

MISSION: The "Friends of Big Finn Hill Park Trails" promote safe, sustainable, multi-use trails within a healthy, natural environment while fostering relationships and engaging the broader community.

Friends of Big Finn Hill Park Trails (FBFHPT) Executive Committee General Meeting Minutes

Date: September 4, 2019
Location: Kenmore Library
Facilitator: Bill Blanchard
Note Taker: Debbie Meyer

Committee Attendees:

Ayrault, Lisa (At Large)
Blanchard, Bill (Neighbors)
Gerrish, Bob (Dog Walkers)
Gerrish, Janice (At Large)
Hall, Bill (Bicyclists)
Hoofnagle, Wayne (Bicyclists)
Hughes, Joe (King County Parks)
Johnson, Gary (Dog Walkers)
Leach, Jeanette (Walkers)
Meyer, Debbie (Neighbors)

A quorum was present.

Absent Committee Members:

Meredith, George (Walkers) – Excused

Non-Committee Attendees:

Bassuk, Jim (advised his affiliation was with the Bicyclists Interest Group)
Booth, Kenny (representative of the Kirkland National Little League)

Summary of Meeting Topics:

Kirkland National Little League's Proposed Batting Cage Replacement Project

Kenny Booth, representative of the Kirkland National Little League (KNLL), reviewed KNLL's proposed plan to replace the existing batting cages at Big Finn Hill Park which are old, nearing the end of their useful life and not protected from the elements which make them unusable for much of the Little League season. Little League season typically runs from the end of February/beginning of March through June. Kenny advised 565 kids currently enjoy participation in the KNLL, but the existing batting cages do not serve the mission of the KNLL nor the public good.

The goal of KNLL's replacement project is to provide a covered structure for year-round use by community organizations with KNLL having preferential use of the facility during Little League season. The proposed new facility will be a free-span pre-engineered two-story steel structure approximately 40' wide by 99' long (more than double the footprint of the current batting cages) with a facade composed of non-reflective neutral colored metal panels, wood, polycarbonate and 1" mesh link fencing. The structure will house three retractable batting cages and a league storage area. It will not be heated but will have interior lighting and power, along with ample openings to the exterior to encourage passive air circulation during summer months. The interior flooring will consist of artificial turf over a cast-in-place concrete slab.

KNLL will be responsible for the upkeep and general maintenance of the facility with dedicated funds and will offer opportunities for local business and individual sponsorships and donations. An internet-based security system with surveillance cameras will be installed to monitor the facility and act as a deterrent to vandalism and theft. Proposed public amenities to be provided by KNLL include a wood bench along the pathway for public use, additional trees along the pathway and modest exterior down lighting mounted on the building for added nighttime security. KNLL also believes a greater presence in the park by KNLL participants and others using the facility will contribute to security.

While the FBFHPT Executive Committee was in favor of making the batting cages more usable in inclement weather, concerns were expressed by many over the size of the proposed replacement with some stating they believed a replacement within the current footprint would be more acceptable. The visual impact of a bigger, solid-sided building was considered a negative as it would be an "eye sore" and not aesthetically accommodating for the Park setting. In addition, it was feared a solid-sided building could invite additional safety/security issues into the Park and be a target for graffiti. Concern of increased noise level caused by a solid wall was also raised given the reflected noise from the existing restrooms and concession stand is quite large. Specifically, noise emanating from the bleachers, as well as from maintenance equipment, may further reflect off the wall of the new structure and extend further into the adjacent neighborhood. Kenny indicated that he would speak with the project architect regarding noise potential/mitigation measures. Additionally, Kenny added that the more solid walls of the facility, along with proper netting inside the structure, would decrease noise levels (batted balls) coming from within the facility, as compared to the existing condition. In response to another concern over the 1200 sf of storage included in the plan given King County Code does not permit private storage, Kenny explained King County considers the storage of public use because of the community use of the facility. However, King County clarification is requested as it appears the storage will be used exclusively by KNLL. Kenny shared that KNLL listened to the previous concern raised that the trail behind the field and the entrance gate for maintenance was blocked in their original proposal and removed the blockage in their revised plan. Kenny also agreed to talk with the Junior High and Senior High cross country/track coaches about narrowing the finish line an additional ten feet to accommodate three batting lanes because it was pointed out that design would make the existing choke point for the cross country/track teams even more dangerous. Kenny further advised KNLL intends to send a communication to the neighborhood regarding this project.

