

**2002 Annual Report
of the
Open Space Commission
City of Bainbridge Island**



March 20, 2003

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Introduction

On November 6, 2001, almost 70 percent of Bainbridge Island voters approved \$8 million in general obligation bonds to pay the costs of “acquiring or otherwise preserving forested areas, open space, wildlife habitat, farms and agricultural lands and creating new trails and passive parks....” In December 2001, the City Council approved seven Bainbridge Island citizen volunteers to serve on an Open Space Commission (OSC) to help the City government carry out this mandate. The OSC began its work with its first meeting in early January 2002.

By the end of its first year of operation, the OSC had drafted an operating plan; developed a process for identifying and reviewing open space properties, including developing draft selection criteria; asked for and received more than 70 property nominations; reviewed all property nominations and identified those that showed the greatest promise of public benefit; recommended two properties for acquisition by the City; and continued review and follow-up work on the remaining high priority properties.

This report summarizes the OSC’s activities in 2002, its first full year of operation.

Commissioners

Andy Maron (Chair)
Dwight Sutton
Connie Waddington
Tim Bailey
Leonora Cross
Dave Shorett
Lisa Macchio

I. OSC Preliminary Activities

A. Developing a Process for Evaluation and Acquisition of Open Space

During the first five months of 2002, the OSC developed an operating plan and selection criteria (see Appendices I and II) to screen and evaluate properties that were being considered for protection as open space. Although the OSC reviewed and, where appropriate, borrowed from already developed criteria such as those used by the Bainbridge Island Land Trust and Kitsap and San Juan counties, the OSC tailored the selection criteria to meet the specific requirements of the open space bond levy. As part of the development process, the OSC sought comment on both the operating plan and the selection criteria from the public.

The operating plan spelled out how the OSC would identify potential open space properties, review those properties, and make recommendations to City Council for purchase or other actions to protect open space. In its selection criteria, the OSC identified five categories of open space – farms and agricultural land, waterfront properties, natural areas, trails and trail systems, and any other properties. The criteria established a numerical rating system for all properties, as well as factors for which properties could receive bonus points, *e.g.*, a property owner's willingness to lower the price of a property. To encourage the nomination of properties for open space consideration, the OSC also created a standardized nomination form (see Appendix III) and an information sheet on mechanisms to protect open space other than property purchase (see Appendix IV).

B. Review and Evaluation of Potential and Nominated Open Space Properties

In June 2002, the OSC began actively soliciting nominations of properties for consideration as open space. The public was asked to submit property nominations by July 7 so that the OSC could evaluate as many open space properties as possible at one time. The majority of the nominations were submitted by August 2002 although the OSC continued to receive property nominations through December 2002.

At year-end, the number of nominated properties totaled 72. The nominations included properties in all categories. Most of the nominated properties were generally located in the center and southern parts of the island. Relatively few properties had been nominated on the north end of the island. The OSC agreed to actively encourage property nominations in the north end during 2003.

In July and August the OSC completed an initial review of all property nominations received. Because more than half the properties had been nominated by someone other than the owner, OSC members contacted all property owners to determine their interest in having their properties

considered for open space protection. A number of owners were not interested in having their properties considered for open space. Other properties were already owned by a public entity. These properties were therefore removed from active consideration.

Each of the remaining properties was assigned to a Commissioner for further evaluation. Based on the additional information collected, as well as scoring/rating the properties, the OSC prioritized properties into groups 1, 2, and 3. Priority 1 properties were properties that showed promise of significant public benefit. Priority 2 properties were those that generally met the Open Space criteria but did not appear to promise the same level of public benefit as Priority 1 properties. Priority 3 properties were those properties that were no longer under active consideration for a variety of reasons – for example, the property was already owned by a public agency.

