

Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC)

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

The ABGC is also closely monitoring the WSDOT SR520 project for impacts to the Washington Park Arboretum. Please see

<http://depts.washington.edu/wpa/520.htm>

Joint effort of the Arboretum Foundation, Seattle Parks, and the University of Washington (UW)

Location: Graham Visitors Center

March 11, 2009

Voting

Members

Present:

Arboretum Foundation

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

City of Seattle

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

University of Washington

- Theresa Doherty, University of Washington, Assistant Vice President for Regional Affairs
- Sandra Lier, University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG) Director
- Iain Robertson, University of Washington Associate Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture

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Washington State

- Dave Towne, Washington State Governor's Appointee

Others

Present:

- Fred Hoyt, UWBG, Facilities & Grounds Manager
- Helen Payton, Arboretum Foundation Development Director
- Michael Shiosaki, Seattle Parks Deputy Director, Projects and Planning

Members of

The Public:

- Brooks Kolb, President, Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks
- Larry Sinnott, Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks,
- Skip Vonyx, Arboretum Foundation Board of Directors

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: Bruce Bare & Sandra Lier

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

Mission Statement: Kathleen Pierce (AF), Donald (City), & Sandra (UW)

Naming Recognition Guideline:
SR520 Mediation (Group of 34):

Paige (AF), Donald (City), & Sandra (UW)
Paige, representing both the ABGC and AF

ABGC Chair Dave Towne called the meeting to order at 8:30 am. The agenda was approved, as revised, as well as the minutes from the January 14 meeting.

Updates

Japanese Garden Entry: Michael reported that this project saw significant progress in the past month and is going fairly well. Work is expected to be complete by April 15. Seattle Parks is the lead on the May 4 grand opening.

Donald thanked Michael for his oversight of Arboretum projects and commented that it has been very helpful.

Pacific Connections Phase II: Michael reported that Phase II is moving from 65% construction documents to 95%. He will bring the documents to the ABGC at a future meeting. Currently, staff are working on the plant list – propagation, re-packaging, and how best to obtain some of the needed plants.

Iain asked why it is so difficult to obtain the needed plants. Michael and Fred answered that they have checked with eight local nurseries, with little interest. The primary reason for this is the small number of different species that will need to be ordered. And due to the phased, multi-year planting schedule, the nurseries would have to track when and which plants to order and have the plants in stock exactly when they are needed for planting in the Pacific Connections Garden. The nurseries would prefer to order hundreds of the same type of plants.

Iain suggested that procuring these plants could be an educational project for UW students. He and Sandra will discuss this option more and report back. Fred responded that staff are open to all options and must move ahead with this soon. Paige added that there is currently \$100,000 budgeted to begin the plant procurement; however, additional funds will be required.

Arboretum Drive Closure Status: Seattle Parks has proposed that the status of Arboretum Drive, which has been temporarily closed to traffic for the past 18 months during construction, be changed to a permanent closure. The ABGC intends to vote on the proposal today and send the results to the Board of Park Commissioners, which recently held a public hearing on the proposal. The Park Board plans to make a recommendation to the Superintendent at its March 26 meeting. Donald noted that the Board was originally scheduled to make a recommendation on the proposal at its March 12 meeting; however, it wanted to give the public additional time to weigh in on the closure. He noted that the staff briefing paper has been posted online on the Board's web page. He next read the staff recommendation: "Full-time, permanent closure of Arboretum Road from Lake Washington Boulevard to the Graham Visitor Center. Access for emergency, service and disability-permitted vehicles would be allowed, as would access for permitted weekend events (approximately 15 weddings scheduled during the summer). Permits would be issued for events."

Dave commented that the ABGC doesn't manage the Arboretum; however, it does have the responsibility to advise both the University and City in how the Arboretum is managed and to give the Superintendent input on this proposal. Several community members attended the meeting in regards to the proposed closure and the Chair asked for any comments.

