

DRAFT Minutes
Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee
June 25, 2007

Committee Members Present: Doug Dunham, Chair, Neal Adams, Lisa Chun, Don Harper, Terry Holme, Cheryl Klinker, Joyce Moty, Alec Stephens

Staff: B.J. Brooks, Interim Superintendent; Susan Golub, Donald Harris, Patti Petesch

Committee Business: The meeting agenda was approved, as were the minutes from the May 28 meeting, as amended. The Development Projects update briefing that was scheduled for this meeting was postponed until the July 23 meeting because the presenter became ill late in the day and there was not time to find a substitute.

Public Comment – All Regarding Crown Hill School

Doug Dunham introduced the public comment period by noting that he has had a long interest and involvement with Crown Hill School and open space, and several years ago was the organizer of a Neighborhood Matching Fund Small and Simple grant project that improved the playfield.

Catherine Weatbrook: Ms. Weatbrook works at Small Faces, the tenant at Crown Hill School. She stated that the School District surplussed five sites, including Crown Hill. The current tenants at these sites have the first right of refusal to purchase the property, as does an entity, such as the City of Seattle, which would be willing to preserve open space. Small Faces wants to purchase the building and part of the open area for a neighborhood center. Part of the building is zoned residential and part is zoned Commercial 1.

The Crown Hill neighborhood needs a park. There were three public meetings to plan a new park at Crown Hill using Pro Parks funds before the District announced the property would be surplussed and Parks put the planning process on hold. Cascade Land Conservancy has a \$15,000 grant from the City to assess neighborhood interest in public purchase of the site. Ms. Weatbrook requested the Pro Parks funds allocated for Crown Hill development be used for its acquisition.

Bradley Hanson: Mr. Hanson, a neighbor of Crown Hill School, commented that the neighborhood needs open space as there is not much nearby. Kids use the park and playfield and there is no community center, so Crown Hill becomes a meeting/gathering place for the neighborhood – it is where people congregate. Because there are no sidewalks in this part of the City, people use the park for bike riding with kids and for skateboarding.

Robert Deeble: Mr. Deeble, a Crown Hill School neighbor, stated that the neighborhood desperately needs to keep the Crown Hill open space. The School District needs to give

the community a chance to develop its own personality and new development in the area is threatening the community feel/atmosphere.

Ryan McFarland: Also A crown Hill neighbor, Mr. McFarland noted the lack of open space in the neighborhood, especially to the east. Crown Hill School may be the last opportunity for open space. The area has high density, especially with the large number of new condominium developments that have been built. There is a lot of neighborhood support for retaining the Crown Hill open space, including a formal vote of the Crown Hill Neighborhood Association, which is raising money for acquisition and lobbying the City Council and Mayor. Petitions with over 400 signatures have been sent to the School Board, City Council and Mayor. There is a short time frame for the community to raise money and the community wants to use the Pro Parks Levy development money to help purchase the property.

Carrie Ferrence: Ms. Ferrence is a Crown Hill School neighbor. She noted that the pedestrian overpass is the only safe access across Holman Road, and it is at the school site. She read into the record a letter from the Crown Hill Neighborhood Association supporting using the Levy funds for acquisition.

Ed Kommers: Mr. Kommers is the president of the North Seattle Little League. He introduced two young softball players, Sarah and Nicole. Mr. Kommers stated Crown Hill is the only place for the Little League Rookie Program which is for 6-8 year olds. In 2007, this program had 100 kids participating. The League was forced to exclude some children because they cannot accommodate all on this one field. Mr. Kommer has participated in planning for the field at Crown Hill for many years and he is disappointed that there is no park there. The League has funded improvements at the field. He hopes the City will do whatever it takes to keep the field, including using the Pro Parks Levy funds for acquisition.

Steve Hawes: Mr. Hawes is a Crown Hill school neighbor and Little League parent. The League is growing, especially among girls playing softball. It is important to start kids young. There currently are 350 kids in the program. Parents outside of the North Seattle Little League boundary have wanted to enroll their children in the Rookie Program because other Leagues do not have opportunities for young children; however, the program is at capacity. The small field at Crown Hill is needed.

Committee Discussion – Crown Hill School

The Committee had several questions for the public comment speakers. Cheryl Klinker asked who will maintain the field if it is acquired. Mr. Kommer responded that Little League will maintain the backstops and dirt part of the field, mow the grass, anchor the bases and chalk the base lines. They do these activities now to maintain the field and plan to continue.

Alec Stephens noted that the plan prepared during the Pro Parks Levy design process shows soccer fields and multi-use fields. Is this correct? Mr. Kommer responded that

yes, the community had been working with Parks to develop a multi-use plan that would include mini soccer fields (mod soccer) for young players and Rookie level t-ball.

Joyce Moty asked how many acres there were at the site and the response was 3.4 She also questioned how much money the Levy allocates to Crown Hill. Donald Harris responded that the original allocation was \$900,000, but that now there is approximately \$1,047,000 due to inflation reserve allocated to the project.

Terry Holme asked whether Small Faces is a non-profit organization and what part of the property they are interested in. Ms. Weatbrook responded Small Faces is a non-profit. They are interested in the property on the north part of the site, and require a fence around their open space because it is used for childcare. It was noted that the School District would do an appraisal of the property and the appraisal price will become the asking price. The value will be high due to the commercial zoning designation.

Mr. Stephens asked what part of the building is used by Small Faces. Catherine Weatbrook responded that they use the north wing and some rooms in other parts of the building. She stated Small Faces would continue running programs if the building can be purchased, and they would try to make it more like a community center.

Neal Adams asked about the possible collaboration that may occur between parks and Small Faces if the property is purchased. Interim Superintendent Brooks responded that the City is open to collaboration. She noted that the situation is complex because the School District has surplussed five schools and created pressure on the community because of their one year deadline to determine purchase possibilities. Parks will be meeting with the community in July and there will be more public involvement beyond that meeting.

Joyce Moty expressed the importance of including the Crown Hill project in the Neighborhood Plan update that is currently being talked about. She stated that when the Levy was developed, the site was not available for acquisition. If it had been, her it probably would have been included in the Levy acquisition list.

Donald Harris reiterated the fact that the District has surplussed five sites and noted that communities surrounding all five want them preserved for open space. None of the sites fill a significant gap in community center service area.

Don Harper questioned whether a better idea would be to put a turf field at Soundview Playfield. This would provide more capacity for field use. He also asked what the value of the property is and expressed concern at the lack of information that was available about the issue. Alec Stephens responded that the school neighbors came to the Oversight Committee with the Crown Hill question and others brought a Carkeek Park alternative to the Committee's attention. However, his preference is to not direct the Pro Parks money away from the Crown Hill neighborhood. Patti Petesch noted that Parks has looked to North Beach as a possible alternative, but the School District may one day expand that site and there would not be enough room for field development if they do.

Mr. Adams stated his preference is to keep the Pro Parks funds in Crown Hill. He recommends leaving open the question as to whether the Levy funds are spent on acquisition or development. Mr. Holme noted that keeping the funds on the Crown Hill site was the closest reflection of the Levy intent. He offered the following motion, as amended by Mr. Stephens:

In order to accomplish the underlying purpose for which the property was listed in the Levy, the Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee supports the City's acquisition of the open space portion of Crown Hill School, and supports redirection of funds from development to acquisition, if absolutely necessary to secure this property.

The motion was approved with all in favor and one abstention.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00.