



SEHOME HILL ARBORETUM BOARD OF GOVERNORS

February 5, 2024 Meeting Minutes

PRESENT: John Tuxill, Kendra Bradford, Jenna Kelling, Joan Drinkwin, Nicole Oliver, Grace Wang (pro tem), Steve Janiszewski and Steve Hollenhorst

ABSENT:

VISITORS: Chris Mead, Alexis Blue, and Donna Gibbs (WWU); Kathi Williams (Rolluda Architects)

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m. by chair, John Tuxill.

- I. **AGENDA REVIEW:** John T. presented the agenda. There were no additional items.
- II. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** John T. explained that the January Board meeting was rescheduled to February 5th due to being Zoom-bombed at the start of the usual meeting time.
- III. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** No public comments were offered.
- IV. **NOVEMBER 2023 MEETING MINUTES:** John T. presented the November draft minutes but acknowledged he had not been able to review the recording of the November meeting to confirm details of the draft minutes. The November minutes were tabled by consent to allow for review of the recording prior to next month's meeting.
- V. **OLD BUSINESS:** As the primary item of business for the meeting, Chris Mead led a presentation to the Board of current plans for WWU's House of Healing Campus Longhouse proposed for siting in the Arboretum in the clearing and surrounding area adjacent to the main Arboretum entrance. The presentation was necessitated by WWU's application to the City for a building permit for the Longhouse, and the City's designation of SHABOG as the advisory board responsible for a formal review of the project, in keeping with the City municipal code for building permit applications involving public City properties. Chris explained that the Longhouse plans call for a 4,200 square ft. building, with a total impervious surface at the site of approximately 11,000 sq. ft. (building, access road, limited parking, and adjacent sidewalk and grounds). The project would also provide for contract development of public facilities (street paving, sidewalk improvements, lighting, and underground utility extensions— stormwater, sewer, electrical, fiber optic cables) along the 25th St. right of way and Arboretum Drive itself leading up to the entrance to the House of Healing site. Chris showed renderings of the Longhouse building and grounds, and

emphasized it would be welcoming to non-native and tribal members alike and centered on supporting Native student success. Longhouse programs will work with the existing grounds and include plantings of native vegetation as part of the Indigenous programming. The building itself will house teaching and learning spaces, offices for faculty and staff, and support spaces. The main gathering hall will have a capacity of 100 people. The hope is for Longhouse construction to begin by spring 2024 with completion of the facility by summer 2025. In addition the project will develop 26 parking spaces along Arboretum Dr. where parking currently takes place at the entrance. There will only be two spaces at the Longhouse itself, designated for visitors with accessibility concerns. The grounds will contain a fish pit for outdoor cooking, fully separate from the building and with protective features to minimize fire risk.

Steve H. led off comments and questions from the Board by explaining that 9 of the 26 parking spaces along Arboretum Drive will be dedicated for the House of Healing, with the public having free access to those spaces after hours. The remaining 17 spaces will be designated as paid hourly parking and managed by WWU. Currently the parking at the entrance is free and dominated by students during daytime hours. Nicole O. confirmed that all 26 parking spaces will be free to the public after 4:30 PM. Joan D. asked about larger gatherings at the Longhouse. Chris confirmed that shuttle transportation will function for those events utilizing the drop-off area in front of the facility.

In response to a question from Joan D. about the footprint of the facility, Chris explained that WWU and the City are working on appropriate lease terms to allow for consideration of future developments. The Longhouse programming is envisioned to make use of both the site grounds (gathering circle, gardens) and the surrounding forest area covering approximately 2 acres, for instance as a Native Food Forest and cultural education program. Plantings would emphasize native food and medicinal species, and care would be taken to source planting stock locally from the bioregion rather than imported cultivars.

John T. asked for clarification of the perimeter of the 2-acre area, which Chris confirmed extends into the forest area bounded by the current meadow and the paved footpath to the south that runs from the base of Arboretum Dr. to Bill McDonald Parkway. John T. pointed out that forest area is a unique grove of trees for the Arboretum, based on the size of the trees and the open understory, and that it also shapes the main entrance to the Arboretum from a visual-esthetic perspective. Chris confirmed that the activities planned in the forest area would maintain and enhance the natural character of the forest, and that access to the grounds and surrounding environment is an essential part of the facility and in many ways just as integral as the Longhouse itself. Nicole O. clarified related aspects of the lease agreement, including that primary access will be for tribal activities and education, but public access will be retained, just as with other facilities at WWU, and that any major subsequent changes to the area would involve additional review and oversight as per usual City requirements. Nicole O. clarified that even for the re-routing of the existing trail

at the site, the only trees that are anticipated to be removed are already damaged and/or of small size. She further emphasized that specific language around tree clearing could be added to the lease agreement. Chris added that minimizing tree removal was entirely aligned with how the Longhouse community viewed their responsibilities towards the environment—the trees are their relatives.

Joan D. pointed out that the Board usually receives and reviews proposals for student research projects or similar activities in the Arboretum, and asked whether educational programming in the forest areas around the Longhouse facility would similarly come before the Board. Chris replied that the focus and intent of Indigenous programming would be to follow a similar stewardship role, and thus align with the goals and intent of the Arboretum as a whole. The goal would be a stewardship arrangement that is collaborative and cooperative with with the Board, and less one of direct oversight, establishing a relationship of trust and recognizing the stewardship by Native tribes since time immemorial. Establishing how to achieve this administratively is still actively being worked out. Chris asked whether there has been discussion of having a seat on the Arboretum Board for someone from the Longhouse community. John T. agreed that would be an important step for establishing and maintaining a collaborative relationship. Steve H. concurred.

After additional discussion about the technical components of lease agreements in general, Nicole O. offered to bring the lease along with proposed modifications to the Interlocal agreement before the Board at a future meeting, for additional discussion and comparison. As well, additional aspects of the Project's permitting will likely require ongoing coordination with the Board, such as how the construction phase for the Longhouse facility and the street upgrades and utility right-of-way might affect public access to the Arboretum.

Following the close of discussion, a Motion was made by Kendra Bradford, and seconded by Grace Wang, for the Board to accept the WWU Longhouse design plans as presented, for purposes of proceeding with City review of the building permit application. The Motion passed unanimously.

With regard to applicants for the two open Board positions, John T. shared that the applicant for the City position, Nick Leader, will attend the upcoming February 15th Board meeting. John T. has also been in touch with a potential University applicant for Grace Wang's position who may attend. Joan D. reminded the Board that her term expires in 3 days, and expressed her interest in serving another term. Board members expressed their delight at having Joan continue to serve on the Board, and Nicole O. and Steve J. will follow up.

VI. NEW BUSINESS: Tabled along with remaining Old Business until next meeting by consent.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

There was no executive session.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT: The February 15, 2024, Sehome Hill Arboretum Board of Governors adjourned by consent at 2:06 p.m.