



WOODLAND PARK ZOO

Woodland Park Zoo
Neighborhood Liaison
Committee
Meeting Report
January 8, 2009

Committee Members in Attendance:

Sheridan Hammond, Fremont Neighborhood Council
Al Tietjen, Zoo Neighbors
Al Starr, Hawthorne Condo Association
Ref Lindmark, Green Lake Community Council
Eric Fisk, Wallingford Community Council
Tom Veith, Wallingford Community Council
John Havard, Phinney Ridge Community Council
Mark Phillips, Phinney Ridge Community Council

WPZ Staff and Board Members in Attendance

David Schaefer, Director of Public Affairs
Ron Siegle, Board Member

Committee Staff

Susan Gulick, Sound Resolutions
Jessica Branom-Zwick, Cascadia Consulting Group

Welcome and Meeting Overview

Ron Siegle, one of several new members of the Woodland Park Zoo Society Board of Directors and a neighborhood resident, attended the meeting.

"News and Notes" from the Zoo

Woodland Park Zoo has been busy with several events and occurrences. David Schaefer presented the following items:

» **Update on Food Concessions**

Lancer Catering, took over food concessions at the WPZ on December 31, 2008. Lancer is a privately-owned company that provides food services for two zoos, a science museum, a golf course, and several educational institutions and businesses in Minneapolis/St. Paul. The WPZ is their first business in Seattle, so the president and two vice-presidents of Lancer have moved to Seattle to ensure success.

Lancer is committed to locally-sourced, sustainable food and other sustainable practices. They have improved the pricing structure and food quality as well as begun using china instead of disposable dishes. Their first major change in food service will be to turn the Boardwalk Sausage Company (near the orangutans) into a chowder house.

» **Update on West Entry**

In mid-December, Seattle approved the WPZ's permit for the West Entry project with an official code interpretation. The WPZ agreed to request and pay for a formal code interpretation, which is an official

document explaining a piece of the city's code in detail. On December 26, within the two-week deadline, the Phinney Ridge Community Council, Save Our Zoo, and a private citizen filed an appeal. Their key points address special development privileges, the removal of mature trees, the SEPA analysis regarding impervious area, Seattle's Sustainable Building Policy for city-owned buildings, and traffic impacts. David assumes that the appeal will be a six-month process, but hearing dates have not been set yet¹.

» 2009 Annual Plan

On November 1, 2008, the WPZ published its draft annual plan on its website and submitted copies to NLC members and the Department of Parks and Recreation. The WPZ received only two comments: use more shuttle buses and provide more pod casts that interpret exhibits. The annual plan has been finalized and is available on the WPZ website at

http://www.zoo.org/zoo_info/board/pdf_bin/2009ap_final.pdf. The highlight of 2009 is the penguin exhibit – the most ambitious new exhibit in a decade. The WPZ will also welcome a new breeding male gorilla and new species such as Stellar's sea eagle and tree kangaroos native to Papua New Guinea.

The WPZ is addressing financial issues through a variety of budget reductions, including a hiring freeze, a travel freeze and a 1%, across-the-board budget cut, as well as efforts to provide new revenues such as a scheduled rate increase (every two years), and two additional Zoo Tunes concerts.

NLC members had the following questions and comments:

- Sheridan asked how attendance in 2008 (1.1 million visitors) compares to previous year. David responded that it is the second highest attendance year after 2001 when Hansa, an Asian elephant, was here. Nationwide in 2008, attendance increased at regional zoos and decreased at destination zoos (such as sea World).
- Sheridan also asked how much revenue the orangutan paintings made for the WPZ. David responded that he could find out for the next meeting.
- Ref asked about the funding the WPZ receives from the Seattle. David explained that the WPZ receives funding from the city according to a formula specified in their agreement. The funding grows every year (less than inflation). However, the WPZ previously received levy funding from the city, but the old levy is expiring and the WPZ was not included in Seattle's most recent parks levy. Instead, the WPZ now receives funds from a King County levy passed in 2006. Overall the WPZ receives its funding from public support (~35%), earned income (~40%), and donations (~25%).
- Eric asked what the next big project would be after the West Entry is completed. David responded that there are several options including revising the Asian forest to incorporate rhinos, lions, Asian bears, and elephants; retrofitting the feline house; and upgrading the hippo pool. Currently, cleaning the hippo pool requires completely draining and refilling it, accounting for 25% of total water use at the WPZ. A new filtration system could save a significant amount of water.
 - Tom responded that the Wallingford Community Council can generally bear improvements to exhibits that increase overall attendance. They mainly have issues with

¹ After the NLC meeting the hearing was set for Feb. 25th.

non-exhibit improvements and events that bring people all at one time and have major impacts.

"Eyes and Ears" from the Neighborhood

Neighbors reported the following news.

