wetlands so there would definitely be a significant cost.

Kenan says the ARCH group is a small, burgeoning group and already they have gained much support. In order for people to understand the arch memorial; there could be an audio tour of the city that would have markers that tell you about the historical interests in the city through the cellphone. Kenan has 2 formal proposals: honoring the activism that stopped the RH Thomson Expressway and out of respect for the work that has been done by the ARCH group, having a public meeting.

Sarah makes a motion to have a subcommittee create a commemoration. Jack feels someone from WSDOT, all 3 ABGC partners, someone from historylink or the ARCH group should sit on this committee. Paige seconds. Michael wants to add a friendly amendment to put it into the conceptual north entry plan. Everyone says aye. Andy adds there are so many people that email him daily regarding the projects in and around the Arboretum and he has received no correspondence on this topic.

Jack raises the topic of a public meeting. Sarah suggests having the public meeting at the April ABGC meeting and bringing some ideas from the newly formed committee so there are options. Michael asks about the feasibility of this change; he doesn't want to lead people toward something that isn't possible this late in the process. Fred wonders about the maintenance of the post/lintel. Kenan would like a public meeting in the evening at which all stakeholders and groups would come. Julie wonders who will pay for the delays in construction and permitting, designs, and all the staff time for going through a full process.

Craig says it is doable but wonders if it is worth the effort. Craig will bring it up at the Arboretum Foundation Board meeting to get their input on this idea. A public meeting without a real focus will fall apart. Kenan agrees; he feels it will be a public airing of the idea, some of the impractical aspects and whether or not this is the best and most appropriate way to commemorate the work of the activists. Andy suggests not having a meeting because they have already had a public process for this. Michael adds the north entry project is not moving forward because there is no money right now.

Paige makes a motion to put this on the Agenda in April for the ABGC meeting. By then the ABGC will have a conceptual idea about alternatives. The known stakeholders will hear about the meeting. Paige says the Arboretum Foundation created this by having the lecture by Frank Butler.

Jack makes a Motion to have an opportunity for people to speak at the April meeting with notice to stakeholders, advocates and opponents; have the initial results of the sub-committee and be prepared to take action soon after that. Kenan adds that they could have a vote to continue this conversation after the next meeting.

Fred says that it would be good to know what the costs would be associated with maintenance. Michael asks if they could flush out the cost of time, permitting, etc... Julie says those numbers would be too difficult to ascertain at this point. Kenan suggests they figure out an estimate for

maintaining a memorial; Michael mentions that maintaining a memorial in the middle of a wetland has much different issues.

Michael clarifies that this would be the April ABGC meeting where there would be opportunity for public comment. Kenan expresses concern that people will get rushed and not have time to express themselves.

Jack calls for a vote on the motion: All those in favor of having a public meeting at the April ABGC meeting that would include a report back from the subcommittee that are looking at alternative ways to commemorate the RH Thomson Expressway and give the public the opportunity to express themselves on this proposal. Everyone says aye!

Budget, Personnel and Other Items

Parks

The Legacy Plan is moving forward. Citizen's Committee took a vote to make a recommendation to the mayor and city council for a package for \$57million and a metropolitan park district. This has moved on to the mayor and city council. Mayor has a press conference tomorrow to give his recommendation.

Arboretum Foundation

Paige shares disappointing news – the license plate bill died on the Washington State Senate floor. Seattle University and Breast Cancer Awareness were able to get theirs through; this was Seattle University's second year. The donor worked hard and is willing to try again next year. The son went down and spoke; he worked very hard on it and did a great job.

Arboretum Foundation Property negotiation - WSDOT has accepted the counteroffer on the property; haven't signed the deal yet but it's an acceptable price. \$125,000.

University of Washington

Marilyn Montgomery thinks they will be able to put some of the SR520 money into endowment.

The UWBG has a new logo and it is really pretty. Sarah gives the members of the ABGC new logo magnets.

MPIG

There were over 10% plant losses in the New Zealand Garden; much of this loss was to be expected and could have been worse with a more severe winter. The UWBG are working to catalog the loss and figure out what needs to be replanted.

Presentation: Arboretum Loop Trail (ALT)

Presented by Andy Sheffer, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Parks held a public meeting at the Graham Visitors Center for the multi-use trail – 60 people came. Andy presented a great slideshow. The public was excited about the project. Their main concerns and wishes were for better connectivity through the neighborhoods and traffic management. Bicycles were a contentious issue.

Jack ran into Paul Gibson, a long-time Montlake neighbor who said he would like the ABGC to know that the Arboretum looks better than it ever has before. Paige adds, Randal attended the meeting and said it was the mildest meeting of Montlakers he's ever attended.

Andy starts the PowerPoint presentation that can be found [here](#). He reviews the public information process; the stakeholders are very active in the decision making.

The connections are important because they are entry points into the arboretum; this design creates bridges and linkages between the adjoining neighborhoods and the Arboretum. The design also connects the bus stops on 23rd and 24th to the Arboretum. Parks will be working with SDOT to create linkages; these goals align with the Pedestrian Master Plan.

Andy articulates the goal of the ALT is to provide the right routes that reduce user conflicts; making sure the correct user is on the correct route. Tools they will use to create the right flow for the users will be: signage, the alignment of curves, the vegetation and bridges. The surfacing will not be typical asphalt but a courser asphalt which will be louder and slow bikers down and there will be centerline striping on s-turns which will discourage commuter cyclists from speeding along the multi-use trail.

Trail alignment and tree preservation: The design team has done extensive work to avoid having to take out trees and is continuing to evaluate. At this point they are looking to remove 127 trees but they will be replaced with similar trees after construction. The trees are not significant collection trees.

At most points the trail will be 14' wide with 2' wide gravel shoulders on either side. On the bridges and behind the cottage the trail will narrow. Until the North Entry is completed, the trail will connect with Arboretum Drive to create the loop.

To maintain the serenity and peacefulness of Azalea Way where it is closest to the ALT, the designers have integrated a lot of planting, buffering and berming to maintain the serenity and peacefulness of Azalea Way. There will be 2 wetland areas developed that are right now very soggy meadows; the UWBG is retaining the opportunity to put in exotic collections in this part of the Arboretum.

Crossing Arboretum Creek – the bridge design has straight vertical handrail; the goal is to keep it as minimal as possible without horizontals to mask the views. This design does not allow for people to lean on the bridge because the design team does not want bridges to be stopping points. This style of bridge allows for many opportunities for design.

SDOT is entertaining the idea of making 31st one way which would help discourage the use of commuters on the multi-use trail. Jack mentions a bike expert came to the public meeting and his major point was that this trail was not for commuter bicyclists. The trail is intended for all level users.

Schedule: going out to bid at the end of 2014; construction starting in the spring of 2015. Hopefully, finished by 2016.

Andy will go to the Arboretum Foundation board meeting to give the Arboretum Loop Trail presentation.

Old/New Business

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourns at 10:26am. Kenan, Jack, and Andy will take a car tour of the ALT, stopping at key places along the way.

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
John B. Collins, ABGC Chair