

Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC) Minutes Graham Visitors Center, Washington Park Arboretum – April 8, 2020

The Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee is a Joint effort of the Arboretum Foundation, Seattle Parks and Recreation, 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

- Jane Stonecipher, Arboretum Foundation Executive Director
- Jenny Wyatt, Arboretum Foundation Board incoming President-elect

City of Seattle

- Kenan Block, Mayoral Appointee
- David Graves, Strategic Advisor, Seattle Parks and Recreation
- James Fearn, Mayoral Appointee

University of Washington

- Sally Clark, University of Washington, Director of Regional and Community Relations
- Fred Hoyt, University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG), Director

Other Staff Present:

- Rachel Acosta, Seattle Parks and Recreation, ABGC Coordinator
- Wendy Gibble, University of Washington Botanic Gardens, Associate Director
- Joey Furuto, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Parks and Environment Division Director

Standing Committees

Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG):

AF: Jane Stonecipher & Jason Morse
City: David Graves (lead) & Kim Baldwin
UW: Fred Hoyt/Wendy Gibble

SR520 Technical Committee:

City: David Graves; UW: Fred Hoyt

Call to Order

Sally calls the meeting to order at 9:05am. Sally asks about the March 11 meeting minutes; Jenny corrects that she is incoming president elect. In the Old/New Business section, at the bottom of page 3 – ABGC would like to see a separation of mitigation dollars from the North Entry Term Sheet. There is a Motion to approve minutes, as amended, for the March 11 meeting; David moves, Kenan seconds and the motion is approved. Joey Furuto introduces himself. He is the new Parks and Environment Division Director for Seattle Parks and Recreation. He managed Parks and Facilities in Tacoma for the last 5 years.

Partner Updates: Budget, Personnel and Other Items

University of Washington

The UWBG is working to create a sense of normalcy within the Covid-19 environment. Staff are working hard to ensure they will be set up and prepared for the end of this. The University of Washington is restricting people to work from home; some horticultural staff rotate through to make sure things are safe. They are making notes of invasive plants and other signs of neglect. They are moving forward on a variety of projects, including the medicinal plantings in the Australia garden and at the Center for Urban Horticulture (CUH). Their priority is the safety of their staff and community members, staff have radios and cellphones for emergencies when in the park. The UWBG is waiting for budgets to come through to anticipate what the immediate future will bring. The Education department will be struggling, as well.

Jane and Fred are discussing the Annual request to Arboretum Foundation.

Kenan asks if the Arboretum or UW qualify for any grants. Stephanie Harrington has asked UWBG to track losses to get future support. Donations are expected to drop as portfolios tighten up. Sally adds that FEMA money will be directed to student support first. The UWBG will have to make some tough decisions about staffing. The UW is looking at timing to enable staff to get the maximum access and flexibility in their unemployment benefits. They are also thinking about furloughs so people can maintain their benefits.

Arboretum Foundation

The Japanese Garden and Graham Visitors Center are closed; communication will extend the closure through May 4. The partners are having conversations about whether to close the parking lots. Staff have been working remotely. The Arboretum Foundation is presented with a unique challenge because they do not currently have a finance director. They are eligible for SBA paycheck protection, which banks started taking applications for last Friday. They are looking for a bank that will cover eight weeks of salary. Jane is looking for any opportunities to fill in gaps and maintain staffing until everything returns to normal. Grant funders are delaying their cycles, this is not ideal since fiscal year ends June 30.

Arboretum Foundations rolled out Haiku of the Day in conjunction with National Poetry Month on social media. There will be a social media series about 60th anniversary of the Japanese Garden. Then, they will launch a 3rd series about traditional Japanese Art and artists. Jane asked the team to launch an initiative to keep their volunteer community engaged. Staff are thinking about what they will do to celebrate Earth Day. Golden Gate Park in San Francisco is celebrating their 150th anniversary and is doing some cool virtual events that the Foundation may try to copy.

The partnership with the Woodland Park Zoo started with Zoo staff picking up sword fern cuttings. The Foundation is hoping to reach out to some joint donors about helping construct some infrastructure.

Fred says there is a focus on Mother's Day and good ideas to bring people virtually into the Arboretum.

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Hopefully, SPR is stretching themselves and building a larger community through social media. SPR has closed the parking lots for its' large, regional parks. The benefit is that with all the people in the parks it is diminishing negative uses. SPR staff are positioning themselves for future grant opportunities since there is no revenue. Capital projects are moving forward as staff try to maintain business as usual. Park District planning is on hold. There will be future opportunities for partnership engagement later.

Cloth masks in public places? Construction projects are moving forward as they can with Center for Disease Control guidelines and protocols. SPR is not policing them. Most projects are outside so it is easier to keep safe distance. Two inspectors are out every day to make sure the sites are secure and in compliance.