Phinney Ridge Community Council

- » **There is supposedly a new tenant (also a market) for the former Phinney Market location.** The building that houses the Roosters Breakfast Club is having its second review-design meeting to become a condominium.
- » **No one knows the source of the \$350,000 earmark for the 59th Street Park in the recent greenspace levy,** but the Phinney Ridge Community Council will try to be involved in the project. Email is a good way to contact the superintendent of the Parks Department because he actually checks and answers his email.
- » **The greenspace levy also has funds for neighborhood-initiated projects,** but they may not be allocated until 2010. Currently the Parks Department is trying to contract design-complete projects because contract prices are low right now and the projects could stimulate the economy.

Green Lake Community Council

- » **The Pathway of Lights held in December at Green Lake was a huge success with large turnout.**
- » **Despite rumors to the contrary, work is not imminent on the Green Lake hole in the ground.** Although the Green Lake community would like the project to continue, construction loans are not forthcoming, and the hole is not a bad hole.
- » **Neighbors have mixed feelings about the new stoplight at Green Lake Way and 64th.** One neighbor moved because of it, and another takes photos of any incidents, such as accidents and skid marks. Ref Lindmark and other neighbors he has spoken with like the stoplight, although Ref noted that the intersection is now over-engineered and needs better signage

Fremont Neighborhood Council

- » **An appeal was filed on the transfer station project,** which will be heard on March 4, 2009. Seattle agreed to review two of the SEPA claims in the appeal but objected to other pieces of the complaint.

Zoo Tunes Proposal

At its previous meeting the NLC decided to discuss guidelines on Zoo Tunes concerts. Mark Phillips drafted a preliminary resolution for the NLC to discuss. He suggested that the NLC establish a formal process for creating and adopting a resolution on Zoo Tunes guidelines, then send the adopted resolution to the WPZS Board of Directors. He alternately suggested that the NLC request the WPZ to draft self-imposed guidelines to be used in long-range planning. For background, David reported that the WPZ plans to hold 12 Zoo Tunes concerts in 2009, two more than in 2008. Each concert increases the WPZ's revenue by approximately \$30,000. The discussion is summarized below, with comments presented by topic.

The desire for guidelines, with flexibility:

- Ref thinks that in the past the WPZ has said that it was their intention to limit Zoo Tunes concerts but that the WPZ did not follow through on these intentions. Neighbors just want to know what to expect in coming years, whether or not they agree with the WPZ's decisions. While neighbors clearly have a right to know the limits, they may have less right to dictate those limits because they do not have to manage budget shortfalls.
- John thinks that guidelines are appropriate and would be helpful to reduce contention and annual fights. The NLC was created for resolving exactly these kinds of issues.
- Sheridan thinks that any guidelines should include some flexibility and wants this to be a win-win situation. If the WPZ has a real budget deficit it may be appropriate to schedule more concerts than the stated limit. She supports flexibility in which the WPZ and NLC can negotiate if the WPZ wants to hold more concerts.
- Mark supports the idea of flexibility once there is a general agreement on limits. For example, the WPZ might trade having an artist play until 9:00 PM in exchange for holding no back-to-back concerts that year. He said that he does not want to put a straightjacket on the WPZ but wants the event to be predictable with overall limits that could be adjusted with negotiations. He said that it is a matter of trust with the WPZ. He does not want just a statement that the WPZ will be reasonable, but rather procedures that the WPZ will use to negotiate with the NLC. He would rather have guidelines that are narrower but include a procedure to amend them.
- Tom said that he wants a general policy from the WPZ for what is going to happen with Zoo Tunes so he knows what to expect. He also thinks that the WPZ should not be able to hold more concerts whenever it wants to earn more revenue. He wants the WPZ should learn to operate without needing additional funding opportunities that have impacts on neighbors.
 - David likes the idea of a compromise on Zoo Tunes guidelines to reduce conflict and wants to continue the discussion. He disagrees that the WPZ holds more concerts whenever it needs more money. This is a unique year in which the WPZ is looking to fill a large budget gap, but not to increase its overall budget.

The Background and Current Nature of Zoo Tunes

- David said that he wants the NLC to recognize that the WPZ works very hard to keep Zoo Tunes a community event and has already imposed limits on itself. The WPZ lets kids in free, sells tickets for significantly less than the price of similar concert series (at Marymoor and Chateau St. Michelle), and gives free tickets to neighbors. Zoo Tunes is the only nighttime concert series in Seattle, and over half of attendees come from Seattle. David also noted that the WPZ has reduced the number of concerts from 13 in each 1992 and 1993 and featured big name acts as early as 1986.
 - John countered that although there used to be more concerts, they were smaller, local acts with smaller audiences.
 - Mark said that the concerts are different than they used to be because the audience used to be mainly neighbors but now draws people from outside the neighborhood (e.g., Issaquah) who drive and cause traffic impacts.
 - Ref thinks that Zoo Tunes is still a community event but now causes more impact.
- David explained additional limits the WPZ has already voluntarily imposed on itself. The WPZ sells only 3,800 tickets per concert, although it could sell twice as many. Concerts end at 8:30 PM,

even though some artists would like to play longer. The WPZ does not schedule concerts on Fridays or Saturdays to avoid adding to traffic on those days. Only one back-to-back concert is tentatively scheduled in 2009. The concert season is limited to 10 weeks because the WPZ does not hold concerts before mid-June or after the last week of August because they would end after dusk. The WPZ also does not hold a concert in the week of Jungle Party.

