



**MINUTES OF
THE REGULAR MEETING
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
FEBRUARY 24, 2025**

PRESENT: Andrea Smith, President
Matthew Mauer, Clerk
Carla Santorno

REMOTE: Alisa Lee

IN THE CHAIR: Andrea Smith

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

COMMISSIONER SWEARING-IN

Newly appointed Commissioner Santorno was administered the oath of office.

STUDY SESSION CITY OF TACOMA STREETS INITIATIVE II PRESENTATION

The study session commenced with Marty Stump, Chief Planning Officer of Parks Tacoma, introducing key guests, including Mayor Victoria Woodards, who provided opening remarks on Tacoma's Streets Initiative II. Mr. Stump highlighted the new Parks Tacoma strategic plan, which focuses on pathways, and emphasized ongoing collaboration with the City on past projects, including a current study aimed at enhancing public rights of way.

Mayor Woodards discussed the importance of the Streets Initiative, which builds upon the success of a previous 10-year levy. She stressed the need to address neglected areas of the city's streets, particularly arterials, multimodal roads, and residential areas. Mayor Woodards expressed confidence that the new initiative would benefit every neighborhood in Tacoma, citing lessons learned from previous funding initiatives.

Ramiro Chavez, Director of Public Works for Tacoma, provided an overview of past street improvements funded by two propositions in 2015. He shared the successful investment of taxpayer dollars to improve over 6,000 residential blocks, construct ramps, crosswalks, sidewalks, and bike lanes. Mr. Chavez emphasized the need to focus on deteriorating arterials and stressed the importance of maintaining streets to avoid costly reconstruction. He also highlighted the equity aspect of the initiative, noting that the city's highest-risk roads are located in areas with limited access to opportunities.

Mr. Chavez discussed a proposed infrastructure initiative, which will be presented to voters on April 22, 2025. The proposal includes an increase in taxes, with the utility tax rising from 1.5% to 2% and the property tax increasing from 20 cents to 25 cents per \$1,000 valuation. This new proposition will replace the previous 10-year levy with a permanent one. The initiative is

expected to generate \$540 million over the next 15 years, with an additional \$360 million anticipated from state and federal grants, totaling \$900 million for infrastructure improvements. The focus will be on enhancing arterials, multimodal transit, and residential streets, including improvements to 1,100 to 1,400 lane miles of arterials, 250 to 300 miles of sidewalks, and 100 to 170 miles of bicycle infrastructure. The initiative also designates 15% of revenue for pedestrian safety improvements, such as sidewalks, street lighting, and crossings, to support Tacoma's Vision Zero goal of eliminating fatalities and serious injuries on the streets by 2035.

Ramiro Chavez outlined the criteria for selecting projects, emphasizing equity, accessibility, and public safety. He explained that the initiative would prioritize safe routes to schools and parks, as well as addressing high-risk corridors. The initiative is designed to improve safety, extend the life of existing infrastructure, and enhance overall mobility and accessibility.

Board members were informed about how the initiative supports infrastructure improvements, particularly arterials, neighborhood greenways, and Vision Zero. The three main project types identified were arterial projects connecting neighborhoods to business centers, neighborhood greenways aimed at improving pedestrian safety through traffic calming measures, and Vision Zero initiatives focused on reducing fatalities and serious injuries. The initiative also seeks to improve connectivity between schools, parks, and districts across the city.

Ramiro Chavez highlighted the progress made under the first initiative, including local employment and contract achievements. He emphasized the importance of partnerships with Parks to implement the plan, which prioritizes safety, accessibility, and sustainable infrastructure.

Councilmember Walker provided a summary of Tacoma Streets Initiative II, noting the successful completion of Tacoma Streets Initiative I, which met and exceeded its objectives. She emphasized that safety and accessibility, particularly through the Vision Zero program, have become fundamental principles in the city's planning. Councilmember Walker acknowledged Parks Tacoma as key partners and stressed the need for support from fellow elected officials to help inform the community about the initiative's significance. She also offered to address any technical questions and discussed upcoming campaign efforts.

