

2012 King County Parks Levy Task Force

October 2, 2012 Meeting Summary—Draft

Levy Task Force Members Present: Julie Colehour, Karen Daubert, Mike Deller (representing Roger Hoesterey), Donald Harris, Terry Higashiyama, Gordon McHenry, Jr., Louise Miller (co-chair), Matthew Pruitt, Chukundi Salisbury, Jim Todd, Justin Vander Pol.

Levy Task Force Members Absent: Shiv Batra, David Burger, Leda Chahim (representing Gene Duvernoy), Hilary Franz, Al Isaac, Terry Lavender, Joey Martinez, Charles Ruthford, Sili Savusa, Kathy Surace-Smith (co-chair), 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; 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; A.J. McClure, Councilmember Patterson staff; Shelley McVein, City of Bellevue; Leslie Betlach, City of Renton; David Schaefer, Woodland Park Zoo; Bong Santo Domingo, DNRP; Karen Reed, meeting facilitator.

Summary:

Co-chair Louise Miller convened the meeting at 4:10pm.

Co-chair Miller reviewed the agenda. Members approved the previous meeting's summary notes as presented. Karen Reed reviewed the consensus items to date and those items that still required a vote. Kevin Brown answered questions from Task Force members regarding funding components still under discussion, including questions regarding whether the consensus package includes current levels of Community Partnerships and Grants (CPG) funding; how the forestry stewardship component is different from the CPG component; and whether the White Center Teen Program could provide increased services through contracts with local non-profits.

Task Force members commented on funding components still requiring a vote including: the value of the White Center Teen Program's anti-violence programs; the value of the CPG program specifically for smaller parks; that a trails-focused package of funding enhancements and connections could include some support for the University of Washington's (UW) request for funding of the portion of the Burke-Gilman Trail that runs through campus; while the UW request is a reasonable one, perhaps this levy is not the most appropriate mechanism for support, given their unique ability to fundraise; that the Tennis Outreach Program (TOPs) did not include enough information in order to consider funding through this levy.

Ms. Reed introduced the proxies for absent Task Force members, each having given earlier notice and preferences for voting. During the evening's voting, Kevin Brown served as proxy for David Burger; co-chair Miller served as proxy for Al Isaac and for Terry Lavender; Gordon McHenry served as proxy for Charles Ruthford; Katy Terry served as proxy for co-chair Kathy Surace-Smith; and Karen Daubert served as proxy for Leda Chahim.

Ms. Reed then led Task Force members through the process of voting on the remaining components: funding for the division's forestry stewardship; additional funding for the White Center Teen Program; additional funding for the CPG program; support for the UW Burke-Gilman Trail project; support for TOPS; and support for the Tateuchi Center. Of these proposals, only additional funding for the CPG program secured consensus support (specific vote tallies can be found in the document, "Funding Components Worksheet-Final").

Ms. Reed asked Task Force members if they wanted to consider increased flexibility for the funding that is intended to be allocated to the cities. Members commented that the cities are not asking for increased funding but are requesting increased flexibility, in order for levy funds to support other capital uses, such as major maintenance and capital enhancements (e.g. conversion of ballfields to synthetic turf) — so that the funding uses would still be consistent with the overall goals of their recommended package of "more and improved" open space, trails and facilities. Members voted unanimously in favor of recommending increased flexibility in the use of the funding by cities.

Ms. Reed reviewed the new consensus amount of 19.01 cents and confirmed that the modeling for these rates assumed a six-year, Consumer Price Indexed (CPI) property tax levy lid-lift. Members voted unanimously in favor of including the 19.01-cent consensus package for their recommendation to the Executive. Members also voted unanimously to recommend that the County again use a 6-year inflation adjusted levy lid lift funding mechanism. Members deferred the decision to recommend a certain number of levies to be placed on the ballot, given that the Executive will have access to additional data before his office transmits a recommendation to Council. Members indicated willingness to reconvene in order to provide additional direction to the Executive on upcoming decisions.

Members identified key themes to be included in the letter to the Executive including: the recommendation is truly a regional package, intended to continue to make connections to the regional trails and open space systems; funding for this package is crucial given climate change issues, population growth and associated traffic congestion concerns, the need for safe pathways to schools, and considering the obesity epidemic; these investments today substantially help secure our region's future quality of life; there are important and substantive economic benefits to properly maintaining a regional parks and recreation system; equity concerns and desire for healthy communities and active lifestyles underlie the consensus recommendation; this recommendation supports filling in gaps in underserved areas, in terms of both socioeconomic concerns and open space connectivity, the Woodland Park Zoo, clean water and a healthy regional ecosystem; there is value to

residents that King County is not moving toward a model of “pay to play” like the state; everyone benefits from increased protection of open space across the region.

Ms. Reed noted that she would draft the report for Task Force members and provide ample opportunity for members to review before transmittal to the Executive by mid-November. Parks staff collected signatures for the final report and committed to keeping Task Force members updated on progress through the Executive Office and Council phases of the process. Mr. Brown and co-chair Miller thanked Task Force members for their valuable time, hard work and insight throughout the summer’s Task Force meetings.

Ms. Reed adjourned the meeting at 5:55pm.