- Tom suggested that these self-imposed restrictions could be included in the guidelines' policy statement. He thinks the current concert hours are fine and would not mind if a concert were held on a Friday or Saturday.
- John said that he likes David's statement on recognizing what the WPZ is already doing. He asked if the background section Mark wrote (which David said is inaccurate) was intended to be part of the resolution. Mark responded that it was not part of the resolution but just provided context as he knew it.
- Ref commended Mark on his efforts to draft a resolution but thinks that the tone should be different. It should recognize that the NLC wants the WPZ to be successful, that Zoo Tunes is important to the WPZ's revenue stream, and that the WPZ has already imposed limits on itself. The resolution should also appreciate what the WPZ has done so far to work with neighbors and ask the WPZ to continue this conversation and working with neighbors in that vein.
- David said that it is important to remember that although the WPZ is located in a neighborhood, it is a regional facility that serves the entire county.
 - Ref responded that Green Lake is similarly a very popular regional park, but Seattle has worked with the community and does not hold events with major impacts without first consulting with the neighborhood.

Number and Frequency of Concerts

- Ref thinks 10 concerts per year is about right.
- Tom likes the policy of a limit of 10 concerts per year and no more than 3 in any 14-day period. However, he also said that he could be convinced to agree to more than 10 concerts per year, as long as there is a definite limit.
- Eric suggested considering a limit on total ticket sales over all concerts, rather than just the number of concerts. Then the WPZ would have the flexibility to hold more, smaller concerts that each cause less impact than if the WPZ tried to max out 10 concerts.
 - John commented that ticket sales are harder to monitor than the number of concerts.
 - Tom said that the impact on neighbors occurs because of an event on a specific night with a lot of people. He can plan around specific events, not the number of tickets sold.
- Al S. asked whether the WPZ could honor a limit on concert frequency, given that the desired artists have their own schedules.
- Mark said that multiple concerts in a short period of time is a problem but is not necessarily worse if the concerts are held back-to-back. For example, holding two concerts on Tuesday and Wednesday is no worse than holding them on Monday and Wednesday.
 - Tom agreed that back-to-back is less of a problem than holding too many concerts in one week.
- David said that the WPZ could not agree to hold no more than three concerts in a 14-days period.

Next Steps

- Ref suggested that the WPZ draft a framework for Zoo Tunes concerts, including what the WPZ is already doing to limit impact and the intended limits (e.g., 10 concerts per year) it can live within. He supported the idea of flexibility, so the WPZ and NLC can have a conversation to amend the framework in special situations. The guidelines may not need to be a legal document but could be a framework to live within and allow for conversations on changes.
 - John said that he agrees with Ref.
- Mark suggested each community council and the WPZ draft resolutions independently to be discussed at the next NLC meeting.
 - John supported community councils creating proposals. He thinks that if neighbors really want to get something done they need to start it themselves. The NLC already tried asking the WPZ to draft guidelines. It would be more effective now to create its own proposal that the WPZS Board can respond to.
 - Eric and Al S. responded that they prefer to respond to a WPZ proposal.
 - David responded that he will bring a draft of reasonable guidelines to the next meeting.

Other Topics Discussed

- David asked if there are operational changes to Zoo Tunes, other than limits on concerts, that could make them more palatable to neighbors.
 - Eric suggested holding smaller concerts and using shuttles.
- Ref said that although his neighborhood is not impacted by the WPZ as much as others, his community council supports protecting neighborhoods and empathizes with Wallingford and Phinney Ridge. He supports creating trust between the WPZ and neighbors.
- David clarified that although the Zoo Society sets policy and guides management, it is the WPZ's management that actually schedules concerts.

Susan summarized that she heard that the NLC wants some agreement with the WPZ on limits to Zoo Tunes but with procedures that allow flexibility. The main parameters are the total number of concerts, timing and frequency of concerts, hours, and ticket sales (total and per concert). There are two main ideas to accomplish this: 1) the WPZ drafts limits that they could live with on the number of concerts per year and per short period of time, or 2) NLC members draft these limits. The general decision seemed to be for the WPZ to draft guidelines that the NLC could discuss and take back to their community councils. Zoo Tunes will be on the agenda for the meeting in March and David will bring draft guidelines for discussion.

When asked for his thoughts, Ron Siegle said that as a Zoo Society board member he wants to be involved with the NLC. As a neighborhood resident, he likes Zoo Tunes, enjoys hearing the music from his home, and does not mind the traffic that adds five minutes to his commute.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Neighborhood Liaison Committee will be on Thursday, March 5, 2009² at 7 p.m. in the ARC/Offices building at the Woodland Park Zoo. Meetings are generally held on the second Thursday of odd-numbered months. NLC meetings in 2009 will be held on the following dates.

- March 5, 2009
- May 14, 2009
- July 9, 2009
- September 10, 2009
- November 12, 2009

Meeting summaries and other information on the Neighborhood Liaison Committee can be found at http://www.zoo.org/zoo_info/neighbors/nlc.html.

² This is one week earlier than the regular schedule.