

**DRAFT** Minutes  
Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee  
October 23, 2006

**Committee Members Present:** Russ Brubaker, Chair; Alan Alabastro, Lisa Chun, Gwen Colwell, Doug Dunham, Don Harper, Terry Holme, Cheryl Klinker, Joyce Moty, Alec Stephens

**Staff:** B.J. Brooks, Deputy Superintendent; Carol Everson, Susan Golub, Peter Lagerwey (SDOT), Michael Shiosaki,

**Committee Business:** The meeting agenda was approved, as were the minutes, as amended, from the September 25, 2006 meeting.

**Public Comments:** There were none.

**Trails Briefing**

Peter Lagerwey, the supervisor of the Seattle Department of Transportation's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, provided the Committee with an update of the trails projects that are funded by the Levy. He began his briefing by describing the Bike Plan for the City that is currently being developed. One focus of the Plan will be to connect the various trails that enter the City from all corners; connecting them to form an integrated system is the goal. Connections that need to be made, and that are not currently funded, are the Burke-Gilman Trail missing link between Fred Meyer and the locks; connecting the Burke-Gilman Trail to the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail; and connecting the Chief Sealth Trail to downtown.

The Pro Parks Levy provides \$6,150,000 for the following trails.

**Burke-Gilman Trail 60<sup>th</sup> to Golden Gardens:** Planning for this section of the trail should be completed by Feb. 2007 with construction to occur in 2007.

**Lake Union Ship Canal Trail:** The three stages of this project are 1) moving utilities; 2) moving railroad tracks; and 3) trail construction. The project is on track and trail construction is scheduled for 2007.

**Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail:** This is a joint project with the Washington State Department of Transportation. While there is not enough money for the entire project, the trail will be constructed in phases, with the Pro Parks Levy money spent on the first phase. Construction of the trail will start in late 2007 or early 2008.

**Chief Sealth Trail:** This project is moving ahead, with parts of the trail unofficially open. The task now is to control access at 22 road and driveway crossings where posts are being put in and ADA access is being provided. There will also be a new signal at Holly Park Drive and Othello.

**Potlatch Trail/ Thomas Street Overpass:** This overpass will provide a connection from Lower Queen Anne to the waterfront. Because of additional funds provided in the 2007 budget, the bridge over the railroad tracks will extend over Elliott Avenue.

Committee member Joyce Moty asked how much money is in the transportation levy that will be before the voters in November. Mr. Lagerwey responded that the levy includes \$6 million per year, for nine years, for pedestrian and bicycle improvements, divided about evenly between the two.

### **Development Projects Update**

Michael Shiosaki, manager of Pro Parks Levy Development, briefed the Committee on the status of development projects. Of the named projects in the Levy, 54 have been completed, as have 9 of 23 Opportunity Fund development projects; for a total of 63 completed projects.

Recent bids have come in under the estimated budget, including an irrigation project at the **Arboretum** which came in \$300,000 under the estimate, and the **Loyal Heights** lighting project which came in \$100,000 below the estimate. The concrete strike which occurred this fall delayed some projects that had been scheduled to be completed in 2006. A January or February 2007 completion is now planned for: **Loyal Heights, Ella Bailey** (Magnolia Elementary) and the **Laurelhurst Community Center**. The Montlake Community Center is on schedule and will be completed in December.

One project has had a change in budget. A small street end park, the **7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast Street End** (at Northlake) has required the addition of \$86,000 from reserve funds, to supplement the original budget of \$204,000. Without the reserve money, the project, which includes a wide sidewalk and bulkhead repair, could not be accomplished.

A project with a schedule change is **University Heights**, where no progress has occurred towards acquiring the site from the Seattle School District. The same situation exists with **Crown Hill Elementary**. There has been no School District decision regarding the disposition of these buildings, and therefore, no progress on developing the property into a park.

Committee member Alan Alabastro asked whether the funds allocated for University Heights could be transferred to another location. Mr. Shiosaki responded that for a named project to be abandoned the Committee would have to vote in favor of this change and the final decision would be made by the City Council. Parks is not close to abandoning University Heights yet.

