

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 10, 2011

Voting Members

Present:

Arboretum Foundation

- Della Balick, Arboretum Foundation Board President
- Paige Miller, Arboretum Foundation Executive Director

City of Seattle

- Jack Collins, Mayoral Appointee
- Donald Harris, Seattle Parks Property Manager
- Kjris Lund, Mayoral Appointee

University of Washington

- Theresa Doherty, University of Washington, Asst. Vice President for Regional Affairs
- Fred Hoyt, University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG) Associate Director
- Iain Robertson, University of Washington Associate Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture

Excused:

Washington State

- Dave Towne, Washington State Governor's Appointee

Other Staff Present:

- Cheryl Fraser, Seattle Parks, Natural Resources Manager
- Andy Sheffer, Seattle Parks, Project Planner
 - Berger Partnership: Jason Henry, Principal, and Andy Mitton, Associate
- Michael Shiosaki, Seattle Parks, Projects & Planning Deputy Director

WSDOT Team

Rob Berman, Planning Manager; Rachel Patterson, Communications Manager for SR520 Project; and Kerry Ruth, Engineering Manager West Side

Public

Paul Gibson, Arboretum neighbor

ABGC Staff: Sandy Brooks, Coordinator

Standing Committees

Building Committee:

Paige Miller (AF); Donald Harris (City); TBD (UW)

Partners Committee:

AF: Paige Miller & Della Balick

City: Donald Harris & Christopher Williams

UW: Tom Hinckley & Sarah Reichard

Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG): AF: Paige Miller & Roger Williams
City: Michael Shiosaki (lead) & Rick Nishi
UW: Fred Hoyt & Sarah Reichard
SR520 Technical Committee: David Graves (City); Theresa Doherty & Fred Hoyt (UW)

This meeting was held at Graham Visitors Center. Theresa Doherty, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:30 am. The agenda was changed to reflect an update on the Holly project. The minutes from the July 13 meeting were approved, with Jack Collins abstaining due to being absent.

Update: Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG) Update

In anticipation of the August 31 public meeting on the North Entry and Multi-Use Trail, Berger Partnership attended today's meeting to give an update on the design of these two projects. Andy Sheffer will give a through background of the SR 520 project at the public meeting, prior to Berger's presentation.

Jason Henry and Andy Mitton of the Berger Partnership presented a slide show which will be presented at the August 31 meeting and asked for feedback from ABGC members. The slides included drawings/maps of the North Entry, WSDOT Peninsula, Critical Areas, and Multi-Use Trail, as well as the preferred alternative for the North Entry and Multi-Use Trail that Berger has submitted to various groups. All references to using some of the leftover ramp structures will be removed, following public comment and the direction of the ABGC. Jason noted that some of the soil mounds in the preferred option will be 40-50' high. He pointed out safety measures, in the section of the Foster Island Trail which will be located under the new SR 520 bridge, to help give "eyes on the park."

Cheryl asked about noise levels from the new highway and bridge. Jason responded that the new land formations will give some relief from the highway noise, but will not eliminate it from being heard on Foster Island. Kerry stated the new highway will have 4' barriers, quieter concrete, and an elevated approach to Foster Island, as ways to decrease the highway noise. Andy Mitton added that the new roundabout at the intersection of Lake Washington Boulevard and Foster Island Drive will reduce noise in that area.

Responding to a question from Sarah the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks (FoSOP) reaction to the designs, Jason answered that FoSOP has been very positive about the designs and have given helpful comments to the design team.

The discussion next turned to how the design affects the Arboretum's Master Plan. The Multi-Use Trail fits in the Master Plan and the North Entry is a high priority project in the Master Plan. When the Master Plan was adopted in 2001, it did not anticipate removal of the SR 520 ramps from the Arboretum or the acquisition of the WSDOT peninsula. Those changes do not require revisiting or amending the Master Plan. It was clarified that the future building shown somewhere in the new North Entry is to compensate for the loss of the future office space that was approved in the Master Plan. The Master Plan anticipated the office space would be at MOHAI, and MOHAI is being torn down to make way for the new SR 520 project. Consequently, the office space will be located elsewhere. The proposed area for a future building is in the WSDOT Peninsula area – an area that will be added to the Arboretum (not an area included in the current Arboretum Master Plan).

Donald asked for clarification on the acreage of the Arboretum. It is currently described as 230 acres, which includes a small sliver of WSDOT-owed land. However, that figure does not include the new acreage to be gained from the ramp removal and WSDOT peninsula property which will become Arboretum property (as much as 26 new acres.)

