

APPROVED

Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC) Minutes

Web site: <http://depts.washington.edu/wpa/abgc/>

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.

The ABGC is closely monitoring the WSDOT SR520 project for impacts to the Washington Park Arboretum. Please see <http://depts.washington.edu/wpa/520.htm>

Meeting Location: Graham Visitors Center
August 5, 2009

Voting Members

Present:

Arboretum Foundation

- Barbara Wright, Arboretum Foundation President
- Paige Miller, Arboretum Foundation Executive Director

City of Seattle

- Jack Collins, Mayoral Appointee
- Donald Harris, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Property & Acquisition Services Manager
- Kjrjs Lund, Mayoral Appointee

University of Washington

- Theresa Doherty, University of Washington, Assistant Vice President for Regional Affairs
- Iain Robertson, University of Washington Associate Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture

Washington State

- Dave Towne, Washington State Governor's Appointee

Excused:

- Sandra Lier, University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG) Director

Others Present:

- Lisa Chen, Seattle Parks, Horticulturist for Arboretum
- Tim Gallagher, Seattle Parks, Superintendent
- Dennis Hartmann, UW, Interim Dean of College of the Environment
- Tom Hinckley, Interim Director, School of Forest Resources
- Fred Hoyt, UWBG, Facilities & Grounds Manager
- Melinda Nichols, Seattle Parks, Natural Resources Unit Manager
- Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, Seattle City Council
- Andy Sheffer, Seattle Parks, Project Manager

Staff:

- Sandy Brooks, Coordinator

Standing Committees

Funding Requests to State Legislature: John (AF), Jack (City), & Dave T (Washington State)

Fundraising Policy: AF: Paige Miller & Barbara Wright

City: Tim Gallagher (Chair) & Donald Harris

UW: Tom Hinckley & Sandra Lier

Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG) Michael (lead), Donald, Fred, Julia, Paige, Sandra & Tom Hinckley

Mission Statement: Kathleen Pierce (AF), Donald (City), & Sandra (UW)
Naming Recognition Guideline: Paige (AF), Donald (City), & Sandra (UW)
SR520 Mediation: AF, David Graves (City), & Theresa Doherty (UW)

Attendance at Upcoming Meetings:

- Dave will be absent from the September 9 meeting
- Tim will be absent from the October 14 meeting

ABGC Chair Dave Towne called the meeting to order at 8:30 am and the agenda was approved, as well as the July 8 minutes.

City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen and Dennis Hartmann, the University's Interim Dean of the new College of the Environment, were both welcomed to the meeting, with Councilmember Rasmussen invited as the guest speaker. Introductions were made around the room.

Councilmember Rasmussen

The ABGC invited Councilmember Rasmussen to this meeting to talk about park issues, especially the Arboretum. Councilmember Rasmussen chairs the Council's Parks and Seattle Center Committee.

Councilmember Rasmussen thanked the ABGC for inviting him to the meeting. Prior to attending the meeting, he read the ABGC's most recent meeting minutes and addressed several of the most important topics. He is interested to hear the members' hopes for the Arboretum, and the ABGC will arrange a walking tour of the Arboretum for him. After opening remarks, ABGC members asked a number of questions and made a number of comments. [Note: For ease of reading, the discussions on various topics are grouped together.]

City's Budget: Councilmember Rasmussen distributed a handout that detailed the spending plan for the new Parks and Greenspaces Levy and noted that it includes \$2.5 million for the Arboretum. He thanked the Arboretum Foundation for its strong support of the Levy, and commented that the Levy will help the Parks Department get through a very rough economic time. The Department's budget is \$136 million, with \$90 million of that from the City's general fund. City budget revenues are still declining, although retail sales were up a bit in June. The City anticipates 2010 staff layoffs in the hundreds unless the unions agree to a furlough program.

City Council Committee Positions: Responding to a question from Dave whether he will remain as chair of the Council's Parks and Seattle Center Committee (PASC) in 2010, Councilmember Rasmussen stated that is not yet decided. He believes Councilmember Conlin may again be president of Council and he makes the final committee chair decisions. He will support Councilmember Conlin in an ongoing role as president, as he believes he exerts independence and is a very active president. Some other Council members are also interested in chairing PASC, and there will be two new Councilmembers after the November election. He urged the ABGC members to look at the candidate's records on their support of the Parks and Greenspaces Levy and on transportation issues, especially SR520.

