

Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC) Minutes Graham Visitors Center – October 14, 2015

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.

Voting Members

Arboretum Foundation

- Paige Miller, Arboretum Foundation Executive Director
- Jim Reid, Arboretum Foundation Board President

City of Seattle

- Kenan Block, Mayoral Appointee
- Jack Collins, Mayoral Appointee
- Michael Shiosaki, Seattle Parks, Projects & Planning Division, Director

University of Washington

- Sally Clark, University of Washington, Director of Regional and Community Relations
- Sarah Reichard, University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG), Director
- Iain Robertson, University of Washington, Associate Professor, Dept. of Landscape Architecture

Washington State

- David Towne

Other Staff Present:

- Fred Hoyt, University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG), Associate Director
- Doug Critchfield, Seattle Parks and Recreation, NRU Manager
- Rachel Acosta, Seattle Parks and Recreation, ABGC Coordinator
- *Excused*, Daniel Sorensen, University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG)

Standing Committees

Building Committee:

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

Partners Committee:

AF: Jim Reid & Paige Miller

City: Christopher Williams & Michael Shiosaki

UW: Tom DeLuca & Sarah Reichard

Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG):

AF: Paige Miller & Jason Morse

City: Michael Shiosaki (lead) & Andy Sheffer

UW: Fred Hoyt & Sarah Reichard

SR520 Technical Committee:

City: David Graves; UW: Fred Hoyt

Opening Items

Jim calls for adoption of the September minutes; he notes one change Jim was marked excused and Iain was not present and those will be corrected. The minutes are approved with changes. Jim requests moving Jesús up on the Agenda to follow the Equitable Outreach discussion. Jack moves to approve the amended agenda, Kenan seconds, and the agenda is approved.

Equitable Outreach Strategy

Andy introduces Karimah Edwards, a planner and Charles Ng, Contracts Manager from Seattle Parks and Recreation who came as representatives of Seattle Parks and Recreation's Race and Social Justice Change Team to discuss equitable access to the Arboretum.

Charles says the Arboretum is a true treasure. This is the 10th year of the citywide Race and Social Justice Initiative. The vision is to dismantle institutional racism and offer opportunities for all people. He agrees that people may not know about the Arboretum. In order to provide more access we have to start thinking through policies, marketing, and outreach to get people here. The effort has to be sustainable. Relationships need to be established with contacts for these constituents. Expanding the pool of patrons will make the organization stronger.

Barriers to access:

- Knowledge – people don't know about the Arboretum;
- Transportation – there are not many public transportation options and they all require some walking
- Cultural differences – non-native English speakers – provide language access to shepherd visitors through the park.

Perform outreach to organizations targeting African American communities. Understand the cultural barriers and look at how to eliminate those barriers. Karimah says she is from the south. Due to historical context, Karimah feels, there are feelings of fear associated with nature. Paige says there are many of cultures and ethnicities at the Arboretum on the weekends, but the African American community is notably absent.

What ways can we connect to the African American community and make this a more welcome place? Karimah says connections with faith based organizations would be a strong start.

Does the department have plans for outreach to those organizations? Jesús says these issues are mirrored throughout the system. Paige says they could collaborate. Kenan says this is a retreat topic and it would be good to come out with some initiatives. Charles says SPR has established contacts. People feel more comfortable coming when they see people that look like them. Jack suggests having a meeting with the Outdoor African Committee.

New strategies to reaching out to new immigrant communities: Find out who their trusted community leaders are. Present in a way that is acceptable to their community; there are cultural intricacies.

Charles says he did a community walk into Cheasty. Through this he found out the dynamics between East Africans and the woods. There is a hesitation going into the woods.

Fiddleheads School – Sarah mentions that the student population could be more diverse if they had the funds to provide scholarships.

Transportation is a huge issue. Charles mentions a program through the Peacock Foundation that provides transportation for getting kids to the Mount Baker Rowing and Sailing Center. Paige

mentions Sound Transit station and the marketing of the Arboretum. Jesús says SPR is talking with SDOT regarding safe routes to schools/parks/community centers.

