

City of Mercer Island

OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST BOARD

Thursday · January 16 · 2020
Regular Meeting Agenda

6:00 pm Call to Order & Roll Call

6:05 pm Minutes of November 21, 2019 Meeting

6:10pm Public Appearances

6:15 pm Regular Business

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1. Eagle Scout Recognition | Marie Bender (10 min) |
| 2. Draft 2019 Annual Report & 2020 Work Plan | Kim Frappier & Alaine Sommargren (20 min) |
| 3. Trails and roots update | Alaine Sommargren (10 min) |
| 4. Quadrant Reports | Trustees (5 min) |
| 5. Next meeting: March 19, 2020 | Chair (5 min) |

7:15 pm Adjournment (estimated)

BOARD MEMBERS

Marie Bender, *Chair*
Thomas Hildebrandt, *Vice Chair*
Craig Olson, *Secretary*
Carol Lynn Berseth
Geraldine Poor
TBA, *Council Liaison*
Vacant position

STAFF

Ryan Daly, *Interim Parks and Recreation Director*
Alaine Sommargren, *Interim Parks Operations Manager*
Kim Frappier, *Natural Resources Specialist*





OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST BOARD MEETING MINUTES NOVEMBER 21, 2019

Call to Order:

Chair Bender called the meeting to order at 6:16 PM.

Roll Call:

Chair Marie Bender, Vice Chair Thomas Hildebrandt, Secretary Craig Olson, Trustee Carol Lynn Berseth, and Trustee Geraldine Poor. Council Liaison David Wisenteiner was absent.

Staff present were Ryan Daly, Interim Parks and Recreation Director, Alaine Sommargren, Interim Parks Operations Manager, and Kim Frappier, Natural Resources Specialist.

Minutes:

Trustee Poor motioned and Trustee Berseth seconded to approve the September minutes.

Motion passed: 5-0.

Public Appearances:

Jenny Harrington Lill and Michael Lill
4821 88th PI SE, Mercer Island, WA 98040

Presented request to install bench in honor of their son, Ewan Lill, in Pioneer Park NW.

Amy Richter
4448 Ferncroft Road, Mercer Island 98040
Spoke in support of the memorial bench for Ewan Lill.

Ze'ev Young
Spoke about the need for management of roots intruding into the trails of Pioneer SE. Mr. Young also spoke of his positive experience working with Parks and Recreation staff to address these concerns.

Regular Business:

(I) Bench Request

Trustees discussed whether to install the memorial bench for Ewan Lill at the southwest corner of Pioneer NW. The suggested location is not one of the Parks Department's pre-approved bench sites. Staff provided information regarding the responsibilities for installation, materials, and upkeep of the bench.

Trustee Poor moved to approve the bench installation location as requested by Jenny and Michael Lill. Trustee Berseth seconded.

Motion passed: 5-0

(II) Roots in Accessible Trails

Interim Parks Operations Manager Sommargren presented background information on accessible trail

requirements, noting that this issue is not addressed in the Pioneer Park Master Plan. She reported that Ze'ev Young, community member, met with Andrew Prince, the Parks Trails and Urban Forestry Specialist, to assess the roots growing up into the trail and potential tree impacts. She also reviewed options available to address in-trail root intrusions which include spray paint roots (so they are more visible), cut or grind roots, add gravel to regrade trail, or re-route trail.

Trustees discussed the pros and cons of different solutions. Interim Park Operations Manager Sommargren explained that there were only two root intrusions connected to live trees. The plan of action will be as follows: (1) Remove (or grind down) roots associated with dead trees, (2) Add additional gravel and rocks to create a ramp over the live-root intrusions to protect the health of the trees. Interim Park Operations Manager Sommargren will work with Trails Specialist Prince to implement these first steps and report back to the Trust Board.

(III) 2020 Work Plan Brainstorm

Interim Parks Operations Manager Sommargren explained the process of developing the 2020 Work Plan. She inquired about adding an Eagle Scout recognition for Elliott Hendrickson to the January meeting. Secretary Olson will create a recognition and thank you letter to Elliott from the Trust. Work plan items added include:

January	Eagle Scout recognition
March	Parking encroachment along 84 th Avenue SE; sword fern decline
July	PROS Plan; plant selection considerations; social trail decommission update
September	Permanent restroom facility

(IV) Quadrant Reports

NW Quadrant: Trustee Berseth

Trustees inquired about herbicide treatments and tree removals. Staff reported on the invasive tree treatments and tree assessment projects.

NE Quadrant: Trustee Poor and Trustee Bender

Trustees reported seeing a lot of mud on trails.

