



Woodland Park Zoo
Neighborhood Liaison Committee
Meeting Report
March 5, 2009

Committee Members in Attendance:

Al Starr, Hawthorne Condo Association
John Havard, Phinney Ridge Community Council
Julie Anne Kempf, Green Lake Community Council
Mark Phillips, Phinney Ridge Community Council
Ref Lindmark, Green Lake Community Council
Sheridan Hammond, Fremont Neighborhood Council
Tom Veith, Wallingford Community Council

WPZ Staff and Board Members in Attendance

David Schaefer, Director of Public Affairs
E.J. Hook, WPZ Maintenance and Operations Manager
Katherine Steen, WPZ Experiences Supervisor
Rob Liddell, WPZ Board of Directors

Committee Staff

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

Welcome and Meeting Overview

Rob Liddell, a member of the WPZS Board of Directors, attended the NLC meeting. At this meeting "Eyes and Ears" were presented first so that late arrivals could hear all the "News and Notes."

"Eyes and Ears" from the Neighborhood

» Green Lake Community Council

- » **There is no news on the hole on the ground.** The developer thinks they have a tenant but says that construction would not start until next spring at the earliest. In related news, the Department of Planning and Development is laying off employees because they are paid for by permit fees, which have significantly reduced in the current economy.
- » **Construction projects at Green Lake Park.** The path that runs between two rows of giant trees from near the Starbucks down to the pool will be replaced with a porous path. The path will lead to a new shade garden, which was included in the neighborhood plan to provide a non-recreational space at the park. New benches and tables will be installed near the Hearthstone Retirement Home. The benches will face each other rather than the lake or the walking path to facilitate conversations. These projects were funded through the first Pro-Parks Levy.
- » **Proposal to replace sand soccer fields.** There will be a public meeting on a proposal to replace sand soccer fields (especially #7 and #2) and address lighting issues at lower Woodland Park. The

soccer fields have major drainage issues. Funding would come from the regular park maintenance budget rather than the Pro-Parks levy.

"News and Notes" from the Zoo

Woodland Park Zoo has been busy with several events and occurrences. David Schaefer, WPZ Director of Public Affairs, presented the following items:

» Tree Removals on Phinney

EJ Hook, WPZ Maintenance and Operations Manager, spoke about the tree removals on Phinney Avenue and answered question on other horticultural topics. EJ runs the horticulture department, manages the maintenance and grounds staff, and conducts pest control, among other projects. Phinney Avenue along the WPZ is lined with cherry trees, which have a relatively short lifespan. Eight to nine years ago the WPZ planted red maples behind the cherries to eventually replace them. Because the cherry trees are diseased and are starting to affect the growth of the maples, the WPZ has tagged four old cherry trees on the northwest side of the park for the first phase of removal

Neighbors asked the following questions.

» Why was the spring Fecal Fest canceled?

EJ explained that the WPZ's Fecal Fest has been canceled for spring 2009 because clopyralid, an herbicide, was recently found in the Zoo Doo. Clopyralid is banned from use on lawns and gardens and can affect asters and legumes, among other plants. In 2000 the WPZ switched to organic hay to remove clopyralid from Zoo Doo but continued to test quarterly for the herbicide at the lowest threshold. This time the culprit was milled feed, which meets standards for agricultural uses but not home uses. The WPZ has now converted to an entirely organic milled feed, so the next batch of compost should meet the WPZ's high standards for giving to the public. However, because Zoo Doo takes eight months to compost, there will not be enough Zoo Doo in time for Fecal Fest in spring. A fall 2009 fecal fest will be planned, and the contaminated batch will be used on Zoo grounds on shrubs that are not affected by clopyralid.

» How did the rose clipping even go?

EJ responded that the annual rose clipping, a free pruning lesson from the Seattle Rose Society hosted by the WPZ on February 28, went very well. If you missed the demonstration, feel free to ask the WPZ gardeners about pruning if you see them in the Rose Garden. The WPZ's Rose Garden is in its second year of completely organic management, and the new pergola is almost completed. The Rose Garden is under the same management agreement as the rest of the WPZ, with the property owned by the City of Seattle but managed by the Zoo Society.

