



**MINUTES OF
THE REGULAR MEETING
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
JANUARY 13,2025**

PRESENT: Andrea Smith, President
Matthew Mauer, Acting Clerk
Alisa Lee

IN THE CHAIR: Andrea Smith

PLACE: Park District Headquarters, 4702 S 19th Street Tacoma, WA 98405

STUDY SESSION WHOLE CHILD UPDATE

Laura Allen, Director of Whole Child for Tacoma Public Schools, shared the importance of the Whole Child initiative, a national movement adapted uniquely to Tacoma's needs. Launched over a decade ago, the initiative was born from a collaboration between Tacoma Public Schools, community partners, and the University of Washington, aimed at improving student outcomes after the district faced significant challenges. Ms. Allen emphasized that by wrapping every child with support from schools, families, and the community, they are empowered to thrive in a safe, healthy, and engaging environment. The results have been promising, with Tacoma Public Schools reaching a record 91.7% on-time graduation rate last year and reducing exclusionary discipline by more than half.

Ms. Allen discussed the crucial role of extracurricular programs like "Beyond the Bell" and "Club B" in supporting these outcomes. She noted that these programs help regulate students emotionally, providing them with a sense of belonging and community, which, in turn, supports their academic success. Ms. Allen explained that when students feel loved and connected, their brains are more open to learning, with access to critical thinking and problem-solving areas of the brain. Ms. Allen highlighted three evidence-based practices—warm greetings, circles for storytelling, and emotional checks—that are central to making these programs successful across all participating agencies.

In closing, Laura Allen reinforced that relationships are at the heart of the initiative's success. Ms. Allen expressed gratitude for the efforts that have made a profound difference in the lives of Tacoma's youth, noting the significant impact these programs have on students' well-being and future success.

Julian McGilvery, School Time Youth Program Manager, provided an update on the "Beyond the Bell" and "Club B" initiatives, which are key components of Tacoma's youth enrichment

programs. He highlighted the comprehensive system designed to offer equitable, affordable enrichment programs across a variety of areas, including science, nature, fitness, sports, and childcare. Mr. McGilvery described the services available at 36 schools for K-5 students, including after-school activities, field trips, and licensed childcare at 22 sites.

Mr. McGilvery also detailed the "Club B" program for grades 6-8, available at 11 locations, as well as the middle school sports leagues. He emphasized the success of the summer and late-night programs, which partner with the YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, and Communities in Schools to provide additional support. Mr. McGilvery concluded by recognizing the efforts of Bernie Rhoades and the team's leadership in making the programs successful.

A brief discussion followed regarding the District's efforts to work through the legislature to create changes related to childcare licensing at after-school sites. Hunter George provided insight into the challenges that need to be overcome to ensure the success of these efforts. These challenges include navigating legislative hurdles and addressing regulatory requirements to improve access and support for after-school childcare programs.

REGULAR MEETING

The regular meeting of the Metropolitan Park District Board of Park Commissioners was called to order at 6:00 p.m. President Smith read a land acknowledgement.

COMMISSIONER SWEARING-IN CEREMONY

Alisa Lee was administered a ceremonial oath of office by Pierce County Executive Ryan Mello.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

WHOLE CHILD PROCLAMATION

Scott Heinze introduced the proclamation by emphasizing the importance of the Tacoma Whole Child initiative and reaffirming the community's shared commitment to this collaborative effort in supporting youth. He noted Metro Parks Tacoma's vital role in fostering opportunities for play through youth sports programs, partnerships, and the stewardship of recreational spaces. Mr. Heinze also referenced the Aspen Institute's Project Play State of Play Report, which recognized the Whole Child initiative as a key resource for enhancing youth physical activity, sports participation, and overall health in Tacoma-Pierce County. He commented that the proclamation, endorsing the Aspen Institute's Children's Bill of Rights in Sports, was dedicated to Tacoma Public Schools, with special recognition of TPS Whole Child Director Laura Allen.

Commissioner Mauer read the proclamation into the record proclaiming that the Board of Park Commissioners celebrates the month of January as Whole Child Month by endorsing and adopting the Children's Bill of Rights in Sports, developed by the Aspen Institute through its Project Play initiative.

Laura Allen, TPS Whole Child Director thanked the Board for this continued partnership with Tacoma Public Schools.

