

Pritchard Park Design Advisory Committee

Subject: Appendix K of Final Report (Attached)

May 18th, 2008

To: Metro Parks District Commissioners
Mayor and City Council
cc: Distribution List Attached

From: Charles Schmid, Co-Chair
Barb Trafton, Co-Chair

It has been just over a year since the Pritchard Park Design Advisory Committee first met. Over that time span our Committee met numerous times, often on a weekly basis. We also have had many meetings with the public who have played an integral part in arriving at the final design recommendation covered in our final report, and which was presented at the joint meeting of the Parks Board and City Council on March 5th, 2008. Equally helpful – if not instrumental to our final design – has been the support the Committee received from the instructors and students at the University of Washington and staff from the Parks District and the City. Of special mention are Manish Chalana, Jennifer Sutton and Perry Barrett.

Attached is **Appendix K** which completes our final report and formally ends the mission set forth for our Committee last year. The Appendix contains the Committee's responses to 19 questions posed by three park commissioners. Their questions gave us the opportunity to clarify some points which were not made clear in either the report or during our presentation in March. Hence we appreciated this opportunity to provide additional input. As emphasized in the attached appendix, we feel that **now is the time** for the Parks District and City to obtain and review plans for: 1) the road access to the shoreline with the EPA, and 2) the new road which is replacing the western road along the bluff with Public Works Dept. Finally we urge you to appoint an implementation committee soon so as to continue the momentum in creating this unique park.



Appendix K: Comments from City Council and Park District Commissioners

Note: The following written comments were received from Ken DeWitt, Kirk Robinson, and Tom Swolgaard, respectively, of the District. No official written response was submitted to the Committee from the City as of April 16, 2008.

Comments received from Ken DeWitt and Kirk Robinson

(Dewitt and Robinson) "First, thank you to the Design Advisory Committee and the University of Washington students for the time and effort in providing a conceptual design for Pritchard Park."

1. **(DeWitt):** "As long as the Point is closed off, the public needs to have vehicular access to the eastern end of the park, west of the superfund site. I think the turn-around drop off approach is the right one, except that there should be a couple of handicapped accessible parking spaces there. While I like the current parking configuration, including the handicapped spaces, it's just too far for some people to walk from the currently designed parking spaces. The turnaround and 2 accompanying handicapped spaces could be removed or relocated in the future once the point is opened."

Committee: *We agree, and propose that two handicapped parking places be included at the turn-around. (This is not shown in the current design plans.)*

2. **(DeWitt):** "We should address the possibility of a boat ramp in the park. I personally don't favor one on the harbor-side of the park. Maybe the old Milwaukee Dock area facing the Sound would be acceptable. Pritchard Park may not be an appropriate place for a ramp, but there are only 2 public boat ramps on the island right now and none facing the Sound. The only one on the main arm of the Sound was located at Fay Bainbridge State Park and was removed over 10 years ago."

Committee: *The current environmental constraints on the site do not allow for constructing a boat ramp at the Park. We agree that a boat ramp on the harbor-side is not a good idea. The beach should not have vehicles on it, nor should a large parking area be placed near beach for boat trailers. Due to concerns about damaging the cap, we doubt if a boat ramp structure could even be placed on the beach. The east beach, where the old Milwaukee Dock was formerly located, is subject to rough water since it is directly on the Sound.*

The one shoreline area where it might be feasible to construct a boat ramp is currently slated for a pocket beach cove. (See Appendix H-1 of this report for more information on this pending project.) A boat ramp would act as a jetty or groin to block northerly flows of sand sloughing off feeder bluffs. This transport is an essential element of the restoration project (see response to number 14 below). Hence as much as a boat ramp may be needed by the community, the physical constraints and regulatory nature of the site essentially prohibit its construction at Pritchard Park.

As proposed in our design, car topping will be allowed for launching at human-powered boats from the west beach.

