



June 22, 2009

TO: Board of Park Commissioners
 FROM: Eric Friedli, Policy and Business Analysis Manager
 Subject: Park operating hours – proposal for dealing with exceptions

Requested Board Action

The Board is being asked to review and make recommendations on standardizing park operating hours. The staff recommendations are presented below.

Project Background

Parks staff briefed the Board of Park Commissioners on this topic in February. At that time, Parks did not make a formal proposal, but did put forth an option of maintaining the current standard hours for regional parks but changing neighborhood park hours to one hour before sunrise and one hour after sunset. Parks held three public meetings in late April and early May and the Board held a public hearing on May 14. Four citizens attended the public meetings and one testified at the public hearing. Two email comments have been received. Addendum A at the bottom of this document summarizes the public comments.

The purpose of this proposal is to: 1) standardize park operating hours so there is less opportunity for confusion about what the operating hours are; 2) alleviate actual and perceived safety issues – alcohol use, graffiti, and noise; 3) demonstrate Parks' intention to be a good neighbor by limiting negative impacts on our park neighbors; and 4) provide Seattle Police an additional tool for resolving issues in parks. Parks has an ongoing interest in being a good neighbor and alleviating late night problems in our parks. Operating hours is one tool available to us and to Seattle Police to address issues of noise, graffiti, and alcohol use. This proposal is not intended to limit an individual's enjoyment of our parks.

Proposal

The vast majority of parks would not see hours of operation change under this proposal. There are 39 parks and 16 parking lots that are exceptions to the standard park hours of 4 a.m. -11:30 p.m. and different from the proposed alternate hours of 6 a.m. - 10 p.m. These would require review and potential changes to their hours. The table below shows the possible hours changes under this proposal:

# of Parks to be reviewed	# of Parking Lots to be reviewed	Current Schedule	Proposed Schedule
7 Parks	5 Parking Lots	6 a.m. – Sunset	6 a.m. – 10 p.m.
3 Parks	1 Parking Lots	6 a.m. – 9 p.m.	6 a.m. – 10 p.m.
9 Parks	9 Parking Lots	6 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.	6 a.m. – 10 p.m.
20 Parks	1 Parking Lot	6 a.m. – 11:30 p.m.	4 a.m. – 11:30 p.m.

Following is a list of each park and parking lot, the date the exception was put in place, and the reason stated for the exceptions. For each category there is a recommendation on what action to take to review and implement a change in hours.

Proposal for Park hours:

1. Maintain the current standard operating hours per Ordinance 117645 – open at 4 a.m. and close at 11:30 p.m., and continue to allow for exceptions following the existing process.
2. For parks where an exception to the standard hours has been approved, the hours would be standardized to 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Parks would then review each of these parks to assess whether or not the exception is still appropriate. This would not apply to parks that are established in Parks Policy 060-P-7.13.0 as being open to the public 24 hours a day, or to boat ramps.
3. Amend the Parks Operating Hours Exception Policy 060-P-7.13.0 so that exception requests would only be granted for opening at 6 a.m. and closing at 10 p.m.
4. Amend the Parks Operating Hours Exception Policy 060-P7.13.0 so that the Superintendent -- in response to neighbor or Police concerns about threats to public safety, public peace or the potential for injury to the public and after consultation with the Board of Park Commissioners -- can close a park earlier than 10 p.m. for up to a nine-month period.
5. Establish a protocol and procedure by which the Seattle Police Department is delegated the authority to temporarily close any city park during the hours of darkness when an officer discovers, or has been dispatched to investigate, a suspicious situation or disturbance and the investigating officer, in the interest of resolving the issue, needs to immediately close and clear the park.