The Park Board members raised several key questions during the meeting. They inquired about the context of neighborhood greenways, specifically how these projects would impact street design, accessibility, and incorporate traffic calming measures, as well as landscaping and tree integration. They also asked about coordination between city departments and non-city partners to avoid disruptions when multiple projects are being implemented, emphasizing the importance of early collaboration. Finally, they questioned how the city planned to meet its ambitious tree canopy goals, considering the lack of significant tree additions in the first five years, and how the streets initiative would contribute to achieving these goals, particularly through partnerships like tree-lined safe routes to schools.

President Smith directed staff to prepare a resolution for consideration for the next Board Meeting in support of the measure.

REGULAR MEETING

The regular meeting of the Metropolitan Park District Board of Park Commissioners was called to order at 6:05 p.m. President Smith read a land acknowledgement.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS None**PRESIDENTS REPORT**

President Smith noted that she and Commissioner Mauer were interviewed last week by the Zoo Society as they are working on a new strategic plan.

STANDING COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL REPORTS**Advisory Councils Annual Meeting**

Board members Smith, Lee and Mauer noted their attendance at last week's annual All Advisory Council Meeting.

Active Living & Community Wellness Advisory Council

Commissioner Lee commented that she attended the council's monthly meeting, noting that the council discussed the Pierce County State of Play Report.

Nature & Environment Advisory Council

Commissioner Mauer reported at their meeting coming up later this week the council will be discussing the District's Climate Action Plan.

Business and Responsive Agency Advisory Council

President Smith commented that she attended this month's meeting. Agenda items included an update on the new budget tool and budget amendment process.

Tacoma Parks Foundation

President Smith stated that she attended the Foundation's Board meeting on February 19th. The operating agreement with the District was discussed in preparation for the Board's COW meeting on March 3, 2025.

Joint Municipal Action Committee

President Smith stated that JMAC was held on February 14th. Agenda items included a discussion related to potential impacts resulting from the new Federal Administration.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Shon Sylvia commented on the following:

- Commissioner Santorno was welcomed by staff.
- Northwest Trek Wildlife Park will be receiving funding through Woodland Park Zoo's Advancing Empathy Grant Program to continue the Nisqually Fellowship for the next three years. The grant totals \$277,000.

- Hunter George was introduced and provided a legislative update including the following:
 - Legislative Session Update:
 - Policy cutoff has passed.
 - Fiscal committee cutoff is February 28th.
 - Two-week floor period follows; bills must pass their respective houses by March 12th.
 - Key Projects:
 - Portland Avenue Park Spray Ground Construction – Funding for completion in the 29th Legislative District.
 - Northwest Trek Beaver Habitat Design – Supported by Representative Barkus, a design grant in the 2nd Legislative District.
 - Titlow Pedestrian Bridge Construction – Priority project with a \$3 million ask; Representative Fey is working on securing funding.
 - Titlow Lagoon Expansion – Considered as a backup if the bridge project is not funded; grant competition expected to be fierce.
 - Federal Grant Update:
 - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NIFWF) has encouraged reapplication for the Titlow Lagoon project after providing positive feedback on the previous submission.
 - High competition expected for this grant.
 - Policy Work:
 - DCYF Language – Ongoing discussions with Representative Mena on the language.
 - Land Leases Bill – Provides more flexibility for WSDOT, including potential developments at Pugnetti Park. Awaiting full House vote, with Senate challenges anticipated.
 - Property Tax Cap Proposal – Monitoring developments.
 - Bull Kelp as State Marine Forest – Bill has passed committee and is awaiting a full Senate vote.
 - Other Bills:
 - Grizzly Bear Conservation – Bill did not pass committee.
 - Open Carry of Firearms in Parks – Bill is awaiting a vote in the Senate.
 - Use of Animals in Traveling Acts – No concerns from the agency; bill is being monitored.

A handout with additional legislative detail was provided to Board Members.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Curt Mehlhaff shared his thoughts on considerations of individuals to fill the last board vacancy. Curt Mehlhaff suggested that the final board vacancy should be filled by a male to balance the Board's composition.