3. **(Robinson):** "I am concerned that we may be taking the Battle Point approach to Pritchard Park - trying to include something for everyone. The only thing I haven't seen is a proposal for horse use (or did I miss it?). On what elements do we focus park development?"

Committee: *We recommend that horses and trail bikes be prohibited from the site. The trails are too narrow and undeveloped, and horses and bikes would potentially disturb walkers and severely damage the trails. Bike racks will be provided to encourage bicycling to and from the park, but not within its borders. In our final design, we have attempted to respond to the community's requests inasmuch as is possible, but we acknowledge both the tremendous opportunities and the not inconsiderable constraints of this site.*

4. **(Robinson):** I was concerned about the lack of involvement of active sports groups in developing the conceptual design, both in committee membership and outreach to the groups. Given the limitations on active recreation due to the use of open space funds in the Phase I purchase and the implications of the ongoing pump & treat operation (regardless of final remedy), it now seems unlikely that Pritchard could be used for organized active recreation purposes.

Committee: *We discussed this concern and sought feedback from the public in the course of our 10-month phase of information gathering. We received no strong requests for organized sports at the Park other than from members of the Washington Water Trails Association. The general message we received from the public favored passive recreation, and acknowledged that other non-shoreline locations were more appropriate for organized sports. The topography and location of the site do not lend themselves to constructing a soccer or baseball field. We have proposed that a large grassy area be set aside for those visitors who want to set up an informal outdoor play space for a volleyball game, a Frisbee game, flying kites, or the like. This also is in line with the Phase 1 open space bond used to purchase the property.*

5. **(Robinson):** "We need to discuss the distinction between active and passive recreation in the Park. Phase I purchase included Open Space bond funds that are to be used only for the acquisition of park and open space for passive use. Does that limit, if at all, any proposed uses? (e.g., off-leash dogs)."

Committee: *Please see our response to the previous comment.*

6. **(Robinson):** "Off-leash dogs - I don't believe it is appropriate to set the park up as a full off-leash dog area, even during certain times. If there is to be such an area at this park, it should be in a defined (fenced) area. The answer to the previous question may direct where an off-leash area could be located. [My guess is that Pritchard has become a popular spot for dog owners because it has yet to be developed and is not real easy for the public to access. Once developed, we will probably have the same issue with dogs that we have in every other park.]"

Committee: *We received a lot of input from dog owners, especially those who presently visit the Park with their dogs. We felt that as the Park becomes increasingly popular, there very well might be problems allowing off-leash dogs, such as confrontations with young children and animal waste. That said, we felt that the beach is very suitable as a surface for dog running (sand is more enduring than grassy areas which in the northwest are always reduced to mud, which then requires expensive surface treatments with bark mulch, etc., to sustain heavy traffic). We encourage the District and the City to think creatively, and to work with this user group by trying a solution which has worked successfully in other more heavily frequented parks in the Northwest (see suggested policy in Appendix F1 and examples of off-leash parks and policies online, such as Portland, OR, which has fenced and unfenced off-leash areas, and parks in Bellingham and Everett). Any new policy could be implemented on a trial basis. Early hours at the Park are presently used almost exclusively by dog-walkers, and though this may change in time, it is likely to continue throughout the winter months and may be accommodated without negatively impacting other groups. Also by limiting off-leash hours to early and late in the day, the park is unlikely to draw off-leash visitors from outside the community (which actually has presented overuse issues at other "dog parks" in the region).*

7. **(Robinson):** "Proposed Cascadia Marine Trail Campsite. I wonder about the liability issues related to this idea. We will not likely have staff on-site 24/7 to monitor the campsite (unlike at Fay Bainbridge or Fort

Ward). How much of a concern is this? On the other hand, the idea of hosting the Northwest Coast Tribal Canoe Journey or other overnight special events should be considered.”