PARKS CHAMPION AWARD

Doug Andreassen highlighted that, as an advisory council focused on the business aspects of parks agencies, Metro Parks Tacoma continually seeks innovative solutions to address challenges and enhance community service. He noted that while much of the behind-the-scenes work is unseen, it is essential for ensuring the agency operates efficiently, equitably, and excellently. Mr. Andreassen emphasized that staying responsive to community trends, habits, and needs is crucial to serving the public. He also acknowledged the significant partnership with the Names Family Foundation, which began in 1996, and how it has played a vital role in advancing community wellness through initiatives like the Tacoma Community Schoolyards and the Eastside Community Center.

Mr. Andreassen reminded the Board that in 2022, the Names Family Foundation partnered with Metro Parks on the Project Play initiative, resulting in the State of Play Tacoma-Pierce County report. The report revealed that only 19% of kids in Pierce County meet the CDC's recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity, but those who are more active report better mental health. He stated that the report provided actionable solutions for improving youth physical activity and health, with Tacoma's Whole Child initiative identified as a key asset. Mr. Andreassen expressed gratitude to the Names Family Foundation for their leadership in the partnership and their ongoing commitment to supporting recreation, sports, and health in the region.

Patricia Schults commended the invaluable partnership with the Names Family Foundation and MPT, which has been instrumental in advancing youth sports and wellness in Pierce County through initiatives like Project Play. She expressed gratitude for the foundation's ongoing support, which has contributed to the State of Play report and highlighted Tacoma's Whole Child initiative as a key asset in improving youth physical activity and health.

MLK DAY OF SERVICE PROCLAMATION

Mark Knowlden highlighted Metro Parks' commitment to equity, inclusiveness, and anti-racism, emphasizing that these core values are deeply rooted in the legacy of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. He noted that Dr. King's vision of a "beloved community" continues to inspire volunteerism, as seen through AmeriCorps' MLK Day of Service, which encourages Americans to serve in their communities. He stated that Metro Parks is participating by offering volunteer opportunities at Swan Creek, Titlow Park, and Point Defiance on January 20, where community members can join staff in restoring parks and strengthening community bonds.

Commissioner Lee read a proclamation into the record recognizing January 20 as MLK Day of Service and encourages community members to take part in this important event honoring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

President Smith commented that Board members attended the groundbreaking of the Port of Tacoma's Maritime Skills Center.

President Smith also commented on the Celebration of Life for Commissioner Reid held last Saturday.

ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS

Being no additional nominations, the question was called, and Commissioner Mauer was elected to the position of Board Clerk.

Being no additional nominations, the question was called, and Commissioner Smith was elected to the position of Board President.

STANDING COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL REPORTS

Nature & Environment Advisory Council

Commissioner Mauer commented the council is scheduled to meet on January 28th.

Arts & Heritage Advisory Council

Commissioner Lee commented that this council is scheduled to meet next Thursday at 5pm.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Shon Sylvia commented on the following:

- The Point Defiance Marina Bulkhead project continues according to schedule to complete in-water work prior to the February 15th deadline. With the failed timber bulkhead exposed, crews are working to repair and replace timber lag boards within low tide windows, which does require some overnight work. Coordination with Anthony's is ongoing to ensure their operation is minimally impacted by this interrupted access.
- The Golf Range Association of America (GRAA) has once again presented Meadow Park Golf Course with the Top 50 Ranges Public Facilities Award. This national award recognizes facilities that introduce the game of golf to a variety of new golfers every day, while retaining and inspiring their core group of golfers. Meadow Park's player development programming, customer engagement and community outreach help grow the game and maintain a sustainable business that is a vital staple in our community. This is the 4th year that Meadow Park has won this award.
- Ribbon Cutting at Peck Community Sports Park for the new ball field is this Wednesday, January 15th at 3pm.
- Tet Lunar New Year Celebration at ESCC is on Sunday, January 19th from noon-4pm.
- The January 15th CIC meeting is canceled.
- Due to the MLK Holiday the COW on January 20th is canceled.
- Special Park Board meeting is being scheduled for February 7th related to the Board Vacancy.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Curt Mehlhaff commented on the recent passing of Commissioner Tim Ried. He acknowledged Commissioner Reid's role and commitment in making Tacoma a better place to live.

The following individuals commented during community comments encouraging the Board to appoint Malachi Cabera to the vacant Park Board seat: CJ Love, Ty Vo, Julia Ellington, Stephanie Acevedo, Chris Chilsom.

Malachi Cabera spoke to the Board about his desire to serve as Member of Board and requested their support for the vacant seat being filled.

The following individuals commented during community comments encouraging the Board to appoint Bronwyn Clarke to the vacant Park Board seat: Dan Knox, Miles Parker, Alexa Brenner.