Kjris has concerns about the new building and asked that all this be explained clearly at the August 31 meeting so the public doesn't think the Arboretum Master Plan's public process is being ignored. Michael agreed; the City will also do a thorough public process when a new building is to be added. At this point, a general area for a future building will be shown. Donald added that the City also requires a legislative process

to accept the land from WSDOT. Paige commented that the ABGC isn't trying to avoid talking about the new building; the ABGC wants the public to be aware of the possibility of a future building and possible locations.

Kjris asked whether the new land will include plantings similar to the Arboretum's plant collections. Jason answered that, while some exotic plants may be brought in, the project does have financial constraints and the funds must cover a lot of areas. The plantings will have to be discussed in more detail.

Iain had several questions/comments:

- Observed that Arboretum Creek, in its current state, isn't as meandering as shown in the drawings. Jason stated that Berger drew the meandering route to show possibilities.
- Recommended that the new Multi-Use Trail be aligned away from Lake Washington Boulevard whenever possible. Jason agreed; the Multi-Use Trail bridge footprint will be kept as small as possible, which is better for plants and fish.
- Commented the new southwest mound looks huge in the drawings. Jason responded it is in scale with the other mounds in the Arboretum.
- Recommended the new parking lot be hidden from view as much as possible, without compromising safety sightlines.
- Protect the sloping hill on the east side of the intersection of Lake Washington Boulevard and Foster Island Drive. Berger staff will discuss this recommendation but do not believe the hillside will need to be graded.
- Asked Jason to point out the potential new building's possible location. Jack added that the building's design must accommodate Arboretum Foundation staff, as the Graham Visitors Center is inadequate for this purpose.

Jason noted the Multi-Use Trail must be paved and Berger has submitted pervious asphalt as the option. A brief discussion followed. ABGC members thanked Berger staff and Andy Sheffer for the update.

Master Plan Implementation Group Report-Continued

Azalea Way Trail Renovation: Michael recently toured the proposed project site at Azalea Way. This project would renovate nearly 700' of the trail, which now consists of grass, to a 6' wide trail of crushed rock and be paid for by the Arboretum Foundation. Azalea Way is one of the most visited areas of the Arboretum and survey results show the public's top complaint about the Arboretum is the trail's muddy/wet condition much of the year. The improvements would also help maintenance vehicles access the area. The project is scheduled for completion prior to Spring 2012.

Michael recognized the problems of the current trail; however, this is a large and very visible change to the Arboretum and he recommends a public process be completed before the project moves forward. A short discussion followed. There are a number of Master Plan projects in progress and staff will use the August 31 and other public meetings to keep the public informed of this and other projects.

Pacific Connections: Construction of the New Zealand garden infrastructure is planned for Fall 2012, with planting to follow in Spring 2013. The Arboretum Foundation has approved this schedule and Cistus Nursery has provided a status report on the plant propagation. Fred has planned a visit to Cistus on Monday, August 15.

Holly Collection: Iain noted that UW staff were out grading in the area this week, as standing water (which is harmful to holly trees) has been an ongoing issue. As part of the Master Plan implementation projects, a number of the large holly trees were moved and results have not been satisfactory. Fred stated that MPIG has discussed that much was learned from this and future projects will not include moving big plants/trees.

Arboretum Creek: The contract is being signed with RH2 for evaluating the Arboretum Creek flow project, with the Arboretum Foundation paying for this part of the project.

Traffic Calming: Seattle Department of Transportation is ready to begin the Lake Washington Boulevard traffic-calming efforts and their staff have asked to update the ABGC at its September 14 meeting.

Wayfinding Plan: MPIG is reviewing this.

Old/New Business

Qwest Volunteer Efforts Update: The final work party is planned for August 13, with a celebration party planned afterwards. Qwest and its employees have provided 400 volunteer hours at the Arboretum in 2010-2011 and donated benches, as well as \$25,000 in cash.

WSDOT Presentation

The WSDOT team distributed a number of handouts and reviewed information on each:

- Arboretum Mitigation Plan-Draft Scoping and Implementation Timeline Updated August 5, 2011
- July 19, 2011, letter from Julie Meredith, SR 520 I-5 to Medina Project Director, memorializing WSDOT's intent to convey property in the area know informally as the "WSDOT peninsula" to the City of Seattle as mitigation for impacts of the SR 520 I-5 to Medina Bridge Replacement and HOV Project. Although the legal details, structure, and quantity of the property transfer are still being worked out, this serves as a statement of our commitment to identify the transfer mechanism when these issues have been resolved."
- Map showing riparian habitat improvements, current mitigation project in development, and multi-use trail
- Chart of Recommended Mitigation Measures
- Conceptual Wetland Mitigation Area for Transfer to Local Agency, approximately 11.0 acres — draft for internal discussion only
- SR 520 Bridge Program: Seattle Community Design Process
- Community Design Process application form

Kerry reviewed the Draft Scoping and Implementation Timeline, which included the following: environmental process, Arboretum mitigation milestones, develop memorandum of understanding (MOU); executive MOU; develop scoping agreement; execute scoping agreement; hire consultant to develop project scopes; develop project scopes and estimates; 4(f) accounting discussion; develop implementation plan; develop agreements necessary to implement; and complete agreements.

