

Magnuson Park Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

December 13, 2023

Attendance

MPAC Members: Jan Bragg (co-chair), Samantha De Abreu (co-chair), Gabrielle Gerhard, Bladimir Recinos

Absent: Lhorna Murray, Evan Briggs, Aaron Hoard, Lara Watson, Ruth Fruland, Mary Bicknell

SPR and Presenters: Joanne Orsucci, Kim LeMay, Ben Burtzos

Welcome and Introductions

De Abreu calls the meeting to order at 6:11 pm.

MPAC members, meeting guests, and SPR staff introduce themselves around the table and share one thing they are looking forward to in the next month.

A quorum of members not yet being present, De Abreu postpones voting on the November minutes.

Announcements and Information Sharing

Gerhard shares that the annual Argosy Cruises Christmas Ships will visit Magnuson Park on Friday, 12/22, from 8:35-8:55 pm. This is a beautiful annual event, including caroling, bonfires, cocoa, cider, and other festivities. Other park spaces will host the ships at other times. Bragg asks for clarity on the location of this event; Gerhard clarifies that the ships will stop by the boat launch and E1/E2 parking lots, south of the gate on Lake Shore Dr. NE.

Bragg will host and lead a birding walk in Magnuson Park on Friday, December 27, on behalf of Birds Connect Seattle (formerly Seattle Audubon). The walk will meet at the northeast corner of the E5 parking lot (the Seattle Children's Hospital shuttle lot) at 10:00 am.

Magnuson Park Manager's Report

Joanne Orsucci, OOC Magnuson Park Manager, delivers the report.

[See attached Report from Seattle Parks and Recreation]

Bragg asks for any negative feedback regarding the Lake Shore Dr. gate closing, particularly if any park visitors have been locked into the park. Only one park user has reported being locked in, and little other feedback has been received.

De Abreu asks for confirmation that the boat ramp is still available to provide fishing access to SPR's tribal partners. Orsucci confirms this is the case, and no complaints about access have been received by the department.

Magnuson Community Center Report

Kim LeMay, Magnuson Community Center Coordinator, delivers the report.

Last month MCC hosted a “Teensgiving” dinner for youth in the neighborhood. 22 teens came to share a meal together and talk about the present and the future. This was a difficult but great conversation for some of these teens, and it was great to hold this space for them.

We are currently facilitating Friday swim nights for youth at the Meadowbrook Pool and hope to start a quarterly family swim soon. We also have the first Magnuson family game night in the works, where we will have board games and some other activities available for families to come and play together, Friday, January 25; more info will follow on that as it is available.

The youth basketball season has begun. This year, MCC was able to field a 9-year-old boys’ team and a 10-year-old girls’ team.

We also have many other classes ongoing, including a new “Parent & Me” tots art class.

Unfortunately, our scholarship funds are on hold, but will resume after the new year; I recommend to anyone who is interested in applying for those scholarships to do that as soon as possible after the new year.

Finally, we had a successful open house last Friday (12/8). We also used that event to begin recruiting members for the re-activated MCC Advisory Committee, which we hope to resume next year.

Burtzos asks if SPR or the Associated Recreation Council (ARC) will oversee and administer the MCC Advisory Committee. LeMay clarifies that both Community Center staff and ARC will be involved; LeMay will work directly with this committee.

Old Business

MPAC Membership

De Abreu provides overview of MPAC membership transitions at the end of the year, noting that two business tenant seats remain unfilled. Orsucci notes that SPR staff have reached out to several organizations to fill these seats but have so far not managed to secure a commitment.

Murray has decided to step away from MPAC at the conclusion of her term. De Abreu shares that Murray has identified a potential replacement to fill the Solid Ground resident seat, but De Abreu has not yet received any confirmation.

Bragg has conducted some outreach to the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) cottage community. The LIHI staff liaison reported that 16 residents have moved in and requested an informational flyer about MPAC. Gerhard volunteers to make a flyer to distribute.

Bicknell has decided to step away from MPAC at the conclusion of her term. Jonathan King will step into the Magnuson Environmental Stewardship Alliance (MESA) seat, pending approval from the SPR Superintendent’s office.

Gerhard has decided to step away from MPAC at the conclusion of her term. Gerhard has identified a replacement to fill the NE Community Councils seat, but communication has been difficult, and the details of the transition are not yet finalized.

Briggs won her recent election to school board and will step away from MPAC to focus on her new responsibilities with that body. Briggs has ideas for potential replacements, but no firm plan yet.

De Abreu announces that she and Bragg are willing to continue in the role as Co-chairs.

De Abreu asks about any flexibility in the “Business Tenant” designation; would organizations such as the Magnuson Off-leash Area or Magnuson Community Garden/P-Patch qualify for these seats? Orsucci and Burtzos agree that this is a reasonable question, but probably one for Brian Judd to answer once his temporary assignment in the Recreation Branch is finished. Burtzos notes that a meaningful distinction might be made between organizations that hold license or concession agreements with SPR and those that do not.