Make the interpretation more readable. There are 9 prioritized languages. Use universal symbols and graphics.

Jesús feels it is important to ensure the place is relevant to their culture. Karimah mentions the National Parks system is providing grant funding to systems working to acknowledge other cultures; how to make it more inclusive.

The new Stewards Coordinator at the Arboretum Foundation is African American; she isn't shy about engaging people and encouraging them to get involved.

The Arboretum Foundation finds it difficult to recruit African Americans to their board. Andy says partnerships are important. He emphasizes persistence and making a long-term commitment. Neighborhood House does an overnight camp at Camp Long with East Africans, perhaps include Neighborhood House in the strategic planning. Engage the local schools and the kids may bring the parents back. How to make the diverse schools come to the Arboretum? Sally mentions reaching out to Seattle Housing Authority.

Jesús Aguirre: His vision and goals for Seattle Parks and Recreation

Jesús is brand new to Seattle and is still in listening mode. He has been on a listening tour at various community centers throughout the system.

Vision for Seattle Parks and Recreation: Health and livability; growth and enrichment; and the goals need to reflect the community. It is important to continue discussions as the role of SPR changes.

Themes emerged at internal and external meetings: Organizational identity and more recreation programming.

There are many demands on SPR and they are asked to do many things and wear many hats. SPR can't be everything to everyone all the time.

Equity: As an organization, SPR has done a good job of pulling a business out of dark financial times; because of that people talk about this like a good business, but, the policies and fee structures cut out a huge segment of the population. Scholarships don't provide enough opportunity.

Marketing/branding/communications: People don't know what we do; hundreds of people are not aware of the plethora of activities offered. How to effectively get the word out.

Invest more in team: professional development and support staff.

Park District: making sure it is transparent and efficient. Use strong performance metrics and data to help us with decisions. It is tough to find indicators of success and how best to articulate that. Jack says if only one could measure units of pleasure.

Making it easier for partners to help; clear about what SPR does and engage partners more efficiently. Paige says the way the funding/budget works is a disincentive for employees to work hard. Japanese garden is well marketed by staff, but the extra income goes to the general fund which means less incentive because it doesn't go to employees. Jesús responds that the city is moving towards performance-based budgets. Dave adds ARC creation was primarily to keep money from going to the general fund. It is a way to circumvent the funds. The ARC partnership creates challenges, says Jesús, equity issues. Need to fix some of those systems.

Jack thanks Jesús for the people the department shares with this committee. Jack has been here for 4 Superintendents, they have all had different strengths and focus. Jack is excited about the education aspect of Jesús' background. Jesús says he is an educator and looks at everything through an educator lens.

Jim says his passion for education and his focus on race and social justice are commendable. The ABGC is passionate for this place to be a center for education and horticulture. Jim says the ABGC is aligned with the goals of SPR. Dave says it is reassuring to have Jesús come in, the department has been through a lot and morale was very low. Through the Seattle Park District, the feeling is that SPR has been solved, but that is not the case. He wonders how SPR will keep up with demands. He feels Jesús is a good leader during this time.

Jesús mentions there were no cuts in the general fund this year. He wants to make sure SPR is doing well and building advocacy. People love Seattle Parks and Recreation! However, there is a lack of true understanding about the Seattle Park District. There are a few symbolic actions the department can do that are very visible and communicate to the public at large.

Responsiveness – SPR is here to serve the residents and those needs change regularly. SPR staff are working to figure out mechanism to understand what is happening in its facilities and parks. In Washington, D.C. they had a tool that scanned social media and would receive everything related to the agency and internally people had to figure out how to respond.

Fred asks how SPR is responding to the homeless issue. He understands it is a hard issue to address. Jesús responds the Mayor is bringing in all partner organizations to figure out how to solve it. Kenan hopes for a compassionate approach with partner organizations. Paige says it sometimes feels unsafe leaving the office when it's dark because of the homeless population camping near the Graham Visitors Center.

