



**MINUTES OF  
THE REGULAR MEETING  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
APRIL 14, 2025**

PRESENT: Andrea Smith, President  
Matthew Mauer, Vice President  
Alisa Lee  
Pete Reyes

REMOTE: Carla Santorno

IN THE CHAIR: Andrea Smith

PLACE: Park District Headquarters, 4702 S 19<sup>th</sup> St. Tacoma, WA 98405

**STUDY SESSION EARTH DAY PRESENTATION**

Alan Varsik, Director of Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and Northwest Trek Wildlife Park—collectively the District’s Zoological and Environmental Education Department—opened the presentation with reflections on Earth Day. Having celebrated the first Earth Day in 1970, Mr. Varsik shared how the movement helped shape his career, noting that the Zoo’s conservation efforts go well beyond compliance—they’re rooted in a mission to inspire environmental stewardship and deepen connections with nature.

In honor of that mission, Alan Varsik invited the community to participate in Earth Day and Parks Appreciation Day on Saturday, April 19, from 9 AM to 12 PM. Volunteer opportunities will include habitat restoration, invasive weed removal, and trail maintenance at Point Defiance Park, Titlow Park, and Charlotte’s Blueberry Park.

He then introduced Conservation Manager Mark Heinzman and coordinators Zach Hahn and Rachel Mueller to provide an overview of the Zoo and Park’s conservation strategy, which centers around four pillars—community science, field conservation, advocacy, and global partnerships.

Zach Hahn described how community members contribute to conservation research by engaging in efforts such as nest monitoring for Purple Martins and Violet-Green Swallows, and tracking Dungeness crab larvae at Point Defiance Marina. He also highlighted the City Nature Challenge, a global biodiversity event the Zoo has supported since 2018, encouraging public participation in this year’s competition from April 25–28.

Rachel Mueller outlined species recovery projects, including the reintroduction of fishers and the head-starting of endangered northern leopard frogs. She shared updates on research monitoring urban carnivores, amphibians, kelp, and vulnerable species like gray wolves and sea otters.

Rachel Mueller also spotlighted efforts to combat White-Nose Syndrome, a fungal disease devastating bat populations. Since 2016, the Zoo has monitored local bats and is now testing a probiotic treatment to counter the disease, underscoring bats' crucial role in pest control and ecosystem health.

Marc Heinzman emphasized the urgent need to protect kelp, noting that populations in Central and South Puget Sound have declined by 80% due to climate stressors. Because kelp supports marine life and stabilizes shorelines, advocacy in this area remains a conservation priority.

Zach Hahn detailed the Zoo's work with the Wildlife Trafficking Alliance, a coalition of over 90 organizations committed to ending illegal wildlife trade. As a longtime Gold Partner, the Zoo has supported initiatives like the "Toss the Tusk" event and was instrumental in passing Washington's Wildlife Trafficking Act via Initiative 1401.

Zach Hahn also described the "Sea Savvy Traveler" educational exhibit at Sea-Tac Airport—created in partnership with the Port of Seattle—to help travelers make ethical wildlife-related choices. The exhibit has since expanded nationwide.

The Zoo's global work includes its role as an Arctic Ambassador Center through Polar Bears International. Staff help test tracking devices, support the land-based radar system "Beardar" to reduce human-bear conflict, and participate in the Climate Alliance program in Churchill to strengthen conservation education.

The Board was informed that with support from the Zoo Society and Northwest Trek Foundation, the Zoo also contributes to tiger and clouded leopard conservation in Indonesia, shark research in Hawaii, and the recovery of the critically endangered American red wolf. With more than 50 red wolves, the Zoo maintains the world's largest population in human care and plays a leading role in the species' recovery.

When asked about federal budget cuts, Zach Hahn acknowledged potential impacts to partnerships with U.S. Fish and Wildlife and NOAA, especially for red wolf propagation, though no immediate effects have been seen.

The study session closed with a reminder that the District's conservation work—grounded in research, outreach, and advocacy—reflects a deep commitment to both local ecosystems and global environmental health.

**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.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS****VOLUNTEER MONTH PROCLAMATION**

Staff and the Board honored and thanked Danny Patnode, Gail Sklar, Pete Sluka for many years volunteer service to parks and community.