Bronwyn Clarke welcomed Commissioner Santorno, expressing excitement for her leadership and partnership with Tacoma Public Schools. Ms. Clarke shared her community endorsements, emphasizing the importance of building strong partnerships to address environmental and social issues.

Malachi Cabera congratulated Commissioner Santorno and emphasized the need for diverse leadership in government, highlighting the importance of female and minority representation. He praised the Board's thorough selection process, thanked the community for its involvement, and expressed confidence that the chosen candidate would be qualified and ready to serve.

Theresa Evans shared that her life, along with the lives of her family and everyone in the room and listening online, matters.

MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 7, 2025 SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 10, 2025 REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Commissioner Mauer moved to adopt the minutes as presented; seconded by Commissioner Smith and passed on a vote of 4-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

RESOLUTION NO. C8-25: MELANIE DRESSSEL PARK IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT NO. J2022-26 FINAL ACCEPTANCE TO PEASE CONSTRUCTION INC.

RESOLUTION NO. C9-25: POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM SOUTH PACIFIC AQUARIUM TANK AND EXHIBIT IMPROVEMENTS BID NO. J2022-14 FINAL ACCEPTANCE TO PEASE CONSTRUCTION. INC.

Commissioner Mauer moved adoption of the consent agenda as presented; seconded by Commissioner Santorno.

Being no additional comments the question was called and the resolution passed on a vote of 4-0.

PURCHASING RESOLUTIONS

PUBLIC WORKS PURCHASING RESOLUTIONS None

SINGLE READING RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. R10-25: APPROVAL OF AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARKS TACOMA AND TACOMA SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10 FOR THE JOINT USE AND MAINTENANCE OF THE MULTI-USE BASEBALL FIELD AT PECK COMMUNITY SPORTS PARK

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

Debbie Russell commented that over the past two years, these agencies worked together under an interlocal agreement (ILA) to fund and construct a multi-use baseball field at Peck Community Sports Park, with Tacoma Public Schools contributing \$5 million to the project. The field was completed, and its grand opening took place in January, named the Aaron Pointer Field, home of the Stadium Tigers.

Ms. Russell commented that the next step is finalizing the ILA for the joint operation and maintenance of the field, which will last for 10 years. Under this agreement, Tacoma Public Schools will have priority use of the field during the school year, while Parks Tacoma and the public can access it at other times. The Board was informed that Parks Tacoma will be responsible for general maintenance and security, with provisions for additional costs for tournaments or intensive events. The agreement also outlines scheduling, storage, and cost-sharing processes to ensure proper reconciliation between the two agencies.

Being no additional comments the question was called and the resolution passed on a vote of 4-0.

FIRST READING RESOLUTIONS None

SECOND READINGS RESOLUTIONS None

NEW BUSINESS None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS None

EXECUTIVE SESSION EVALUATE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF CANDIDATES FOR POTENTIAL APPOINTMENT TO ELECTIVE OFFICE

Before entering executive session, President Smith provided an update on the vacancy process. The Board then entered into executive session for 30 minutes to evaluate the qualifications of candidates for potential appointment to elective office.

MOTION TO NOMINATE AND DISCUSS NOMINEES FOR APPOINTMENT TO PARK BOARD POSITION #3

President Smith moved to nominate the following candidates to fill vacant position #3: Sean Arent, Azaria Azene, Malachi Cabera, Bronwyn Clarke, Robb Krehbiel, Pete Reyes; seconded by Commissioner Mauer.

Qualifications of the slate were briefly highlighted by Board members.

It was noted that candidate interviews will be planned for the week of March 3rd.

BOARD COMMENTS

Commissioner Mauer highlighted a historic milestone in Parks Tacoma over 100-year history: that the board now has a female majority for the first time. As the only male member, he expressed full support for the current composition and optimism for the future, regardless of gender.

ADJOURN

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

President

Clerk

Submitted by: Jennifer Bowman, Board Secretary