Brooks Kolb: He is the president of the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks (FoSOP.) FoSOP is concerned that this is a permanent closure; however, it was included as part of the "Summer Streets" program, all of which are temporary street closures. FoSOP believes that the permanent closure will make it more difficult for park users to access the Arboretum, especially for the disabled and for picnickers, and that the bar for getting a sticker/permit will be too high for many people. He noted that the existing parking lots fill quickly during nice

weather, leaving fewer options to access the Arboretum. He also stated that the Olmsted's intent for the Arboretum was inclusion of a pleasure drive through the park at a leisurely pace.

Barbara stated that Arboretum Foundation members have anecdotal information on the proposed closure, including: that the proposal limits access to the elderly, handicapped and children; it detracts from the user's experience; it is difficult to safely access the Arboretum by pedestrian crosswalks along Lake Washington Boulevard (LWB), as the traffic is heavy there; and once a person crosses LWB there are still impediments, such as inclines/hills, to those in wheelchairs or with other disabilities.

Barbara has received a number of letters of concern from Arboretum Foundation members and received another just prior to the meeting. Members do not want to spoil the park with vehicles; however, they do want access. The donors have given a great deal of money to Arboretum Foundation projects and a result of these new projects has been more people interested in visiting the south end of the Arboretum.

Barbara, Paige, and Skip Vonyx of the Arboretum Foundation will meet with Superintendent Gallagher on March 12 and the AF Board will discuss the proposal and take a vote on Wednesday, March 18.

Dave asked if the closure is consistent with the Master Plan and Donald read a portion of the letter from Friends of Olmsted Parks, as follows: *Regarding Arboretum Drive, Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks participated in a multi-year process of public meetings on the Arboretum Master Plan. One of the most heavily discussed topics was whether Arboretum Drive should be closed to traffic. As a result of all the public input, the Arboretum Master Plan, adopted by City Council in Resolution 30317, includes the language in section 2.3.5-1.3: "Leave Arboretum Drive open to through traffic; add measures to eliminate trucks and other inappropriate vehicles; utilize Drive for tram tours and other special purpose access".*

Dave noted that in other language the Master Plan refers to the need to eliminate trucks along Arboretum Drive. He also referred to a letter from the Japanese Garden Advisory Council, which states that 89 parking sites along Arboretum Drive will be lost as a result of the road closure.

Iain stated that he recently advocated that a long-term goal of the closure should also reduce the paved surface of Arboretum Drive. However, he now feels more caution should be exercised and that a system of preventing through traffic in the Arboretum should be implemented. There are both short-term and long-term goals involved with traffic in the Arboretum. Barbara responded that Iain's points are good ones; however, she does not agree with a permanent closure of Arboretum at this time.

Kjris stated that she favors the permanent closure. She has heard from Superintendent Gallagher that he is interested in alternative forms of transportation to help those with disabilities access the Arboretum. However, she does not want to alienate the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks or the Japanese Garden Advisory Council. Another source of concern for her is that the destruction of Lake Washington Boulevard has been generally accepted. This is a park road that runs through the Arboretum and has been allowed to be turned into a major arterial. LWB should have more and safer crosswalks.

After the February ABGC meeting, Dave asked Jack to poll the sentiments of ABGC members in regard to the road closure proposal. Jack summarized that 8 of the 9 members responded and a clear majority favors a permanent closure that would include agreement between Parks and the Arboretum Foundation on how the closure is managed. Jack believes the Arboretum Foundation should make a proposal to the Superintendent on how best to manage the closure.

Sandra added that she favors the road closure; however, she wants to make sure visitors don't lose access to the Arboretum. She noted that there are no toilets at the south end of the Arboretum and eventually 9,000 or more people annually will use that area. Walking from the south end to the nearest restroom will take awhile.

Donald noted that Arboretum Drive has been closed temporarily for 18 months, due to construction, and there have been no complaints. Paige responded that virtually no one knows about the permanent closure, including Councilmember Jan Drago, a member of the City Council's Parks and Seattle Center Committee. Paige recently walked Arboretum Drive with Karen Tsao, Seattle Parks' strategic advisor on this proposal, and pointed out various concerns to Ms. Tsao. Paige believes that 95% of the Superintendent's objectives for the closure can be reached by permanently closing Arboretum Drive at the south end only. Some vehicles that need access could then drive along Arboretum Drive at a slow pace. She thinks things are working well as they are now and is concerned about the ABGC taking a position at this time - before it knows what the operation plans are for the road closure.