To gather additional information about the Priority 1 properties, the OSC asked the owners and/or supporters of the Priority 1 properties to make short presentations to during the regularly scheduled OSC public meetings. The presentations on individual properties began in September and continued through the remainder of the year. The commissioners also visited each of the Priority 1 properties in preparation of rating the properties using the selection criteria. In four instances, the OSC recommended that the City proceed with property appraisals.

In December, the OSC again reviewed the entire list of nominated properties as well as the Priority 1 properties. Based on this review and the results of further evaluation, two properties were removed from the Priority 1 group and one property was added. At year-end, the Priority 1 properties included eight agricultural and farm properties, 25 forest properties, one waterfront-forest property and two trail system properties.

II. Acquisition of Properties

In January 2002 two properties were brought to the attention of the OSC through the Bainbridge Island Land Trust (BILT). BILT had a history of successfully helping to preserve open space on the island and was already talking with the owners of both properties about preserving their land as open space. One property was already on the market for sale. BILT had obtained a no-cost option to purchase the other property, but the option was scheduled to expire within the first six months of 2002. In light of these circumstances the OSC agreed to expedite the review of these two properties.

The first property, which was under option to BILT, was a waterfront property consisting of four adjacent lots of approximately one-half acre on Rockaway Beach Road. The second was a 12-acre parcel of waterfront and forested property on the north side of Eagle Harbor, known as the Hall Property.

OSC commissioners toured both properties and formally evaluated them using the Open Space

selection criteria. In both cases, the OSC recommended that the property receive a formal appraisal to determine fair market value. MAI appraisals were ordered through Re-Solve, a firm with extensive Bainbridge Island land appraisal experience. Acting on behalf of the City of Bainbridge Island, BILT entered into separate negotiations with the owners of both these properties. In each case, the negotiations resulted in agreement on a lower price than the initial offering price. Accordingly, in July, the OSC recommended that the City purchase the Rockaway Beach property (see Appendix V); in October, the OSC recommended that the City purchase the Hall property (see Appendix VI). The two properties are described below.

A. Rockaway Beach

Four small waterfront lots near Blakely Rock were the first parcels the OSC recommended to the City Council for Open Space purchase. The property is relatively small (approximately 0.47 acre) and consists of a small upland bench adjacent to Rockaway Beach Drive that gives way to about 200 feet of beachfront facing eastward. It is the single remaining undeveloped parcel on Rockaway Beach.

At first glance, the property appears unimpressive, but the OSC's evaluation revealed this site to be a unique parcel. The property consists of a small upland bench adjacent to Rockaway Beach Drive. The southern portion of the property contains a flat grassy area which sits atop a rocky outcrop rising about 10 feet from the water's edge. The northern portion allows for easy access to shallow waters by divers and kayakers. An unobstructed and quite spectacular view of the City of Seattle, the Cascade Range and Mount Rainier, and the marine traffic in Puget Sound can all be had from this property.

The appraised value of the property was \$585,000 – below the initial offering price by the property owner, who then lowered the asking price to the appraised value. Accordingly, in August the City Council accepted the OSC's recommendation to purchase Rockaway Beach for \$585,000. Rockaway Beach was acquired by the City of Bainbridge Island on August 28, 2002, and an opening ceremony was held September 28, 2002.

On October 6, 2002, volunteers from the diving community, the Rockaway Beach neighborhood, and the broader Island community spent several hours removing Scotch broom and other invasive, nonnative plants from the newly purchased property. Under the direction of a volunteer coordinator from Exotic Aquatics, the volunteers removed dead branches from trees, mowed grass, and hauled three truckloads of yard waste to the Vincent Road Transfer Station. Members of the diving community, neighbors and other island residents have made a commitment to continue active volunteer stewardship of this property.

B. Hall Property

The second property recommended for open space protection was the Hall property, a 12-acre

parcel of land bordered on the north by Wing Point Way and on the south by Eagle Harbor. Extending from a heavily-wooded upland, it slopes steeply downward to a sandy beach on the northern shore of Eagle Harbor. From any point along the 600 feet of beach, a visitor has views of the Wyckoff property on the southern shore of the harbor, the activities of the ferry terminal, and boaters, including sailing classes. On clear days, the vista includes a striking view of Mount Rainier.