Andrea Reay spoke to the Board about her desire to serve as Member of Board and requested their support for the vacant seat being filled.

Chelsea McElroy spoke in support of Mary Louise Curry being appointed to the vacant Park Board seat.

MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 9, 2024 REGULAR BOARD MEETING**MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 20, 2024 SPECIAL BOARD MEETING**

Commissioner Mauer moved to adopt the minutes as presented; seconded by Commissioner Lee and passed on a vote of 3-0.

CONSENT AGENDA**RESOLUTION NO. C1-25: APPROVAL OF WARRANTS CLAIM FUND FOR DECEMBER 2024**

Commissioner Mauer moved to adopt the consent agenda as presented; seconded by Commissioner Lee and passed on a vote of 3-0.

PURCHASING RESOLUTIONS**RESOLUTION NO. P2-25: AUTHORIZING PURCHASE OF GOODS AND SERVICES FOR METRO PARKS TACOMA**

1. WASHINGTON CITIES INSURANCE AUTHORITY (WCIA) FOR PROPERTY, LIABILITY AND AUTO INSURANCE IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,703,216

Commissioner Mauer moved adoption of the resolution; seconded by Commissioner Lee.

Debbie Russell provided an update on the 2025 premium for property, liability, and automobile insurance, which is obtained through the Washington Cities Insurance Authority (WCIA). She explained that WCIA functions as a risk management pool comprising 165 jurisdictions. This arrangement allows members to pool resources and jointly contract for insurance coverage, which has consistently resulted in benefits for the District since joining the program in December 2005. Ms. Russell spoke to the key advantages including lower rates and premiums due to the absence of broker commissions and the provision of staff training programs that enhance risk management practices across the organization.

Ms. Russell noted that, despite these benefits, the cost of insurance has been rising in recent years. Three primary factors have contributed to these increases. First, the organization's updated fleet, which includes new vehicles and trams, has led to higher rates. Second, WCIA conducts property assessments every five years, and recent assessments have reflected the increased value of Metro Parks Tacoma's extensive acreage, including the newly acquired Probst property. Finally, staffing levels have grown significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic, and the corresponding increase in staff hours has further contributed to higher insurance costs.

Ms. Russell then explained that when the 2025–2026 budget was adopted, it accounted for a 10% increase in insurance premiums. However, the actual proposed costs exceed this estimate, meaning a budget amendment will be required. She informed Commissioners that staff would return in the spring with a budget amendment to align the budget with the revised figures. She also emphasized that WCIA premiums are evaluated on a year-by-year basis. The organization remains committed to monitoring the value and cost-effectiveness of its participation in WCIA to ensure that District continues to receive the best possible coverage at an optimal cost.

Commissioner Mauer inquired about the value of insurance premiums in the market and whether they are still being assessed for competitiveness. It was noted by staff that the insurance provider, WCIA, is highly valued for its expertise and collaboration with member municipalities. The organization's experience-based decision-making, covering 165 municipalities, was highlighted as a key advantage. Additionally, Jenna Richardson's recent appointment to the WCIA board provides the District with greater insight into the provider's operations and rate-setting.

Staff clarified that while WCIA's base fees have increased across the board, additional costs specific to the District are due to its expanded assets. Tanya Wink added that Jenna Richardson conducted research, confirming that the District's insurance rate increases are consistent with trends seen across Washington State. Other organizations have reported increases ranging from 10% to 20%, and WCIA's rates remain competitive compared to other brokers.

Being no additional comments the question was called and the resolution passed on a vote of 3-0.

PUBLIC WORKS PURCHASING RESOLUTIONS None

SINGLE READING RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. R3-25: RENAMING OF PECK FIELD TO PECK COMMUNITY SPORTS PARK

Commissioner Mauer moved adoption of the resolution; seconded by Commissioner Lee.

Debbie Russell presented the resolution to rename Peck Field to Peck Community Sports Park, aligning with Metro Parks' policy for naming and renaming parks and recreational facilities. She then commented that Peck Field, originally established in 1954, holds historical significance as the site of Tacoma's first baseball stadium. It was named in honor of Gertrude and Roger Peck, who donated the land and provided substantial financial and community support.

Ms. Russell further explained that 2023, Metro Parks updated the master plan for Peck Field to transform it from a primarily athletic facility, often closed to the public, into a broader, community-focused space. The Board was reminded that the new plan reflects input from the local community and includes a variety of amenities such as walking paths, gardens, open spaces, and facilities for numerous sports. This vision aligns with Metro Parks' strategic plan and reflects the community sports park model. Ms. Russell commented that the site now features a new Tacoma Public Schools field, designated as the home field for Stadium High School's baseball team. In closing Ms. Russell stated that the timing of the proposed renaming coincides with the formal dedication of this field as the *Aaron Pointer Field, home of the Stadium Tigers*, making it an ideal moment to adopt the new name of Peck Community Sports Park.

