



SEHOME HILL ARBORETUM BOARD OF GOVERNORS

May 16, 2024 Meeting Minutes

PRESENT: John Tuxill, Kendra Bradford, Jenna Kelling, Steve Hollenhorst, Nick Leader, Wayne Galloway III, Travis Tennesen, Nicole Oliver, Kate Bemis, Caryn Regimbal

ABSENT: Joan Drinkwin

VISITORS:

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by chair, John Tuxill.

- I. **AGENDA REVIEW:** John T. presented the agenda.
- II. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** On behalf of the Board, John T. thanked Steve Hollenhorst for his many contributions and always thoughtful service on SHABOG over the past two years. Travis Tennesen shared that in a wellbeing survey of the WWU community, the Arboretum was among the most frequently cited campus spaces that support their wellbeing.
- III. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** No public comments were offered.
- IV. **MEETING MINUTES:** John T. presented the minutes from the April 2024 Board meeting. Approved without objection on a motion by Travis T., seconded by Kendra Bradford.
- V. **OLD BUSINESS:**
 1. **Proposal to permit rock climbing in the Arboretum:** John T. reminded the Board of the proposal from the American Alpine Institute to formally permit use of identified climbing areas in the Arboretum for AAI's training of guides and instructors in rescue and other aspects of climbing. In turn, AAI would be prepared to provide an annual service contribution to the Arboretum (e.g. climber education, cleanup of graffiti on rock faces, trail maintenance). Wayne Galloway asked whether the WWU Outdoor Center conducts climbing programs in the Arboretum. Kendra B. replied that she talked with the Outdoor Center assistant director, Ben Crandall, who confirmed they do use the Arboretum for occasional education of climbers in techniques. Jenna K. confirmed that the Outdoor Center doesn't normally publicize or promote climbing sessions in the Arboretum. Travis T. asked about whether AAI would pay for use of the Arboretum. Nicole Oliver replied that Parks has a special request form for the use of City parks facilities, which functions as a contract with an open space fee being charged in addition to specifying location, date, and time of the planned activity. An approved special use permit then authorizes the requester to carry out the activity

while assuming responsibility for the people who participate. Nicole O. also clarified that Parks has never given formal permission for activities that are potentially dangerous, however it is well known that climbing takes place in the Arboretum and has for a long time. Steve H. pointed out that the vertical rescue training that AAI is proposing is different from climbing per se, as the work involved is all conducted on ropes lowered from the top of a rock face, rather than ascending it from below. John T. added that AAI's requested use of the Arboretum (approximately 15 times per year) would primarily be as a backup site when weather or other concerns make accessing preferred distant sites less feasible. Steve H., John T., and Kendra B. spoke about how AAI as a service partner could make a difference in being able to manage and clean up the graffiti currently defacing rock faces in the Arboretum, and mitigate the impact of off-trail foot traffic on vegetation. Travis T. asked whether there was a way to allow AAI to carry out emergency response/rescue training in the Arboretum as a pilot program without sanctioning climbing more broadly. Kendra B. and Nick Leader concurred that such an arrangement should be possible. Nicole O. said that if AAI is offering a class where people are paying to learn a set of specific skills, a core step is to apply for a facility use agreement on a one-year or seasonal trial basis, where AAI is charged for using the Arboretum space and assumes responsibility for the risk and liability involved. John T. asked whether a facility use permit typically includes a service component, and Nicole O. replied that sometimes it does in exchange for a reduced fee. Kendra B. asked who receives the special request applications. Nicole O. confirmed they are handled by her administrative staff, who would be kept up to date in the event AAI submitted an application. After additional discussion, Kendra B. made a motion to approve the Board endorsing AAI to submit a proposal to City Parks for a special use permit for rescue training with a specific request for stewardship reciprocity by AAI and regular reporting of activities and accomplishments. The motion passed unanimously.

2. **House of Healing update:** Kendra B. indicated her understanding was that construction of the Longhouse facility and the parking area and additional stormwater management infrastructure at the Arboretum entrance was scheduled to begin in June.
3. **Informational Kiosks update:** Wayne G. relayed that the kiosk by Old Main has been installed, and the other two are on their way. Wayne G. shared photos of the installed kiosk and stated that the precise location of installation was adjusted slightly to accommodate an existing memorial structure on site.
4. **Accessible Arboretum website update:** John T. confirmed that he exchanged emails with David Engebretsen, who is working with technical writing students and a computer science student this quarter to revise the archived accessible website for the Arboretum, including the birds and plants pages and a new "community artists" page. John offered to meet informally and unofficially with David in June to hear more about the progress the students have made by the end of the academic quarter. If Board members are able to look at the website pages

over the summer, they should provide their comments and suggestions to John and he will be the conduit for relaying that feedback to David moving forward.

5. **Invasive plant removal work party update:** John T. shared that in June WWU student Mckenna Varela will be implementing, as part of her senior project, a work party in the Arboretum focused on removing an invasive patch of Yellow archangel along the main road just below the summit area. Mckenna plans to use a sheet mulching approach and is in communication with WWU gardeners for accessing cardboard and other supplies.
6. **Land acknowledgement wording:** Following on last meeting's discussion about the SHABOG land acknowledgement, Steve H. shared that he looked into the question of "unceded" territory and found that this term has a specific legal context in Canada that is different from the U.S. experience where treaties with Indigenous nations were more widespread and common (if still forced, oppressive acts). Travis T. offered suggestions on wording that could replace "unceded" and instead refer to the enduring importance of treaty rights for Native communities around the Salish Sea, and agreed to work on revised language for the Board's fall meetings. Kendra B. suggested, and Board members agreed, that it would be important to share potential revised language with WWU Native Liaison Laural Ballew to receive her input.
7. **Sehome Hill Arboretum Policy document:** John T. requested of Board members that over the summer break they read the Arboretum Policy document in preparation for reviewing and potentially revising it at future Board meetings. The Policy document was last revised in 2013.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Accessible trail in the Arboretum:** John T. shared that David E. is also working with GIS students at the WWU College of the Environment's Spatial Institute, who have begun mapping the Huntoon Trail with the idea that it could become the Arboretum's first fully accessible trail. Board members voiced general support for this idea, but also agreed that renovation of the Huntoon Trail to improve accessibility would be a major infrastructure project, and would need to be considered within the normal process of prioritizing available construction/maintenance funding. Wayne G. agreed to be a primary point of contact for David E. on this topic moving forward.
2. **Designated forest bathing trail:** Kendra B. relayed a conversation with Ben Crandall that there are ongoing conversations within the WWU wellness program about having a designated forest bathing trail be part of the Arboretum. The idea would be to apply this designation to an existing trail section (such as the Quiet Rocks Area). More discussion of this idea may take place during a fall Board meeting.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

There was no executive session.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT: The May 16th, 2024, Sehome Hill Arboretum Board of Governors adjourned by consent at 5:16 p.m.