Seattle Center Advisory Commission Meeting
September 3, 2026 | 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.
Ivar's Acres of Clams
Adopted

ATTENDEES

Commissioners:	Mark Dederer, Michael George, John Olensky, Lara Mae Chollette, Eric Pettigrew, Sarah Rich, Ashley McClaran
Absent Commissioners:	Stacey Hutchison, Matthew Mead, Will Ludlam, Sally Bagshaw, Adriane Musuneggi, Matt Roewe, Eric Berlinberg, Gloria Connors
Seattle Center Staff:	Randy Engstrom, Rose Ann Lopez, Marc Jones, Vi Nguyen, Tiffani Melake, Chelsea Riddick-Most, Kaori Kiyono
Guests:	Sarah Marino, Bob Donegan

Welcome/Review & Approve the August Meeting Minutes – Mark Dederer*, Chair*

- The meeting lacked a quorum and decided to move approving minutes to next month.

Public Comment – *Mark Dederer, Chair*

No public comment

Director's Report – *Randy Engstrom, Acting Director*

After-Action Review Work

- An after-action review session was held with 25 staff members regarding the July 26 incident.
- The finalized after-action review report is currently with the Mayor's Office to be sequenced with Seattle Police Department and Fire Department reports.
- Rose Ann Lopez, Director of Campus Operations, will serve as the executive sponsor for implementing ten recommendations across eight different work streams by early December.
- Key themes for improvement include enhanced security planning, standardized incident response roles, crisis communication protocols, and institutionalizing staff training.
- Seattle Center will share the after-action report executive summary with commissioners and resident organizations within the next couple of weeks.
- We will conduct a tabletop exercise with all affected parties in early December to prepare for the New Year's Eve event.
- We will walk the safety review subcommittee through the detailed after-action report and discuss its components.
- A tabletop exercise is planned for early December to prepare for the New Year's Eve event.
- Mayor's Office is providing a one-time allocation for safety and security enhancements.

Community Outreach and Resident Organization Feedback

- Sarah Marino, Advancement Director from the Seattle Center Foundation, explained that they conducted individualized, one-on-one outreach to every partner organization on campus following the incident.
- Feedback from resident organizations highlighted a need for better communication during crises and improved lighting in certain areas of the campus.

- The Foundation used feedback from these conversations to direct community response funds.

Budget

- The upcoming budget, expected around September 22, is positive and going to support waterfront growth and bond planning. It is also expected to include a healthy investment in public safety despite broader city deficits.
- Commissioner Eric Pettigrew suggested sending a formal letter of support for Seattle Center's 2027-2028 budget to the Mayor and the Council Chair, and the commissioners in attendance agreed.
- The commission plans to dedicate specific time to review the budget and decide on a formal response strategy.

Bond Planning

- Seattle Center is preparing for a significant bond campaign, potentially a 1.5 billion dollar measure, for the August or November ballot next year.
- Michelle Caulfield has been hired to lead the bond planning effort for the department.
- Director Engstrom proposed forming a commission committee focused on real estate development, planning, or public sector financing to support this work.
- Seattle Center must balance long-term construction needs with maintaining revenue targets and campus accessibility during a multi-year build.

Commission Leadership Transition & Goal Setting – Randy Engstrom, Acting Director
Mark Dederer, Chair

- Director Engstrom addressed the upcoming transition of leadership as Mark Dederer concludes his tenure as Chair.
- Will Ludlam is set to step into the role of Chair, and the commission needs to formally nominate a new Vice Chair.
- Potential candidates for Vice Chair include Sally Bagshaw and Gloria Connors, though their interest has not been confirmed.
- Members shared personal reflections on Mark Deter's long-term commitment and significant impact on the Seattle Center Advisory Commission.

World Cup Report – Campus & Waterfront – Chelsea Riddick-Most, Director of Programs & Events
Tiffani Melake, Waterfront Operations Manager

Campus Activation Strategy

- The strategy focused on using the mural amphitheater screen as an "anchor" to draw crowds for home games. To increase retention, the team implemented "spectacles" such as stilt walkers, drone shows, and hot air balloon show.
- City funding was utilized to bring in entertainment and artists because local organizing committee funds were unavailable.
- The team prioritized talent with built-in fan bases who agreed to social media collaborations to elevate Seattle Center's visibility.
- The team worked with partners like KEXP and the Seattle Children's Museum to build a weekly program. While visitors used facilities heavily, they did not spend much money at campus vendors, though merchants in the Armory performed well.
- The campus saw over one million visitors, including 600,000 unique new visitors, representing a 12-13% increase.

Waterfront Park

- Waterfront Park successfully pivoted to host activations starting in January despite a late identification as a site. Key activations included:

    - A floating barge connected to Pier 62 (active for 26 days)
    - Match day activations at Pier 62 (10 days) and Pier 58 (June 19 and July 6)
    - Crowd management at the Overlook Walk, which became a major viewing beacon despite safety concerns regarding ingress and egress.
- The park saw significant growth, with visitation increasing by 36.8% between June 11 and July 6. Specific high-traffic dates included:
    - June 19 – USA vs Australia: Approximately 84,000 visits.
    - July 6 – USA vs Belgium: Almost 100,000 visits (the highest recorded)
- While the waterfront saw massive crowds, there were challenges regarding people bringing items into the park rather than leaving them.
- While restaurants and deli services saw some success with beer and grab-and-go items, managing large-scale crowds in restricted spaces like the Overlook Walk remained a logistical difficulty.

Guest Speaker - Bob Donegan, President of Ivar's & Member of the Central Waterfront Oversight Committee

- Bob Donegan reported that unique visitors to Waterfront Park reached 8.35 million last year, with a goal of 10 million this year.
- Business performance during the World Cup varied, with retailers seeing massive increases while some attractions saw decreases in attendance.
- Donegan highlighted concerns regarding homelessness and the need for continued funding for social service providers like Reach Northwest.
- He identified a critical need for more public parking near the Seattle Aquarium to accommodate families.

Good of the Order – *All*

- N/A

1:32 p.m. – Meeting adjourned