Committee: *Cascadia Marine Trail Campsites have functioned successfully in similar sites around Puget Sound, and they must have faced similar questions of liability. Hence we suggest the District and City research liability and safety issues with the Washington Water Trails Association, as they can offer expertise and assistance in these areas. These campsites are specifically designed so as not to require any onsite staff support. We feel that these issues are surmountable, and that some additional fact finding, using the resources of the Washington Water Trails Association, will permit the site to be part of a wonderful regional amenity.*

8. **(Robinson):** “Boat Storage - What liability will the City or Park District have for private boats stored at the park? What are the visual implications for the park to have a number of boats stored out in the open? There was one visual in the report that showed boats stowed on the side of a building. This might be a better approach.”

Committee: *We agree that storing boats in a building is definitely the better approach. At the same time, we feel that providing a simple anchored cable to lock up boats will enable visitors in human-powered watercraft to use the Park as soon as possible. This simple installation will also allow the City and the District to assess the public’s need and their usage of boat storage before investing considerable expenses for a storage shed. The cable would be located back from the beach to create a small area which would minimize deleterious visual effects to the natural features of the site. This approach also supports implementation as soon as possible to encourage visitors to use the Park now. In a later phase of funding, the construction of a restroom with kayak storage will perhaps be a more perfect solution to address the issue of boat storage.*

9. **(Robinson):** “Restrooms - Will the proposed park restrooms be hooked into the sewer line that serves Rockaway Beach? Or will the Park rely on septic systems? If septic, where would the drain fields be located - and would they be sufficient distance from the harbor to prevent contamination.”

Committee: *Hookups to water, electricity and sewer were briefly explored by the Committee, but a more detailed engineering approach needs to be undertaken. There is a deep well at the center of the site which is intended to supply water for the steam operation. However the present EPA buildings are hooked up to City water. Electricity is being brought into the building housing the new wastewater treatment plant. The EPA presently uses a septic field west of this new building. How and if we can hook up to these utilities still needs to be ascertained. Another approach is to use composting toilets and use solar panels for heating and electricity. These plans require – and in fact reinforce the need for – the City, the District, and the EPA to coordinate their activities and funding.*

10. **(Robinson):** “Water Taxi - Would this serve only to bring visitors from the Winslow side of the harbor? Or would it serve commuters headed to Winslow and the ferries? If the latter, where would folks park?”

Committee: *This was proposed as an idea which has been circulating in the community for a while; one that we believe is a long-range implementation. Two proposals for landing at the park were to either have a boat which can land on the beach, or to use the adjacent marina dock to the west. One member of the public recalled that when this marina received its shoreline permit, one condition was to allow public access. We did not look into details or commuter use since it was so far in the future.*

11. **(Robinson):** “Creosote Company Interpretive Structures - Rather than having both the interpretive structures and separate picnic shelters, should we consider having all picnic shelters designed per the old Creosote housing? Sort of a multi-purpose design and use.”

Committee: *This seems like an interesting alternative. This idea, as well as a number of other similar concepts, needs to be transformed into a realistic design by a professional at the master plan level.*

12. **(Robinson):** Point – “While I believe that long term one option for the point should be an open playfield, I understand this is unrealistic under all remedy options. Due to a continuing pump and treat, there will always be well heads that need to be accessible and above ground (confined working space issues). Hence a portion of this area might be the best location for a fenced off-leash dog area.”

Committee: *We did not consider this use for the Point, and it seems like a possible plan - depending on how safe the area is for dogs due to the cleanliness of the soil (they do run around with bare feet!) and the height of fences around the wells. However, this area doesn't acknowledge that a big part of the draw for dog owners is the beach itself, and its swimming access, so our thoughts are that it is unlikely that this area will be a popular alternative for that user group.*

Comments received from Tom Swolgaard

13. **(Swolgaard):** “The new access road is too far west in my opinion. The road acts as a knife cutting though the park. Sort of making the east area not used.”

