

2012 King County Parks Levy Task Force
August 7, 2012 Meeting Summary
As approved by Task Force on August 28, 2012

Levy Task Force Members Present: David Burger, Leda Chahim (representing Gene Duvernoy), Julie Colehour, Karen Daubert, Mike Deller (representing Roger Hoesterey), Donald Harris¹, Terry Higashiyama, Terry Lavender, Joey Martinez, Matthew Pruitt, Chukundi Salisbury, Kathy Surace-Smith (co-chair), Jim Todd, Justin Vander Pol.

Levy Task Force Members Absent: Shiv Batra, Hilary Franz, Al Isaac, Louise Miller (co-chair), Charles Ruthford, Sili Savusa, Gordon McHenry, Jr., Jeff Watling (co-chair).

Parks and Recreation Division Staff and others present: Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP); Megan Smith, Environmental Policy Advisor, Executive Office; Kevin Brown, Director, Parks and Recreation Division; Katy Terry, Parks Assistant Director; Jerry Hughs, Parks Finance Manager; Frana Milan, Parks Program Manager; Cristina Gonzalez, Parks Deputy Finance Manager; Tricia Davis, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget (PSB); Jennifer Lehman, PSB; Alan Painter, DNRP; Tim O'Leary, DNRP; David Schaefer, Woodland Park Zoo; Shelley McVein, City of Bellevue; Karen Reed, meeting facilitator.

Summary:

Co-Chair Kathy Surace-Smith convened the meeting at 4:05pm and led introductions.

Karen Reed reviewed the agenda. Members approved the previous meeting's summary notes as presented. Ms. Reed noted that the next Task Force meeting has been moved from August 21st to August 28th. Additional meetings are scheduled for September 11th and 25th. Ms. Reed noted that meeting handouts included a report from the King County Rural Forest Commission with a request for additional funding for the county's forestry efforts.

Kevin Brown reviewed the vision of the division and shared two maps with the group that showed how this vision can be implemented. The first map showed the acquisition area priorities to achieve a network of connected parks and open space across the county. The second map showed the vision for a completed Regional Trails System. Mr. Brown then provided additional detail for the operating and capital options presented thus far, noting for each option the consequences of providing lower funding or no funding. Task Force members asked a number of questions, including: will the survey gauge residents' priorities; how the King County Fair was previously funded; if Parks had received FEMA reimbursement for storm damage this year; if drug seizure monies support

¹ New Task Force member

vandalism/graffiti removal; and, how the county was working with cities in the development of the BNSF rail corridor.

Jerry Hughs presented funding options available to generate future funding for the parks system, and spoke about the conditions and limitations associated with each option. The options presented included: special districts (parks and recreation district, parks and recreation service area, metropolitan parks district) each with separate taxing authority and requiring multiple steps to create, the county's General Fund, property tax lid lifts (both constrained by I-747 and indexed to inflation), annual excess property tax levies, excess levies for capital purposes (bonds), "REET 3," grants and business revenues.

Task Force members asked a number of questions, including: which areas of the county would be taxed and serviced by the various options; the seniority of various taxing districts and ramifications to the division if taxing authority is suppressed; and, about the viability of some of these options.

Tricia Davis of the Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget further discussed the county's General Fund, including: what it currently supports; recent and projected deficits; cuts in General Fund support for human services, parks, the arts, safety and justice systems; and ways the county has found savings, including employees foregoing COLA and taking furloughs in recent years. She emphasized that the General Fund cannot further support parks without making other significant cuts into what is mandated by the state for counties to provide.

Kathy Surace-Smith opened up a conversation with the Task Force inviting all members to participate. Task Force members deliberated next steps and various themes, such as whether survey data should drive what the Task Force recommends in terms of viability; the need to communicate a levy in terms of cost per household for increased clarity; including funding the Woodland Park Zoo and the cities in future discussions; the impact and fairness of asking the unincorporated areas to support countywide services and facilities; how to combine resources so that parks agencies across the region are working better together; the role of the Task Force in determining a funding tool and revenue levels to recommend; and further separation of funding options in order to ensure that at least the existing system is funded.

Task Force members asked a number of questions, including: whether the county has made efforts to get additional funding authority from Olympia; whether the division has a preferred option in terms of the funding mechanism to be used and the level of funding to be requested; what has been done to contain the division's expenditure growth; requesting information on how other service levies (particularly but not exclusively for parks) have fared on regional ballots recently; how the size of the options on the table compare to the funding limits of the various funding mechanisms discussed today; requesting more information on the 4-H program and the King County Fair; and further information on support for parks generally.

No public comment was given. Ms. Reed noted that the division would present findings of survey data at the next meeting and the Task Force members would have further chance to deliberate.

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