

2012 King County Parks Levy Task Force

July 17, 2012 Meeting Summary
As approved by Task Force on July 24, 2012

Levy Task Force Members Present: Shiv Batra, Leslie Betlach (representing Terry Higashiyama), Leda Chahim (representing Gene Duvernoy), Julie Colehour, Karen Daubert, Mike Deller (representing Roger Hoesterey), Terry Lavender, Joey Martinez, Gordon McHenry, Jr., Matthew Pruitt, Charles Ruthford, Chukundi Salisbury, Jim Todd.

Levy Task Force Members Absent: David Burger, Hilary Franz, Al Isaac, Louise Miller (co-chair), Sili Savusa, Kathy Surace-Smith (co-chair), Justin Vander Pol, Jeff Watling (co-chair).

Parks and Recreation Division Staff and others present: Bob Burns, Deputy Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP); Megan Smith, Environmental Policy Advisor, Executive Office; Katy Terry, Assistant Division Director, Parks and Recreation; Don Harig, Parks Resource Manager; Jerry Hughs, Parks Finance Manager; Monica Leers, Parks CIP Program Manager; Helen Subelbia, Parks Program Manager; Frana Milan, Parks Program Manager; Cristina Gonzalez, Parks Deputy Finance Manager; TJ Davis, Parks Program Manager; Jennifer Lehman, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget; Tim O'Leary, DNRP; AJ McClure, Aide to Councilmember Julia Patterson; Karen Reed, meeting facilitator; David Schaefer, Woodland Park Zoo (WPZ); Lynn Claudon, WPZ; Jennie Proby, Executive Director, Sammamish Rowing Association; Rob Nist, Co-Director, Ravensdale Park Foundation (RPF); Scott Serpa, Co-Director, PRF.

Summary:

Karen Reed convened the meeting at 4:05pm.

Ms. Reed led introductions of everyone present and reviewed the agenda for the meeting. Members approved the previous meeting's summary notes as presented but noted a misspelled name which will be corrected.

Katy Terry gave a brief recap of the previous meeting, including a description of the division's operating and capital funding sources and funding options for operating parks. Ms. Terry noted that the Task Force is being asked to make recommendations about future funding for the division. The division is providing information about a variety of funding ideas and options for consideration by the Task Force. The goal is for the members to have the information they need to be able to make an informed decision about what options should be recommended for funding and why.

Ms. Terry provided an overview of the division's capital project accomplishments funded by the 2008-2013 Open Space and Trails Levy, including trail development projects (such as the repaving of the oldest segment of the Burke-Gilman Trail, and the completion of the Redmond segment of the East Lake Sammamish Trail), and the acquisition of open space critical to the preservation of regional watersheds and streams (such as at Bass Lake Natural Area and Cougar Mountain).

Ms. Terry then provided an overview of the division's Community Partnerships and Grants (CPG) program and welcomed representatives of two partnerships to speak about their CPG projects. Jennie Proby of the Sammamish Rowing Association (SRA) described the SRA program and how the new boathouse at Marymoor Park, partly funded by CPG support, will help the organization to better serve the rowing community. Rob Nist and Scott Serpa, both of the Ravensdale Park Foundation, described the partnership with the division which resulted in resurfaced soccer and baseball fields at Ravensdale Park; they noted that CPG partnerships allow for quick and efficient construction of recreational facilities and that the community takes greater ownership of the facility when they have been involved in the project.

Monica Leers presented information on the current condition of the division's maintenance and recreation facilities. She discussed the need to fund a variety of major maintenance projects (such as at Marymoor Park, the King County Aquatic Center (KCAC), and Dockton Park) in order to address safety needs, meet regulatory requirements, and otherwise preserve the public's investment in these assets. She noted that many of the division's maintenance shops are in serious need of repair or replacement. The system's existing regional trails require major maintenance to deal with erosion of pavement, sink holes, cracking, potholes and drainage issues, all of which pose user-safety concerns. She noted that there are 72 bridges and trestles in the system, some of which are 100 years old and all of which require inspection every four years. Other facilities, including playground structures and parking lots, also require regular on-going maintenance. Ms. Leers noted that the Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) revenues are the only funding currently available to the division to take care of these capital and major maintenance issues.

Task Force members asked a number of questions about the information presented, including: revenue generated at Marymoor Park and the KCAC as compared to their operating costs; the process of allocating CPG grants; and the process by which the Open Space and Trails levy is allocated to the cities and for open space and trails development.

Ms. Terry reviewed historical funding for the division's capital program, including the steep decline of the REET revenue and the introduction of the Open Space and Trails Levy funding, and provided a snapshot of what resources would be necessary to protect and preserve the system on the long-term basis. Ms. Terry identified a number of items that the division could potentially address through

increased capital funding including: funding major maintenance issues, such as at Marymoor Park, the KCAC, maintenance shops, bridges and trestles, and other needs; funding continued development of the regional trail system, including building missing links, redeveloping existing trails to current standards, and connecting to various jurisdictions' systems; funding acquisition of regional open space towards the division's long-term vision of preservation and conservation of natural lands; continued support of the CPG program to continue to build strategic partnerships to address gaps in programming and recreation opportunities; and funding two legacy trail projects—development of the BNSF trail corridor and the Lake-to-Sound Trail corridor. The combined cost of these various projects would equate to an 8.3 cent levy.

Task Force members asked a number of questions about the information presented, including: whether feedback from survey efforts indicated need for new parks; whether geographic equity considerations have driven property acquisition decisions; general timeframe for completing the Lake to Sound Trail; consequences and options around the number of levies that the Task Force might propose; whether funding was considered for forest restoration; and additional breakdown of the funding options.

Jerry Hughs provided a handout produced by the Office Performance, Strategy and Budget, on recent historical sales and property tax revenue levels. He noted outstanding questions about junior taxing districts and noxious weed funding which will be answered in coming weeks.

No public comment was given. Ms. Reed noted that the next meeting would include presentations by current recipients of levy funding, including two cities' representatives and the Woodland Park Zoo.

Ms. Reed adjourned the meeting at 6:05pm.