» Is the trail on the west side of Aurora also the WPZ's responsibility? Could it be made bike-friendly?

EJ confirmed that the WPZ prunes the trail on the west side of Aurora during its spring cleaning to open the trail up a little, but neighbors should call if they see something the Zoo missed. Over the long term, WPZ is replacing 100-150 linear feet of invasive plants with natives every year along its trails. EJ could look at making the trail on the west side of Aurora bike-friendly, but there are many safety issues to address when making a "bike trail" (consider the problems with the Green Lake trail). An informal trail that is as safe as possible without encouraging bikes would probably be best.

» **WPZ West Entry Project**

The appeal to the West Entry project was withdrawn about a month ago. The WPZ has not received the master use permit yet but expects to so soon.

» **Camp David Parking Lot**

The Camp David parking lot, near the North Entry, will be open to the public when the North Entry is also open - for weekends in April and all days in May through September. Parking will cost \$5 per day, the same as in other lots. The Camp David lot has 70 spaces and was previously used by staff. Staff will now be guaranteed a parking space only four days a week. The WPZ will put up additional fencing and lock the office trailers near the area when the lot is open to the public.

» **Boardwalk Sausage Company**

Lancer, the new food concessionaire, is in the process of converting the former Boardwalk Sausage Company into a Chowder House. Lancer will cook chowder and prepare sushi on site. The venue is located in the East Plaza near the raptor exhibit. The Chowder House should be open in early in May.

Summer Experience Plans

Katherine Steen, Zoo Experiences Supervisor, spoke about the upcoming Summer Experience. The WPZ plans special activities in summer, when more visitors attend, including people who may come only once a year. The goals are to create engaging experiences, provide learning opportunities, and encourage people to take conservation action. The Summer Experience began in 2007 with the Maasai Journey, featuring a lot of fun, a longer high season, and higher summer prices. In 2008, the Summer Experience focused on the new flamingo exhibit, frogs (supporting the 2008 Year of the Frog conservation campaign), and more fun. The WPZ has in-house staff to research what visitors are learning and acting on after visiting the WPZ, not just whether they enjoyed the zoo. Follow-up visitor surveys on the Maasai Journey found that visitors planned to take or had taken action on the conservation messages by installing water saving kits or donating to the Water Holes project. In 2008, kids signed pledges to save water and took home a tip sheet; a follow-up survey found that they actually did save water. The WPZ wants to build on these conservation successes in 2009.

The theme of the 2009 Summer Experience is sharing habitat around the world and in your backyard. Sharing habitat came out of the WPZ's mission statement and advice from a recent visitor to the WPZ. The visitor spoke about zoos and values, explaining that parents take their children to zoos to teach them values, such as sharing. The WPZ also wants to convey positive messages, not just doom and gloom. This year the WPZ will encourage visitors to take the following actions: donate to WPZ conservation partners, understand how the WPZ contributes to conservation, consume wisely, and add habitat in their homes and neighborhoods. Wise consumption includes thinking about how daily purchases affect habitat and purchasing sustainable products, such as sustainable seafood, shade-grown coffee, and FSC-certified timber (important for Asian Elephants). This year the WPZ will better integrate messaging throughout the whole zoo, but messaging will be most obvious in the penguin exhibit, addressing sustainable seafood lists and conservation partners in Punta San Juan. The WPZ is also partnering with Earth Corps to talk about their efforts in local habitat restoration and provide volunteer opportunities.

Neighbors offered the following comments and questions.

