

Minutes
2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy Oversight Committee
April 27, 2009

Committee Members Present: Doug Dunham, Chair, Neal Adams, Don Harper, Terry Holme, Cheryl Klinker, Sharon Lee, Joyce Moty, Beth Purcell, Pete Spalding, Alec Stephens

Committee Appointees Present: Bruce Bentley, William Brousseau, Shanon Kearney

Staff: Superintendent Tim Gallagher, Terry Dunning, Susan Golub, Donald Harris, Chip Nevins, Michael Shiosaki, Kevin Stoops, Lise Ward, Gary Johnson of the Department of Planning and Development, and Casey Hildreth from the Seattle Department of Transportation

Committee Business: The meeting agenda was approved, as were the minutes, as amended, from the March 30th meeting.

Introductions: Three new Committee members, scheduled to be confirmed by the City Council on May 4, attended the meeting as guests. All attendees and staff introduced themselves.

Public Comment:

Glenn McGilvra: Speaking on behalf of the Urban Park Project, Mr. McGilvra spoke in favor of buying property adjacent to the Belltown P-Patch. He noted that in the last month the price of property downtown has decreased.

John Pearson: Mr. Pearson supports the Bell Street Green Street Program. He noted the City has not adequately implemented the program, and that the concept was a part of the Belltown Neighborhood Plan. Bell Street is a unique opportunity because it connects downtown, the waterfront, Denny Triangle and South Lake Union.

Shirley Dumphy: Ms. Dumphy supports the expansion of the Belltown Cottage Park as proposed by Mr. McGilvra. The expansion will allow for additional activities to occur in the Park, in addition to the P-Patch. There are over ninety people on the P-Patch waiting list.

Kurtis Dumphy: Mr. Dumphy supports buying land to expand the Belltown P-Patch. The time is now because land is cheap and we need more P-Patch opportunities.

Chris Gurley: Ms. Gurley gardens at the Belltown P-Patch and supports acquiring additional land to expand the garden. There is a lot of new development in Belltown, and people like walking through the P-Patch.

Sandi Hogbean: Ms. Hogbean gardens at the Belltown P-Patch and favors the expansion project described by Mr. McGilvra. The existing gardening program is very

successful, but too small. An expanded garden would better meet the needs of urban dwellers, who often find it hard to get to natural, green areas.

Elizabeth Campbell: Ms. Campbell is organizing Sustainable Belltown. One goal is to expand the P-Patch. In 2006 the City Council passed a resolution asking Parks and Recreation to find a half block for a Belltown park. This has been a hard task, and now the opportunity is there to buy land adjacent to the P-Patch.

Levy Legislation

Kevin Stoops, Director of Parks Planning and Development Division, reported to the Committee on the Levy legislation that the City Council passed a week ago. The legislation included funding for 20 projects, including:

- Play area renovation projects;
- Resurfacing two athletic fields at Lower Woodland; and
- Building upgrades at Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center and at Camp Long.

Additional legislation is being prepared that will provide funding for more play area renovations, the forest restoration and P-Patch projects.

Joyce Moty asked what criteria were used to pick the projects, and if there was an attempt to achieve geographic diversity with the playground renovations. Mr. Stoops responded that Parks identified projects that could start early; they could be accomplished with in-house design, or were already designed, such as the Queen Anne Boulevard project. And yes, the playground renovations are scattered throughout the City.

Beth Purcell asked what the \$2 million designated for the P-Patch program is for – improvement, acquisition. Mr. Stoops responded that Parks is initially appropriating \$500,000. Staff will be working with the Department of Neighborhoods (DoN) to determine priorities, as DoN will be administering the P-Patch program. The City Council has indicated a preference for the funding to be mostly for development of existing sites or new sites on public property.

Alec Stephens expressed concern for Parks ability to maintain the facilities we have, noting that the projects in the Levy that upgrade declining facilities are good. He noted the sorry state of many park restroom facilities. Mr. Stoops responded that there were no restroom redevelopment projects in the Levy.

Regarding the funding in the second appropriation for the P-Patch program, Don Harper asked how the Committee would get input regarding which properties would receive funding. He expressed a concern that the process was moving too fast, stating there was not a lot of neighborhood input when the Levy was put together, and we don't want to move fast now without that input. Mr. Stoops responded that DoN would be discussing their process for designating sites to receive the P-Patch funds at the upcoming public

meetings. Mr. Harris noted that Parks is conducting public meetings for the individual projects, as is the usual practice. Parks is not short-cutting public input.

Superintendent Gallagher reported on the good bid climate Parks is finding for recent projects. The Hiawatha Playfield project (not a 2008 Levy project) was estimated at \$1.6 million; nine bids were received, all nine at least \$100,000 under the estimate, with the low bid \$500,000 under. The Miller Playfield project (also not a 2008 Levy project) came in 30 percent under the engineer's estimate. With the money saved from these projects, Parks will try to fund the Delridge skatepark, a project that was originally slated to be funded by the Department's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), but lost funding due to CIP budget cuts. The Delridge project has been very well received by park neighbors. Parks is considering transferring the 2008 Levy funding for the Myrtle Skatedot (\$250,000) to the Delridge project. Both projects are in West Seattle and the Myrtle project was more controversial, with some neighbors strongly opposed. A vote to move the money away from Myrtle to Delridge will come to the Committee, after consideration by the Department's Skatepark Advisory Committee.