Commissioner Santorno read a proclamation into the record recognizing April as National Volunteer Month.

**EARTH DAY & PARKS APPRECIATION DAY PROCLAMATION**

Commissioner Mauer read a proclamation into the record recognizing and celebrating April 19<sup>th</sup> as Parks Appreciation Day and April 22<sup>nd</sup> as Earth Day.

**PRESIDENTS REPORT**

President Smith commented that she along with Commissioners Lee, Mauer and Reyes participated in the Daffodil Boat Parade.

President Smith removed Resolution P19-25 from the agenda and stated it is being postponed and directed staff to add a discussion about fleet to the April 21st COW meeting.

**STANDING COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL REPORTS****Nature & Environment Advisory Council**

Commissioner Mauer stated that at the last meeting the agenda included the Reimagine Meadow Park Project.

**Active Living and Community Wellness Advisory Council**

Commissioner Lee noted that the committee discussed the Reimagine Meadow Park Project. She also stated the committee is continuing to recruit new members.

**Business & Responsive Agency Advisory Council**

Commissioner Reyes commented that the committee will be taking a look at the Boathouse Marina rate increase.

**Joint Municipal Action Committee (JMAC)**

Commissioner Reyes commented that at the April meeting the committee was reminded that the Tideflats Subarea Plan is on schedule.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Executive Director Shon Sylvia commented on the following:

- New Parks & Recreation Geroge Schaaf was introduced.

- Parks Tacoma will receive three awards from the Washington Recreation & Parks Association (WRPA) at their annual conference in May including the Lasting Legacy Award for past Commissioners Aaron Pointer and Tim Reid, and the Spotlight Award for Innovative Programming (Population 100k+) for Park Guides.
- A special Earth Day themed “Agents of Discovery” session has been launched to cover a new location. The Wright Park module will run through April 27. Members of the public are encouraged to learn more at the Tacoma Nature Center’s website.
- Dune Peninsula Summer Concert Series Schedule Has Been Finalized  
Dune will host 5 concerts this summer:
  - July 20: Sierra Farrell
  - July 24: Dropkick Murphy’s
  - July 25: Miaoli
  - August 1: CAAMP
  - August 9: Sam Barber

**COMMUNITY COMMENTS** None

**MINUTES OF THE MARCH 24, 2025 REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

Commissioner Mauer moved to adopt the minutes as presented; seconded by Commissioner Lee and passed on a vote of 5-0.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

PROCLAMATION IN CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL VOLUNTEER MONTH

PROCLAMATION IN CELEBRATION OF EARTH DAY AND PARKS APPRECIATION DAY

Commissioner Mauer moved to adopt the consent agenda as presented; seconded by Commissioner Reyes and passed on a vote of 5-0.

**PURCHASING RESOLUTIONS**

**RESOLUTION NO. P19-25:** AUTHORIZING PURCHASE OF GOODS AND SERVICES FOR PARKS TACOMA

1. WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE SERVICE CARS BUD CLARY FORD (W403) FOR 17 VEHICLES FOR USE IN THE PARKS AND RECREATION DIVISIONS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$619,577.20 (WSST INCLUDED)

Item was postponed by President Smith earlier in the meeting.

**PUBLIC WORKS PURCHASING RESOLUTIONS**

**RESOLUTION NO. PW20-25:** POINT DEFIANCE PARK LOOP TRAIL PHASE 2 BID# J2025-07, CONTRACT AWARD TO GLOBAL CONTRACTORS, LLC.

Commissioner Mauer moved to adopt the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Lee.

Paul Simmons provided a high-level summary of the proposed action, which is to authorize bid acceptance from Global Contractors, LLC for Phase 2 of the Point Defiance Loop Trail. He noted that the engineer's estimate for the project ranged from \$4.8 to \$5 million, and the lowest pre-tax bid came in at \$4,832,750. Project funding will utilize 2014 UTGO bond funds along with grant funds from the Recreation and Conservation Office.

