



OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST SPECIAL VIDEO MEETING

Thursday, January 20, 2022 at 5:00 PM

BOARD MEMBERS:

Chair Thomas Hildebrandt
Vice Chair Carol Lynn Berseth
Secretary Geraldine Poor
Board Members: Lisa Anderl, Marie Bender,
Hillary Ethe, and Craig Olson

LOCATION & CONTACT

Mercer Island City Hall – Zoom Meeting
9611 SE 36th Street | Mercer Island, WA 98040
Phone: 206.275.7706 | www.mercerisland.gov

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, those requiring accommodation for meetings should notify the Staff Liaison at least 24 hours prior to the meeting at 206.275.7706.

Registering to Speak: Individuals wishing to speak live during Appearances will need to register their request with staff at 206.275.7793 or email andrea.larson@mercerisland.gov and leave a message before 4 PM on the day of the meeting. Please reference "Appearances" on your correspondence. Each speaker will be allowed three (3) minutes to speak.

Join by Telephone at 5:00 PM: To listen to the meeting, or speak under appearances, via telephone, please call **253.215.8782** and enter Webinar ID **886 1166 3851** and Password **691590** when prompted.

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- 1) Click [this link](#)
- 2) If the Zoom app is not installed on your computer, you will be prompted to download it.
- 3) If prompted for Webinar ID, enter **886 1166 3851**; Enter Password **691590**

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL, 5 PM

PUBLIC APPEARANCES

REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Approval of Minutes for the November 18, 2021 Meeting
2. Annual Report to Council
Recommended Action: Discuss draft 2021 Annual Report
3. Trail network expansion on Trust properties

Recommended Action: Evaluate Trust's interest in pursuing topic at future meeting

OTHER BUSINESS

4. [Quadrant](#) Reports
5. [Next](#) Scheduled Meeting – April 21, 2022

ADJOURNMENT



OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST BOARD MEETING MINUTES November 18, 2021

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Hildebrandt called the meeting to order at 5:04 PM

Chair Thomas Hildebrandt, Vice Chair Carol Lynn Berseth, Secretary Geraldine Poor, and Trustees Marie Bender, Hillary Ethe, Craig Olson, participated remotely using a video teleconferencing platform by Zoom.

Staff participating remotely included: Deputy Public Works Director Alaine Sommargren, Parks Operations Manager Sam Harb, Natural Resources Project Manager Lizzy Stone, Attorney Eileen Keiffer, Madrona Law Group

PUBLIC APPEARANCES:

No public appearances

REGULAR BUSINESS:

1. Approve Minutes of the September 23rd, 2021, Meeting

Corrections:

Secretary Poor - Add Rita Moore to public appearances for Sept 23, 2021 meeting

Chair Hildebrandt - Chair Hildebrandt called the meeting to order. Deb Estrada should be changed to Andrea Larson

Alaine Sommargren - Staff participating remotely also included Merrill Thomas-Schadt, Recreation and Operations Coordinator, Lizzy Stone's job title was incorrectly listed as Natural Resources Specialist.

Motion by Hildebrandt; seconded by Bender to:

Approve the Minutes of the September 23rd meeting, as amended.

PASSED: 6-0

FOR: (Bender, Berseth, Ethe, Hildebrandt, Olson, and Poor)

2. Code of Ethics Training and Public Records Training (combined into one presentation)

Eileen Keiffer from Madrona Law Group presented on Ethics for City of Mercer Island Officials. This presentation highlighted ethics rules in the Mercer Island City Code, as well as Revised Code of Washington laws pertaining to City Council, City Boards and Commissions and other council appointed task groups or committees. Other discussion included prohibited conduct such as conflicts of interest, improper use of city staff time or property and gifts or favors. Next, Eileen Keiffer presented on public records pertaining to city business, communications, emails, and cell phones.

3. Plant Selection for Restoration

Lizzy Stone, Natural Resource Project Manager, presented on plants to be installed at Pioneer Park, and discussed restoration planting considerations including current conditions, restoration objectives, plant palette, and plant sourcing.

4. 2022 Work Plan Draft

Alaine Sommargren, Deputy Public Works Director, outlined the 2022 Work Plan. Trustees asked staff for clarification on permanent restroom facility and Fire Management Plan items. Trustees requested that staff add several new items to the work plan: addition of new trails to Trust properties, evaluation of the 84th Ave parking project, parking at NE and SE quadrants, and an update on the Engstrom title transfer to the Trust.

OTHER BUSINESS

Quadrant Reports

Northwest quadrant - Note about number of trees that came down in storm, and commendation of staff's speed in clearing trails.

Southeast quadrant - Nothing to report.

Northeast quadrant - Paths looked clear, crew's extensive work is apparent; note about ivy starting to climb up the big leaf maples in the ravine.