Current Exceptions to Standard Park Hours:

6 a.m. to Sunset	Date	Reason
Fauntleroy Park	Summer 89	camping, fires, alcohol, drugs
Lower Kinneer	Spring 88	camping, fires, intimidation
Martha Washington School	11/87	vandalism
Pratt Playground	6/89	drug and gang activity, intimidation, neighborhood crime
Pritchard Beach	Summer 88	drug activity, noise, vandalism
Ross Playground	10/87	drug activity, partying, vandalism, neighborhood crime
Kubota Gardens	9/97	alcohol, gunfire, narcotics sales, vandalism
Mathew Beach parking lot		
North Acres parking lot		
Westcrest parking lot		
Japanese Tea Garden parking lot (6am – 6pm)		
Magnuson Park parking lots (6 am – 6pm, 9/11 – 4/30)		
ACTION RECOMMENDATION:		
<i>Review with intent to change hours to 6 am to 10 pm. Make the park hours the same as the parking lot hours were they are different. This will lengthen the park hours so should engage the immediate neighbors and community. Engagement would include mailing notification and one community meeting.</i>		

6 a.m. to 9 p.m.	Date	Reason
Parsons Garden	Unknown	Unknown
Waterfront Park (10/1-3/31 only)	10/07	drug use/sales at Pier 62/63
Pier 62-63 (10/1-3/31 only)	10/07	drug use/sales
Magnuson Park parking lots (5/1 to 9/10)		
ACTION RECOMMENDATION:		
<i>Review with intent to change hours to 6 am to 10 pm. This is a minor modification that will lengthen the park hours so should engage the immediate neighbors and community. Engagement would include mailing notification and one community meeting. At Magnuson Park the intent would be to standardize the hours year round and for all parking lots.</i>		

6 a.m. to 11 p.m.	Date	Reason
Garfield	6/88	gang, drug, noise alcohol, intimidation
Laurelhurst (parking lots close at 10)	6/86	alcohol, loud noise
Miller Park	10/89	drug activity, gang, alcohol, intimidation
Volunteer Park	2/94	drug use/sales, unlawful activity
Seward Park Benefit Playground	6/93	drug use/sales; vandalism
Brighton Playfield	6/93	drug use/sales; vandalism
Van Asselt Playfield	6/93	drug use/sales; vandalism
12 th Ave Viewpoint	6/93	drug use/sales; vandalism
Alki Beach (4/15 – 10/1)		
Green Lake Bathhouse Theater parking lot		
Lincoln parking lot		
Discovery Park parking lots		
Meadowbrook Community Center parking lot		
Montlake Community Center parking lot		
Museum of History and Industry parking lot		
Pratt Park parking lot		
Schmitz Preserve parking lot		
Woodland Park ballfield parking lots		
ACTION RECOMMENDATION:		
<i>Review individually with intent to change hours to 6 am to 10 pm. Make the park hours the same as the parking lot hours were they are different. This is a minor modification and will shorten the park hours so should engage the immediate neighbors and community. Engagement would include mailing notification and one community meeting.</i>		

6 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.	Date	Reason
Boren/Pike Pine	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
City Hall Park	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Freeway Park	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Hing Hay Park	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Hubble Place Fountain	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
International Children's Park	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Kobe Terrace Park	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
McGraw Square	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Occidental Square	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Pigott Corridor	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Pioneer Square Park	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Prefontaine Place	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Regrade Park	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
South Washington St Dock	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Tilikum Place	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Union Station Square	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Westlake Park	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Westlake Square	11/95	drug use/sales, intimidation
Golden Gardens	8/93	aggravated assault, drug use/sales, vandalism

Pratt Park basketball court (5/1 – Labor Day)
Volunteer Park parking lot

ACTION RECOMMENDATION:

Review individually with intent to change hours to 4 am to 11:30 pm. Discuss with reconstituted Center City Parks and Open Space Task force.

PARKING LOTS and ROADWAYS

6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Bitter Lake Playfield
Carkeek
Gas Works
Lake Washington Blvd.
 Adams Street
 Duck Bay
 Ferdinand Street
 Lakewood Moorages
 Mt. Baker Beach
Leschi Tennis Court
Madrona Playground
Magnolia Viewpoint
 (Btw Howe & Montevista)
Maplewood Playfield
Riverview Playfield
Roxhill
Seward

ACTION RECOMMENDATION:

Review individually with intent to make park hours and parking lot and roadway hours the same.