Michael commented that the term "Summer Street" did not make it clear that the proposal is for a permanent closure of Arboretum Drive. Barbara agreed and believes the idea was buried in the summer Street proposal. The Arboretum Foundation Board was very surprised by the idea. The Foundation is asking people to calm down and wait until the results of the March 18 meeting with the Superintendent are known. If any action is taken today by the ABGC, she asked that it ensure that adequate public notice about the permanent closure is distributed. She also asked that the Superintendent first work with Seattle Department of Transportation to focus attention on the heavy traffic along Lake Washington Boulevard – and spend additional time getting the word out to the public about the proposed permanent closure of Arboretum Drive.

Responding to a question from Dave on whether the Arboretum Foundation would prepare a management plan for Arboretum Drive, Barbara responded that she is unsure if this is the role of the Foundation. Sandra commented that this closure could be vetted more clearly to the public and then done in stages. Theresa agreed.

Dave asked if Seattle Parks followed its public involvement policy on this proposal. Donald responded that Ms. Tsao held three public meetings in different areas of the city. Paige added that Park Board Commissioner Terry Holme asked if the Arboretum Foundation had been surveyed to ascertain how the Foundation members feel about the proposed closure. Paige and Foundation staff have now prepared a survey, which will be posted later today. All efforts have been used to make the survey neutral. It will be on the Arboretum website from March 11 through March 20 and e-mailed to 6,000 addresses in the Foundation's mailing lists. Fred asked that the survey include the wording "closed with caveats" and include the conditions that are listed in Ms. Tsao's briefing paper.

Dave summarized that he is not hearing disagreement with the long-term goals to remove pavement and reduce traffic in the Arboretum and asked if members would entertain a motion.

Jack moved that the ABGC recommend to the Parks Superintendent approval of the permanent closure of Arboretum Drive from Graham Visitors Center to Lake Washington Boulevard, subject to negotiating a management plan with all interested parties. Kjris seconded.

Dave asked that the ABGC limit any remaining discussion. Barbara stated that she believes this motion is premature, as she has not yet heard what the Arboretum Foundation Board has to say on the closure and she requested that the vote be delayed. Sandra responded that closure of the road is a decision to be made by the Parks Superintendent. She will vote yes on the motion, as she believes it is his job to manage the Arboretum's roads.

The vote was taken with five voting yes (Kjris, Theresa, Sandra, Jack, and Dave); two voting no (Barbara and Paige); and one abstaining (Donald.) Motion carried.

Kjris asked that a portion of a future ABGC agenda include a discussion of traffic/crosswalks, etc., along Lake Washington Boulevard. Sandra suggested that Seattle Department of Transportation staff be invited to the meeting. Michael will check with SDOT to see if it has any future plans for LWB and report back to ABGC.

Larry Sinnott was in the audience and suggested that the ABGC also contact Jerry Arbes, a very active member of Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks, regarding his research on LWB.

Joint Fundraising Committee & Naming Recognition Guidelines

The Joint Fundraising Committee held its first meeting on February 2. The group spent much of the meeting discussing the relationship between the ABGC, Master Plan Implementation Group, and the Joint Fundraising committee in determining Master Plan funding priorities. Sandra is working to develop a flow chart to more clearly define the roles of each group. Until the relationships are clear, she recommended that any further work on the Naming Recognition Guidelines be delayed.

The Joint Fundraising Committee will report back on its discussions at the next ABGC meetings.

Update: SR 520 Project

Paige reported that the Washington State House of Representatives is voting today on early tolling of State Route 520. Paige has been receiving regular e-mail updates from Fran Calhoun, leader of a citizen group very actively engaged in the SR 520 project.

UW Report: Theresa understands that tolling is being considered for SR520 at this time (and not Interstate 90); however, the tolling will not fully fund the SR520 replacement. The floating portions of the bridge are slated to be replaced first, as they are more vulnerable in the event of a severe earthquake or other catastrophe. She believes that, initially, more action on the project will be seen on the east side of the bridge than will occur on the west (Seattle) side. The Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled for completion in December 2009.