Focus on Arboretum as a Park and Valuable Education Center: Donald noted that the UW Regents recently visited the Arboretum for a tour. ABGC members reminded them that the Arboretum is not only a park, but also one of the University's classrooms. It is unique, the State's only arboretum, and preserves many of the top collections in the country and world.

Arboretum Maintenance Needs: Iain stated that the Arboretum's many collections cannot be adequately maintained without adequate staff. Many, many more staff are needed. Councilmember Rasmussen agreed; however, the City does not have the needed budget to fund the number of positions it needs to take care of its current parks, new greenbelts, and other sites. It must depend on volunteers and Green Seattle Partnership to help Parks with the maintenance.

Jack commented that the Arboretum Foundation has really stepped forward on raising funds for the Arboretum and the City has stepped forward with additional staffing. He believes that the UW should also step forward on funding both operations and capital projects. He doesn't believe the three-member partnership is a fair "three-legged stool."

Tim disagreed and stated that the relationship is very good, and so is the three-legged stool. The bad element is the current economy. Tom Hinckley also addressed this and gave information on the UW's budget concerns. Tim noted that Parks reorganized over a year ago and was able to assign additional staff to the Arboretum. All three partners contribute to the benefit of the Arboretum. Councilmember Rasmussen asked if there is a potential to use even more volunteers at the Arboretum. Tim responded that the Department's 23 unions are already very upset about the number of volunteers being used for this work. Fred added that the bulk of the Arboretum consists of trees and volunteers cannot do tree maintenance; however, they can remove invasives. Tom H noted that there is also inadequate staff to oversee the work of the volunteers.

SR520 Project: Councilmember Rasmussen believes the ABGC is really up to date on the SR520 project. His goal is to ensure that the Arboretum is fully considered and well protected. He referred to the tolling that will begin in 2010 and asked where the booths will be placed and how that will impact the Arboretum. Paige responded that there will be no booths; instead, the State will use a "pay as you go" card system. Those who use the road occasionally will be tolled via their license plates. He also referred to Paige's suggestion at an earlier meeting to designate 25 cents of the toll for every vehicle that drives through the Arboretum from SR520. This is estimated to raise as much as \$700,000 annually for the Arboretum. Paige added that WSDOT could implement other measures, such as better lighting on the main arterials, to encourage drivers to use other transportation routes rather than the Arboretum. Tom H asked whether a long-term mitigation endowment could be set up that would sustain the wetlands, keep blackberries from coming back, and provide other long-term maintenance and care for the Arboretum.

Councilmember Rasmussen suggested a system to allow people to donate via tolling to help fund both parks and outdoor recreation. Paige responded that this is a good suggestion; however, it is important that any tolling funds as traffic mitigation to the Arboretum be routed directly to the Arboretum and not into a general fund. Councilmember Rasmussen believes 25-cent tolling to benefit the Arboretum is a great idea and encouraged the ABGC to propose it to Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT.) Tim agreed that it is a good idea to look at a tolling fee as part of mitigation for impacts to various parks, as several Seattle parks will be impacted by the SR520 project. This will be on the ABGC's September meeting agenda for further discussion.

Jack believes the SR520 project is one of the most important challenges facing the Arboretum. He summarized that the City has a number of parks that will be impacted by the project and the University is most interested in how it will impact the UW's School of Medicine. In fact, the UW is so concerned that it has appointed a representative, Theresa Doherty, to attend the meetings about the project. The ABGC is the body that brings all three partners' concerns for the Arboretum together. Councilmember Rasmussen asked Jack how he thinks the City is doing in its representation. Jack responded that the City is not visible. The Parks Department is doing a great job; however, he has not seen either Council or Mayoral interest like that shown on the Viaduct replacement project. Councilmember Conlin believes that Council's Transportation Committee, http://www.seattle.gov/council/committees/transportation_comm.htm, is very engaged. Members of that committee are Councilmembers Jan Drago, Sally Clark, and Richard McIver. Paige commented that Councilmember Conlin is very engaged on the project; Deputy Mayor Ceis is much less so. Bob Powers, Seattle Department of Transportation, has attended some of the meetings. Donald believes the City looks to the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) as its lead on the SR520 project. Theresa added that the City is also more focused on the Viaduct. Councilmember Rasmussen commented that this is good information and noted that SDOT's staff are stretched thin working on several major, as well as ongoing, transportation projects.