The MOU was signed in April of this year and since then WSDOT has been working to executive various elements of the agreement. Parks/Berger/WSDOT have held good discussions on the Arboretum vision and to develop estimates.

Kerry next referred the July 19 letter from SR 520 Director, Julie Meredith, to Donald (see above.) Kerry stated the intent is now included in the record of decision. Donald believes this satisfies Jorgen Bader's request regarding the WSDOT peninsula transfer of land. Kerry stated that WSDOT will have the results of the appraisals in late October and will bring this information to the ABGC. Kerry gave additional details and stated that State Legislature approval of the SR 520 project is critical.

Responding to a question from Jack whether the ABGC can meet the listed deadlines, Kerry responded that it can; however, the biggest challenge is who will take the lead on various aspects of the projects. Parks and WSDOT will work on this and report to the ABGC. Rob added that the approval process, which will follow the scoping process, could take much longer. There is lots of work ahead.

Rob reported that WSDOT is tracking all the refinements of the mitigation measures (in reference to one of the handouts in the packet) and Michael asked that all the handouts have titles and dates. WSDOT agreed and explained that this document was part of another document on the project web page.

Kerry next reviewed the chart of Recommended Mitigation Measures, which include new information on leads for each of the projects/measures. WSDOT will continue updating this chart with the leads and additional info on 4f and Sections 401 and 404. Jack noted that the Arboretum has an excellent wayfinding plan and really needs to have it implemented. It was noted that Seattle Department of Transportation staff plan to attend the September ABGC meeting to present an update on the traffic calming measures for Lake Washington Boulevard.

Rob stated that WSDOT will continue attending all ABGC meetings. It will hold two large public processes by the end of September. Rob gave a brief overview of a design review team it is assembling. The ABGC will discuss under Old/New Business its representative and will notify Rob of its decision.

ABGC members thanked the WSDOT team for the update.

Budget Updates

Arboretum Foundation: Paige and Della reported the Foundation's budget is currently showing a deficit balance, after funding the UW's highest priority education projects. The efforts to attract more volunteers to the Arboretum, especially for the new Pacific Gardens Unit, is going well, with an orientation scheduled for August 24.

UW: Sarah reported that the Center for Urban Horticulture budget was recently reduced another \$38,000, resulting in the Collections Manager position being cut from full- to half-time. Tom Hinckley, Acting Dean of the College of Forest Resources, recently stated CUH will not have any further budget cuts in 2011.

Last year CUH received a $\frac{3}{4}$ Research Analyst who has been incorporating the collections database into a GPS system. This information will eventually become available to the public in an Application.

Parks: City departments have submitted their proposed 2012 budgets to the mayor who will consider the proposals and announce his proposed budget in late September. In addition, the City Council requested a Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) showing new models for operating the Department's 26 community centers. Nine models were developed, with the most popular being a geographical model. The Department is also looking at additional ways to bring in new revenue with weddings at the Japanese Garden an option.

Fred understands that currently movie companies are not charged to use the Arboretum in their films and asked whether this could be a new revenue stream. Cheryl and Donald will check on this possibility.

Old/New Business

SR 520 Design Process Committee: The ABGC briefly discussed an appointee to the new SR 520 Design Process Committee as requested by WSDOT earlier in this meeting. Theresa will contact WSDOT to determine the meeting dates and times, as well as the meeting structure for both the public and the small groups. It's possible the ABGC representative could serve on both a public and small committee. Barbara Wright of the Arboretum Foundation was suggested as the ABGC's representative.

Future Agenda: Jack requested that the following item be discussed at a future ABGC meeting: with which ABGC partner will the mitigation funds reside?

Citizen Comment: Paul Gibson asked to speak on Foster Island and the SR 520 mitigation and voiced concerns with noise impacts from the SR 520 project. Azalea Way and the north end of Foster Island are probably the most popular areas in the Arboretum. People visit Foster Island to picnic, fish, and watch boats. Noise from the new highway won't affect the plant collections but it will affect the public's enjoyment. He was sorry to learn in today's meeting that the noise barrier will only be four feet tall and asked the ABGC to protect the public's use and enjoyment of Foster Island.

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourned at 10:30 am.

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Theresa Doherty, ABGC Chair