Graham Visitors Center (GVC) restrooms were initially not being cleaned because porta-potties were going to be installed; Fred spoke with Paula Hoff on Friday to see what restrooms were open at the Arboretum. She wasn't aware if/when the Arboretum were getting porta-potties. She was going to see what she could do. Comfort stations at Green Lake are open. Jane says they would like to discuss the location of the porta-potties.

Master Plan Implementation Group

MPIG has not happened yet, so they have not met since our last meeting. Fred, David and Jane update the committee with what they know.

Rhododendron Glen – MPIG is working with the Berger Partnership on the scope of Rhododendron Glen. They are disappointed with the amount of environmental consulting the project will need. They will reevaluate the scope to exclude the wetland areas. Azalea Way pond could be part of the SPR maintenance plan. The Japanese Garden pond is in the queue to be addressed through similar channels. It would be great to coordinate Azalea Way pond with the renovation of Rhododendron Glen. MPIG asked for advice from Berger about ways to minimize erosion on the paths in Rhododendron Glen. Fred adds he is uncomfortable with amount of environmental fees going into this project. This is a learning experience in doing watershed projects.

When the ABGC starts talking about bigger mitigation projects and the daylighting of Arboretum Creek, MPIG will be more prepared.

Old/New Business

Tsutakawa Gates – The gates were stolen on the evening of March 18 along with downspouts at the GVC. SPR staff distributed the description to the scrap dealing networks. The scrap dealer recognized what was being brought in, refused to buy it, and got a description and a license plate. They recovered a portion of one gate and the chopped up remains of another one. Jerry Tsutakawa fabricated the gates for his father in the 70's; he's been alongside the Arboretum Foundation through the ordeal and arranged to take a look at the parts. It is unclear if all of the pieces are there. The large piece was damaged around the edges. Seattle Office of Arts and Culture are the stewards of these gates; the Deputy Director is discussing the options with the Tsutakawas to gauge their interest in remaking the gates.

Jane received more than a half dozen inquiries about supporting a restoration project. Jane is letting potential donors know that they are still trying to figure out the next steps. The recovered piece could be a standalone piece of art. Kenan asks who makes the final decision. The family will have a lot of input, especially if Jerry is willing to do or oversee the project. The complexity of the project is weighing on him. Seattle Arts will have to evaluate the insurance; this may impact what a replacement project looks like. The Arboretum partners will need to figure out what they want to do. Kenan feels Tsutakawa is such an important local artist and he hopes some vestige of his work will remain in the Arboretum.

David wonders, from an SPR perspective, if the gates are needed there or a more utilitarian gate. The gates were originally placed on Arboretum Drive but they could be moved elsewhere.

SR520 Update – There are new people in the Attorney General’s Office who included in the development of the mitigation. The revised Term Sheet has been sent to WSDOT. SPR is separating the Term Sheet for property transfers from the mitigation projects. SPR is in the lead for design of the North Entry and the Term Sheet is fuzzy regarding partner engagement. David suggests a Term Sheet with all three partners involved. It would be great to get a sense of the timeline for understanding all parties’ interest and engagement with the Mitigation Term Sheet. There is uncertainty about how covid-19 will impact the schedule and the partners may have bought some time. The ABGC will start this conversation as soon as possible in order to access the funds more quickly. UW will educate themselves about the mitigation and start figuring out the partners position by June.

What is WSDOT’s incentive to do this now? There is a benefit to clear uncertainty off the books, but other than that, the ABGC do not know. The more we understand their motivation the better positioned the ABGC will be to negotiate.

SPR would lead design and public process, but it isn’t clear about the next round of mitigation negotiations.

Stone Cottage – What can the cottage be used for and are there other potential uses? UW Realty, David and Fred are discussing this. What is the vision of the future of the stone cottage? Is there an artist-in-resident program? A Classroom? The ABGC discuss options, recognizing the amount of work needed to renovate the cottage.

Conversation about this in May or June; David and Fred will have more information at the end of this month.

Governance Taskforce – They met remotely last week. They reviewed reports from Bellevue Botanical Gardens, Brooklyn Botanical Garden, and Ann Arbor Botanical Garden and Arboretum. Each garden has its own challenges and vulnerabilities. There were no ideal solutions presented for organizing and running a complex structure. They are still trying to figure out a common vision.

Sally asks about timeline: Are they still preparing a report in June? Jenny says they feel it is important to have an in-person discussion and think things through as a group. This may go into August or September.

Arboretum parking lots – Jane and Fred had a conversation with Deputy Superintendent Christopher Williams yesterday about closing the parking lots.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 10:15 a.m.

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Sally Clark, ABGC Chair