SE Quadrant: Secretary Hildebrandt and Trustee Olson

Trustee Poor reported that she witnessed dogs chasing wildlife in the SE Quadrant. Overall quadrant looks good.

(V) Other business

Secretary Hildebrandt reported that there has not been progress for the renovation of the Hatheway bench.

(VI) Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for January 16, 2020.

Adjournment: 7:28 PM

Marie Bender, Chair

Attest:

Kim Frappier, Scribe

From: Amy Babson Richter
To: Diane Mortenson
Subject: Letter in support of bench for Ewan Lill in Pioneer Park
Date: Saturday, November 16, 2019 1:53:14 AM

Dear Open Space Conservancy Trust Members, (c/o Diane Mortenson)

Thank you for your service to our open spaces and to our community. In preparation for your November 21st Open Space Conservancy Trust Board meeting, I am writing to request your support for having a bench placed in honor of Ewan Lill in Pioneer Park in the NW Quadrant, near the corner of 84th Ave SE and SE 68th St.

Ewan was deeply loved by many of us in the Mercer Island community. He was kind, loving and courageous with the brightest spirit you could ever imagine. Ewan and his family spent many hours in Pioneer Park walking together, spending time with friends and connecting with nature. As people who visit Pioneer Park frequently to do the same types of things that Ewan did when he visited there, we can think of no better place to honor his memory than in this special place.

Often when our family walks in Pioneer Park, we pause at existing benches, and read the loving memorials to individuals in which the benches are dedicated. It makes us love Pioneer Park even more knowing how much happiness it has given to generations of individuals who have spent time there. Placing a bench in Ewan's honor would bring tremendous joy to those of us who loved Ewan...to know that he is still with us, amongst us, and now part of our connection to this beautiful open space within Pioneer Park.

I understand the need to be thoughtful when considering new benches. It's a critical responsibility in order to keep our parks uncluttered and beautiful. This particular section of the park, however, seems to be flat, open and located at an intersection that is often considered an informal meeting place when waiting for friends. Having a bench for Ewan in this particular spot seems practical, increasing the likelihood that it will be utilized as a natural and relevant addition to the park. The Board's approval of this bench, would be a beautiful and lasting legacy for Ewan to share with his community and a meaningful way for his community to remember him.

Thank you for your kind consideration,

The Richter Family (Amy, George, Hans and Jack)
4448 Ferncroft Road, Mercer Island

Dear Open Space Conservatory^{ancy} Trust Board,

We would like to thank you for reviewing and considering our request for the addition of a bench in memory of our son, Ewan Lill, in Pioneer Park's NW Quadrant. We would also like to thank Mercer Island's Parks and Recreation Department. Community Engagement & Program Manager Diane Mortenson, has worked tirelessly with us and fielded many letters regarding Ewan's bench. Ryan Daly and Diane^{who} were very kind to meet us at the proposed site on Ewan's 10th birthday, Sept. 22, 2019, to discuss our vision. We would also like to thank the Park Operations Manager and tree expert, Alaine Sommargren, who has expressed her support of this proposal.

When Ewan was dying, I asked him what his favorite type of tree was. He said, "Maple"

I was surprised by this answer because three winters ago, a maple tree fell through the dining room ceiling of our Mercer Island Home. We spent two month's living out of the Residence Inn in Bellevue, while our house was restored.

When Alaine shared that the proposed location is under a maple tree, everything^{made} make sense to me. It's the location where Ewan would want us to remember him. It is where his sister's IMS cross country team runs by every practice. It is where, for many years, I have met my friends on our morning walks with our dogs.

Ewan loved this location on MI. Our first year, we went letterboxing. Subsequent years. We walked the park when it was aglow with jack-o-lanterns. It is a special place to Ewan, our family and to many of his friends.

Today, especially on National Grieving Child Day, please consider our request for a bench for our beloved son and cherish Mercer Island resident.

^{and Letterboxing Recognition}
Sincerely,
Jenny Harrington Lill



**CITY OF MERCER ISLAND
OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST BOARD
STAFF REPORT**

Action Item No. 2

January 16, 2020

Description:	Annual Report to City Council
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Exhibits:	1. Draft 2019 Annual Report
	2. Draft 2020 Work Plan

BACKGROUND

The ordinance that established the Open Space Conservancy Trust requires that the Trust report to City Council each year on its activities of the past year and the condition of the Trust properties.

PROCESS

Parks and Recreation staff have drafted a report from 2019 meeting minutes. The Trustees may discuss the report and suggest changes at the January meeting. Staff will finalize the report in conjunction with the Chair. The report will be presented to the City Council on the Consent Calendar at the March 3, 2020 meeting. The report will also include the 2020 Work Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Discuss draft report and work plan, and suggest additions or edits.



TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS AND ELECTIONS

Councilmember Bruce Bassett served as the Council Liaison through January 2019. Councilmember David Wisenteiner took this position beginning in March 2019. Chair Rory Westberg ended his service on the Board in May.

The annual election of officers took place at the July meeting. Trustee Bender was elected as Chair, Trustee Hildebrandt was elected as Vice Chair, and Trustee Olson was elected as Secretary.

MERCER ISLAND PARKS AND RECREATION, NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM

The Natural Resources program is tasked with implementing the Pioneer Park Forest Health Plan as well as all trail building and maintenance on Trust properties. Natural Resources Staff include:

Alaine Sommargren, Interim Parks Operations Manager
 Kim Frappier, Natural Resources Specialist
 Andrew Prince, Trails and Urban Forestry Specialist

FOREST HEALTH AND MANAGEMENT

The Natural Resources program continues to implement the recommendations outlined in the Pioneer Park Forest Health Plan (FHP) adopted in 2008. Restoration efforts in the park are overall on track, particularly regarding invasive tree treatments and ivy ring creation. During the 2019-2020 Biennium, restoration work will focus on maintenance of existing projects and canopy retention activities, so there were no large-scale plantings installed in 2019 by professional contractors. Some area units required additional planting maintenance in addition to what is called for in the FHP benchmarks. This was due to an increase in summer drought conditions which contributed to high plant mortality. In 2019, the program prioritized maintenance treatment of invasive trees such as English holly and cherry laurel.

Between 2009 and 2014, the Open Space program was able to get ahead of the schedule set out in the 2008 FHS due to a favorable bidding climate and lower contracting costs. Beginning in 2015, restoration costs increased significantly. Natural Resources staff continue to advance restoration priorities while addressing challenges and using available resources as efficiently as possible. The following outlines actual progress made to date versus proposed benchmarks outlined in the 2008 FHP:

Table 1. Forest Health Plan Cumulative Progress in Pioneer Park, 2009-2018

Restoration Task	Proposed (acres)	Actual (acres)
Invasive tree treatment	93	105
Invasive tree treatment maintenance	75	34
Ivy ring creation	65	77
Tree planting	79	70
<i>Replanting due to high mortality</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>14</i>
Plant maintenance (1 year post-planting)	72	66
<i>Additional plant maintenance due to site conditions</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>70</i>

Forest Health Survey 10-year data collection

The Pioneer Park Forest Health Plan specified that data be recollected every ten years, to track changes in ecological health. In summer 2018, the City hired two field technicians to collect vegetation data in the plots established for the 2008 Pioneer Park Forest Health Survey. Due to staffing changes and constraints in 2019, staff were unable to complete analysis and provide a report to the Trust. Staff expect to move forward with analysis in 2020.

2019 Accomplishments

In 2019, approximately 34 acres of Trust properties - Pioneer Park and Engstrom Open Space - received restoration work from combined efforts of the Natural Resources seasonal crew, professional contractors, and volunteers.

Professional contractors

Restoration Task	Pioneer Park	Engstrom Open Space
3 rd Year Invasive removal	n/a	3.2 acres
Invasive removal maintenance	8.2 acres	n/a
Ivy rings	5.4 acres	1.7 acres
Planting maintenance	10.4 acres	1.7 acres
Watering	700 plants on 5.8 acres (495 trees/ 205 shrubs)	n/a

Volunteers

Mercer Island Parks and Recreation contracts with EarthCorps to lead volunteer stewardship events at Pioneer Park as well as conduct outreach in the community to engage and educate Mercer Island residents about forest restoration. Most of EarthCorps' work this year focused on maintenance of restoration areas along SE 68th and Island Crest Way in the NW quadrant, and planting.

- Events 7
- Volunteers 115 adults; 45 youth
- Volunteer hours 611 hours
- Maintenance invasive removal 1.4 acres
- Planting 286 total plants (33 trees/ 253 shrubs)

Schools and companies engaged:

Microsoft
Farmers Life Insurance
Seahawks First and Goal
Seattle PWC Green Team

Mercer Island High School
Seattle Central College
Kennedy Catholic
Interlake High School
Holy Names Academy

Natural Resources Seasonal Staff

In 2019, the Natural Resources seasonal crew consisted of three field staff from April through September. Under the direction of the Natural Resources Specialist and the Trails Specialist, the crew conducted noxious weed monitoring, mapping and treatments, maintained plantings, performed invasive tree treatments on English holly and cherry laurel, and trail maintenance activities.