PROS Plan Update (Trustee Bender, liaison to the Parks and Recreation Commission)

Trustee Bender recounted discussion items from the previous Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, including impermeable surfaces, mountain biking in Upper Luther Burbank park and implications for Pioneer Park, and consolidating open spaces into a single organization.

Trustee Bender also mentioned recent social media posts about coyotes. Deputy Director Sommargren reported on the recent public meeting by USDA staff and encouraged the public to report coyote issues to official city channels such as the police non-emergency line.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for January 20th, 2022, at 5:00 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Open Space Conservancy Trust, the meeting was adjourned at 7:13 PM

Thomas Hildebrandt, OSCT Chair

Attest:

Andrea Larson, City Clerk



**OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY TRUST
STAFF REPORT**

**Item 2
January 20, 2022
Regular Business**

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION

TITLE:	Draft 2021 Annual Report & 2022 Work Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Discuss draft report and suggest additions or edits	

STAFF:	Lizzy Stone, Natural Resources Project Manager Alaine Sommargren, Public Works Deputy Director
COUNCIL LIAISON:	Lisa Anderl
EXHIBITS:	1. Draft Open Space Conservancy Trust 2021 Annual Report 2. 2022 Work Plan

SUMMARY

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

Natural Resources staff have drafted a report based on the 2021 meeting minutes, Natural Resources work accomplishments, and progress on the 2008 Forest Health Plan. 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 1, 2022 meeting. The report will also include the Open Space Conservancy Trust’s 2022 Work Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Discuss draft 2021 Annual Report.



TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS AND ELECTIONS

In 2021, the Open Space Conservancy Trust held meetings in January, March, July, September, and November. Meetings were held online via Zoom in order to minimize risk of COVID-19 exposure. The annual election of officers took place at the July meeting. Trustee Thomas Hildebrandt was elected as Chair, Trustee Carol Lynn Berseth was elected Vice Chair, and Trustee Geraldine Poor was elected Secretary.

MERCER ISLAND PARKS AND RECREATION, NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM

The Natural Resources program is tasked with managing forest restoration, tree risk mitigation, and trail construction and maintenance on Trust properties. The program is staffed by two three-quarter time employees and supervised by the Parks Operations Manager. Additionally, the program hires a seasonal trails and restoration crew, consisting of three-four staff for 6 months. In 2021, a staff transition led to a vacancy in the Natural Resource Project Manager position from late March through June. During this time, other members of the team fulfilled the urgent tasks associated with the role. At the end of 2021, program staff included:

- Sam Harb, Parks Operations Manager
- Lizzy Stone, Natural Resource Project Manager
- Andrew Prince, Trails and Urban Forestry Specialist

FOREST HEALTH AND MANAGEMENT

Background

Forest management on Trust properties is directed by the Open Space Vegetation Management Plan 10-Year Evaluation and Update, the Pioneer Park Forest Management Plan adopted in 2003, and recommendations outlined in the 2008 Pioneer Park Forest Health Survey. These plans emphasize the importance of protecting existing tree canopy and maintaining a resilient forest ecosystem by controlling invasive species and planting native species. Activities outlined in the plans include invasive tree treatment, ivy ring creation, ground ivy and herbaceous weed management, targeted maintenance around newly installed plants, and planting native trees and shrubs.

2021 Accomplishments

In 2021, restoration tasks were performed on 31.5 acres of Trust properties. Work was performed by professional contractors and seasonal field staff. Due to staff transitions, increased local demand for restoration contractors, and contractor workforce limitations, bidding for many restoration contracts was delayed and/or postponed until 2022. Re-bidding this work in the second half of the biennium will allow for early season work to be completed more effectively and program funds to be used more efficiently. The following is a summary of 2021 accomplishments:

Professional contractors

Restoration Task	Pioneer Park	Engstrom Open Space
Invasive removal maintenance	3.3 acres	3.2 acres
Invasive tree treatment maintenance	2.4 acres	n/a
Ivy rings	2.3 acres	3.6 acres

Tree and shrub installation | (335 trees/ 165 shrubs) | n/a

Volunteers

Historically the City of Mercer Island has contracted with EarthCorps and Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust to lead community engagement and volunteer stewardship events at Pioneer Park and other sites throughout the City. In 2021, these partners significantly downsized their volunteer management services as a result of changing COVID-19 safety protocols and budget challenges related to the pandemic. As a result, there were no volunteer events on Trust properties in 2021. The City is working with partners and internal program staff to re-think the volunteer program, with the goal of providing regular engagement, education, and volunteer opportunities for the Mercer Island community in 2022 and beyond.