- Ref commented that this is a good opportunity to connect people to other local efforts and work with partners, such as efforts to save Puget Sound or Seattle's new campaign to increase recycling. Ref also suggested reaching out to new neighborhoods, such as New Holly and Rainier Vista, in which the WPZ could influence and build a community ethic around conservation and habitat.
 - Katherine agreed, replying that the WPZ is trying to network with local groups because this is a perfect time to connect people to opportunities in the region. For example, Earth Corps has connections with groups in lots of communities throughout the region. The WPZ is also involved an upcoming workshop at Camp Long to learn how to create and certify Backyard Habitat, partnering with the National Wildlife Federation, Seattle Audubon, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Washington Native Plant Society. The WPZ will continue to expand these opportunities. The habitat theme will also continue through 2012.
- Rob Liddell, WPZS Board Member, noted that the WPZ hopes to be a significant influence on people's actions and to become completely sustainable and carbon neutral. The WPZ Board is pushing the staff very hard to become fully sustainable in the "near century." The biggest environmental impacts are driving and heating. However, visitors to the WPZ average 3.5 people per car, which compares favorably with other zoos. In addition, the new penguin pool will be geothermally heated.
 - Tom cautioned the WPZ to consider the energy required to replace a building when analyzing ways to save energy. It can be better to think about how to use buildings differently, rather than simply replace them. Concrete in particular is carbon intensive.
 - David responded that the WPZ is working with McKinstry to do an energy audit of their facilities. They are currently looking for funding to do an energy retrofit of the 1951 Feline House. The project would cost \$3 million but have significant savings for City Light.
- Sheridan asked if the WPZ is organizing evening events, such as sleepovers for students.
 - Katherine responded that the Summer Experience just covers daytime activities, but the WPZ educate Summer Experience visitors about other events, such as concerts and school visits, and educate concert-goers about Summer Experience activities. The WPZ has found that people who attend Zoo Tunes almost never come to the zoo for a regular visit, so the WPZ has educators at the concerts to teach people about what is happening at the zoo.

David closed the conversation by adding that the WPZ is also going to try to persuade people to eat anchovies as a conservation action. Anchovies are overfished in part because they are mainly used for pig food and, consequently, not valuable. Making them a human food could raise their price, reduce overfishing, and save the penguins who also eat anchovies. This will be an interesting story to try to tell.

Zoo Tunes Proposal

At the January meeting of the Neighborhood Liaison Committee, the WPZ agreed to draft framework guidelines for Zoo Tunes concerts that list what the WPZ is already doing to limit impact and the

intended limits it can live within. At this meeting David presented the draft framework for the neighbors to discuss.

David also described developments in scheduling the 2009 concert series. He has pushed back on the schedulers to hold no more than two concerts per week. However, the WPZ has scheduled back-to-back concerts for July 1st and 2nd, and these artists would like to play until 9:00 PM. Concerts have been set for Wednesday, June 17; Wednesday, July 1; Thursday, July 2; Wednesday, July 15; Sunday, July 19; and Wednesday, August 19. Six others have yet to be scheduled.

The discussion is summarized below, with comments presented by topic.

Traffic, driving, and total attendance:

David explained that the WPZ distributes 3,800 tickets, but total attendance is likely 4,000 to 4,500 with kids that get in free with an adult. David said that there are 700 parking spaces on WPZ grounds and another couple hundred at the lower Woodland Park lot, but he does not know the total number of cars that come for concerts. Several years ago the WPZ did an extensive transportation demand management study of Zoo Tunes concerts. David will bring the researchers to an NLC meeting in a couple months to talk about the study and efforts to mitigate traffic.

- John reported that turning some residential streets into temporary one-way streets improves traffic flows, but the current system uses temporary signs that are not staffed and sometimes get moved. He noted that Zoo Tunes has a lot fewer live staff (such as police) to direct traffic than other similar events.
- Ref said that although people who drive to the concerts are generally carpooling, it doesn't really count as making an effort to reduce trips because they would be coming with their spouse and kids anyway. He noted that effectively reducing driving requires continually rewarding people for taking the actions you want them to take, such as preferential parking, a button, 10% off at the Zoo Store, a good bike situation, or other incentives. At the San Francisco Art museum, entrance staff ask all visitors how they traveled to the museum, and people who didn't drive get \$1 off admission. He reported that the former shuttle from Northgate was expensive and not successful at reducing driving to concerts. There was some ridership, but it was way below what was needed.
- Ref would also like the WPZ to encourage biking to concerts. Mark responded that the WPZ is in a bad location for biking, except from the North.
- Tom said that it would help the discussion to accurately quantify the impacts of Zoo Tunes concerts so that the WPZ and neighbors can discuss and address real impacts, not assumptions about impacts. Perhaps the WPZ could measure them this summer. Useful data include accurate counts of the number of adults, free kids, and cars that come to each concert; the average number of occupants per car; the times the first person arrives and the last person leaves; and the length of time that neighborhood streets (such as 50th) are backed up.
- Mark said that the WPZ should consider Zoo Tune's impacts in conjunction with other events and neighborhood changes. Traffic in general has increased over the years, so even though Zoo Tunes attendance hasn't changed, the concerts have more impact. The effect is similar to the new condominiums that individually have little impact but together cause a lot of traffic.