Mr. Simmons expressed enthusiasm for reaching this stage, highlighting that this marks the second phase of a project more than 10 years in the making. He emphasized that the improvements will enhance bike and pedestrian safety in one of the District's most heavily used parks. Project features include new sidewalks, asphalt trails, and retaining walls, a landscaped buffer with over 130 new trees, improved signage, upgraded utilities, and a revamped parking area.

Mr. Simmons underscored how the project builds on past investments and improves connectivity between key areas of Point Defiance Park, including the Wilson Way Bridge, Owen Beach, the Point Defiance Zoo, the Pagoda, and the Japanese Garden. A one-year construction timeline is anticipated.

It was also noted the project was reviewed at the April 2<sup>nd</sup> Capital Improvement Committee meeting.

Being no additional comments, the question was called and the resolution passed on a vote of 5-0.

**RESOLUTION NO. PW21-25: FORT NISQUALLY CLERK'S HOUSE REPLACEMENT BID J2025-01, CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT AWARD TO PEASE CONSTRUCTION, INC**

Commissioner Smith moved to adopt the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Lee.

Paul Simmons provided a high-level overview of the proposed action to authorize bid acceptance from Pease Construction for the replacement of the Fort Nisqually Clerk's House. He noted the engineer's estimate ranged from \$2.1 to \$2.15 million, with the lowest pre-tax bid coming in at \$1,733,160. Project funding includes 2014 UTGO bond funds, Park Operations funds, and a Washington Heritage Grant.

Mr. Simmons explained that the new Clerk's House will serve as a functional support space for the 188 volunteers who support the museum's operations through reenactments and hands-on activities. The facility will include areas for dressing, breaks, sewing, tool storage, and climate-controlled storage for museum clothing and cannons. It will also support event staging and include a small kitchen, restrooms, showers, and gender-inclusive dressing and restroom facilities.

The Board was informed that construction is expected to begin in May and take approximately nine months. Mr. Simmons noted that the project should not significantly impact park visitors or events, aside from mild construction noise.

Being no additional comments, the question was called and the resolution passed on a vote of 5-0.

**RESOLUTION NO. PW22-25: PORTLAND AVENUE PARK IMPROVEMENTS PHASE 1, CONTRACT AWARD TO MITHUN**

Commissioner Lee moved to adopt the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Mauer.

Paul Simmons presented the proposed action to authorize the District to enter into an architectural and engineering contract with Mithun for Phase 1 of the Portland Avenue Master Plan, in the amount of \$526,318. This initial phase will focus on the design and construction of a spray ground, playground, and restroom building, which will also include storage—primarily for rugby equipment and potentially other uses.

Mr. Simmons explained that the 13.4-acre park, located on Tacoma’s East Side, underwent a comprehensive master planning and community outreach process led by Parks Tacoma. The resulting master plan, completed in 2023, identifies key investments aimed at enhancing recreational, public health, and cultural value in the community. He shared that once design concepts are developed, community feedback will again be solicited.

The resolution was reviewed by the Capital Improvement Committee on March 19. Mr. Simmons confirmed that the \$526,318 design contract is part of a larger \$3.9 million total project estimate and is funded through the 2014 UTGO bond. The design phase is expected to last approximately one year, depending on various factors, including the timing of community engagement.

Theresa Evans commented positively on the project at Portland Ave.

Being no additional comments, the question was called and the resolution passed on a vote of 5-0.

**SINGLE READING RESOLUTIONS****FIRST READING RESOLUTIONS****SECOND READINGS RESOLUTIONS****RESOLUTION NO. RR18-25: AUTHORIZING THE SURPLUS & CONVEYANCE OF CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY AND GRANTING A TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION EASEMENT TO THE CITY OF TACOMA, ACCEPTING & APPROPRIATING COMPENSATION FROM CITY OF TACOMA AND AMENDING UTILITY EASEMENT NO. 12921 AT WAPATO PARK FOR SHERIDAN ARTERIAL IMPROVEMENTS**

This resolution was moved and seconded at the March 24, 2025 Regular Board Meeting.

Being no additional comments, the question was called and the resolution passed on a vote of 5-0.

**NEW BUSINESS** None

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS** None

**BOARD COMMENTS**

**ADJOURN**

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:52p.m.

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President

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Clerk

Submitted by: Jennifer Bowman, Board Secretary