

Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC) Minutes

Via Zoom – January 13, 2021

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

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
- Dan Brown, University of Washington, School of Environmental Forest Sciences Director
- Ray Larson, UWBG, Interim (incoming) 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 9am. The members of the ABGC introduce themselves. Sally asks for edits or a motion to approve the September 9 meeting minutes. Kenan moves, David seconds, and the minutes are approved.

Governance Taskforce Update

A copy of the Taskforce presentation can be found [here](#).

Dan Brown, School of Environmental Forest Sciences Director, provides background.

This started a few years ago as an opportunity to improve the coordination and management of the University of Washington Botanic Gardens. The Taskforce members visited various public/non-profit organizations and learned about different governance models looking at relationships between non-profits and public institutions.

The Taskforce consisted of:

- Stephanie Harrington – Assistant Dean, College of the Environment
- Marlon Herrera – Planner, Board of Park Commissioners
- Fred Hoyt – UWBG Director
- Scott Medbury – Executive Director, Quarryhill Botanic Gardens
- Jane Stonecipher – Executive Director, Arboretum Foundation
- Dave Towne – Former Director SPR, Zoo Society, former ABGC Commissioner
- Maggie Walker – President, Audubon Society, Friends of Waterfront Board member
- Christopher Williams – Deputy Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation
- Sylvia Wolf – Executive Director, Henry Art Gallery
- Barbara Wright – Community member, former AF President, former Park Board Commissioner
- Jenny Wyatt, Arboretum Foundation Board President

Taskforce Conclusions:

- Recognize the limited potential of the current governance structure. 3 partners make it more complicated.
- Primary goal is changes has key goals of increasing equity
- Focus on streamlined organizational structure
- Effective non-profit with partners, could be best framework for consolidation.

Received taskforce recommendation:

- A powerful, compelling vision needs to emerge that will:
 - a) inspire the community;
 - b) motivate people to support the organization,
 - c) attract an influential group of “champions” to advocate for the Task Force’s recommended future governance structure; and
 - d) persuade key decision-makers within the University of Washington, City of Seattle, Arboretum Foundation (AF), and community.
- The parties who would be most interested in and affected by the recommendations need the opportunity to review and influence next steps. This begins with staff.
- A feasibility study should analyze what amounts to the Task Force’s preferred alternative. The study should also consider additional findings that could indicate alternative or additional options not

identified by the Task Force that may be more feasible than the Task Force's recommendations. An important variable in the feasibility study is the role of Seattle Parks and Recreation in any new model.

Next steps: A detailed feasibility study and structured stakeholder engagement process.

Dan and Jason presented to staff of all 3 agencies and asked for their input.

Jason leads the conversation regarding ABGC involvement. He feels this has been a fruitful process and engendered many valuable and thoughtful conversations.

ABGC came up with guiding principles that have informed the process.

- Missions of partnership organizations should be honored
- Education, conservation, and expanding access and equity
- Evaluate practices and changes made to be more inclusive
- Health and stewardship of the Arboretum
- Use Master Plan as a guide
- Change in governance should improve finances and development opportunities

Does this require changes to the underlying ownership of the Arboretum?

Taskforce report calls out that ownership doesn't need to change. Feasibility study, as they move through, may require new lines of responsibility.

Is Center for Urban Horticulture (north property) included in this?

There are several different possible solutions:

- Consolidate all 3 properties.
- Potentially allowing property north of the Ship Canal to stay more under UW management.
- Unified structure under management of UWBG – recognizing the importance of the library, nursery and herbarium as important resources for the Arboretum.
- Considering ownerships are different between north and south with the city-owned arboretum, gated Japanese Garden, UW owned property.
- Challenges imagining non-profit that relies so much on UW infrastructure, staff and support.

The next stage needs to determine how these properties and organizations interact.

From the University of Washington and the Arboretum Foundation, having a unified volunteer base could help to engage a broader community.

Jane says the stakeholder engagement from this phase is taking longer than anticipated but it is important. What has the reaction been from staff?

Why putting money into this during budget cuts and layoffs? They are looking to create efficiencies and become more sustainable and equitable.

The main concern in comments received from staff are about who they will be working for.

Arboretum Foundation staff are focused on confusion of entities with multiple websites and multiple brands and excited about a process that reduces confusion for donors.

Report talks about ensuring equity focus and raises questions about how governance models evolve.

Staff want details and to be involved in the next phase of the process; concerns from UWBG staff regarding working for a non-profit instead of a public entity.

SPR staff mentioned similar concerns as UWBG staff. Lisa says she ameliorated concerns by letting them know that they would be under Arboretum Foundation management, but still work for the city.

The task force is done. UW is engaging a consultant for the next steps.

