

Draft Minutes
JENSEN-OLSON ARBORETUM ADVISORY BOARD
Wednesday, September 19, 2012
City Hall, room 224, 5:15PM

I. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Patricia Harris; Kathy Thatcher; Kim Garner; Ed Buyarski; Kate Walters, PRAC Liaison; Barb Murray

Members Absent: Iris Korhonen-Penn, Peter Froehlich, Patty Newman, Deborah Rudis

Staff Present: Merrill Jensen, Arboretum Manager; George Schaaf, Parks and Landscape Superintendent; Amanda Wilkins, Administrative Assistant I

II. PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS - none

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Moved by Ms. Garner second from Ms. Harris

IV. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – moved to approve Ms. Walters, second from Ms. Thatcher
A. February 1, 2012

V. CHAIR REPORT - none

VI. MANAGER'S REPORT –

Mr. Jensen said in February he helped set up the city greenhouse. Mr. Jensen said he worked with Terry Hinkley to start some seeds and to set aside seedlings to be able to give away for Alaska Public Gardens Day. He also set some aside for Arboretum us.

JOA is now part of the US Phenology Association. JOA will help the Phenology Association track the lifecycle of 28 different species in Alaska. They were thrilled to welcome JOA into the group because there are not many members in Alaska. Ms. Thatcher asked if they generate reports. Mr. Jensen said yes. JOA is now accredited with Morton Registrar of Arboreta. The registrar tracked down Mr. Jensen and asked if JOA would like to be accredited. JOA is at level one accreditation. There are 725 institutions world wide.

The application for the North American Plants Collections Consortium application has been sent off. The evaluation cost \$600. The evaluator spent a day talking with Mr. Jensen on how to care for the different species of primrose. A letter is in the mail stating that the JOA has the National Collection of Primrose. There are 130 species of primrose in the arboretum. Mr. Buyarski suggested that Mr. Jensen write an article for the Primrose monthly cataloging what the JOA has. Mr. Jensen will write something for their winter edition. The arboretum will also participate in exchanges to grow their collection of primroses.

Sherry Fluke came out to the site. She was a good friend of Caroline Jensen. Fluke came out and identified some of the plants that Mr. Jensen had not identified that had been originally planted by Caroline Jensen.

NAPCC- Mr. Jensen took pictures of some primrose plants that he was unsure of their identification. He spoke with Pam Everley and Dave Rankin for help with identification.

In April, Mr. Jensen went to the National American Primrose Society gathering. He brought back 2 suitcases of plants.

There was a master gardener pruning class taught by Mr. Buyarski. Mr. Jensen helped facilitate the class.

They dug up the old rhubarb bed and replanted it in a new area. It is now inside instead of growing within the "wild/native" plant area.

They put new caps on the fence posts. Rotary Club will come out this winter and put the gates up.

There was a request for the *Heuchera glabra* from Ohio State University. JOAB is one of the few institutes that are growing this particular species. JOA sent several samples to OSU in exchange for some other plants.

The Tlingit potatoes were planted and dug up by students. 44 students participated in the event. Ms. Garner asked how old and who participated. The high school botany class planted them and the middle school native studies students who dug them up.

After the fishmeal fertilizer was put down, a bear came to the arboretum and licked it from the ground. The bear opened a storage facility and dragged 3 bags into the woods and ate them. Fish and Game brought out a “critter gitter”, a motion activated device that sounds off a loud noise (130 db) and flashing lights. The bear tried going into the shed 4 times before he was scared off.

The plant sale was successful, despite the terrible weather. They brought in \$2400. The wine tasting was successful as well. There are plans to do it again next year. The Alaska Public Garden day was not as successful. Only 150 people showed up. This is about half of what has attended in the past.

Long time seasonal gardener Bill...went back to work with the state of Alaska. Chelsea Harris, a UAS student, jumped in and took over.

Between April and August, there were only two weekends that did not have events. But, the number of visitors was down to 4400, with a previous year at 5500. This is attributed to the terrible weather Juneau experienced this summer.

Mr. Jensen has been collecting seeds for various organizations. There are 40 different species going out to different organizations as part of the exchange.

