

2012 King County Parks Levy Task Force

June 26, 2012 Meeting Summary
As approved by Task Force on July 10, 2012

Levy Task Force Members Present: Shiv Batra, David Burger, Karen Daubert, Terry Higashiyama, Mike Deller (representing Roger Hoesterey), Al Isaac, Gordon McHenry, Jr., Louise Miller (co-chair), Joey Martinez, Charles Ruthford, Kathy Surace-Smith (co-chair), Jim Todd, Justin Vander Pol.

Levy Task Force Members Absent: Julie Colehour, Gene Duvernoy, Hilary Franz, Terry Lavender, Matthew Pruitt, Chukundi Salisbury, Sili Savusa.

Parks and Recreation Division Staff and others present: Fred Jarrett, Deputy County Executive; Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP); Kevin Brown, Director, Parks and Recreation; Katy Terry, Parks Deputy Director; Don Harig, Parks Resource Manager; Jerry Hughs, Parks Finance Manager; Monica Leers, Parks CIP Program Manager; Debbie Udydz, Parks Human Resources Manager; Jessica Emerson, Parks Enterprise Team Manager; Frana Milan, Parks Program Manager; Cristina Gonzalez, Parks Deputy Finance Manager; Macile Assink, Parks Finance Officer; Hazel Bhang Barnett, Parks Project Manager; Rosanna Snyder, Parks Project Manager; Tricia Davis, Budget Supervisor, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget (PSB); Carolyn Duncan, DNRP; Tim O'Leary, DNRP; Karen Reed, facilitator; David Schaefer, Woodland Park Zoo.

Summary:

Karen Reed convened the meeting at 4:10pm.

Christie True and Fred Jarrett gave opening remarks, including welcoming and thanking the newly-appointed Parks Task Force members for their participation. Mr. Jarrett noted the dependence of the Parks and Recreation Division on the levy, indicating that without a funding replacement, the parks system would be closed. He emphasized the need for the honest opinions and recommendation of members to the King County Executive and Council, as the county's parks system has a tremendous impact on the quality of life of county residents.

Ms. Reed led introductions of everyone present. She reviewed the mission of the Task Force, which the members accepted as presented. Mr. Jarrett noted its alignment to the King County Strategic Plan, in which the Equity and Social Justice goals and principles are embedded, and the need for the Task Force's recommendation to reach the Executive's Office by September 2012. Ms. Reed then discussed ground rules for Task Force meetings, which the members approved as presented. Ms. Reed also noted Public Record Act requirements, indicating that county email has been assigned to each Task Force member which should be used for email correspondence.

Kevin Brown discussed the history of the division, including the division's 2002 business transition plan and its ensuing vision and major lines of business. He described the system, including 200 parks, 26,000 acres of open space, and 175 miles of regional trails. He provided a snapshot of the division, including the entrepreneurial efforts of the division toward increasing business revenues by five percent each year.

Jerry Hughs gave an overview of the division's funding, including the two property tax levies which fund operations and maintenance and acquisition of open space and trails. He described the division's financial history, including the decline of support from the county's General Fund and the importance of levy revenues to the system to date. Mr. Hughs then explained the impact of the loss of General Fund support and low levy revenues, leading to the elimination of the division's local aquatics programs and the county fair, and lowered day-to-day maintenance.

Mr. Hughs then described the division's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and its major goals and funding sources. He noted that levy revenues help fund acquisition of open space and regional trail development. Other funding sources are used for rehabilitation and "major maintenance" of existing Parks facilities, including primarily Real Estate Excise Tax revenues, which have dropped by 83% since 2007, because of both the recession and a series of annexations .

As a member of the Parks Levy Citizen Oversight Board (COB), Justin Vander Pol presented the COB's role in determining whether levy revenues are spent consistently with the levies' requirements and making policy recommendations on future expenditures. He noted that the COB has been satisfied with how the division has spent levy revenues and that the COB members have submitted an annual report to the Executive and Council. He also described policy recommendations made to the Executive, which can be found in the COB's annual reports.

Mr. Hughs then gave a description of how a typical property tax levy works and what funding would be required in order to fund the current Parks system in the future, assuming current levels of service. He also noted that solely assuming a five-cent levy in the future would require division expenditures cuts by one-third.

Division staff answered members' questions about levels of service, benchmarking and metrics, and the effects of deferred maintenance on the system's infrastructure and ability to provide services, among others. Ms. Reed described the next meeting's agenda, which is to include a presentation by the Executive's Budget Director and a presentation on the division's current levels of maintenance.

Ms. Reed adjourned the meeting at 6pm.