LETTERBOXING PROGRAM

The Letterboxing program kicked off on National Trails Day on June 1st in Pioneer Park. New and seasoned letterboxing families in attendance learned about letterboxing, made their own stamps, learned about and participated in trail maintenance/trimming, and began their letterboxing adventure. The program attracted over 730 participants throughout the summer. The 2019 Letterboxing Committee consisted of Elizabeth Cross-Nichol and Kim Borden. Special thanks to Mercer Island Girl Scout Troop #46803 who helped rewrite and create new clues.

The OSCT Board held a ceremony at City Hall on November 21st to recognize children who turned in their completed clue books. Each participant received a certificate of completion, their completed clue book, and an outdoor exploration kit. Snacks and refreshments were provided as part of the celebration.

LEASH POLICY EDUCATION EFFORTS

In 2019, Parks and Recreation Natural Resources staff continued to publish and distribute the brochure “Dog Owner’s Guide to Mercer Island Parks” which provides park users with information about voice/signal control and location of off-leash versus on-leash parks. The brochure is distributed at the Pioneer Park kiosk as well as park kiosks across the City and the Mercer Island Community and Events Center.

TRAILS

The Natural Resources team continued to manage trails for safety and access in 2019. Trails were brushed a minimum of two times during the growing season with an emphasis on pruning the larger woody plants. Fall leaf drop was blown off major trails to prevent organic muddy material from building up on trails.

More substantial trail tread improvements were also completed in 2019. The Fire Station trail in the NW quadrant received complete resurfacing to eliminate puddling and provide a more stable walking surface. Approximately 100 tons of crushed gravel were spread, graded, and compacted by Parks Maintenance and Natural Resources staff.

URBAN FORESTRY

Tree risk mitigation is the focus of our urban forestry efforts in Pioneer Park. Certified staff arborists make decisions each year to remove dead, dying, or structurally defective trees to reduce the risk of trees falling on people, property, or causing interference with utility lines or roadways. It is our preference to retain trees through corrective pruning or as wildlife snags when possible, but tree removals are occasionally necessary. In the case of whole tree removals, the wood from the tree on site as habitat and so its decomposition may improve the soil.

This year, the City contracted the removal of five trees for risk mitigation, and City staff removed six additional trees. Dead and dying trees continue to make up the majority of tree removal work. Staff continued to monitor park boundaries for tree risk.



**MERCER ISLAND
OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST
2020 Work Plan**

January 16
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual Report to Council: The Trust is required in its by-laws to report to City Council each year on the status of Trust properties.• Work Plan: The Trust develops a list of topics that it intends to address during the year (this document). This work plan is submitted to City Council with the Annual Report as a courtesy.• Quadrant Reports (ongoing item): Trustees will report on the condition of certain quadrants at Trust board meetings.• Eagle Project recognition: The Trust will recognize Eagle projects that have benefitted Trust Properties.• Trails and roots discussion continued:
March 19
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community event participation (ongoing item): The Trust board will continue to sponsor and support an annual Letterboxing program for youth on Mercer Island.• Parking on 84th Ave SE: The Trust will discuss possible changes to parking on the west side of the NW Quadrant.• Sword fern decline report: Staff will update the Trust on current status and research about sword fern decline in the Puget Sound region.• PROS Plan: Staff will update the Trust on PROS Plan status.
May 21
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restoration Work Plan: City staff report to the Trust its planned restoration activities in the spring of each year, and recap work completed in the previous year.• Summer Trail Work Plan: City staff report to the Trust its intended maintenance activities in the spring of each year, and recap work completed in the previous year.• Off-leash dogs: The Trust will evaluate success of education measures over the past year and discuss possible changes.
July 16
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Herbicide application report: The Trust adopted an herbicide use protocol that requires City staff to report on the use of herbicides on Trust properties each year.• Election of Officers: The Trust is required by its bylaws to elect officers at its July meeting each year.• Plant selection: Staff will report on current considerations for plant selection in restoration work on Trust properties.• PROS Plan (tentative): Staff will update the Trust on PROS Plan status.• Social trail decommission report: Staff will provide update on status of recently decommissioned social trails on Trust properties.
September 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eagle Project recognition: The Trust will recognize Eagle projects that have benefitted Trust Properties.• Permanent restroom facility: The Trust will discuss potential options for the restroom facility at Pioneer Park.
November 19
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letterboxing recognition: The Trust will recognize participants in the 2020 Letterboxing program.

Note: The listing of an item under a particular month means that the item will be introduced at that meeting. There will be follow-up discussions and decisions at subsequent meetings as directed by the Chair.