Commissioners Lee and Mauer expressed excitement for the new field.

Being no additional comments that question was called and the resolution passed on a vote of 3-0.

FIRST READING RESOLUTIONS

SECOND READINGS RESOLUTIONS

NEW BUSINESS None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS DISTRICT BRAND UPDATE

The update opened with a presentation about the upcoming launch of an updated brand for Metro Parks Tacoma, now rebranded as Parks Tacoma. This rebranding effort, described as a multi-year initiative, was led by Brand Manager Tara Mattina and involved input from community partners, employees, and other stakeholders.

Tara Mattina began by outlining the rationale for the brand refresh. She emphasized that a brand is more than a logo; it represents an organization's identity, services, and community perception. Given that the previous brand was over 25 years old, she explained it no longer reflected the organization's leadership, programs, and places. Additionally, community feedback indicated strong favorability for the organization but revealed confusion about its breadth of services.

Ms. Mattina noted the rebranding focused on simplifying and strengthening the brand while creating a closer connection between Parks Tacoma and its offerings. She highlighted research that showed that while the public highly associated MPT with parks (68%), there was less recognition for community centers and other programs, signaling a need for improved brand cohesion.

Tara Mattina revealed the new branding, which emphasizes “Parks Tacoma” and removes “Metro” from the name. She commented that this shift highlights the organization’s strongest and most recognizable element: parks. Ms. Mattina further explained that the new logo features a salal leaf, a resilient and symbolic plant native to the Pacific Northwest, reflecting the organization’s roots in nature and commitment to the community. The visual identity system was designed to maintain consistency while allowing individual locations, such as community centers and attractions, to retain unique branding elements.

Ms. Mattina stated the website is also updated to reflect the rebranding and will transition to a new URL, parkstacoma.gov. She commented this domain, which provides additional security and credibility, will launch alongside the brand on the following day. Other updates include revised vehicle decals, informational materials, and temporary signage, with a long-term signage redesign project set to begin shortly.

The presentation concluded with a preview of marketing materials, including videos and digital ads, aimed at promoting the new brand. Board members expressed their appreciation for the extensive work behind the rebranding, acknowledging the challenges and the effort required to for such a significant change.

Staff expressed enthusiasm about the brand refresh and optimism for its reception by the community. The launch was described as a critical milestone, marking a fresh chapter for Parks Tacoma.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

President Smith provided an update on the ongoing process to fill vacancies on the Park Board. She explained that after the anticipated retirement of Aaron Pointer and the departure of Rosie Ayala, a call for applicants was issued in November, with 19 applicants responding between November 19 and December 3. Four finalists were chosen, and after interviews, Alisa Lee was selected on December 20. The passing of Tim Reid created a third vacancy, which led to the reopening of the application portal, now open until all positions are filled. President Smith further clarified that the Board is addressing vacancies in the order they were created, and Tim Reid’s seat is being discussed tonight. She noted that no new applications have been received, so the remaining 18 applicants will be considered.

President Smith commented that an executive session will be held to review qualifications, and finalists will be nominated for interviews, scheduled for February 7, 2025, with a final vote to occur on February 10th.

President Smith noted that for Rosie Ayala’s position, a similar process will take place, with finalists reviewed on February 24 and interviews held before a final vote on March 10th.

President Smith stated that in accordance with RCW 42.30.110 the Board will now recess into executive session to discuss the qualifications of nominees for public employment for approximately 1 hour.

MOTION TO DISCUSS AND NAME CANDIDATES FOR CONSIDERATION FOR FILLING BOARD VACANCY

Following the executive session the Board members briefly discussed the qualifications of the following 4 applicants: Azaria Azene, Andrea Reay, Carla Santorno, and Herschel Wilson. Board members expressed their gratitude to all 18 applicants for their continued interest in the vacant commissioner positions.

President Smith moved to nominate the following candidates to be interviewed for filling Position #2: Azaria Azene, Andrea Reay, Carla Santorno, and Herschel Wilson ; seconded and passed unanimously.

President Smith commented that everyone who is in the existing applicant pool will be considered for the second appointment.

BOARD COMMENTS

ADJOURN

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

President

Clerk

Submitted by: Jennifer Bowman, Board Secretary