

Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC) Minutes

Via Zoom – October 13, 2021

The Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee is a Joint effort of the Arboretum Foundation, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and the University of Washington, and designated by Seattle City Council Ordinance 65130, approved December 27, 1934, and Ordinance 116337, approved September 8, 1992.

Voting Members

Arboretum Foundation

- Jane Stonecipher, Arboretum Foundation Executive Director
- Jenny Wyatt, Arboretum Foundation Board President

City of Seattle

- Excused, Kenan Block, Mayoral Appointee
- David Graves, Strategic Advisor, Seattle Parks and Recreation
- James Fearn, Mayoral Appointee

University of Washington

- Sally Clark, University of Washington, Director of Regional and Community Relations
- Christina Owen, University of Washington Botanic Gardens (UWBG), Director
- Ken Yocom, Professor, College of Built Environments

Other Staff Present:

- Rachel Acosta, Seattle Parks and Recreation, ABGC Coordinator
- Wendy Gible, University of Washington Botanic Gardens, Associate Director
- Lisa Chen, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Natural Resources Unit Manager
- Ray Larson, University of Washington Botanic Gardens, Curator of Living Collections

Standing Committees

Master Plan Implementation Group (MPIG):

AF: Jane Stonecipher & Jason Morse
City: David Graves (lead) & Kim Baldwin
UW: Ray Larson/Wendy Gible

SR520 Technical Committee:

City: David Graves; UW: Ray Larson

Call to Order

Sally calls the meeting to order. The board introduces themselves. New board member Christina Owen, new director of UWBG.

Partner Updates: Budget, Personnel and Other Items

Arboretum Foundation

SPR and the Arboretum Foundation are working out the terms of the Japanese Garden Management Agreement which expires this year. They will do 1-year extension to provide more time to complete the agreement.

Partnership Taskforce – The taskforce are doing some due diligence on options. They recently had an information session with Central Park Conservancy about a grant program that helps with Organizational governance. More to follow. The taskforce is realizing partnership planning work will not happen overnight and need to keep work moving forward. They are considering strategic planning activities with a 2- to 3-year threshold.

Planning process for Park District engagement. Takeaways:

1. Everyone wants a greater desire to understand park usage and user attitudes and it is difficult information to obtain. UW Transportation Services gave Jane some good ideas for surveying visitors. Surveys would ask for basic information like zip code and how they came to the park. Last Saturday, they did a trial which showed the Arboretum visitors are from all over Seattle and King County, less national and international visitors than anticipated. They will approach the State Legislature about funding for a larger visitor survey.

Baseline data would help plan next set of outreach for future projects, like the North Entry. Jane says they need to start planning in larger increments, do things to increase probability of success on future milestones. This is a way that the foundation could play a role in the future of the partnership.

2. Talked about work going on in other city agencies and how that may dovetail with projects within the Arboretum. For example, RapidRide with SDOT and how can SDOT help highlight that connection. SPU is working with watershed projects that have established funding and similar goals. Draw alignment with greater focus between Arboretum projects and local agencies.

Arboretum Foundation staff are busy planning a Gala in February, doing a fall appeal, working on a new donor database and making minor cosmetic upgrades to the office.

University of Washington

Christina Owen is the new UWBG Director, did her PhD at the University of Washington in plant evolution and genetics. She worked at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. She is passionate about science communication. There is a lot of great work done at the UW Botanic Gardens and she looks forward to communicating that to the public. She is excited to build on great work that has happened here already.

Reopening – First day back for many to in-person work; Miller Library, Fiddleheads Forest School are open, and programming commenced. They are slowly ramping back up to pre-pandemic levels.

Explorer packs are available through, and in partnership with, Kubota Gardens.

School of Environmental and Forest Sciences is starting a search for 3 new faculty members. They hope the new faculty will utilize UWBG and Arboretum more.

Rare Care program is doing 3 projects in Eastern Washington: prescribed burns in Hanford Reach, planting Umtanum buckwheat, planting on BLM land near Wenatchee.

With the rain in Seattle, the plantings at the Arboretum will recommence. Excited about a project in collaboration with the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard to enhance the collections database which will make it more user-friendly.

Ray did a great interview with KUOW ([click here](#)) and an article in the Emerald Herald about Climate Change.

Positive cases are declining slowly, but the number was high initially. No major workplace outbreaks. 80% Covid-19 cases are in the Greek system. There is a small number of separations for those employees who refused to get vaccinated.

Excitement from students is pervasive and contagious. There was some anxiety around returning, but people seem excited to be on campus.

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Mayor's budget is at City Council.

Permits are moving along for Rhododendron Glen and the Waterfront Trail.

David is working with Ray on stone cottage to upgrade the utilities.

Strategic Plan – community engagement is the focus now, staff will start prioritizing in 2022. For more information please [click here](#).

Tree Ordinance – connected to SDCI staff about coming to ABGC meeting to find out what it means for parks and the Arboretum, in general. David will follow up with potential dates.

Lisa updates the ABGC on two projects, SPR staff are managing currently:

- Waterfront project – Natural Resources Unit crew raised and restored 500 feet of the trail. Working on mulching. This is a temporary resolution for the trail. Shop fixed floating bridge side in August. SPR waiting for project management and permits to work on long-term resolution.
- Loop trail – Extending 200 ft asphalt paving and retaining wall. Permanent fence has not yet been installed.

WSDOT visit – David says WSDOT has multiple signage projects going on. It would be great to capture their signage program as part of the WSDOT update.

Master Plan Implementation Group

Rhododendron Glen – Increased budget challenges due to additional permitting needed; will adjust project or reduce scope to bring it back into budget.

Woodland Meadow – Preparing a donor proposal for this project and additional horticultural positions. Brainstorming possible volunteer recognition ideas in the meadow to commemorate the legacy of volunteers in the Arboretum.

Motion on Master Plan Priorities

Ray reviews list of priorities as detailed in the September meeting minutes. The ABGC makes a motion to approve the 2-year list of priorities as provided by the Master Plan Implementation Group. David moves, Ken seconds; the priorities list is approved unanimously.

Old/New Business

Strategic Plan Engagement

The ABGC wants to be present and doesn't want to lose the opportunity to get funding as things move forward.

Jane proposes a joint letter from the UW and Arboretum Foundation to Seattle Parks and Recreation about Master Plan Priorities, value the Arboretum provides and ask for a meeting with SPR leadership to explore a carve out budget item would make sense – like the zoo/aquarium. Letter to be drafted by Jane and Christina, assisted by Sally and sent to Jesús and Christopher Williams.

As a group, the ABGC ratified these project priorities for the next 2-3 years and have gone through a vetting process; having seal of approval from staff would be helpful.

A letter from the UW and Arboretum could work great. A reminder of what the UW provides to the partnership. Generational change in staff and leadership at the City; may need to remind people what the UW provides to the Arboretum. At the last meeting, Jane observed SPR has a real focus on climate change and resiliency and that could be a powerful partnership with the College of the Environment.

New leadership may result in new cabinet members, this could result in opportunities for engagement and partnerships.

Guest speaker for upcoming meetings

WSDOT – Rachel to follow up, RapidRide folks – Sally to follow up, tree code folks – David to follow up.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourns at 9:57 a.m.

APPROVED _____ DATE _____
Sally Clark, ABGC Chair