New/Old Business

Goals & Objectives: It was agreed that this document needs an extensive review and updating. The next ABGC retreat is scheduled for November 4 and the Goals and Objectives will be updated and used as a major tool for the ABGC's strategic planning for 2010.

Graham Visitor Center Management: Sandra reported that she is still working on this agreement between the UW and Arboretum Foundation. She noted that the Joint Fundraising Committee developed a "Responsibilities Chart", which includes roles of the three partners (AF, City, and UW) in ownership, management, and maintenance of the Arboretum and its components. This list helps define the many complex layers that have developed over the years between the three partners and will be sent to the other members of ABGC.

Invite Councilmember Rasmussen to an ABGC Meeting: Dave agreed to invite Councilmember Rasmussen to the April ABGC meeting.

UW Regents Tour: Sandra reported that the Regents will visit the Arboretum on Wednesday, July 15. Parks Superintendent Gallagher will be on the tour and Sandra requested a member of the Arboretum Foundation Board also attend. Donald stated that the Superintendent suggested tour members stress that the Arboretum is an educational facility – and not just a park. Staff will gather information on student projects and other Arboretum educational opportunities to present to the Regents.

Municipal League Nomination: Kjris reported that she nominated the ABGC for this award; however, it was not selected. She will forward the written nomination to the ABGC.

Madison Valley Drainage: Seattle Public Utilities is working on a water detention project that will affect Washington Park, located adjacent to the Japanese Garden and Arboretum Creek. Michael reported that this project is a two-phase project by Seattle Public Utilities and the first phase, water detention improvements, is now out to bid. The conceptual design for Phase 2 has just begun. Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) staff briefed the ABGC on this project last year and the ABGC requested SPU staff to examine whether this project could also enhance Arboretum Creek stream flow. Responding to a question from Kjris on whether the stream enhancement is part of the Master Plan, Paige answered that it is. Kjris is in charge of King County's floodwater control division, which has funding to help with stormwater runoff projects. Michael will follow up with Kjris on this funding source and will be in contact with SPU staff.

Mission Statement: Theresa, Sandra, Donald, and Kathleen Pierce are the committee working on revisions to the Arboretum mission statement; however, due to other commitments and priorities, work on this is on hold for the time being.

Washington Park Arboretum's 75th Anniversary Celebration: The event includes a community-wide picnic, scheduled for July 18. More details will be discussed at the April ABGC meeting.

UWBG Financial Status: Sandra asked that this topic be added to the April agenda. She thanked Dave for the excellent letter he wrote to the Dean of the College of Forest Resources [the letter was forwarded to ABGC members] in support of continued funding for the University of Washington Botanic Garden. The letter stressed the importance of the UWBG and urged that budget cuts be kept to a minimum. Superintendent Gallagher has sent a letter of support and the Arboretum Foundation is preparing a letter.

ABGC Record of Correspondence: Sandy asked that a copy of all ABGC correspondence be sent to her for the files.

Harrison Community: Donald showed a map and pointed out the location of the Harrison community, located adjacent to the Arboretum. Community members are interested in having more connecting trails into the Arboretum from their area. Michael stated that MPIG has looked at the feasibility of connecting trails within the Master Plan.

Curator position: Fred thanked Sandra and Paige for testifying in Olympia recently in support of the curator position for the UWBG.

WPA Historic Review: Jack asked Sandy to make a color copy of the WPA historic review for him and to also send a copy to the Seattle Public Library.

Announcement: Sandra announced that the UWBG, Arboretum Foundation, and Seattle Parks is sponsoring a lecture by noted plant expert Dan Hinkley. Mr. Hinkley will speak on "Sechuan to Seattle" and is scheduled on Tuesday, April 7, 7:00-8:30 pm, at University Tower Auditorium. All ABGC members are encouraged to attend.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be on April 8, 2009, 8:30 am, at Graham Visitors Center.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 10:15 am.

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Theresa Doherty, ABGC Secretary