

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, January 11, 2012

Voting Members

Present:

Arboretum Foundation

- Paige Miller, Arboretum Foundation Executive Director

City of Seattle

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

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

Washington State

- Dave Towne, Washington State Governor's Appointee

Excused:

- Della Balick, Arboretum Foundation Board President

Other Staff Present:

- David Graves, Seattle Parks, Senior Planner
- Sarah Reichard, UWBG, Director
- Michael Shiosaki, Seattle Parks, Projects & Planning Deputy Director

Washington State Department of Transportation Team (WSDOT) Team

Rob Berman, Planning Manager; Kerry Pihlstrom, Engineering Manager West Side; and Katie DeLeuw, Communications Manager for SR520 Project

ABGC Staff: Sandy Brooks, Coordinator

Standing Committees

Building Committee:

Partners Committee:

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

AF: Paige Miller & Della Balick

City: Donald Harris & Christopher Williams

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

This meeting was held at Graham Visitors Center at the Arboretum. ABGC Chair Theresa Doherty called the meeting to order at 8:30 am. The minutes from the October 12 and December 14, 2011, meetings were approved as presented.

WSDOT – SR 520

The WSDOT team presented an update on the SR 520 project. Exciting news! – WSDOT staff are working with City, State, and federal government agencies to issue permits for the entire corridor. The pontoons will be floated into Lake Washington this spring and the over-lake construction will then begin. WSDOT is now developing construction documents to outline impacts to the neighborhoods and these will be issued within the next couple months. Paige asked if any of this work will be staged in the Arboretum and Kerry answered not yet. Little work will be done at the Arboretum until the west approach is started and it doesn't yet have funding.

Jack asked how Governor Gregoire's transportation announcement, issued the day before this meeting, (briefing titled "Addressing Critical Needs: Preserving the Integrity of Washington's Transportation System", <http://www.governor.wa.gov/priorities/transportation/criticalneeds.pdf>) will affect the SR 520 project. Kerry answered it is unclear as of yet; Julie Meredith, WSDOT Program Director is in Olympia today to determine the impacts. WSDOT staff will report back to the ABGC with Julie's findings.

The City and WSDOT have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by Mayor McGinn, which is an important milestone. Now, WSDOT will move forward on implementing the MOU. Jack asked if the lawsuit, filed by some neighbors of SR 520, will impact the project's timeline. Rob responded that the suit has no defined timeline. A court date hasn't been set and no injunction to stop work has been issued. Paige added that the longer the group waits, the less likely it is a judge will grant an injunction. The legal system generally doesn't allow one party to sit back and allow work to go forward, then bring suit to harm the other.

Rob next reviewed 10-12 display boards that have been presented at the Seattle Community Design Process (SCDP) and described each. A copy of all are attached to these minutes and may be viewed at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/I5ToMedina/scdp.htm#materials> under the "Dec. 7 public meeting" header. Michael and Theresa are attending most of the SCDP meetings. A brief re-cap of the boards is included below:

1. Seattle Community Design Process: Rob described the purpose of SCDP and the stakeholders.
2. Next steps in SCDP:
 - In 2012
 - gather feedback
 - design
 - explore
3. Sustainability values:
 - Sustainable practices

- Value choices for sustainable communities
 - See or hear? *Noise walls and bridge railings are areas where the desire for views can clash with the desire to reduce noise. Which prevails in a given location?*
 - To or through? *Is a particular feature or facility intended to be a destination or a place that people pass through?*
 - Green or gray? *Where can we use natural materials and reduce the use of carbon intensive materials such as concrete?*
 - Single or several? *Does a facility have only a single function or can multiple functions be layered to create more value for the investment?*
 - Few or many? *Does a feature or facility benefit only a few constituents or does it provide benefits to many?*
 - Big wheels and little wheels? *While considering the needs of the mainstream bike/pedestrian community, how are special needs being addressed?*
 - Connect the dots? *Are neighborhoods, parks, paths, etc., being connected in a meaningful and useful way?*
- 4. Regular and neighborhood connection gap analysis. WSDOT heard that the neighborhood isn't satisfied and will keep working to connect the dots.
- 5. How to read today's materials? At the third meeting, WSDOT staff built a GIS 3-D model to help attendees understand the project design and get a "birdseye view" of the project.
- 6. Lake Washington Boulevard area. Design for this area is getting to a better level, but not yet where WSDOT wants it to be. Input from UW students and parents with kids are needed, along with the opinions being heard from more parochial participants. Iain asked if WSDOT has selected UW students for this; they haven't. Rob suggested it could be course work for the students. Their participation would be valuable to give a broader perspective to the design. Michael believes the design is moving forward and "getting there". While the surrounding communities are well represented, there is no one at the table from the North Capitol Hill area.
- 7. E Lake Washington Blvd area – 24th. Rob described the process used at SCDP. Participants were asked who uses the area now, what it is used for, and asked for design opportunity suggestions.
- 8. 24th Ave E & Shelby/Hamlin Neighborhood. Same process as #7.
- 9. E Montlake Area Stormwater Facility. Same process as #7.
- 10. East Montlake Water's Edge. Same process as #7.