Alec Stephens asked what the process is to review bids and make awards. What does the Department do to ensure good projects, to ensure that these low bids aren't too good to be true? Kevin Stoops responded that the standard, careful review of qualifications of bidders occurs; also, projects awarded at a lower bid amount have contingency funding built into the project budget based on the original, higher engineer's estimate.

Beth Purcell asked what the Committee's role would be regarding the DoN management of the P-Patch program. What will the public process be? How are decisions being made? Superintendent Gallagher responded that we will ask DoN to speak to this issue at the next Oversight Committee meeting. Mr. Harper expressed his concern with DoN, noting that for the Thomas C. Wales project funded by the Pro Parks Levy, Parks and Recreation let the Office of Cultural Affairs take over and there was not a good public process.

Bell Street Green Street Project

Superintendent Gallagher introduced the Bell Street Green Street project to the Committee. It is a park boulevard concept designed to address open space issues in downtown. The cost of land downtown is very high and there is no funding for development of properties if they are acquired. Long-term thinking is that perhaps downtown could convert two north/south streets and two east/west streets to become park boulevards. This would involve reduction in driving lanes on these streets and the addition of park features.

Already 44 percent of downtown land is owned by the City, in streets and parks, but the environment is controlled by cars. Green streets may reverse the trend by conversion of road to park. The area of greatest need for park space because of density and population has the highest property costs. Moving forward with the Bell Street project does not preclude other projects in the Belltown neighborhood – the project is not in competition with other projects.

Bell Street Power Point Presentation Highlights

Power point presentations were made regarding the Bell Street project and Great Cities. Bell Street is responsive to City Council Resolution 31075 which called for an interdepartmental team to create green infrastructure. The project will create 17,000 square feet of new park space at an estimated cost of \$2.5 million, significantly less than the cost of acquiring and developing parks downtown. Recent acquisitions in the vicinity ranged between \$315 and \$350 per square foot.

Green streets were identified as a community priority by the Belltown neighborhood. The green design for Bell Street has one lane of traffic, one lane of parking, a natural drainage swale and park space.

The goal of Great Cities is to develop multi-functional urban landscapes, including green infrastructure: wetlands, forests and green buildings. Multi-functional, high performing streets and landscapes that layer uses such as park, drainage and movement are the focus.

Bell Street Discussion

Gary Johnson, a planner with the Seattle Department of Planning and Development described the long history of green streets as a smart growth strategy. The plans for green streets have been on the books since the mid 1980's, but there has not been any money. The City has had to depend on private redevelopment, not City funds, for any green street progress. Because a City Light project will require tearing up Bell Street, the decision was made to focus on Bell and coordinate the park development with the City Light project.

The project will be built in phases:

- Phase 1 – 1st Avenue to 5th Avenue
- Phase 2 – waterfront to 1st Avenue
- Phase 3 – 5th Avenue to Denny Park.

The schedule has the community design process occurring in 2009 and construction in 2010.

Don Harper asked if the park portion of the project would remain a park forever. Superintendent Gallagher responded that if the property is transferred from SDOT jurisdiction to Parks, then any future transfer out of park use would require replacement of the park property with similar property.

The Superintendent stated that the Department is asking the Committee for a recommendation to move \$2.5 million from the Levy Acquisition program to the Levy Development program. Because the property is City owned, no acquisition funding is necessary. The next step after the Committee recommendation will be a City Council ordinance approving the funds transfer which requires a three fourths vote.

Joyce Moty asked how the business community viewed the Bell Street proposal. Gary Johnson responded that the Belltown Business Association has stated the green street development is a priority and they strongly endorse the project. He added that in addition to the Levy's \$2.5 million, City Light will be contributing \$160,000, the amount that would have been spent to restore the street at the conclusion of their project.

Cheryl Klinker asked what the neighborhood position was on narrowing the driving lanes in Bell Street to one lane. Mr. Johnson responded that this issue would be one that will be addressed during the community design process.

Shanon Kearney asked how the design fits with fire department regulations. Mr. Johnson responded that the current design's 17 feet street width is just under the fire department's requirement for a 20 foot width. The project managers will continue working with the fire department to ensure their needs are met.

Neal Adams asked who the loser would be if the transfer of \$2.5 million from Acquisition to Development is approved. Superintendent Gallagher responded that there would be no loser. The Citizens' Committee that developed the Levy wanted green infrastructure projects, and with this project, \$2.5 million is going a lot further than it could if the project needed acquisition and development funds. Completion of this project is costing half of just the acquisition costs for the recent Denny Triangle purchase of a much smaller piece of property. The Bell Street project is a creative approach to expanding park space in dense, expensive neighborhoods.