NO CHANGES WOULD BE MADE TO THE FOLLOWING:

6 a.m. to 10 p.m.:

Lake Washington Blvd. Parks (4/96):

Colman Park (including Colman Beach)
East Portal Park
Mt. Baker Beach Park
Day Street Landing Park
Adams Street

Others:

Me-Kwa-Mooks Park
Schmitz Memorial Overlook
Volunteer Park
Prentis I. Frazier Park (8/05)
John C Little Senior Park
Pratt Park
Blanche Lavizzo
Flo Ware
Madrona Playground
Othello Playground
Bitter Lake Playfield parking lot
Carkeek parking lot
Gas Works parking lot
Leschi Tennis Court parking lot
Madrona Playground parking lot
Magnolia Viewpoint parking lot
 (Btw Howe & Montevista)
Maplewood Playfield parking lot

Buck Bay parking lot
Ferdinand Street
Lakewood Moorages
Mt Baker parking lot

Roxhill
University Playground

Waterfront Park (4/1-9/30 only) -established
10/2007

Pier 62-63 (4/1-9/30 only) - established
10/2007

Steinbrueck Park
(est. 5/07 – excessive drinking, noise, littering,
narcotics)

Riverview Playfield parking lot
Seward parking lot

Individual Parks with Modified Operating Hours:

Don Armeni Boat Ramp	4 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. (Except for Vehicles with Boats Trailers/Permits)
Magnuson Beach Park/ Boat Ramp	4 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. May 1 to Labor Day 4 a.m. – 10 p.m. from the day after Labor Day to April 30
Pratt Park covered B'ball court	6 a.m. – 10 p.m. from the day after Labor Day to April 30
Alki Beach	4 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. Oct 2 to April 14

Parks That Remain Open 24 Hours a Day (Policy 06-P 7.13.0):

Green Lake Park	Kerry Viewpoint
Myrtle Edwards Park	Eddie Vine Boat Ramp
Lake Washington Blvd Jogging Trail	Atlantic City Boat Ramp
First Avenue S Boat Ramp	Stan Sayers Boat Launch
Ferdinand St. Boat Ramp	
Sunnyside Ave. S Boat Ramp (responsible for dock only)	

Budget

Minor budget impacts would be associated with changes in signage.

Schedule

The action recommendations would be completed by the end of 2009.

Additional Information

For more information, please contact me via phone at 206.684.8369 or by e-mail at eric.friedli@seattle.gov

Addendum A

Park Operating Hours Public Meetings Summary May 2009

Seattle Parks and Recreation held three public meetings to determine public concerns regarding changing park operation hours. Eric Friedli, Larry Campbell and Mickey Fearn, and representatives from the Seattle Police Department staffed each of the meetings. No one attended the meetings held at Green Lake (4/27/09) and Miller Community Centers (5/4/09). Four people, who live adjacent to the Lakewood playfield, attended the final meeting at Jefferson Community Center (5/7/09). They expressed the following concerns about park operations, hours, and enforcement of those hours.

- The park is a good hangout for people, and they do so well into the night.
- There appears to be drug dealing in and around the bathrooms. Is there away to reduce the hours the bathrooms are open to help eliminate the drug dealing problem?
- People play basketball well into the night. When it gets too dark to play, they often direct their car headlights at the court so they can continue playing
- Neighbors expressed their willingness to take some responsibility to discourage after hours activities but are reluctant to intervene for fear of some form of retribution.
- Park hour signs are not prominently displayed.
- There was some conversation about rewording signs so that they clearly reflect park hours and suggest that closing parks at a reasonable time is done in respect of the neighbor's right and need for quiet and rest.
- Don't power wash the restrooms at 6 o'clock on Saturday morning.

SPD expressed that in lieu of the things to which they have to respond, enforcing park hours has very low priority unless there is actual criminal activity taking place. Many of the neighbors' concerns related as much to how our department can be a good neighbor as much as they related to park hours.

Park Operating Hours Written Comments Summary

One comment was opposed to changes asking what problem is being fixed. The other comment concerned noise at Cal Anderson Park and asserted the solution is not necessarily changing park hours but in getting Police to schedule park visits during hours when the park is closed.

Park Operating Hours Public Hearing Summary May 14, 2009

The Board of Park Commissioners held a public hearing May 14, 2009. One person testified. She (and others) had appeared five years ago asking for reduced hours in their neighborhood park (Prentis Frazier) which was granted – she testified in defense of those reduced hours. She opposed the sunrise/sunset option because the park would open too early (4:11 a.m.) in the summer and close too early in the winter (5:18 p.m.). The early opening would lead to more noise and the early closing would cut off access for the neighborhood who would like to enjoy the park for caroling, etc.