The shallow slope of the beach, together with its southwest exposure, makes the beach a great place for beach walks and wading. Inland from the marsh is a narrow berm, the result of long-ago efforts to place a road across the wetland. The berm now serves as a nature trail, providing filtered views of the harbor, as well as a place of discovery of various flora and fauna. A narrow trail from the beach crosses the berm and inland wetlands, and then climbs the hill through mixed forest and emerges on Wing Point Way.

The relatively large size of this property, the mixture of forest, wetlands and waterfront, the significant size of the flat sandy beach, as well as its location, (within walking distance of many neighborhoods in Winslow) – all made this a particularly attractive property for open space protection. In making its recommendation to City Council, the OSC was mindful of the need for open space in areas of high population density.

At the request of the City, BILT purchased an option on the Hall property in July. The option was extended from the end of September to November 15 to allow time for completion of the appraisal. The appraisal estimated fair market value of the property between \$750,000 and \$800,000. Negotiating on behalf of the City and the OSC, BILT reached an agreement with the property owners to buy the property for \$785,710 – more than \$100,00 below the original asking price of \$899,000. On October 16, the City Council accepted the OSC's recommendation to purchase the Hall property for \$785,710, subject to a satisfactory Phase One Environmental Assessment. The Hall property was acquired by the City of Bainbridge Island on November 20, 2002.

III. Stewardship for Acquired Properties

Early in the year, as the OSC began developing its operating plan, Commissioners recognized that stewardship would be an important factor in the success of the Open Space Program. Early drafts of the operating plan included detailed descriptions of stewardship requirements. However, some commissioners pointed out that stewardship responsibilities would vary significantly among different open space properties, depending on the nature of the property and its intended use. For example, stewardship responsibilities for a working farm would be significantly different from those for properties that were part of a trail system or for a waterfront property with a high bank. Accordingly, the OSC chose to include a general policy statement about the need for stewardship of open space properties in its operating plan. In response to public comment, this general statement was expanded to include steps for the development of a stewardship plan for each open space property.

In August 2002, when the OSC recommended purchasing Rockaway Beach, City Council members raised a number of questions about the stewardship requirements for this property. OSC members responded to the Council's questions. In October, when the OSC recommended purchase of the Hall property, the recommendation included a section outlining short-term stewardship responsibilities for the property, including the signs, access, parking, and trail construction and maintenance.

In the fall of 2002, staff members of the City's Planning and Public Works Departments asked Commission members to help develop a mechanism to make sure significant stewardship issues were identified before property recommendations were sent to City Council. In November, Mayor Kardonow convened a meeting of staff representatives from the City of Bainbridge Island, City Council members, OSC members (including Chair Andy Maron), and representatives of the Park District to discuss stewardship of open space properties. Chair Maron agreed that the OSC would develop a short-term stewardship plan for every property it recommended, and would seek input from City staff on stewardship issues. By year-end, the OSC had completed first drafts of short-term stewardship plans for Rockaway Beach and the Hall property.

IV. Management and Financial Report

A. Management Issues

OSC Commissioners brought a wide variety of expertise and experience to the task of identifying, reviewing and recommending properties to be protected under the Open Space Program. Nonetheless, it was clear from the outset that some elements of the work would need to be supplemented by outside consultants, both paid and volunteer, working on clearly defined assignments. The Open Space bond levy provided that up to 7 percent of bond levy funds could be used for administrative expenses, including contract work.

The OSC also recognized the need to obtain an objective appraisal on every property under active consideration for open space protection through purchase or other action, such as purchase of development rights. To that end, the OSC recommended contracting with a MAI appraiser to obtain appraisals on four properties (Rockaway Beach, Hall, and two additional properties under active consideration).