Pete Spalding asked what stumbling blocks there might be in the way of project completion; what is the possibility the property will sit and not be redeveloped. Mr. Johnson responded that the commitment is to move forward in 2010 after the fund transfer is approved. While he does not see any show stoppers and believes there is no chance the project will not get done, the City Council would have the option to move the funds back to the Acquisition program if there was a problem.

Doug Dunham commented that the Bell Street project hit all of the criteria that he anticipates the Committee will establish and he expects there will probably be more, similar projects.

Motion

Joyce Moty made the following motion, seconded by Beth Purcell:

I move that the Committee recommend \$2.5 million move from Acquisition to Development for the Bell Street green street project from 1st to 5th Avenues.

Terry Holme asked whether the \$2.5 million in funding is adequate. After City Light completes it work, has the City analyzed what other, future utility work might be needed that would disrupt the park? Casey Hildreth responded that City Light has located the utilities in the street and that the project will design around them. If there is a need to

access the utilities in the future, existing regulations requiring complete restoration would apply.

Mr. Holme asked about long-term uses such as cafes – will cafes be developed in the public space? Mr. Johnson responded that downtown parks function differently than those outside downtown, and opportunities to activate the parks are critical to safe, well-used parks. Activation could be in the form of a café or other type of food sales. These can bring a positive element to the space. Superintendent Gallagher remarked that there could be tables and chairs available for nearby restaurant customers to use for picnics.

Neal Adams remarked that the Bell Street proposal is the first step to a bigger vision and the issue of private/public use will be important to resolve. He expects the issue of cafes and food carts will be pushed more. Superintendent Gallagher stated the purpose of the project is to provide open space for Belltown residents – neighborhood spaces for neighborhood uses.

Beth Purcell asked what the \$2.5 million will pay for; will it include art, park furnishings, paving? Mr. Hildreth responded that the budget included landscaping, lighting and the roadway elements to create separation between the park area and the street, and a significant contingency fund of approximately 30 percent. The budget will be further developed following the community design process.

Don Harper asked what in the project schedule is requiring a vote by the Oversight Committee at this meeting. He would like to see a detailed budget before voting to recommend the fund transfer. Mr. Johnson responded that the goal is to coordinate with the City Light project, to move together as much as possible, and also to take advantage of the current good bid environment.

Motion

Don Harper moved to table the motion on the floor [to transfer \$2.5 million from Acquisition to Development] until the next Committee meeting. He said a 30 day delay would allow the Committee to have more information on the budget. There was no second.

Alec Stephens spoke in favor of the original motion, to transfer funds from Acquisition to Development, stating the interdepartmental cooperation underway is significant; the community will have a process for design input; this type project is called for in the City Council resolution; and that this is a new vision which the City should embrace, take a risk and get moving. Ms. Purcell noted Bell Street is exactly what the Citizens' Committee wanted to see.

Vote on the Transfer Motion

The Committee voted 12 in favor and 1 against for the following motion:

I move that the Committee recommend \$2.5 million move from Acquisition to Development for the Bell Street green street project from 1st to 5th Avenues.

Following the vote, Mr. Adams noted that he agrees with Mr. Harper in concept, stating that the Committee gets rushed a lot, and he would not like to see more rushed actions. Ms. Purcell concurred.

Acquisition Program Priorities

Chip Nevins showed the Committee a power point presentation regarding acquisition priorities.

Acquisition Priorities Power Point Presentation Highlights

The Levy includes \$35.7 million from acquisition. Funding is divided as follows:

\$24 million – Neighborhood Parks

\$ 6 million – Green Spaces

\$ 5.7 million – Inflation for Acquisition Category

Mr. Nevins noted that it is very likely that significant funds will be leveraged to increase the total amount that will be spent for acquisitions. In the Pro Parks Levy, the City brought in an additional 75 cents for every Levy dollar.

The Neighborhood Park category focuses on urban villages and urban centers as mapped in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Twenty-two project neighborhoods are identified. These areas have been divided into three preliminary tiers based on a combination of need, equity and opportunity. (See Attachment 1)

The Green Spaces category includes 8 focus areas: Arroyos Natural Area, Duwamish Head Greenbelt, West Duwamish Greenbelt, East Duwamish Greenbelt, Northeast Queen Anne Greenbelt, Thornton Creek Watershed, Ravenna Woods and other designated greenspaces.

Committee Discussion

Because time ran out, the acquisition priorities will be further discussed by the Committee at the May meeting.

Committee Business

The Memorial Day holiday falls on the next regular fourth Monday meeting date. Therefore, the Committee agreed to meet on Tuesday, May 26.

Attachment 1
Preliminary Acquisition Tiers
April 27, 2009

Acquisition Priorities

Neighborhood Parks \$24.0 M

Tier One

Belltown
Capitol Hill
First Hill
International
District
North Rainier
University
12th Avenue

Tier Two

Ballard
Commercial Core
Fremont
Lake City
Morgan Junction

Tier Three

Beach Drive
Bitter Lake
Denny Triangle
Greenwood-Phinney
Ridge
Ravenna
Westwood-Highland
Wedgwood
Neighborhood
W. Seattle Junction

* Project areas were evaluated on each criteria and then ranked according the aggregate of those evaluations.