

2012 King County Parks Levy Task Force

August 28, 2012 Meeting Summary
As approved by Task Force on September 11, 2012

Levy Task Force Members Present: David Burger, Leda Chahim (representing Gene Duvernoy), Karen Daubert, Hilary Franz, Terry Higashiyama, Roger Hoesterey, Al Isaac, Terry Lavender, Joey Martinez, Gordon McHenry, Jr., Louise Miller (co-chair), Matthew Pruitt, Charles Ruthford, Chukundi Salisbury, Kathy Surace-Smith (co-chair), Jim Todd, Justin Vander Pol, Jeff Watling (co-chair).

Levy Task Force Members Absent: Shiv Batra, Julie Colehour, Donald Harris, Sili Savusa.

Parks and Recreation Division Staff and others present: Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP); 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; Alan Painter, DNRP; Carolyn Duncan, DNRP; A.J. McClure, Councilmember Patterson staff; Ian Stewart, EMC Research; Mike Deller, Trust for Public Land; David Schaefer, Woodland Park Zoo; Shelley McVein, City of Bellevue; Jenny Schroder, City of Kirkland; Susan Costa, Tennis Outreach Programs Board of Directors; Josh Kavanagh, Director of Transportation, University of Washington; Karen Reed, meeting facilitator.

Summary:

Co-Chair Louise Miller convened the meeting at 4:05pm and led introductions.

Karen Reed reviewed the agenda. Members approved the previous meeting's summary notes as presented.

Two organizations provided public comment. Susan Costa from Tennis Outreach Programs, a local nonprofit, described their interest in receiving levy support for a new tennis center that could be built in south King County to serve low-income groups. She noted that the project meets the goals of the King County Strategic Plan and the Equity and Social Justice initiative. She requested that the Task Force formalize a process in order to ensure fair consideration for possible levy funding of other projects.

Next, Josh Kavanagh from the University of Washington (UW) described a project to upgrade the 1.7 miles of the Burke-Gilman Trail owned by the UW. The project will cost between \$30M and \$40M; the UW has already secured some federal and local match funding. He requested that the Task Force include levy funds for the project. Task Force members asked several questions about the trail project, including: why does the project cost so much (it includes two overpasses); request for more information about the separation and overpass portions of the project; and a request for more information about the current partnership with the City of Seattle.

Task Force member Roger Hoesterey, who is Senior Vice President at The Trust for Public Lands, described national trends regarding support for ballot measures to fund acquisition and maintenance of public parkland. He noted that while the most recent recession has affected the number of measures placed on the ballot and their associated rates of approval, the measures' likelihood of passing increases when it is shaped with an understanding of what the public is willing to support. He noted that measures including several items to which residents/voters can relate tend to garner wider support. Mr. Hoesterey responded to Task Force members' questions, including: the extent to which organized opposition to past ballot measures has affected rates of approval; balancing between local and regional parks; types of items that increase likelihood of a ballot measure passage; whether the broad theme of regional trail development and open space acquisition is enough to connect to the voting public; and public appetite for maintenance funding support.

Ian Stewart from EMC Research presented the findings of a telephone survey the firm recently conducted on behalf of the division to gauge residents' levels of favorability for a variety of possible parks and recreation facilities and projects. In general, the survey found that:

- The King County Parks system draws excellent ratings, higher than the ratings for King County government generally.
- The Woodland Park Zoo (the Zoo) and Marymoor Park have high favorability ratings, while the Interurban trail and Cougar Mountain Park are not well recognized.
- There is overwhelming support by all geographic sub-regions of the county for operations and maintenance and parks, yet there is more varied support between Seattle residents and the residents in other parts of King County for capital projects.
- Survey respondents indicated that: they place greatest importance on open space acquisition (particularly when referencing water quality and habitat preservation), the Zoo, and distributing funding in ways that improves equity in parks and recreation access.
- Residents place medium importance on funding for major maintenance needs and improving levels of service; they placed least importance on funding for larger projects, including the development of the Lake-to-Sound and BNSF trails.
- When asked about specific dollar amounts for three levels of possible service (including basic operations, enhanced operations and capital funding), survey respondents indicated highest levels of support for the funding for basic operations.

Mr. Stewart noted that given the survey results, he believed that a ballot measure proposing a package that cost somewhere between the amount needed for the basic operations and the enhanced operations scenario could have a great deal of support. Mr. Stewart responded to Task Force members' questions, including: how the demographics for those surveyed compares to likely voters; and how the dollar levels included in the survey questions relate to the cost of the various funding options presented to the Task Force to date.

Ms. Reed asked the Task Force members present to each describe: their individual priorities in terms of outcomes of the Task Force effort, and their outstanding questions and concerns. The results of this conversation are summarized in Appendix A to these meeting notes.

Ms. Reed and Ms. Miller led a discussion to define how “consensus” would be determined in regards to making a recommendation to the Executive. The Task Force members amended the Ground Rules to provide that: (1) “consensus” would be determined by 80 percent of members present (given that a quorum is present); (2) voting by conference call is acceptable; and (3) a proxy or alternate’s vote is also acceptable if the facilitator has been notified in advance of the proxy.

Ms. Reed noted that the next meeting would take place on September 11, 2012. The meeting was adjourned at 6:05pm.