Several nominated properties were located close to each other and close to land already owned by the City or the Park District. The nomination of these properties, as well as follow-up discussions with the owners of neighboring properties, opened up the possibility of creating a network of trails. During the OSC's review of these properties it quickly became clear that creating these trail networks would involve negotiations with multiple owners on a variety of actions not limited to outright property purchases. This task appeared to be beyond the scope and expertise of individual commissioners. Accordingly, the OSC recommended that the City contract with a consultant (Open Space Resources, Inc.) to research and negotiate with individual property owners the most cost-effective package of actions to create these trail systems. At year-end, the

contract with Open Space Resources was expected to be signed in early 2003.

The terms of two commissioners – Lisa Macchio and Leonora Cross – expired December 31, 2002. Both agreed to be considered for a second term. Upon the recommendation of OSC Chair Andy Maron, Mayor Darlene Kardonowy sent the nominations of Ms. Macchio and Ms. Cross to the City Council, which confirmed the reappointment of both commissioners for three more years. Their new terms expire December 31, 2005.

B. Finances

The OSC spent \$1,406,575.94 (approximately 18 percent), of the \$8 million bond levy, in 2002. The bulk of expenditure – \$1,382,437.93 was for acquisition of the two open space parcels - Rockaway Beach and the Hall property.

Expenditures: 2002

Capital Projects/Property Purchases	\$1,382,437.93	(17 percent of total \$8 million bond levy)
Supplies	1,790.68	
Salaries	9,436.25	
Appraisals/Reviews	7,085.00	
Advertising	1,029.00	
Legal	2,191.00	
Administrative Costs	2,606.08	
Total	\$1,406,575.94	(18 percent of total \$8 million bond levy)

The vast majority of the Commission's 2002 expenses were the cost of purchasing two open space properties – Rockaway Beach Park and the Hall property. That amount totaled 17 percent of the \$8 million bond levy. The remaining expenditures for support and administration totaled 1 percent of the \$8 million bond levy.

Although all seven Commissioners serve as unpaid volunteers, their success depended on staff assistance to handle administrative work, including preparation of minutes and other record keeping, correspondence, contracting, coordination among OSC members, and other essential tasks. Salaries for staff support totaled \$9,436.25. Administrative costs included expenses such as fees for videotaping the public forum in May 2002, production of maps and aerial photographs of nominated properties, notices of public meetings, and posting minutes and other OSC information to the City's web site. Supplies included a four-drawer filing cabinet for record storage, paper, binders, labels, photographs and general office supplies.

Appraisals and reviews of properties are essential to ensure the City pays a fair market price for

any properties it purchases. Appraisals and reviews accounted for \$7,085.00. Advertisements were published in the *Bainbridge Review* requesting nominations of properties for possible open space protection. These advertising expenses totaled \$1,029.00.

Legal services in connection with the Open Space Program totaled \$2,191. This cost was reduced because some legal services were provided at no cost to the City by volunteers from the Bainbridge Island Land Trust.

V. The Public Process

Throughout the year, the OSC continued to apprise the public, the Mayor and the City Council of its activities and progress in reviewing available open space. The Commission's operating plan includes a section on how the OSC will keep the public informed of its activities and invite public input and comment.

All OSC meetings (held the second and fourth Tuesday of each month) are public, and the agenda for each meeting specifically includes an opportunity for public comment. During 2002, public attendance at regular OSC meetings varied greatly. Most meetings attracted no more than five members of the public. However, during the property presentations public attendance greatly increased. One such meeting attracted well over 50 members of the public.

In May 2002, the OSC held a special public forum specifically designed to solicit public feedback on the Commission's operating plan and property selection criteria. In addition, the OSC requested comment on several specific policy issues. For example, the OSC sought public input on whether it would be acceptable to maximize use of open space funds through alternative means, such as the purchase of conservation easements and development rights. In addition, the Commission asked for comment on the relative importance of public access to protected properties, such as farms; the importance of geographic distribution of properties, and the significance of protecting a variety of kinds of open space, *i.e.*, forests, waterfront, farms, natural areas, and other open space areas. The public forum was videotaped and broadcast several times over Bainbridge Island Broadcasting in order to solicit the broadest possible range of public input.