Jack commented that one reason for the lack of City interest is that SR520 is a Washington State-funded project, while the City will be required to contribute sizable funding to the Viaduct replacement. Responding to a question

from Councilmember Rasmussen whether the East Side is engaged in the SR520 project, Jack responded that they are very involved. He added that Paige and Theresa represent the ABGC on the committees and that State House Speaker Frank Chopp recently toured the Arboretum with staff and also walks the Arboretum at least once each month.

Iain thanked Councilmember Rasmussen for sharing his thoughts with the ABGC so well. He showed a large map of the Arboretum and pointed out the current configuration of SR520 and how it impacts traffic on Lake Washington Boulevard. This traffic is a stranglehold on the Arboretum. He stated that what happens at the northern top of the Arboretum, by way of SR520 and how it intersects with Lake Washington Boulevard, affects the entire Arboretum. He reiterated that the Arboretum is not just a park — it is a northwest research site, the State's only Arboretum and houses immensely valuable collections, and is the home of an integrated ecosystem. This is an immense opportunity that doesn't exist anywhere else in the State. He stated that the collections are affected by the pollution and repeated the words of former UW Botanical Garden director, David Mabberley: "SR520 is a sword through the heart of the Arboretum."

Improve Bike Corridors in Arboretum: Councilmember Rasmussen would like to work with the ABGC to improve the Arboretum's bike corridors, as biking can be very risky on Lake Washington Boulevard. He is also interested in a bike connection from the Burke-Gilman Trail to Lake Washington Boulevard.

Paige noted that the Arboretum's south end bike connection (at Madison Street) needs to be reconfigured near the Shell Station; however, cost estimates for this are \$1 million dollars. One solution would be to build a trestle bridge over the creek/wetlands and the existing roadway.

Barbara was pleased to hear the Councilmembers' support for improved bike access to the Arboretum. This would introduce more people to the Arboretum for health and exercise. She added that walking/biking to and within the Arboretum helps to protect the land from noise and pollution. She also asked that Metro provide better transit to the Arboretum so people can ride to the Arboretum via public transit.

Arboretum Drive Closure and Lake Washington Boulevard Traffic: Kjris stated that this summer's permanent closure of Arboretum Drive was of tremendous help to the Arboretum. Many more people now use the road for walking and she has observed many families and strollers on the road. The recent signage has been a tremendous help. She thanked Councilmember Rasmussen for the closure; he responded that he left the road closure to the Superintendent's decision.

He agrees with the ABGC's desire to reduce traffic on Lake Washington Boulevard; however, it must carefully consider how any reductions will impact the surrounding neighborhoods. Tim commented that he wants to add speed bumps at the crosswalks and reduce speeds through the park to 20-25 mph. Kjris added that the pedestrian crossings also need to be painted. Paige also voiced a need for better stop signs in the park, especially at the north end of Arboretum Drive, for biker's safety. Councilmember Rasmussen asked the ABGC to contact him if it needs his help with these efforts. Donald noted that there is some political pushback on the sign at the north end of Arboretum Drive/Foster Island. The Broadmoor Community Club has agreed to pay 1/3 of the costs to re-pave the road that leads from Lake Washington Boulevard past the north end of Arboretum Drive and into the Broadmoor community. However, the Club does not want a stop sign at the crossing to Foster Island and is leveraging the funding with this demand.

Barbara stated that one way to reduce traffic impacts to the Arboretum are by changing the traffic light at 23rd and Madison. Parks staff is working with Seattle Department of Transportation staff to attend a future meeting of the ABGC to discuss the traffic-calming suggestions.

Madison Park Stormwater Retention Site: Councilmember Rasmussen referred to the Madison Park retention plan and described it as being huge. He wants to ensure that this project does not adversely affect the Arboretum or the Olmsted park plan. Dave responded that Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) recently briefed the ABGC on the

project and he hopes the Council and Mayor will mediate any possible adverse effects. Donald has been working with SPU on this project and they have been very responsive and briefed the ABGC early in the project, as well as a recent briefing. Paige added that the opportunity for Arboretum Creek is enormous from this project and that the bioswale system could help bring big fish back to the heart of the city.