Committee: *It was the Committee's understanding that the road had to be moved due to the danger posed by its present location on the East bluff. The road will be unsafe in the near future due to shoreline erosion. If done properly, the road relocation will allow pedestrians a safe and wonderful view of the Sound and Seattle, and offer an excellent access road into the Park. That said, the City was supposed to meet with the Pritchard Park Design Advisory Committee to discuss the details of the new road location, but Public Works never responded to an invitation to meet with the Committee. In addition to reviewing the new location of the road, the Committee wanted to insure that the proposed plan accounted for the small pocket parking areas shown on our design. Planning for the installation of these pocket parking areas now will assure they can eventually be added (cost-effectively) later. This lack of communication was frustrating since the City has scheduled the new road to be built this year (2008). Since our Committee will terminate when the report is finalized, we encourage the District to ask the City's Public Works Department to meet with them as soon as possible. Our members would be interested to attend as private citizens.*

14. **(Swolgaard)** “The east beach restoration has me worried. What will stabilize the bank to keep it from eroding away (nothing) and will we lose several acres over time? Most likely.”

Committee: *Peter Namvedt-Best from the City of Bainbridge Island has provided an answer, noting “that the east Bluff habitat restoration project is intended to allow erosion of the feeder bluff that was historically present there and move essential infrastructure to a location where it will not be at risk or require ongoing and expensive protection measures. The Park Board adopted a resolution supporting the project. The preliminary design should be completed by July 2008 for Park Board consideration, which will allow for an informed discussion about the project at that time.”*

15. **(Swolgaard):** “The realignment of access to Bill Point neighborhood cuts the upland in half as well. The road has been where it is for how many years? And what issues are there with the current alignment?”

Committee: *Communications with the Bill Point neighborhood showed us they agree that the current access at the corner of Eagle Harbor Drive and Rockaway Drive is a dangerous intersection. The new road will be much safer due to increased visibility from both directions. We believe that cutting the southern parcel in half is not detrimental since there is not much connection between the two parcels. Finally vacating the old portion of the road allows for parking for larger events and provides a fabulous*

spot for one of the "pearls" at the eastern tip of the Park, which provides magnificent views – even of Mt. Baker on a clear day.

16. **(Swolgaard):** "I agree regarding the access afforded by moving the fence at the EPA clean-up site and proving Accessible Parking in the turn around."

Committee: *Yes- this road is an important and necessary access to the Park, and we were glad to hear during the March 5, 2008, presentation to the City Council and Park Board that the City had contacted the EPA, which in turn has agreed to do this. However we are still waiting for a written response to the verbal approval for this access road. Since the Committee will terminate at the end of this report, we again encourage the Parks District and City to obtain written confirmation from the EPA.*

17. **(Swolgaard):** "There's lots to discuss and plan before implementation of improvements."

Committee: *We agree, and recommend another citizen committee be formed to shepherd stewardship, including implementation and attention to some of the remaining questions brought up in these responses. As noted above, it is important to give citizens the opportunity to discover the wonderful features of this Park, which were obtained with federal, state, county and city funds.*

18. **(Swolgaard):** "My idea for the park is less is better."

Committee: *The public generally supported your sentiments, as did the Committee.*

19. **(Swolgaard):** "I desire to have stream restoration, restrooms, graveled trails, active recreation (ball fields), grassy area along west beach, and the rest natural. No pagodas, no frilly things, no goofy stuff."

Committee: *These uses are all part of the design in our report. The one exception is a ball field. Reasons for not having this activity are supplied above in the Committee's response to Kirk Robinson's Comment number 4 above. We agree with the public that the flatlands along the harbor are best utilized for informal sporting activities and occasional large events, and that the Park should remain in as natural a state as possible. Building and maintaining a ball field and the structures needed to support it did not seem to mesh with that vision.*

The Committee appreciates the suggestions and concerns expressed in these comments, and we sincerely hope our responses clarify our final design recommendations.

April 18, 2008.