Dei'Marlon “D” Scisney, a guest at the meeting, asks if there are any seats reserved for neighbors of Magnuson Park who are not members of a stakeholder group. De Abreu reflects that the closest thing to what Scisney is describing is probably the Mercy/Solid Ground/LIHI resident seats. Scisney notes that these seats still have a barrier to access, whereas a true at-large seat would have no barrier. Gerhard adds that the NE Community Councils seat was created through a combination of regional seats, in part to provide regional interests in MPAC; additionally, the local PTA member seat, currently held by Briggs, provides another regional voice. Scisney points out that these seats require membership in other groups (a neighborhood council and a PTA, respectively). Burtzos notes that this is a productive discussion but will probably need to wait until after the new year, as the current slate composition was approved by SPR Superintendent in early 2023.

62nd Ave NE Streetlights

De Abreu reports on the advocacy letter she sent to SPR Superintendent Diaz regarding non-functioning streetlights on 62nd Ave NE. In the email, De Abreu shared a map of these lights, which includes two SPR-owned areas along 62nd Ave. Burtzos reports that Deputy Superintendent Andy Sheffer is aware of the issue and has reached out to Seattle City Light (SCL) to try to expedite repairs.

Off-Leash Dog Concerns

Bragg provides updates on off-leash dog reporting in Magnuson Park. The Seattle Animal Shelter (SAS)¹ reports that they are fully staffed for the first time in several years and hopes to patrol Magnuson Park more frequently moving forward. Bragg reports that SAS has issued several warnings and citations to dog owners at Magnuson in recent weeks, and the hope from SAS officials is that word of this enforcement will spread and discourage further off-leash behavior in unsanctioned areas of the park. SAS officer training takes about six months, so there is some lag time between hiring and program readiness. Gerhard asks for clarification – should off-leash infractions be reported to SAS? Bragg confirms and relates that license plates of violators can help SAS follow up after the fact, as well.

2023 Cyclocross Race – Damage to Environmentally Critical Area

The 2023 cyclocross race used a new race map that took riders into an environmentally critical area. At the 11/9/23 meeting, MPAC members voted to authorize Bragg to investigate where the responsibility for this decision lay for the sake of determining the responsibility for environmental remediation.

¹ SAS is a division of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) and does not directly coordinate standard operations with SPR.

Bragg has not been able to positively identify where the breakdown occurred in the approval of the cyclocross map. Carl Bergquist, OOC SPR Events Scheduling Manager, shared that that part of the route may not have been discussed, but that he himself was out sick the day the walk-through occurred. Bergquist agrees that the racers should not leave the paved path in the future.

Bragg and Tom Kelly, former MPAC member and guest at this meeting, met onsite with OOC NE District Crew Chief Josh Bishop and Senior Gardener Anna Rylko to discuss remediation of the area as well as a barricade to prevent re-entry and additional damage.

- The plan for the barrier includes a wood pile and temporary fencing
- The dirt in the affected area has been compacted and needs aeration before reseeding will be effective. Rylko and her team were able to aerate the area, but reseeding has not yet occurred
- The cyclocross organization reseeded the race area near the lakefront, but not the environmentally critical area

Bragg will continue following up regarding remediation efforts.

Other Special Events Concerns

Bragg reports that public transit options were not advertised in the promotional materials for the cyclocross race. When Bragg asked Bergquist about this, he was unclear about the number of bus lines that serviced Sand Point. Orsucci suggests that MPAC compose an event guideline sheet for Magnuson events to share with the Events Scheduling team. Bragg and Gerhard assert that this should be the responsibility of the Events Scheduling team, not MPAC. Orsucci responds that even if that is so, realistically, the Events team is understaffed and likely does not have the capacity to differentiate between events at different parks. Bragg also raises concerns about the fragility of institutional knowledge; if Bergquist were to retire or leave his current position, would there be anyone in Events Scheduling who remembers this discussion?

New Business

De Abreu notes that the scheduled meeting time is nearly over. Prior to the January MPAC meeting, De Abreu asks members to brainstorm ideas for advocacy priority items and email them to herself and Bragg.

Gerhard notes that traffic continues to be a concern surrounding special events at the park, that she received complaints from neighbors unable to proceed south on Sand Point Way when cars were backed up trying to enter at NE 74th St, north of the 74th St entrance. Bragg asks for clarity regarding attendance thresholds to trigger SPD traffic control. Orsucci notes that SPD traffic control is only provided when an event rises to the Citywide Special Events level of consideration; this scrutiny applies to events of 500+ attendees that also meet several other criteria. Orsucci will connect with Bragg after the meeting to continue this conversation. De Abreu and Bragg are collecting evidence of traffic congestion related to Magnuson events; De Abreu is concerned about multiple events occurring simultaneously in the park, for example, sporting events at the same time as an art fair, causing increased traffic and congestion.

Gerhard moves to adjourn the meeting. Bragg seconds the motion. There is no discussion. The motion passes by unanimous consent.

De Abreu adjourns the meeting at 7:30 pm.