Dennis Hartmann

Dave stated that ABGC members are very pleased that Dean Hartmann attended today's meeting. Dean Hartmann noted that he has visited the Arboretum three times in the past six months. Jack and Kjis commented on the amount of UW funding to the Arboretum and Tom H briefly addressed this. Dave added that the relationship between the UW, City, and Arboretum Foundation are very positive and open. The Arboretum Foundation has really stepped up efforts on raising funds for capital and operating needs. He noted that relations between the City and University have not always been positive; however, Sandra Lier from the UW has worked hard over the past 8-10 years to develop a great working relationship.

Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG)

Phase II Presentation: Andy Sheffer, Seattle Parks' senior project manager, presented an update on Phase II of the Pacific Connections project. Andy showed a very large drawing of the plan and gave an overview of the Master Plan. He next pointed out the location of the five gardens: Australia, New Zealand, Chile, China, and Cascadia.

Phase I was completed in October 2008 and is considered the "bones" of the gardens. This included the removal of invasive plants from the areas, moving the holly collection to its new site, completing the entrance to the Chilean garden, and other components.

The design for Phase II design is complete. Andy gave information on the design and pointed out where various elements will be. Construction documents will be at 100% in two weeks. Staff members are now working on the contract with Sistus Nursery to propagate the needed plants. Work on the infrastructure will begin in late 2011 and early 2012. Visitors to the gardens will have a sense of being in a New Zealand or Chilean, etc., garden when the gardens are completed.

The discussion next moved to the complex plant propagation required for these gardens. Jack recently watched well-known Northwest plant expert Dan Hinckley on the Martha Stewart Show and learned that each plant must have a permit from its country of origin — it is expensive to acquire plants from other countries. Tom, Paige and Andy added that the project planning must include lead time to procure the thousands of needed plants. It will take 2-1/2 to 3 years to plan and sequence the plantings.

Andy contacted 14 Northwest nurseries, and received little interest in the propagation, other than Sistus. He and Fred discussed the work with the UW's horticulture unit and it is too large for them to handle. However, the UW can propagate for the Cascadia garden on a smaller scale.

Lisa added that even for staff to do some of propagation, they must first secure the seeds from the appropriate country and have specialists on staff to propagate the plants. Parks has inadequate resources to do this and does not have the plant specialists to do the propagation. Fred summarized that the UW is also understaffed to take on this large project. The outside vendor is competitive in what it would cost the UW to propagate the plants — if it had the necessary staff to do so. He added that there are many camellias in the new garden areas that must be moved to a new site. Staff must always think ahead for these gardens and plan which plants must be moved and what must be protected during the construction.

The preliminary work for Phase II is funded by the \$2.5 million from the Pro Parks levy. The construction will be funded by the new Parks and Greenspaces Levy and the Arboretum Foundation.

Jack complimented Andy for his great work as project manager for the Pacific Connections gardens. Andy stated that this has been a great team effort and he appreciates working with the UW and Arboretum Foundation on this. Iain noted that, once the gardens are completed, their success will lie with the management and having adequate staff to maintain them. Fred and his crews will maintain the gardens and volunteers will help with weeding the new plantings.

Update: SR 520 Project

Theresa and Paige are the two ABGC representatives that attend the WSDOT committee meetings. Theresa also represents the UW at these. Theresa reported that the State Legislature has assembled a committee to look at the three alternatives for the replacement of SR520 – Alternatives A, K, and L – and come up with a financing plan. The Committee met on July 29 and selected a co-chair from both the east and west sides of Lake Washington. The next meeting is scheduled for September. There will be no toll booths on SR520; instead, drivers who regularly cross SR520 can purchase “good to go” permits and occasional users will be billed by license plate numbers. The Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled for release in December 2009.

Fred reported that he has briefed the Arboretum Foundation on the outcome of this first meeting and is meeting with a variety of agencies.

Responding to a question from Dave on when the City Council will weigh in on the project, Councilmember Rasmussen responded that it passed a resolution; however, the project is not currently scheduled for Council discussion. This will most likely be scheduled after the EIS is released.

