

Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC) Minutes

Via Zoom – June 10, 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 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 Gible, University of Washington Botanic Gardens, Associate Director
- Lisa Chen, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Natural Resources Unit Manager
- Robert Stowers, Seattle Parks and Recreation, EPIC Division Director

Standing Committees

Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG):

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

SR520 Technical Committee:

City: David Graves; UW: Fred Hoyt

Call to Order

Sally calls the meeting to order at 9:10am. The Board introduce themselves; Sally asks for approval of the consent items, the May minutes and June 10 Agenda. Jenny says her title is President-elect and should be changed on the agenda and minutes. She also correctly modifies the minutes to show that Lisa Chen attended the May meeting. Fred moves, Kenan seconds and the minutes are approved, as amended.

Partner Updates: Budget, Personnel and Other Items

University of Washington

UW is putting together safety plans for reopening. Environmental health and safety is leading with their guidelines. For employees to go to work, one needs to attest they are not ill and sign in, and comply to all safety procedures for sanitation. Everyone is required to wear a mask. Overarching principle is that only critical workers go into work; supervisors have to get authorization for their employees to enter.

Arboretum Trail from Duck Bay to Foster Island is closed for SR520 work. David and Fred have a meeting tomorrow with WSDOT and Graham Construction. The sign says they can access Foster Island via East Montlake Park, which is not true because that portion of the trail is currently underwater. The original message said the trail would be closed through Friday.

Budget – Fred is considering the proposed 15% budget cut. Preschool and summer camps are starting up at a reduction; they provide a lot of income for programs throughout the year. The long-term effects of the pandemic is yet to be determined.

Fred says the conversations between him and staff has been fruitful. The feedback has been helpful.

Arboretum Foundation

Staff have been busy producing their annual report and preparing for the annual meeting, which will be a virtual webinar a week from today. 60 households are signed up. They are thinking about reopening protocols for the Japanese Garden, volunteer programs, and the gift shop. Without a target date, they are spending lots of time imagining the plans for reopening. They are thinking about public restroom access and access to the Graham Visitors Center. Harsh realities have surfaced regarding the recommended occupancy under the social distancing guidelines. It is sobering how few people can gather indoors. One volunteer program with a majority of elderly folks, are questioning whether they will return this year. Staff will tilt toward more virtual and self-guided programs.

The 60th Anniversary for the ribbon cutting of the Japanese Garden was on Friday, June 5. The Foundation has done nice history blogs and translated original documents between Tokyo Metro Parks and the Seattle Japanese Garden. They produced a commemorative edition of the bulletin about the Garden. A carousel of birthday wishes are up on the website. The Foundation received nice support from the Consul General of Japan in Seattle. Arboretum Foundation staff felt it was less important to focus on June 5 as ribbon cutting day during all of the civil unrest. KOMO was in the garden filming, and the garden will be on Seattle Refined in a couple of weeks. There will be a feature story in the largest Japanese-American newspaper on the west coast, and in Pacific Magazine in the Sunday insert of the Seattle Times in October.

Financial standpoint – The Foundation is asking itself what will happen with the Northwest Flower and Garden show, their largest fundraiser, or the decreased revenue resulting in smaller numbers in the Japanese Garden.

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Phase 2 – The Woodland Park Zoo and Seattle Aquarium will re-open. Robert will schedule a presentation with Jane and Belinda to Jesús and Christopher on their plans to reopen the Japanese Garden. Jesús heard presentations from the Zoo and Aquarium with their plans to open, so the Japanese Garden has a good chance to open also. Robert is working with Jane, NRU and Belinda, because this would meet the guidelines for reopening.

Reopening of parking lots – SPR leadership are discussing whether to open parking lots at the operations meeting tomorrow. Businesses at Magnuson are reopening and they need parking. Safe Streets is a program whereby streets are closed to cars to provide more openspace for biking and walking, through SDOT. Golden Gardens Avenue, a SPR-owned street, is being considered for a Safe Street. Boat ramps on the Puget Sound are opening and their parking lots are open too.

Arboretum is receiving complaints from neighbors because people are parking on the streets around the Arboretum since the parking lots are closed. Could they reopen smaller lots along Lake Washington Boulevard? If the Japanese Garden opens, would the parking lot reopen as well? Robert says yes, but perhaps limited with SPR Social Distancing Ambassador's controlling access.

