

Sehome Hill Arboretum Board of Governors Meeting Minutes

September 21, 2023

1. Meeting called to order at 4:00 pm. John Tuxill, Joan Drinkwin, Kendra Bradford, Jenna Kelling, Janet Ott, Nicole Oliver, Steve Hollenhorst and Wayne Galloway III present. David Engebretsen, Jr., attending as WWU staff. Robin Thomas attending as a member of the public.

2. Land Acknowledgement:

a. John T. read the Board's land acknowledgment.

3. Agenda Updates:

a. Joan D. requested to discuss signage in the Arboretum.

4. Minutes from June meeting approved with a motion from Steve H., seconded by Joan D. The motion passed unanimously.

Joan D. requested that informational documents shared during Board meetings be attached to the minutes. John T. agreed and stated he would plan to do so starting with the minutes for this meeting.

5. Existing Business:

- **Board Members:** John T. welcomed new student Board member Jenna Kelling to the Board. He also relayed that Grace Wang has stepped down from SHABOG but has offered to stay on until her Board position is filled. Grace has circulated an announcement of the position vacancy already and other WWU Board members are encouraged to help recruit potential candidates.
- **Meeting logistics:** Steve H. and Wayne G. verified that this month's meeting space at the WWU Physical Plant will be available for future Board meetings as well. Nicole O. had a question about whether the room is ADA accessible, and Wayne confirmed that it is.
- **House of Healing Project update:**
 - a. Nicole O. shared that the House of Healing building plans are now at the fine-tuning stage, with details on utility access, building alignments, and other site-specific factors being worked out. WWU produced a plan that has been submitted for pre-application with the City Planning Department, and the Longhouse Steering Committee recently met on-site for a discussion of the layout and alignment, complete with a blessing ceremony. Nicole confirmed the walking trail that currently bisects the meadow will be re-routed to the North side of the project site, and will continue to serve its current purpose as a connector between the main Arboretum entrance and Bill McDonald Parkway near Sehome High

School. The current parking area at the Arboretum entrance will be redeveloped (including paving and adding a sidewalk and rain gardens to handle stormwater runoff) and managed by WWU rather than the City, which will minimize the amount of new parking that will have to be accommodated on the Longhouse site. The grounds of the Longhouse will include a rain garden, a cultural food sovereignty garden, an outdoor kitchen and fish pit, a gathering circle, a ceremony and dance area, a healing traditions and teaching garden, and a serene forest gathering circle, a service entrance to the Longhouse, and ADA parking. WWU will lease the site from the City and be responsible for managing and operating the facility, and the City will retain ownership of the underlying land. The City will contribute approximately \$500,000 to help cover the cost of utility and road improvements required to serve the site. Additionally, City Parks will be responsible for re-routing the trail, which will not be part of the costs of the project itself. Nicole emphasized that maintaining the heavily used trail at the site was a priority for the City. The current plan will ensure that the large trees along the edge of the site will be retained, and Steve H. added that the path alignment will conform to the elder community's wishes for maximizing the private, secluded nature of the Longhouse grounds. Nicole O. stated that the most significant change is that the Arboretum entrance parking will be managed by WWU and, like most other University parking, will no longer be free. However currently during weekday hours most of the parking is taken up by WWU students and employees anyway, thus the functional value of the parking may not change that much. The road at the Arboretum entrance will be upgraded to a 3-quarters standard.

- b. Joan D. asked about the sequencing of construction and whether the current trail will be relocated first and remain accessible during the site work. Nicole O. was not entirely sure but expected that likely there would be some periods when the trail would be closed during active construction. Kendra B. pointed out that there are additional trails above and below the site that similarly provide access to Bill McDonald Parkway, and that could be highlighted as alternative options for foot traffic.
- c. John T. asked for more details on the process for shifting the re-developed entrance Arboretum entrance parking lot from free (City) to paid (WWU). Nicole O. replied it is similar to when City adds meters to parking over time as part of improvements. Steve H. added that WWU parking revenue is being counted on to bring in funds (~ \$350,000) to help pay for the Longhouse project and improvement of the parking area. But unlike other parking lots on campus, it will still be made available to the public. John T. also asked whether the rain garden adjacent to the parking area would be a University project. Steve H. confirmed that it would be, and would conform to City standards. John T. expressed it would be great to have the Board involved in reviewing the species of plants that are incorporated into the rain garden since it is a prominent entry point to the Arboretum itself. Nicole O. agreed and expressed an interest in identifying key moments for Board input into the overall House of Healing project since the Board is going to have an official regulatory design review role.
- d. Kendra B. also shared a communication from Longhouse Steering Committee member Sharon Montgomery. She indicated the project is largely on track in terms of budget and timeline. The Committee is working with the contractors and design team to reduce the height of the building, and the expectation is that construction could still start by next April and be completed by Fall 2025. Nicole O. added that the Arboretum's Interlocal Agreement

will need to be modified and updated to reflect the Longhouse development, and there would also likely be a separate management and operations agreement to clarify public access and other expectations consistent with a University facility being located within a public park.

- **WWU Arboretum website:** John T. summarized progress made by the Board over the summer in reviewing the draft WWU website materials. He discussed how some sections of the Website that have been reviewed may be ready to go public relatively soon, while recognizing that other sections, such as the human history of Sehome Hill, will likely take longer and involve substantial information gathering as well as rewriting. Joan D. agreed and felt that the 'How to Get Involved' section and the Arboretum map were areas that could be reviewed and revised relatively rapidly. David Engebretson, Jr. confirmed in response to Board members questions that the draft website could be configured with a similar design and style as the University website as a whole. John T. suggested that once David E. had a chance to incorporate the draft website revisions already made by the Board, such as to the Plants, Geology, and Arboretum Rules and Map sections, then Board members could review those sections and provide additional feedback at the October meeting. Kendra B. agreed but suggested that the Board should decide now on the desired website style and design. Board members agreed by consensus to have the draft website follow the WWU style and design, with Wayne G. pointing out that would be consistent with the City Arboretum website version already mirroring City standards.
- **Student Senior Project on Douglas fir dieback:** John T. informed the Board about the results of a Senior Project undertaken by WWU student Jonathan Bellicci (under the direction of Environmental Science professor Rebecca Bunn) which centered on comparing the known locations of Douglas fir dieback in the Arboretum with the distribution of soil types. Jonathan documented the results of his work with a story map, which was shared with the Board.

6. New Business:

- **Bikes and signage:** Joan D. brought up that while bikes are officially prohibited from trails in the Arboretum, signage to that effect at most Arboretum entrances is lacking. Wayne G. replied that the three new information kiosks are due to be delivered next week and will include that information, and that WWU Facilities and the City together are in the process of installing similar signage at other entrances. The timeline is to have the kiosks and other signs in place by early winter.
- **Public comment period:** Robin Thomas asked whether there is progress on creating a fire hazard management plan for the Arboretum. Nicole O. replied that there is a meeting scheduled between the City and WWU to talk about a fire suppression plan for the Arboretum. Additionally the City's Urban Forestry Management Plan under development

has an urban-wildland interface that will be relevant for fire hazard management. Nicole clarified that City firefighters are usually the first responders when small-scale fires occur in City parks, but that DNR is also involved for wildfires of a larger scale as occurred this summer. Robin followed up that a main concern for the Arboretum is fires set as part of encampments or other illegal activity such as the mountain bike trail building, and fire suppression in part begins by controlling those. Wayne G. replied that he will be meeting with the WWU director of emergency management and City staff and next week and agreed to report back on how fire is part of that conversation.

Joan D. made a motion to adjourn with Steve H. seconding. Meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.