Jenny says they need a vision statement – that is inspiring and dreamy, as opposed to bureaucratic.

Jane says the centennial anniversary of the Arboretum and return of the WSDOT peninsula to SPR are exciting milestones. How to frame the work to best realize these opportunities? Maximizing potential instead of minimizing deficiencies.

Dan thanks Fred for all of his work and leading the organization through really challenging transitional times.

Partner Updates: Budget, Personnel and Other Items

University of Washington

- Last day of 2020 had to permanently layoff 5 staff in rental unit and reduce 2 full-time staff to part-time.
- Planning 15% overall budget cuts have already started.
- Miller Library is doing curbside lending; it is very popular.
- Lost a big hemlock in the Woodland Garden; expect more during these stormy days.
- Ray Larson will be taking over as Interim Director since Fred is retiring.
- They are considering an Executive Director for the UWBG who would work with an Academic Director to bring more college academics into the Botanic Gardens.
- Vacancies on ABGC – save 1 with permanent Director
- MPIG group conversation for 3rd Fiddleheads classroom in Arboretum; 1 would be all day to serve working families. UWBG looking for it to start fall 2021. Natural growth for a successful program.
- Education programs developed take-home explorer kits – partnering with Kubota Gardens to serve families throughout the city.
- Performing outreach and working with local schools to do off-site programs – a great opportunity to reach new communities.
- Adult education programs continue. Ray did a virtual tour of the Woodland Gardens last night. Education staff is on reduced hours due to budget. Virtual platform allows the Arboretum to reach a larger audience. Ray hopes the virtual classes continue after the pandemic ends.

Arboretum Foundation

- Flooding in Graham Visitors Center during big rain storms in December;
- Break-in at the GVC in December – the trespassers made their way into staff areas by throwing a large rock through the door to the gift shop. However, other than making a mess, they didn't get anything. ABGC is tightening up security.
- Tried some curbside sales and pick up for the gift shop in December. \$10,000 in sales. Thinking about how to continue that.
- New guidelines came out this week and Arboretum Foundation staff are considering the significance of this for limited opening later this spring. Specialty gardens have specific guidance and a clearer path to move forward.
- Permits obtained for Japanese Garden pond work. Hopeful it will be completed to open by March 1 opening.
- The Foundation is assuming virtual events only until June. Hoping to do small events starting in July.
- Earned revenue is closed but receiving nice support in fundraising. Seeing new supporters and existing supporters making larger gifts. Roughly doubled the fall appeal goal. Successful with some grants and this enabled the Foundation to support the education programs at the higher end of the range.
- The Arboretum Foundation encouraged to solicit a larger donation from the organization who provided funding for the Lake Washington Boulevard improvements. This additional funding could top off the budget for Rhododendron Glen, initiate improvements to the Arboretum entrances to create more of a sense of place.
- March 4 virtual event in lieu of NW Flower and Garden Show; the theme will emphasize pillars conservation, education, and recreation – with an added 4th pillar – inspiration.
- \$250-300,000 in lost revenue for rentals at Japanese garden and gift shop receipts. Making up a portion of this through fundraising.

Seattle Parks and Recreation

- SPR has 47 vacancies that will not be filled; positions being filled with those from other units; the Arboretum is at almost full capacity. Operations budget is limited.

Master Plan Implementation Group

- Damage done in Japanese Garden due to rains in December.
- Waterfront Trail – rename it? Process to rename it to reflect location and spirit of the area.
- Timing for interpretation – coordinating with Waterfront Trail and Graham Construction for rollout.
- Tot lot – playground at Lynn Street; working with SDOT to replace ugly guard rail with a more attractive structure.
- Stone cottage – property groups working on MOU to identify ownership and management.

Recognizing Fred Hoyt

Recognizing Fred – We would like to share treats and recognize you in person after this pandemic is over. Sally thanks Fred for being a great civil servant. He brings beauty to the world through his work. He is delightful, and she couldn't be happier to work with him at the UW. She will miss his historic knowledge. She wishes him all the happiness.

Kenan has been on ABGC for 8+ years. Fred has been so helpful and insightful. He demonstrates caring through his knowledge and engagement. It is hard to imagine going forward without him. Kenan offers his heartfelt thanks.

Fred responds that it has been a privilege to work in an arboretum and botanic garden. He cares deeply about the Arboretum and appreciates the support. He is so appreciative of Jane and the work they have done together. It has been a great relationship. He's looking forward to going sailing and playing with his grandkids.

Sally says when the ABGC is back together, we will invite him to return so that they can celebrate him in person.

The ABGC is looking forward to Ray carrying Fred's good work forward.

Old/New Business

There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 10:30 a.m.

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Sally Clark, ABGC Chair