King County Update

Joe Hughes reported the following Big Finn Hill Park happenings:

- A few homeowners have been encroaching in the Park between 75th Avenue NE and 80th Avenue NE, along NE 140th Street by inappropriately parking or dumping their yard waste. King County issued notices to all residents along this stretch and
 - installed three large “No Dumping” signs;
 - removed much of the dumped yard waste;
 - placed 16 large rocks along NE 140th Street to emphasize the Park’s boundary;
 - sprayed the Yellow Arch Angel; and
 - ordered “Park Boundary”, “No Motorized Vehicles” and “Park Rules” signs which will be installed once they arrive.
- Most of the trail system was recently brushed back, as needed. Jeanette Leach advised a number of trails had been blown with leaf blowers; and, unfortunately, the blowing extended to a number of illegal trails in need of closing, especially north of the beaver pond.
- Joe’s crew has started working on the outstanding requests from the FBFHPT Executive Committee, including removing the gravel from the base of the soil bins and remediating the area back to grass.
- The back country trails crew lowered the rails of the new bridges, making them more stable.
- King County is awaiting the Geo Tech Consultants review of the new site plan for connecting the existing trails to the new crosswalk on Juanita Drive. If the new site plan is approved in the review, a permit to commence the work will be resubmitted to the City of Kirkland.
- Two additional tree permits are being worked to submit to City of Kirkland to address the issues with the tree along 138th Street and the other tree that borders 76th Avenue NE.
- Brian Lund, who directs WTA work in the King County Parks, is looking for work for the WTA youth in Joe’s district that will require a couple days to one week to complete. WTA youth are primarily Middle School-aged kids and work mostly on repair and drainage concerns, brushing back trails and re-establishing trail grade. If anyone has any suggestions for work to be completed by WTA youth, please email Joe with the location; and he will review with Brian when they meet.
- Northshore Utility is planning in October to commence sewer line cleaning and to rehab the sewer pipes in the Park. King County wants this work completed by early December.
- Kirkland National Little League (KNLL) banners have been taken down.
- King County grooming of the KNLL fields will continue until the KNLL fall ball is over.
- Upcoming volunteer events include:
 - October 22, 2019 – Big Finn Hill Park planting with the Environment and Adventure School
 - November 2, 2019 – Planting on the west side of the Juanita Woodlands
 - December 7, 2019 – Big Finn Hill Park planting supervised by Jeanette Leach. Rob Dembowski, King County Council Vice Chair, intends to attend this event.

In addition, Joe confirmed all of Big Finn Hill Park is a non-smoking area.

Jim Bassuk (non-Committee attendee) advised the southwest corner of the west side of Big Finn Hill Park is being overrun by blackberry bushes which are encroaching on the power lines in that area. According to some on the Committee, this has been a recurring issue as the responsibility to clear the bushes from the power lines belongs to Puget Sound Energy and not King County nor the City of Kirkland. Bill Blanchard offered to follow up with the appropriate party.

Big Finn Hill Park Trails Project Tracking Document

Gary Johnson led a discussion of the Big Finn Hill Park Trails project tracking document. He reminded the group the document is used to track progress in closing out the Phase 1 and 2 projects of the Big Finn Hill Park Trails Recommendation Plan before taking more action on the Phase 3 projects and identifying new and/or maintenance projects. He committed to incorporate the group input received and send a revised document for review. In preparation for our next meeting, he asked the group to give thought to new and/or maintenance projects so we can begin to list, discuss and prioritize for future completion.

Other Business

Bill Blanchard discovered the Google description for Big Finn Hill Park was a “bikers' park”. He offered to pursue having Google change its description for Big Finn Hill Park to “multi-user park” to be in line with King County Park's description and to be more representative of what Big Finn Hill has to offer. The majority of the FBFHPT Executive Committee approved Bill B's pursuing the change.

Debbie Meyer shared the article found in the August 9, 2019, edition of the *Kirkland Reporter* entitled “Residents encouraged to suggest improvement projects”. She asked the group if the FBFHPT Executive Committee should suggest speed bumps minimally be installed on 72nd Avenue in proximity to the crosswalk on 138th Place, connecting the north and south ends of the west side of Big Finn Hill Park, given the safety issue caused by speeding drivers on 72nd Avenue and the uncertainty as to if/when the crosswalk will be relocated to address the safety issue. While the Committee agreed the safety issue should be addressed, Bill Blanchard suggested funding may be available through the Kirkland Safety Grant Program and offered to research how to submit a grant request.

Frana Milan of King County sent an email to the FBFHPT Executive Committee advising King County Parks was hosting a booth at Denny Fest on Saturday, September 7, 2019, from Noon to 4 pm. She asked anyone interested and available in helping to let her know.

Next General Meeting of the FBFHPT Executive Committee is on Wednesday, November 6, , 2019, at the Kenmore Library from 7 pm – 8:30 pm.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:33 pm.