

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, September 14, 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

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:

- Kjris Lund, Mayoral Appointee
- Dave Towne, Washington State Governor's Appointee

Other Staff Present:

- Sarah Reichard, UWBG, Director
- Michael Shiosaki, Seattle Parks, Projects & Planning Deputy Director

Washington State Department of Transportation Team (WSDOT) Team

Rob Berman, Planning Manager; Rachel Patterson, Communications Manager for SR520 Project

Seattle Department of Transportation (SDO) Team

Paul Elliott, Communications; Luke Korpi, Transportation Planner; Jennifer Wieland, Transportation Planner

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

Retreat Planning Committee:

Theresa Doherty (UW); Donald Harris (City); Paige Miller (AF)

SR520 Technical Committee:

David Graves (City); Theresa Doherty & Fred Hoyt (UW)

This meeting was held at Graham Visitors Center at the Arboretum. Jack Collins, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:30 am. Theresa assumed chair position approximately 8:40 am. The agenda was changed to reflect an update on the tree removals and a UW student art project in the Arboretum. The amended agenda and August 10 meeting minutes were approved.

Japanese Garden Teahouse Operations

Nathan Torgelson, Seattle Parks Policy and Real Estate Manager, presented a briefing on the Japanese Teahouse contract negotiations. During the summer, he negotiated a new maintenance and volunteer use agreement for the Teahouse through 2013 with the Urasenke Tankokai Seattle Association (Tankokai Seattle.) Previously, the Urasenke Foundation Seattle Branch held the contract. The new agreement is a good partnership for the Parks Department. Other tea groups may also schedule the building for tea ceremonies. A bonus of the new partnership is that a delegation from Japan Urasenke visited Seattle recently and arranged for two of their Japanese craftsmen to inspect the Teahouse. They determined the 30-year-old structure is in remarkably good condition, although some work is needed.

Acting Parks Superintendent Williams thanked the Urasenke Foundation Seattle Branch for its recent generous donation of utensils to the Teahouse. Jack has participated in the tea ceremonies and recommended them to other ABGC members. The ceremonies are scheduled on weekends through October.

Paige reported the recent Arbor Circle event was originally scheduled at Woodway; however, there was a last-minute emergency and the site was unavailable. Acting Parks Superintendent Williams paved the way for the event to instead be held at the Japanese Garden. Paige voiced the Foundation's thanks for the Superintendent's support and stated the 50 guests enjoyed a wonderful evening.

SDOT Team - Traffic Calming on Lake Washington Boulevard

Jennifer Wieland and Luke Korpi, transportation planners from Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), introduced Paul Elliott, communications manager for SDOT. Luke and Jennifer have attended several ABGC meetings regarding Lake Washington Boulevard traffic calming to discuss SDOT's role. Jennifer reported that Seattle City Light is experiencing an unavoidable delay in its street lighting project for Lake Washington Boulevard. The delay was caused when City Light was directed by the City to bid the conduit portion of the project and impacts SDOT's traffic-calming schedule for Lake Washington Boulevard, as the raised asphalt crosswalks cannot be completed during winter months. SDOT has tentatively re-scheduled the work to begin in spring 2012 from its original intent of fall 2011 and will continue doing prep work for the project. Their crews will be working on the Arboretum Drive connection within the next two weeks. Paige voiced disappointment at the delay, as Arboretum members have been told to expect the new crosswalks by spring.

Paul will work closely with the Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG), especially Michael as MPIG lead, to determine the best weekends to close Lake Washington Boulevard for the ramp installations and other traffic-calming enhancements. It was agreed that the public must be informed well in advance of these closures. Fred added that the UW and Parks crews can take advantage of the closures to complete maintenance projects that are difficult to do while vehicles are traveling the Boulevard.

WSDOT Team - SR 520 Update

Rob Berman, Planning Manager, and Rachel Patterson, Communications Manager for SR520 Project, reviewed the project schedule. WSDOT staff attended the September 1 Seattle Design Commission meeting, reviewed the project design, and heard the commission's comments. (To read the minutes, see <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/AppDocs/GroupMeetings/DCReportSR-520-I-5-to-MedinaAgendaID3337.pdf>.)

A progress report on the project will be generated in December and updated in January 2012.

The discussion next focused on WSDOT's Seattle Community Design Process (SCDP.) For more information on this, see <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/I5ToMedina/scdp.htm>). The first meeting was held on September 13. There is a strong need to work with the community to integrate project details; this will be one of several design processes. The SCDP will not manage the design process but it will help form questions, listen to input, and serve as an advisory group. The Capitol Hill, University District, and Laurelhurst areas have not yet selected a representative to SCDP. ABGC members stressed the importance that these areas are represented and suggested several names. A group of citizens have filed a lawsuit against the project regarding the SEPA process and those named on the lawsuit cannot be on the SCDP. If the lawsuit results in an injunction, project construction will be halted, but the design process will continue to move forward while the lawsuit moves through the legal process. Even if the lawsuit is successful and the proposed project never goes forward, WSDOT will still replace the existing four lanes as part of its catastrophic planning.

Michael commented that the initial meeting was a good start. The grass roots effort is needed, along with great designers. Rob stated ABGC members may attend the meetings and will receive the meeting minutes.

Jennifer referred to the Arboretum traffic management plan and the neighborhood traffic plan. It is easier to roll these two together, but SDOT wants to respect the Arboretum traffic management plan. ABGC members commented that while it is difficult to separate the two; the ABGC will become one of many voices if the processes are combined. They asked that WSDOT and SDOT keep the ABGC's concerns for the Arboretum front and center and not envelope them into the bigger process. Jack suggested the ABGC appoint Kjris Lund as its representative to the SDCP.