Discussion: 2015/2016 Goals and Work Plan Review

Communications Work Group

- Groundbreaking of loop trail and how we message and tell that story.
- UFC meeting with Andy and Sarah – she felt it went fairly well. She is still emphasizing that the Arboretum is not a natural area or a park. Andy says they are concerned about the messaging to the public when the city removes tree. It is important to articulate tree replacement and tree canopy.
- Sound Transit station – the ABGC are working to make the Arboretum more accessible and the new Sound Transit Station allows for easier access. Jack is concerned Sound Transit is not responding to their requests for signage and materials. The ABGC may ask Jesús to escalate the issue to a citywide issue with Sound Transit. Kenan adds SDOT signage will be important. UW also feels Sound Transit communication and collaboration could improve.

- Peplemover - In the Spring, Kenan thinks a feature story about the people mover tours; this will be a great way for those with mobility issues to see the Arboretum.

Education Work Group

- Parking study is starting
- Education Center – This would be a \$5million project. The partners are working together. Currently, the education program operates out of the old greenhouse. While the idea is that they are outside in the rain, the education staff has grown and the office space is limited and sometimes it's very stormy.
- Composting toilet – Sarah will send the link around for the compostable toilets that are apparently very low maintenance.
- Potable water– Andy is obtaining estimates on getting 2 historic fountains up to code and a new fountain installed near fiddleheads.

Volunteers/Public Policy

- Engaging more students. UW Carlson center – service learning opportunities for University of Washington students to volunteer at the Arboretum.
- Creating stewards program for the Japanese Garden; engaging people to come several times a month to stretch the capacity to care for that place. As part of negotiations in increasing the role, she wants to create a volunteer steward group. The Japanese Garden needs really dedicated volunteers. The docent volunteers are really the only volunteers in the Japanese Garden and they all need to be more organized.
- University of Washington cross country/track teams are doing more volunteering.
- Work with Dan Sorensen to expand the circle at the UW.
- Attracting more outside groups to come and do service. The Seattle/Christchurch sister city organization come and volunteer annually in the New Zealand Garden.
- Lobbying for the specialty license plate – because of the donors connection to the McCaw family, we will have the services of a lobbyist. This will be a great help.

MPIG

Arboretum Loop Trail – working to get it rebid; revising the plan to make sure it is biddable. Reduced the scope. The plans came back and there will be some choices to make. SPR hired a civil engineer and he had some great suggestions. Being creative and keeping the aesthetic simple. There will be fewer concrete walls.

Major Projects Challenge Fund: The Seattle Park District Oversight Committee approved the criteria for the Major Project Challenge Fund. MPIG needs to spend time looking at the Rhododendron Glen and the summer garden. It is not necessary to get in the queue this year.

Randal met with a potential donor whose mother has just passed. She expressed interest in making a major gift for accessibility; Paige suggests this could go towards accessibility for the Ridgetop Trail. There is a little Parks and Greenspaces Levy money left.

Relighting the parking lot outside of the Graham Visitors Center – Andy says SPR staff are ready to go; the trees are scheduled for removal.

Jesús states the partners in the ABGC work together so well, which allows for a holistic perspective. The ABGC is thrilled Jesús came to visit.

Old/New Business

Audubon expressed concern about the multi-use trail; Jim and Rachel will work together to contact them for a possible meeting and tour. Jack says it would be great to obtain some graphics about birds in the Arboretum.

Upcoming Sound Transit meeting – Topics to discuss include:

- Wayfinding signage to the Arboretum
- Interpretive signage and a large map inside the station
- Free shuttles during opening day to the Arboretum from the new station
- Make the Arboretum integral to their media campaign

Donald Harris and Fred met because there are property encroachments to the Arboretum. Homeowners were given options to deal with their stuff on Arboretum property.

SDOT – Status of signage on right of way? Michael says it is hard because the ROW between the new Sound Transit Station and the Arboretum are in constant flux until SR520 is finished.

Tricia Stitler, the cross-country coach at Seattle University, wrote a letter and said they appreciated the letter but wanted to make sure it wasn't her kids being referred to in the letter.

Arboretum Foundation: New Development Director is starting on the 19th; she worked with Paige to raise money for the Chinese Garden 15 years ago. She is fabulous.

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourns at 10:35am.

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Jim Reid, ABGC Chair