Michael noted the issue of removing the lid vs. noise came up several times, as well as concerns a homeless area will be created under the new bridge. Rob stated the working charrettes will be set up for each of the areas listed on the poster boards, with as many people from those areas as possible participating.

Iain asked if soil can be bermed against some of the concrete walls to cut down on the gray concrete. He suggested the design team visit Freeway Park for great examples of ways to do this. Jack asked when WSDOT will discuss the Term Sheet with ABGC. Kerry responded the WSDOT team met with the ABGC representatives (Theresa, Michael, Donald, and Paige) on the previous Thursday to review the Term Sheet. WSDOT will now gather cost estimates, prepare a new draft and bring to the ABGC's March 14 meeting.

Dave commented that sketches are great, but the project is now getting to the “nitty gritty” and asked if a landscape designer is involved. Kerry responded that WSDOT has contracted a well-respected landscape architect who is getting community feedback for the design and believes key design decisions will be made this fall. Rob added that additional landscape architects will be brought into the project as funding is secured. Jack thinks it is great that WSDOT is working with the community to develop the design.

Donald attended Mayor McGinn’s town hall last night and, considering some of his statements on supporting sustainability, believes this is a good time to further engage him on the sustainable focus of the SR 520 project. The WSDOT team thanked Donald for this insight.

Paige asked when WSDOT will bring in an artist to help design the Foster Island bridge. WSDOT staff responded that Donald McDonald is the project’s bridge architect. The discussion on Foster Island Bridge will begin after some other work is completed.

Iain noted the next steps are very important to bring the design down to a human scale and determine if the design works for people. He asked that a link to the poster boards be forwarded to ABGC members and the WSDOT team agreed to do so.

The WSDOT team will next attend the March 14 meeting to discuss the Term Sheet with ABGC members.

Seattle Parks Foundation

Becca Aue, Seattle Parks Foundation Policy and Program Director, next presented a copy of the Park Funding Study Executive Summary, dated January 2012. This document was just finalized the day before this meeting. (To read more about the Funding Study, see http://www.seattleparksfoundation.org/project_Sustaining_Parks.html.)

Becca stated the Foundation’s Executive Director, Thatcher Bailey, is at a meeting with City Councilmember Sally Bagshaw and Acting Parks Superintendent Williams to discuss the long-term revenue system for Seattle’s parks. The Foundation and six partners have been working on this study for 18 months. Seattle Parks Department is doing the best it can in a dire budget situation.

Ms. Aue reviewed the Executive Summary and its five recommendations:

1. Asks the City to use existing authority in State law to create a “Seattle Metropolitan Park District” to provide a new source of dedicated funding for the park system.
2. The level of funding requested from the voters for the Seattle Metropolitan Park District should be sufficient to put the park system on a truly sustainable path and provide enough resources to meet the future needs of a vibrant and growing city. Five sub-recommendations followed.
3. The new park district must be designed to be highly efficient and accountable to the community it serves. Two sub-recommendations followed.
4. The City should invest a portion of the new resources obtained through the creation of the park district to ensure that the parks system is a model of resource conservation and innovation. Three sub-recommendations followed.
5. Continue to extend the tradition of civic partnerships that has become a hallmark of the Seattle parks system and create new partnership opportunities that enhance the system. A number of sub-recommendations followed.