VII. ACTION ITEMS – none

VIII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Overview from Finance on JOA budget

Ms. Harris said she had looked at the budget online and is concerned that there is no inflation proofing for the endowment. Mr. Schaaf thanked the board for their patience in regards to the endowment fund. Bob Bartholomew is the new finance director and Pat White is the Parks and Recreation accountant. Mr. Schaaf met with them to discuss the endowment, the concerns the board has with the use of the endowment the funding the arboretum. Mr. Bartholomew said that inflation proofing is mandatory for the endowment; it is in the resolution from the assembly and with any endowment. Looking at the principal of the endowment, Mr. Bartholomew said there is not enough there to fund the arboretum operations, inflation proof the endowment and pay back the city the \$582, 000 from previous year’s operation costs. Mr. Bartholomew will meet with Kim Keifer, the city manager, and discuss these issues. Mr. Bartholomew said that the reasonable expectation is that the endowment would average \$100,000 a year in earnings for the fund to accommodate the ups and downs of the market. For things to remain sustainable, the city will have to write off the \$582,000 and accept that it will cost about \$50,000 from the general fund every year. Mr. Bartholomew said that the city has not booked the \$582,000 as a cost receivable. It is not recoverable; therefore the arboretum should not try to pay it off. It was a policy from the finance department to try to recover the money that the assembly appropriated. There are 3 scenarios that are possible. One is that the city accepts that the money cannot be recovered, commits to making the endowment inflation proof & supporting the arboretum with \$50,000 a year in operating costs. There are two options if this is impossible. One is to divest the city of the arboretum and the fund, which leaves the city without the \$582,000 the city appropriated. The other is to propose to the PRAC which parks would you prioritize and if Parks and Recreation cannot fully fund all, which parks would you close. It is now mid-budget cycle, which is when the city revisits the budget and can change the funding sources. Mr. Schaaf does not believe the city will not walk away from the JOA; it costs less to operate than Pocket Park does for the department.

Ms. Garner asked about if the meeting that occurred in March with Mr. Schaaf, Mr. Jensen, and Ms. Keifer. She asked if the policy that they approved last October is acceptable. Mr. Bartholomew is looking it over and will meet with Ms. Keifer.

B. Event/Wedding policy

The board asked Mr. Jensen if he truly works 7 days a week during the peak season. Mr. Jensen answered that he does; most of this is due to events on the weekends.

Mr. Jensen brought the current policy before the board and asked if the board wished to change anything?

Wedding money does not come back into the arboretum; they are going into the city coffers and not benefiting the arboretum. Weddings are a miniscule amount of the revenue. The majority of the revenue comes from the rental of the residence.

The biggest issue with the wedding policy is that it is almost impossible to enforce the 50 person limit. It is becoming an issue with some weddings. For some events, people are also ignoring their start and end time of their rentals. Most people do not read the rental agreement and do not care that the contract states a 50 person limit. One of the things that continue to occur is that people also do not abide by the opening and closing times of the arboretum. This is especially prevalent for morning weddings. Mr. Jensen said that he is bringing this up for consideration for the board to discuss at a later meeting.

Mr. Schaaf explained that the income from weddings is used to offset the endowment funds that are withdrawn by the assembly in an effort to recover the previous cost of operation. Mr. Buyarski asked if picnics and other users are charged. Mr. Jensen said no. Ms. Harris asked if revisiting the admission policy is something the board should do. Mr. Jensen said that it is not the vision of the arboretum.

Ms. Garnero said that she can see that the weddings wear on Mr. Jensen, but that it means a lot to the people who use the facility for their wedding. Mr. Schaaf asked if limiting the number of weddings per year would be helpful. Mr. Jensen said they are currently about 2 per month. Ms. Harris asked if they had looked into a wedding manager. Mr. Jensen said that it is an idea that should be considered. Ms. Thatcher asked if maybe the Friends group could volunteer to help. Mr. Schaaf asked if the friends group could be the recipients of the wedding fund. The board said that was something that they should consider. Ms. Harris said that they should bring the idea of volunteering to help with weddings and events before the Friends board.

Mr. Jensen is working on a Rasmussen grant for a fence to prevent people from jumping over and trespassing during weddings and when they arboretum is closed.

Ms. Harris asked about the commercial use policy. Mr. Schaaf said that law has given it back to him to rewrite.

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Endowment Committee:
- B. Volunteer Committee:

X. CORRESPONDENCE

XI. CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS - none

XII. BOARD COMMENTS

Ms. Harris said that it was great to see everyone. The Friends group will meet this Friday.

Ms. Walters reminded everyone to tell people to vote on the 1% sales tax initiative.

XIII. NEXT MEETING – December 12, 2012 in the valley.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT - Ms. Gareno moved to adjourn