UW staff have received permission to proceed with summer camps at the Arboretum. Amanda has expressed concern that if the public sees cars in the GVC parking lot there will be more parking. SPR is keeping the birch lot for ADA parking only.

Community centers will not be opening now. They are thinking they might open during phase 3, which could be in 2021. Most of the centers that are opening sooner will be for childcare.

Master Plan Implementation Group

Stone Cottage – There is a cedar tree that seems to be right on top of the sewer line. The cedar tree will be removed. Once the tree is removed, the sewer line should be accessible and could be a relatively inexpensive fix. This will allow for better visibility of the stone cottage. When the UWBG staff are removing a tree, they distribute notification widely. The Arboretum are good tree managers and are thoughtful about tree removal.

Jane says that the Zoo will receive parts of the tree for habitat or snack.

Waterfront Trail – This project is moving along as quickly as possible. The Army Corps of Engineers takes forever to permit. The challenge right now from a permitting standpoint is getting U.S. Fish & Wildlife to engage in the process. The permit applications are all in and Garrett is preparing to go out to bid on the project.

Rhododendron Glen – There were surveyors out last week. Staff are doing a lot of planting in the upper glen and annual weed removal. At the start, staff removed some trees which brought in a lot of light and the plants are happier. Jane adds, she hopes that by the July MPIG meeting, Berger will give a more extensive update and SPR staff will attend to be engaged in the project early.

Japanese Garden pond – David has not heard yet if there is follow-up needed on the permits. He will find out.

Composting toilet – There are process disconnects happening. The partners need to reevaluate how MPIG is working together to ensure communication is flowing between them. The Department of Neighborhoods

(DON) grant was extended until September. MPIG is hoping to get installation done in the next month. Jane asks about restroom protocol in the Japanese Garden or the Graham Visitors Center, because there needs to be another facility in the park.

Old/New Business

SR520 – The SPR property review committee has the latest version of the Term Sheet and the biggest issue is the little property on Lake Washington Boulevard and Montlake. SPU will need to put in some utilities and SPR staff are examining whether they will need to transfer some of the property to SDOT. This was the proposed location for the entry marker for the Arboretum. Sally says the ABGC appreciates being included in the drafts of the Term Sheets. There haven't been any mitigation discussions.

Construction is picking up and is it time to schedule an update from WSDOT. July or August?

Tsutakawa Gates – Jerry is trying to get estimates for replacement costs.

Black Lives Matter – UWBG has been sending out messages regarding the Black Lives Matter movement. The Arboretum Foundation did an initial message last week with a more in-depth follow-up message to come. Jane appreciated seeing the messages from the University. However, they were more targeted towards UW community, not the public. There has not been much communication to the public yet from Seattle Parks and Recreation.

The ABGC discuss what they could do to participate in this moment and show solidarity. This is the biggest demonstration that has ever taken place in most of our lifetimes. They discuss a tree planting to commemorate this community-wide awakening. The Board agree to be thoughtful about the work of the Arboretum and their role in racial justice. They consider the larger context they want to be part of. Is the arboretum a welcoming and safe space for everyone in the community? The boardmembers will think about all the ways the partners are or are not moving this work forward. UWBG is looking at camps and programming through an equity lens. In thinking about issuing a statement, one speaks when one has things to say, when one can add to the conversation; going beyond the expression of compassion to how this translates into actionable steps.

Fred says that creating equitable systems is more powerful to being inclusive; arboreta and botanic gardens were historically exclusive and not accessible for People of Color. The ABGC want to make it known that this is a welcoming space for all, while acknowledging the history of arboreta and botanic gardens. This is more meaningful than putting a marker in the ground or planting a tree. James says he knows arboreta are known to be exclusive but has been going to arboreta since he was a kid and he has always felt welcome. A tree with a plaque that says something about the tree growing into a society with a more equitable vision of the future could be an appropriate show of solidarity and recommitment to racial equity. Juneteenth is not celebrated by all African-American communities; but that might be an opportunity to send a message to the community.

The ABGC decides to continue this discussion at next month's meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 10:20 a.m.

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Sally Clark, ABGC Chair