Jack expressed interest in the suggested structural governance and asked if the Board of Park Commissioners would make decisions. Becca answered that it wouldn't; decisions would be made by the City Council. Jack asked who would staff the Park District; Becca stated it would rely on existing Parks Department staff. She believes the mayor is better understanding the concept of a Metropolitan Park District (MPD.) The discussion turned to possible conflict between a mayor and City Council over such a district. Becca stated Seattle Parks Foundation and the funding study team will next investigate how similar municipalities, operating within an MPD, handle this potential conflict.

Dave reflected that ironclad wording that parks funding is not affected by ups and downs in the General Fund is tricky to achieve. Becca replied that it would require an interlocal agreement written in such a way that a City Council could not change the General Fund level to the MPD. She added that neighborhood activist Chris Leman wrote an editorial opposed to the MPD.

Michael stated that part of the mayor's concerns is that the City has needs more critical than parks. Becca understands from Councilmember Conlin that 2014 would be a logical time to bring the concept before Seattle's voters. However, it may be brought for a vote this year just to get it in motion. The public must be well informed of MPDs before that happens. Paige noted there are several funding sources for parks: charter levies; user fees; the General Fund (which needs to be revised so the City Council cannot set parks funding below a certain level.) It would be great to add an MPD to these funding sources.

Iain finds it exciting that sustainability will re-focus on daily operations and not just building something new that is sustainable. Make what we already have great! Becca added that making existing assets sustainable also creates new jobs, which is good for the economy.

Dave recommended adding a requirement that fundraising for new projects must include maintenance and operation figures and funding as part of the budget.

Iain stated this is great work and the funding study group have done good work. ABGC members agreed. Becca stated the white paper will be released in June and Seattle Parks Foundation staff will return to the ABGC's July meeting to present an update report.

Budget Updates

Parks – Nothing new to report.

AF – Nothing new to report.

UW – Sarah reported the UWBG's marketing plan is moving ahead.

Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG) Update

Michael reported MPIG met on January 10. He gave a number of updates:

Gateway to Chile: Andy Sheffer is adding some additional plantings at the entry to the Gateway to Chile garden. This will green up the area while the Chilean plants grow larger.

New Zealand Garden:

- Plant propagation continues to move forward. Cistus is behind on propagating some grasses but is working to supply the needed amounts. UW staff are re-thinking a few plants that died last winter, with the goal of balancing the planting experiment with the donor's expectations.

- John Ballard, a local gardener, was the originator of a New Zealand Garden at the Arboretum and has volunteered an extensive amount of time to plant an area near the new site. Some of his plantings will be incorporated into the new garden, as the original planting are getting overgrown. Parks staff are working with Mr. Ballard to keep him informed of the changes and will report any updates at the February ABGC meeting.

WSDOT: Andy has also prepared figures for the two SR 520 mitigation projects, Multi-Use Trail and North Entry, estimated at \$20 million. This includes design, tax, administrative, and other costs. Staff are scheduled to meet with WSDOT on January 12 and will share the figures. Michael voiced some concern about WSDOT reaction to the amount.

Arboretum Creek Flow Implementation Study: Parks staff have asked RH2 to determine the feasibility of salmon returning to Arboretum Creek. If it seems unlikely, MPIG will drop this idea. Jack asked if the Creek will at least be cleaned. Michael responded that it would as part of the Multi-Use Trail Project. Iain cautioned that it not be made into a "sanitized" creek, but rather remain looking like a natural creek in the Northwest.

Japanese Garden: The Japanese Garden Society, with Steve Garber as the President, has now received a recent \$350,000 bequest. Michael and Parks staff have made some recommendations for needed projects at the Japanese Garden for which the bequest could be directed. He will report again at the February 8 meeting. He added that ADA accessibility has become a driving force of Parks' projects and this is a good opportunity to ensure the Japanese Garden is in compliance.

Old/New Business

Update on Arboretum Plant Vandalism: Fred reported some Arboretum plants were vandalized/stolen by UW fraternities. UWBG staff met with the intercouncil of fraternities to discuss the damage. **Ki Psi** has volunteered to perform long-term work at the Arboretum, with 500-1,000 people working 4 hours each. They will also pay for the Monkey Puzzle tree, valued at \$1,000. The volunteers will work with David Zuckerman. Iain stated this is a great approach to compensate for the vandalism.

College of Environment (COE): Sarah reported the COE is preparing a strategic plan and the UW Botanic Gardens are faring well, so far.

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

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Theresa Doherty, ABGC Chair