

Friends of Seward Park

Minutes for Board Meeting 10 January 2026

Submitted by E. Van Volkenburgh

Attending: Lizabeth Coller, Chris Hollinger, Joey Manson, Joyce Moty, Owen Schmeichel, Paul Shannon, Paul Talbert, Liz Van Volkenburgh

Paul Talbert called the meeting to order at 9:37 am.

Announcements. Following brief introductions, Paul T noted that there were a few more year-end donations. Chris H has written some notes thanking past donors and offered to continue doing this. Paul shared the names, reported from the Seattle Parks Foundation and recently from Benevity.

Audubon Update. Joey was not available to report.

Treasurer's Report. Our account has \$78,589, with a balance to pay ~\$331 for WordPress (an annual cost). There was a brief discussion about seeking a less expensive hosting site, but general sentiment was that the current situation is working well.

Secretary's Report. Hearing no objections, the minutes for last month will be posted (after checking with Joey on highlighted parts). Unless someone else volunteers to take minutes at the next several meetings, Liz asked for voice memo recordings to be sent to her so she can write up the minutes. Paul S volunteered to do this, with a trial this meeting.

Graffiti, Paint. Joyce and Paul S noted where graffiti has been noticed. Paul said it has all been cleaned up now, but it is recurring. The post that had been knocked over has been righted. Paul S said our gardener, Gail, participated in setting it back into the ground. Joyce says she reports sightings of graffiti to the Parks Maintenance Crew Chief located on Genesee. Chris H reported that she and Liz had repainted the red dots on the basalt signs. Joyce recommended we use brighter paint for the dots. Chris and Liz will locate new paint and touch up the maps in drier weather.

Rangers. Paul S sent a letter to Parks including Director Diaz describing unsatisfactory interactions with Park Rangers. Paul received a brief reply from a Deputy Secretary at Parks who said she would discuss the matter further at Parks. Paul S said he would continue to pursue this in a low-key but persistent manner. There was a brief discussion of the remit for the Rangers, and how better to engage them.

Follow up on Red Cedar and WSU Fern Research. We discussed FoSP's bandwidth to engage with the Red Cedar project at Point Defiance Park. Paul S suggested another person, not himself, could pick this up if needed, but that SP's red cedars are not threatened. Chris emphasized that Ray Lepore sounded interested in visiting SP. Paul T will follow up.

Paul S turned to Owen Schmeichal, who worked with us last summer. Owen is working with mycorrhizal networks at McAllister College and is interested in a summer project at Seward Park. Paul S mentioned a computer program available for mapping underground networks; he suggested Owen might be able to use that program and test some hypotheses related to soil fungal composition and ferns/fern die-off. Paul S encouraged Owen to develop a proposal in conjunction with an advisor, perhaps a researcher at McAllister or UW.

Plant pathogen and soil testing update. There is no current update from the California State Pathology lab. Paul S mentioned that Ben Schillp is interested in more work with SP in the summer and suggested that he and Nate Butcher work together to extend Nate's 2023 survey for the Forest Inventory Project (supervised by Tim Billo).

Chris H raised the question of how to fund, and whether to fund this research or other projects instead. Paul addressed the hourly fee for paying student researchers, with general agreement that this fee is affordable and their work has been valuable. Chris enlarged the conversation to ask the Board how it wants to spend funds, in general; what is the FoSP framework for utilizing its funds. Paul S continued focus on research projects. Liz asked for conversation about other (non-research) projects that might be supported by funds from FoSP. Chris asked how the ByLaws for FoSP would guide this conversation. Paul S mentioned that Seattle Parks is clear about not conducting research, which is why FoSP has picked up this work. He mentioned an example for a non-research project: the hill where some are building temporary structures and continue to degrade the bare ground. A proposal to film the activity there might require support and be useful for engaging Parks' attention to the issue. Chris H proposed more signage, for example, "Restoration Area" in regions being replanted. Joyce emphasized the educational value of signs. Paul S mentioned that Parks does not endorse using signs in the parks. Paul T offered to share the ByLaws with Chris H and the Board.

Paul T addressed the topic about ByLaws and Budget. FoSP has required approval by a majority of the Board for any expenditures. Paul T said most of what FoSP spends is for ad-hoc asks, which recently have been for research. Chris H expressed an interest in defining or better describing what FoSP is purposed to do. When asked, Chris said she appreciates the energy Paul S puts into the health of the Park. She suggests the Board discuss how to move forward. Paul T referred to the Mission Statement which is broad in focus. He observed that tasks and expenditures arise and fall without having a constant focus. All agree that FoSP needs to be open, flexible. Joyce mentioned that the Stewardship program at SP is among the strongest in the city.

GSP Oak Management. Tim's plan has been mailed out but not yet read by the Board. Paul T suggests a group of interested people consider the plan and then meet with Tim Billo, Green Seattle Partnership and others interested. Paul T and Chris talked about the difficulty of removing St. John's Wort (technically Aaron's Beard). Paul S wishes to speak against removal of Doug Firs.

500 Year AI Plan. Liz reminded us of Paul Shannon's proposal for developing a 500 Year Plan for managing SP as a forest which is also a park. She described a plan produced by ChatGPT, shared with the Board by email. Liz offered this as a draft format and type of plan FoSP could develop.

Paul S mentioned the origin of his idea for developing a 500-year plan, referencing an interaction years ago with an indigenous forester who mentioned having been involved in 1000-year planning for thousands of years. This prompted him to envision making a long-range plan for our park.

Paul S also mentioned that there are ~60 people involved in work parties for the Park; these people are involved and more might become involved in more should they know where FoSP is headed.

Liz suggested one possible utility of a 500-year plan: with an ecological framework the plan could be used to guide sourcing and survival of plants used for restoration. Paul S mentioned that Parks does not monitor survival but FoSP has begun to do so. He suggested FoSP develop an Adaptive Vegetation Management Plan within which survival and other data track health of the forest. Paul S suggested that a new, adaptive VMP be developed that is shorter and more strategic than the prior one which was more prescriptive.

Paul T mentioned he is working on a re-issue of the SP book but suggested we could also produce some smaller pamphlets on individual topics might reach more people. General discussion of having a walking map with brief information behind certain locales be created, using a template Paul S has, and information gathered and put together by volunteers (next summer?). Chris mentioned making sure these resources be accessible to a diversity of visitors, perhaps also in several languages.

Paul S pulled us back to creation of a new Forest Management Plan, suggesting it could also be used as the context for creating education pieces. He also observed that there are many, and different kinds of people who join in “fun things to do” so our job may be to create these activities to keep engaging caring people. Chris suggested that we develop a framework describing the purpose and type of activities, at the very least to share with and attract potentially interested participants in SP’s work.

Other business. Chris said she would look like to invite the lead of Pacific Northwest Trails to visit the Park, in particular to share with her knowledge of the fern die-off.

The meeting was adjourned at 11: 18 am.

The next FoSP meeting is scheduled for February 14, 2026 (second Saturday of the month) at 9:30 am.