October agenda: ABGC will notify the SDOT team whether it should attend the October meeting. The WSDOT team will attend and report on North Entry and Multi-Use Trail mitigation measures and Foster Island Planning. ABGC members also want to discuss the Marsh Island Trail with WSDOT at this meeting.

Update: Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG) Update

Michael and staff gave extensive updates:

Michael reported that 25-30 members of the public attended the August 31 public meeting, which focused on the North Entry and Multi-Use Trail schematic designs. Strong support was voiced for the designs; however, a number of questions were asked as to why the trail was being built and staff corrected several rumors.

Iain voiced concern about the size of the North Entry roundabout and asked that Parks staff measure the current asphalt footprint and ensure the new roundabout is no larger.

Iain next asked if the Multi-Use Trail includes a clear loop that connects the trail at Marsh Island. Fred asked if repair of the trail near Marsh Island is part of the SR520 mitigation and Sarah wondered if it can be included. The trail in that area rests on a peat bog and keeps sinking. ABGC members asked that this topic be added to the October ABGC agenda for follow up with WSDOT.

Michael next showed two large drawings prepared by Berger staff with elevation gains of the Multi-use Trail. The Trail will be pervious asphalt, 10' wide, and have crushed rock shoulders on either side.

Crews will soon begin replacing the soggy, grassy trail at Azalea Way with a crushed rock trail. This is a temporary solution and Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks (FOSP) has agreed to help raise funds for a permanent solution.

The removal of a large cottonwood tree, scheduled for this next week, will complete the next phase of tree removal for the Pacific Connections gardens.

Fred recently visited Cistus Nursery to review the New Zealand garden plant propagation and reported the propagation is slower and more complicated than anticipated. Other CUH and Arboretum Foundation staff will visit the nursery October 7-9.

Paige reported outstanding results with the new volunteer steward program for the Pacific Connections gardens. More than 20 people have signed up and this number is expected to double by the end of the year. A kickoff and two work parties have already been held. The volunteers include landscape architects and others with extensive gardening experience, with some brand new to the Arboretum. Two work parties are being scheduled monthly, with one on a Thursday and one on a Saturday. The stewards will receive free lectures and training sessions.

This model may be used for the Arboretum's Witt Winter Garden and Azalea Way and is a good opportunity for incoming UW students to volunteer at the Arboretum. Garfield High School staff have also been in contact with Foundation staff and some of their students will volunteer at the Arboretum. Sarah announced the Center for Urban Horticulture is providing opportunities for UW students to volunteer and receive academic credit.

Following up on a discussion at the last ABGC meeting, Sarah will warn students at the Greek fraternities that the plantings at the Arboretum are very valuable and should not be damaged.

Century Link (formerly Qwest) recently completed their year-long donation of \$26,000 in cash and 400 volunteer hours to the Arboretum.

MPIG will discuss which Arboretum signs to replace first. The road closure sign at the north entry of Arboretum Drive is very likely to be first as its wording confuses the public.

Budget Updates

Arboretum Foundation:

- Della reported the recent Arbor Circle event was quite successful, with Lynn and Steve Garber honored at the event.
- The Arboretum Foundation is once again fully staffed, with four new staff members. These new hires help form a very strong team.

UW:

Sarah reported that CUH is holding one vacant position open. There have been no new budget announcements in the past month.

City/Parks:

- Donald and Michael reported that Seattle Parks is bracing itself for more cuts when the Mayor announces his proposed 2012 budget on September 26. Mayor McGinn announced changes and staff reductions to the 26 community centers at a special press conference on September 12, with 13 full positions lost in the recreation division. The rest of the Department's staff will all receive a letter on September 26 notifying them whether their position is cut, reduced, or unaffected.
- In addition to budget cuts, the funding for the Parks and Greenspaces Levy is winding down. This will result in the Department reducing the number of Levy project managers over the next year or two.
- Jack asked the status of the Seattle Parks Foundation study on funding for Seattle's parks. The Board of Park Commissioners will hear an update briefing on this at the October 13 meeting and the agenda will be forwarded to the ABGC. Paige has heard rumors the Seattle Park Foundation funding study may propose a new park levy in 2012. Donald has heard there may also be a library and housing levy, as well as the substantial increase in car tabs. This is a lot of requests to the public for tax increases.

Japanese Garden Weddings

Donald reported the Parks Department will begin holding weddings in the Japanese Garden in 2012. Guidelines for the Garden's use will be exceptionally strict. Expectations are that it will produce needed revenue for the Parks Department.

Old/New Business

UW Student Art Project in Arboretum: Sarah reviewed a proposed student dissertation project, "Music of Trees", which involves some installations in Arboretum trees. All such installations require a permit from the City. However, if a student is using the Arboretum as a study and reporting source, they do not need a permit. Both City and UW staff voiced concerns that wildlife might be attracted to the installations and asked the project be done in the fall. Sarah responded the student is getting a wildlife permit, and the exhibit will have interpretive language, a map and numbered sites, and possibly QR coding.

Following discussion, **Iain moved the ABGC endorses the project as it uses the Arboretum as an educationally interesting site and adds to the pleasure of the public using the Arboretum. Jack seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.** Donald will notify Paula Hoff, Seattle Parks staff person responsible working on the approval process for the permit.

ABGC Annual Retreat: The retreat is scheduled on Wednesday, November 9. Theresa, Donald, and Paige volunteered to plan the agenda. Sandy will send them supporting documents from last year's retreat.

Flower and Garden Show Update: Paige announced that the first night of the show, previously called "Preview", has been re-named "Opening Night". The Seattle Audubon Society is partnering with the Show and arranging bird call recordings for the bird-friendly displays (no live birds.)

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

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Theresa Doherty, ABGC Chair