In general, the public comment supported the OSC's operating plan and selection criteria. Commenters suggested changes that would clarify particular aspects of the operating plan. In particular, several commenters emphasized the importance of developing stewardship plans for open space properties. As a result, the OSC amended its operating plan to provide more detail about the actions OSC would take to promote responsible stewardship of public open space. All changes were made prior to the active solicitation and review of potential properties.

In June, the OSC advertised in the *Bainbridge Review* soliciting nominations of properties to be considered for open space protection. The Commission also sent requests for nominations to island public and private organizations, as well as local real estate brokers. Announcements

requesting nominations were posted on local bulletin boards. In response, the public nominated more than 50 properties by the initial deadline of July 7.

Also in June, the Commission added its own web page to the City of Bainbridge Island web site. Information about the Commission's activities, including its operating plan, property nomination form, and evaluation criteria, is available on this web site. The agenda and minutes of OSC meetings are also posted on this site.

Throughout the year, the OSC continued to receive input from the public through e-mail messages, letters, comments at public meetings, or discussions with individual commissioners. Many e-mail messages from the public either nominated additional properties for open space consideration or expressed opinions – both for and against – acquisition of various properties under consideration for open space protection. In addition, comments received by the OSC through all media generally addressed two points: (1) the public supported protecting a mix of open space – farmland, forest, natural areas, waterfront; and (2) if possible, the public wanted to see open space properties geographically distributed on the island.

In addition to encouraging public comments on its activities, the Commission also provided updates on the Commission's activities to the Mayor and City Council. In reviewing property nominations with City Council at year-end, the Commission noted that it was actively considering properties in all categories of open space. However, relatively few properties had been nominated in the northern section of the island. The Commission reiterated its desire to consider additional property nominations throughout 2003 with special emphasis on new nominations in the northern part of the island.

VI. What's Ahead for 2003?

In 2003, the OSC will face a number of challenges. The most significant continues to be how best to use the remaining open space funds to protect properties that will provide the greatest benefit and best value to the Island. To that end, the OSC will continue its review of Priority 1 properties and begin or continue negotiations on those that appear most promising. The OSC will also give a thorough review to any newly nominated properties to determine whether they qualify as Priority 1 properties. In particular, the OSC will encourage nominations of properties in the northern third of the island. When additional review shows that a Priority 1 property no longer merits that designation, the OSC will reclassify that property to a lower priority. Additional review may also show that some Priority 2 properties deserve a higher priority.

The OSC will also continue to work with City staff and/or the Park District to identify stewardship concerns for properties under active consideration for recommendation to City Council. In some cases, stewardship concerns may be so significant as to argue against making a recommendation. In such cases, a Priority 1 property may be downgraded or eliminated from consideration. As in 2002, the OSC will write short-term stewardship plans for each piece of acquired property. As part of the plan for each property, the OSC may recommend that ultimate

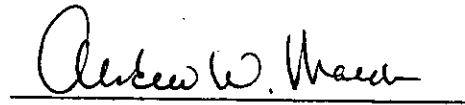
responsibility for stewardship be retained by the City, contracted to an outside party, or transferred to another government body, such as the Park District.

Stewardship plans are likely to prove most difficult to develop for farm properties. In 2003, the OSC will work to clarify how the City can best manage farmland acquisitions. At year-end 2002, several agricultural properties were under active consideration for acquisition.

The biggest challenge for the Open Space Commission, however, will continue to be how to get the biggest bang for the buck – how to stretch Open Space funds to maximize open space protection on Bainbridge Island. The Commission's activities in 2003 will focus on meeting that challenge.

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Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Andrew W. Maron", is written above a horizontal line.

Andrew W. Maron
Chair