Seasonal Trails and Restoration Crew

In 2021, the seasonal Trails and Restoration Crew consisted of three crewmembers from April through September. The crew conducted planting maintenance on 12.7 acres in Pioneer Park, managed invasive weeds along trails, watered recent plantings, and conducted noxious weed monitoring, mapping and treatments throughout Trust properties.

Forest Health Plan Progress

The Natural Resources program implements the management recommendations and benchmarks outlined in the Forest Health Plan. The benchmarks serve as a guide to managing forest health on Trust Properties. Between 2009 and 2014, the Natural Resources program was able to get ahead of schedule due to a favorable bidding climate and lower contracting costs. Beginning in 2015, the regional demand for qualified restoration contractors increased and restoration costs increased significantly. Implementation of the Forest Health Plan has slowed during the last two biennia, but Natural Resources staff continue to advance restoration priorities while addressing challenges and making effective use of available resources. Forest Health Plan timelines propose starting comprehensive ground ivy and invasive weed management in 2021. Challenges with bidding in 2021 delayed the start of this work until the second half of the biennium. In order to stay consistent with the Forest Health Plan’s proposed timeline, bidding in 2022 will include comprehensive removal for both 2021 and 2022 projected areas.

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, 2009-2021

Restoration Task	Proposed (acres)	Actual (acres)
Invasive tree treatment and maintenance*	200	217
Ivy ring creation and maintenance*	205	119
Tree planting	93	75
Plant maintenance (1 year post-planting + additional depending on site conditions)	89	81
Ground ivy and herbaceous invasive weed management	15.5	0

* Invasive tree treatment and ivy rings require a first round of treatment, followed by additional maintenance treatments as weeds grow back. Acreage listed shows both first and second round treatments combined.

LETTERBOXING PROGRAM

The Letterboxing Program is a collaborative effort between Parks and Recreation staff, OSCT Board Members, and

community volunteers. Due to COVID-19 related challenges, the Letterboxing Program was paused in 2020 and 2021.

LEASH POLICY EDUCATION EFFORTS

Leash policy education efforts were paused in 2021 due to Parks Maintenance staffing shortages and transitions. The program will be picked up again in 2022 with the distribution of educational brochures and educational posts on the City's website and social media channels.

TRAILS

In 2021, the Natural Resources team was able to catch up on trail maintenance work on Trust properties that was delayed by the loss of the seasonal crew in 2020. One of the larger projects was the complete resurfacing of the Perimeter Trail in the SE quadrant, adjacent to Island Crest Way, and several sections of interior trails in the NW quadrant. Approximately 150 tons of gravel were applied on 1,800 feet of trail. The gravel was then graded and compacted, eliminating low, muddy areas in the trail.

Stair tread repairs and regular trail brushing continued as normal, with special attention paid to pruning fast-growing hazelnut branches in the NW quadrant.

URBAN FORESTRY

Tree risk mitigation continues to be a primary focus of urban forestry efforts in Pioneer Park. Certified staff arborists make recommendations each year to remove dead, dying, or structurally defective trees to reduce the risk of trees failing and causing injury, property damage, or interference with utility lines or roadways. Trees are retained 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 is left to decompose on site as habitat and to improve soil conditions. Dead and dying trees continue to make up the majority of tree removal work. In 2021, eight trees were removed from Trust properties to reduce risk of failure. Staff continued to monitor park boundaries regularly for trees in need of pruning or removal.



Mercer Island Open Space Conservancy Trust

2022 Work Plan

Meeting Date	Agenda Item
January 20	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.
	Trail network expansion: Gauge Trust’s interest in expansion of Pioneer Park/Engstrom OS trail system.
	Quadrant Reports (ongoing item): Trustees will report on observations of each quadrant at Trust board meetings.
April 21	Restoration Work Plan: City staff report to the Trust its planned restoration activities, and recap work completed in the previous year.
	Letterboxing program: The Trust will reach out to letterboxing volunteers about the potential to launch the program.
	Fire Management Plan amendments: The Trust will consider proposed revisions to the plan. Trail Work Plan: City staff report to the Trust on its intended maintenance activities for the year, and recap work completed in the previous year. This report includes status of recently decommissioned social trails on Trust properties.
July 21	Election of Officers: The Trust is required by its bylaws to elect officers at its July meeting each year.
	Engstrom title transfer: Staff will provide an update on the status of the Engstrom property title.
	Permanent restroom facility: The Trust will discuss potential options for the restroom facility at Pioneer Park.
October 20	Herbicide application report: City staff will report on the use of herbicides on Trust properties each year, in accordance with the Herbicide Use Protocol.
	84th Ave Parking Project: Staff will provide an update on successes/challenges of the parking exclusion measures.
	Eagle Project recognition: The Trust will recognize Eagle projects that have benefitted Trust Properties.

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