The total number and frequency of concerts

The draft guidelines from the WPZ state that it would be impractical to hold more than 12-15 concerts per year. David explained that the zoo is not prepared to pledge not to hold more than X number of concerts

per year, but that no one is thinking about holding 15. He added that Zoo Tunes is both a community resource and a revenue generator that earns the WPZ approximately \$30,000 per concert.

- John said that he is disappointed that the WPZ will not agree to limits. To him, it sounds as though the WPZ thinks that it is doing enough already and is not willing to negotiate. He noted that there is a big difference between 12 and 15 concerts.
- Tom said that he can survive back-to-back concerts, as long as they do not occur all of the time. He noted that Wallingford will be highly impacted on July 4th, two days after the back-to-back concerts, which is a lot of disruption for the neighbors and may be poor scheduling by the WPZ. In the future, people in the neighborhood will remember that they faced traffic impacts in Wallingford for 3 out of 4 days, and that Zoo Tunes concerts were part of it. He also noted that July 15 and 19 are only 4 days apart, so the WPZ should think about not scheduling the rest of the concerts too close together.
 - David responded that he agrees the WPZ needs to be sensitive about scheduling around other neighborhood events.
- Ref said that the guidelines should say that the natural limit is 10-12, but that sometimes the actual number has bumped up to 13 concerts in a year.
- Tom asked why the WPZ will not state the natural limit that they have described as a cap. He suggested the following limits: no more than 12 concerts in one year, no more than 3 in a 9-day period, no more than 4 in a 14-day period, and no more than 3 in a standard week.
- Mark said that if the WPZ doesn't want a hard limit, there either has to be some positive reward for the community or some negative incentives for the Zoo that will eventually lead to a limit.
 - David responded that the WPZ put some rewards and limits in place in 1999. The WPZ agreed to give free tickets to neighbors and to limit the number of tickets sold to 3,800 per concert.

Other actions that would mitigate impact

David asked the neighbors if there are other actions besides reducing the number of concerts that would mitigate impacts and help neighbors.

- John recommended picking one or two days of the week for concerts. Predictability is a small thing but would be helpful. For example, he needs to choose a weeknight for his daughter's swim lessons that don't ever have concerts.
 - David responded that concerts are usually Wednesdays, plus a couple of other days.
 - John responded that it is those other days that cause the problems.
- Ref noted that the UW pays police to clear the neighborhoods out after sports games quickly. He said that something similar could help with Zoo Tunes concerts, although the major disruption occurs before concerts. He suggested providing an incentive for people to come to the concerts earlier to spread out the traffic at rush hour.
 - John said that he likes the idea of hiring police to clear the neighborhood at the end of concerts. He said that they could also direct traffic in general and write parking tickets, for example for cars that block driveways.

- Mark recommended putting out sandwich boards or other signs in a five block radius around the WPZ announcing “Zoo Tunes Concert Tomorrow.” That way neighbors would know without having to consult the fliers and calendars.
- Mark said that neighbors are not against concerts, per se; rather they are against the impacts of the concerts. He suggested having incentives instead of hard limits on the number of concerts, such as being able to hold more concerts if the concerts were smaller.
- Rob said that he hears that the impact is mainly on traffic and parking, so if the WPZ could address those issues, there would be no problem for the neighbors. Rob noted that concerts also have an impact on WPZ staff, visitors, and food concessions as well. However, the Board also recognizes that concerts generate revenues and bring people to the WPZ who don’t normally visit.

