



SEHOME HILL ARBORETUM BOARD OF GOVERNORS

October 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes

PRESENT: John Tuxill, Kendra Bradford, Joan Drinkwin, Nick Leader, Traci Brewer-Rogstad, Wayne Galloway III, Travis Tennesen, Nicole Oliver, Kate Bemis

ABSENT: Jenna Kelling

VISITORS: Chris Mead, WWU Longhouse Project Manager; Luke Schrader, Peyton Bovee, Elsa Lindenmayr, WWU Ecological Restoration students

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

- I. **AGENDA REVIEW:** John T. presented the agenda. An item was added on priorities for trail improvement work in the Arboretum.
- II. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** John T. welcomed Traci Brewer-Rogstad to the Board as the new WWU Associate VP for Facilities Development & Operations.
- III. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** No public comments were offered.
- IV. **MEETING MINUTES:** John T. presented the minutes from the May 2024 Board meeting. Approved without objection on a motion by Kendra B., seconded by Travis T.
- V. **OLD BUSINESS:**
 1. **House of Healing update:** Chris Mead provided an update on the House of Healing construction progress. Most work so far has involved installation of stormwater detention facilities, grading and prepping of the main Arboretum entrance parking lot (in preparation for paving) and curb/gutter/sidewalk construction along 25th Street leading into the Arboretum main entrance. Anticipated completion date for this work is mid-November. Also imminent is the placement of the concrete footings for the House of Healing and stormwater detention infrastructure at the House site. Log structure installation is expected to commence in mid- December. Access to Arboretum Drive has mostly been maintained for visitors during construction with brief periods of closure for specific site construction activities. There will be a full shutdown of the entrance for paving work on Nov. 7th/8th.

John T. asked whether the original expectations that no trees would need to be removed for construction has proven to be the case. Chris M. confirmed that no tree removal has been necessary other than one or two small alders at the entrance adjacent to the stormwater detention facility. The Garry oak saplings planted at

that site previously as part of a student restoration project have been relocated off-site. Nick L. asked for clarification on whether the new sidewalk would extend all the way from Bill McDonald Pkwy up to the main Longhouse project, and Chris confirmed that was the case along with street lights and curb/gutter. Kendra B. raised the issue of what sort of vegetation restoration is anticipated at the stormwater detention vault. Chris indicated that the planned revegetation involved hydroseeding with a grass mixture following best management practices, and he would look into whether that could be native grasses. Rather than having grasses, Kendra B. and other Board members expressed a preference for native plant landscaping that would better align with the extant understory/ground cover vegetation in the Arboretum. Joan D. asked about restrictions on what kind of vegetation could be planted above a stormwater vault. Board members suggested mulching the site for ground coverage as a short-term step while developing plans for revegetating with native plants in the near future. Chris M agreed to look into what kind of revegetation might be compatible and options for mulching, and get back to the Board. He also pointed out it would be essential to maintain a drive lane at the site for vehicle access to the vault for maintenance purposes. Nicole O. concurred that replanting options at stormwater detention sites in general tend to be very limited.

2. **Land acknowledgement revision:** Discussion of land acknowledgement revision options was tabled for next meeting with the consent of Board members.
3. **Revisions and updating of the Arboretum's Policy document:** Discussion of revision and updating of the Arboretum's Policy document was tabled for next meeting with the consent of Board members.
4. **WWU Arboretum website:** David Engebretson, Jr., was unable to attend the meeting. Discussion of the WWU Arboretum website was tabled for a future meeting with the consent of Board members.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Student ecological restoration project proposal.** Three WWU students-- Luke Schrader, Peyton Bovee and Elsa Lindenmayr--from John Tuxill's *Ecological Restoration* class presented a proposal for an applied research project examining options for the management and restoration of the forest canopy in areas of the Arboretum afflicted with Douglas fir dieback linked to laminate root rot fungal infestation. The students are interested in 1) researching how the canopy composition is likely to change at dieback sites with ecological succession and a shift away from mostly Douglas fir; and 2) assessing the presence of invasive species and developing management recommendations to ensure they do not come to dominate dieback sites. Included in their research approach would be small experimental replantings of Douglas fir seedlings to determine whether the species is able to re-establish at sites where the former canopy cover has been lost. Joan D. asked whether environmental stressors might be interacting with laminate root rot to produce the dieback seen at multiple sites. The students have consulted with WWU Professor Rebecca Bunn about that question—it is clear

that laminate root rot is part of the problem, but likely not the only factor, with precipitation patterns being one possible co-factor. The experimental replantings would be designed to get at the question of whether root rot presence in the soil alone is enough to prevent the re-establishment of Douglas fir. After additional discussion, the Board voted unanimously to approve the students' project proposal.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

There was no executive session.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT: The October 17th, 2024, Sehome Hill Arboretum Board of Governors adjourned by consent at 5:09 p.m.