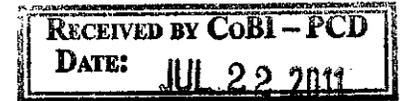




July 17, 2011



City Council
Planning Commission
City of Bainbridge Island
280 Madison Avenue North
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

Attention: Planning Department

Dear Councilors and Members of the Planning Commission:

The Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park & Recreation District appreciates the opportunity to work with the City on its update of the Shoreline Management Program. Regrettably, the Park District's regular board meeting is on July 21, the date of the first joint City Council/Planning Commission public meeting where the public will be able to comment. We are therefore sending this letter in lieu of our comments at that meeting.

As the largest single owner of waterfront on Bainbridge Island, the Park District has a particular interest in the City's update of its SMP. We strongly support the aim of this program to achieve no net loss in the quality of our marine environment and, indeed, to improve the ecological quality of the water that surrounds our Island.

At the same time, the Park District must also be able to carry out our other responsibilities to the public. Our parks are public property. We have a responsibility to the public not only to protect and improve the shoreline and marine environment, but also to facilitate public views, access to, and enjoyment of the shoreline and waters around the island while limiting risks to public safety. Our charge is to find a middle ground among these differing policy objectives.

We want to work with the City to make the revised SMP as effective as possible. To that end, we appreciate the willingness of COBI staff to work with the District's senior planner, Perry Barrett, and with Park Commissioners Lee Cross and Ken DeWitt about the District's concerns. We have agreed on a number of changes. For example, working together, we were able to ensure that the draft Shoreline Designation Map includes all the public park shoreline on the Island.

Because of the public nature of the shoreline property we own, the Park District is different from almost all other shoreline property owners on the island. In the working drafts of the SMP policies and regulations, that difference was recognized in some but not all of the sections. We have worked with City staff to suggest changes necessary to distinguish between regulations that applied to privately and publicly owned shoreline properties. However, because the latest versions of these sections were not available for review at the time we prepared comments in this letter, we cannot be sure that these changes were incorporated into the staff's final draft. We encourage the Planning Commission and City Council to review all the Sections in this draft to ensure that they include language recognizing the difference between public and private ownership, and to ensure that the updated SMP protects public access to the shoreline and waters around Bainbridge Island for recreational purposes, as is required by the State.

In particular, we are concerned about three points.

1. First, in the draft language that we have reviewed, there is no recognition that some shoreline parks were acquired with grants from the State and other sources that require extensive public access and specific shoreline uses. Overall, these requirements for park land are consistent with the SMP; however, requirements for individual park properties may emphasize some SMP goals over others. For instance, some park properties were purchased with funds requiring the preservation of natural shoreline settings (e.g., Gazzam-Close), while other properties carry requirements for physical access to the water and preservation of historic sites (e.g., Fort Ward Park and Pritchard Park).

The Park District appreciates the draft language about Public Park Development that the staff suggested for incorporation in Section B (Vegetation and Conservation Zone) in Part III (General Policies and Regulations). It is our hope that the staff's final draft of other sections of the entire SMP Update will include similar separate provisions for publicly owned parks.

2. **Shoreline Designations.** On the most recent draft of the Shoreline Designation Map, all City- and Park District-owned shoreline parks are designated as "Island Conservancy". This designation does not make sense to the Board of Commissioners. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines conservancy as "an organization or area designated to conserve and protect natural resources". Many shoreline parks have significant natural values that should be conserved, but – as discussed above – many parks also have competing public values, such as waterfront access and water-based recreation. Some waterfront parks have almost no natural attributes. It's difficult to understand how a park with a marina, dock and multiple buildings, such as Waterfront Park, can have the same designation as a park where the only development is a trail, such as the Close Property.

The Park District recognizes that many of the regulations in this draft are tied to these shoreline designations and that, from a logistical standpoint, changing these designations would be difficult at this late date. However, it should be possible to add language to the definition of "Island Conservancy" that clarifies that almost all these properties are publicly owned parks that have varying degrees of natural values. This additional language could also recognize that these "Island Conservancy" parks are encumbered with additional requirements to meet other public goals, such as public access and recreation, ADA access, and preservation of historical and cultural resources/artifacts.

3. **Shoreline restoration properties for specific properties.** This is a separate document prepared by Herrera laying out proposed restoration projects for some of the Island's shoreline properties. Commissioner Cross and DeWitt and Senior Planner Perry Barrett had an opportunity to go over the draft proposed restoration projects for BIMPRD shoreline parks with City Planners Libby Hudson and Ryan Erickson. Working together, they agreed on a number of corrections. Libby also emphasized that restoration is voluntary and is different from mitigation, which is required under certain specific circumstances.

Notwithstanding these assurances, Commissioners DeWitt and Cross expressed some concern about how this booklet might be used. They and the other members of the Park Board believe that the booklet needs an introduction that provides guidance regarding its use, and that clarifies (1) that these are *possible* restoration projects and (2) that these projects are voluntary. Without such explicit clarifying language, an individual could interpret these projects as required in circumstances where a property-owner is seeking to make a change in his/her/its property. We understand that such an introduction to this booklet exists but have not had an opportunity to review it.

As the review process for the updated SMP continues, Park Commissioners would be happy to meet with representatives of the City Council and/or the City's Planning Commission to discuss these concerns and suggestions further. Once we have had an opportunity to review the City staff's complete final draft of the SMP update, we may offer additional specific suggestions.

Thank you again for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Kirk Robinson
Chair, Board of Commissioners
Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park & Recreation District

cc: COBI Planning Department
BIMPRD Park Commissioners
Terry Lande, Executive Director, BIMPRD
Perry Barrett, Senior Planner, BIMPRD