Other topics

- Al asked how Zoo Tunes concerts support the WPZ and its mission, aside from bringing in revenue.
 - Rob responded that the concerts create an engaging experience for people who don’t normally come to the Zoo. Concerts give the WPZ an opportunity to encourage those folks to come to the Zoo for a regular visit. At concerts, the Masters of Ceremonies who introduce the artists also talk about the Zoo, and information is posted along the side of the concert space.
 - John said that concerts are a very high-impact way to get the WPZ’s message out. He added that concerts are peripheral to the WPZ’s mission and impact the neighbors so highly that the WPZ and neighbors must come to some reasonable agreement.
 - David responded that the concerts are a community resource, being the only affordable evening concert series in Seattle. He wouldn’t lose money on the concerts, but he would hold even if they just broke even. He agreed that the WPZ should do more conservation messaging at concerts.
- Rob asked whether noise is an issue that impacts the neighbors.
 - NLC members confirmed that they are not concerned about noise as it affects them. However, Mark noted that some people wonder about the noise impacts on the animals.
 - Rob responded that he has visited the animals during concerts and does not hear much where they are, but David reported that he has heard that some WPZ zookeepers are concerned about the impacts.

Board involvement and WPZ-neighbor negotiations

David said that he would like to discuss Zoo Tunes with the NLC as early as possible in the spring to address concerns. If there are special considerations, such as an artist’s request to play until 9:00 PM or the desire for a larger concert, he would also like to discuss that with the NLC as early as possible.

- Ref said that he would like the WPZS Board to understand the neighbors' concerns and to give the message to the staff and the schedulers that these concerns need to be considered and addressed.
 - Rob responded that the Board would like to help the neighbors, but that there are a lot of considerations around Zoo Tunes concerts. The Board hears neighbors about all the issues but doesn't want to be boxed in by a cap. He noted that David exists to convey and address these concerns, so the WPZ and neighbors can have an ongoing conversation. Rob invited neighbors to come to the Board meetings and speak during the public comment period. He said that he has heard from the NLC that the WPZ needs to address the traffic and parking impacts.
 - John responded it is not enough to have conversations or to have the NLC just listening to what the WPZ dictates. There must also be negotiations and give-and-take. Without give-and-take, the neighbors have to fight every little thing, creating a contentious environment.
 - Tom responded that with no limits on the Zoo, it's the neighbors who get boxed in. The guidelines contain promises to notify neighbors about scheduling and special consideration (such as late concerts) but do not imply the neighbors have any sort of say on the issues. Tom understands that the NLC has only an advisory capacity, but the WPZ will have to have these arguments every year without some change. Either there need to be hard limits or the neighbors (or another entity outside the WPZ) need a way to say no to some proposals.
- Ref noted that sometimes language has big impacts and that semantics are important. For example, the word "limit" is a harsh word and has created some pushback from the WPZ. Instead, neighbors and the WPZ could think about "expectations" around concerts and use language like "guidelines." If the WPZ lives under agreed-on guidelines for a while, it would build trust. He also suggested replacing the word "notify" with "have a dialogue" in the draft guidelines discussed.

Next steps

- Ref suggested that for next steps the WPZ brainstorm on the impacts Zoo Tunes and how to address them. He recommended that the WPZ bring the ideas back to the NLC, which will provide input. The WPZ should look at the transportation study for hard numbers, and then ask how to reduce those cars by 10%. The onus is on the Zoo to make changes.
 - Tom agreed with Ref that the next step is to understand the impacts and figure out ways to reduce them. He thinks that it is best to start with limits and then work towards relaxing them limits by reducing the impacts. As the WPZ reduces impacts, it could hold more concerts.
- David said that he has heard some ideas tonight that he thinks the WPZ should do, such as having active people for traffic control rather than passive signs. Some of the ideas discussed at this meeting seem very reasonable; however, David reiterated that there is a real reluctance at the WPZ to commit to a cap. He said that Zoo Tunes will be on the agenda for the next NLC meeting and that he will bring someone who knows about traffic impacts.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Neighborhood Liaison Committee will be on Thursday, May 14, 2009 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. Upcoming NLC meetings in 2009 will be held on the following dates:

- 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.