Paige has been out of town for two weeks, but has been reading e-mails about SR520. She doesn't yet know if the new committee is being asked to make a recommendation to the Legislature. The East Side is very united in its goals and purpose and still wants eight lanes. The City needs to be engaged if it has a preference on the alternatives. Kjris asked if the West Side is in trouble because it does not have a focused presence for the west side of the project. Paige stated that her sense is that the Legislature is getting close to narrowing a decision. The East Side wants eight lanes, wants them soon, and wants the project to stay within its budget. The West Side is not as fully engaged as the East Side and Seattle's mayor is not as engaged as some of the City's departments. She is concerned whether the West Side will get the best results possible from this project.

Jack noted that an enormous amount of information is being distributed on the project and asked that Paige forward more of this to the ABGC. Dave asked Paige and Theresa to determine between them what information should be forwarded.

Iain stressed that the width of the replacement road is critical, if it includes safety shoulders. That would make it three times the width of the current SR520. He urged that the road not have the type of safety shoulders that I-5 has. Even six lanes is more than 50% wider than four lanes and if dedicated traffic lanes are included, it complicates the width even more. Paige responded that regulations call for new roads to have safety shoulders; this would be a re-build of an existing road and would not require the safety shoulders.

Paige added that the dynamics of this project are very complicated, as each alternative has benefits and disadvantages to the Arboretum. Theresa stated that at the July 29 meeting (1) The East Side had decided what it wants for the East Side; and (2) There was lots of discussion on the catastrophic plan and replacing the pontoons. The pontoons could be fitted to accommodate light rail, which would make 8 traffic lanes, with 6 lanes for vehicles and 2 for light rail. Dave recommended that the ABGC watch the project closely and advise the State, City, and UW on the project. He also recommended that the Arboretum Foundation get input from ABGC and be the political lead on this.

Jack noted that Paige is in an awkward position as she represents the ABGC and works for the Arboretum Foundation as its Executive Director. The ABGC supports Alternative K and the Foundation is neutral on the alternatives. Barbara, Arboretum Foundation President, responded that the Foundation is not as neutral as Jack

might perceive it to be. Theresa commented that the UW, Arboretum Foundation, and City have not yet taken a position on the alternatives and Jack commented that the West Side is “gonna get rolled.” Barbara added that the City’s leadership should be out front on this project. Councilmember Rasmussen responded that this discussion is alarming and he will take these concerns to the City Council.

ABGC members thanked Councilmember Rasmussen for his interest and support.

Joint Fundraising Committee

The committee met on July 16 and the coordination is going very well. The next meeting is on September 17.

New/Old Business

UW Regents Tour: Two of the University’s Regents attended the July 17 tour of the Arboretum. One attended the first portion and the second joined the tour later. The weather cooperated and the day was beautiful for the tour.

Lake Washington Boulevard: Donald reported that Superintendent Gallagher asked Parks staff to investigate which City department controls Lake Washington Boulevard. Staff determined that Parks owns the road; however, Seattle Department of Transportation controls the road from curb to curb. The next step is to invite SDOT staff to attend an ABGC meeting to discuss traffic-calming measures.

Arboretum’s 75th Anniversary Celebration: Paige reported that public radio station KUOW sponsored a number of on-air spots about the anniversary celebration. Between 100-150 people attended the picnic. They also played croquet and badminton and watched a soap box derby, resulting in a nice and low-key party. Plans are to do this more often to help people learn about the Arboretum. The Arboretum kayak tours scheduled for August 14 and 15 are nearly sold out. Another event scheduled in honor of the anniversary celebration is Art in the Park, which includes a wine tasting and free art show.

Arboretum Survey: Fred gave a brief update on the year-long survey for users of the Arboretum. Sandra has contacted both the City and Arboretum Foundation asking if each will contribute \$1,000 to help defray the estimated \$4,000 cost for the survey.

Lake Management District Proposal: Theresa reported that Susan Holiday of the Laurelhurst community will send a petition to City Council to create a Lake Management District on Lake Washington from Webster Point to Madison Park. The proposal needs the Council’s approval to move forward.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be on September 9, 8:30 am, at Graham Visitors Center.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Theresa Doherty, ABGC Secretary