Committee member Don Harper asked what the status was with the Dexter Pit project. Mr. Shiosaki commented that this project was proceeding in a different manner from most projects, as Parks is working with the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs and planning to have an artist as the lead for the project.

Committee member Terry Holme asked about the status of the athletic fields at Magnuson Park, particularly regarding the timing of the bid documents. Mr. Shiosaki responded that the City Council has asked questions about the field funding during the budget process that is currently underway, but so far there has been no action that would

delay the project. The plan is for the project to go to bid with the five funded fields combined as one project.

Committee member Gwen Colwell asked what remained to be completed at John C. Little Park and whether signage would be part of the project. Mr. Shiosaki stated that the project had been completed; but that since the completion occurred after the September 30 date of the report, it did not show up as such on his handout. Signage will be added on Othello, but the funding is not from the Levy.

Committee member Cheryl Klinker asked what happened with project money that does not get spent; for example, when a project is completed under budget, where does the extra money go? Mr. Shiosaki stated that the funds often stay with the project. For example, with the Arboretum, irrigation is one element of a larger Levy funded project, so the money will remain dedicated to the Arboretum. This is the same situation with Loyal Heights. If all funds are not spent when the full project is completed at a park, then the money goes into the fund balance.

### **Budget Briefing**

Carol Everson, Parks Finance Division Director, briefed the Committee regarding budget issues the City Council is considering that are Levy related. She announced there would be a public hearing before the Council on Monday, October 30 at 5:30p.m.

At this point, City Council staff have identified a number of issues for the Council to consider. From this preliminary list, the Council will choose which ones they want to pursue further. There are 3 Parks related Operations and Maintenance issues:

- Center City Parks funding;
- Late Night Recreation; and
- Pro Parks Levy facilities – transition to General Fund.

**Pro Parks Facilities:** The Levy includes funding to maintain and operate new facilities that are built as a result of the Levy. When the Levy expires at the end of 2008, this funding will disappear. In 2007, the new facilities costs will be \$2.1 million; in 2008 the new facilities costs are \$2.8 million. To lessen the impact on the General Fund at one time, the Mayor is proposing to gradually offset these costs with support from the General Fund: \$526,000 in 2007 and \$1 million in 2008. Doing so will allow the Levy funds designated for new facilities costs to be stretched out over a longer period, running out in 2010, instead of 2008.

City Council Central Staff identified this funding plan as a budget issue for the Council to consider. Instead of the Mayor's proposal, Council staff is proposing to use surplus Levy program dollars to cover new facilities costs in 2009 and 2010, and not allocate any General Fund to the 2007 or 2008 budget for this purpose. A three-fourths vote of the City Council would be needed to make this change.

Council staff targeted \$240,000 in the Environmental Stewardship category and \$788,000 in the Recreation Program category as the funding source for the new facilities costs. These amounts are Parks estimates of funding that will remain in these categories after 2008. The Environmental Stewardship surplus is primarily a result of a lag at the beginning of the program – things just didn't get up and running as quickly as planned. The Recreation surplus is largely a result of the Learn to Swim program which was forced to go in a different direction than planned when the Levy was developed after the Seattle School District decided not to release 4<sup>th</sup> graders from class time for swimming lessons. Parks plan for the surplus funds is to continue the programming beyond 2008.

Committee member Doug Dunham asked what could be accomplished in 2009 with the \$240,000 remaining in the Environmental Stewardship category. Ms. Everson responded that the Strategic Business Plan the department is developing will evaluate all Pro Parks programs, as well as other Parks programs, and will prioritize which programs should be cut. She noted that the City Council action as proposed would use approximately \$500,000 of the surplus program funds for new facilities costs in 2007, and another \$500,000 in 2008.

The Committee discussed what response should be made to the Council staff proposal to use program funds for new facilities costs. Committee members Dunham and Brubaker stressed the importance of maintaining new facilities. Mr. Harper stated he favored keeping the program funds in the program categories to allow the programs to continue beyond 2008. He noted that within the broad program category were small programs that could well use the funding.

Ms. Klinker stated it was especially important to retain the Natural Area Crews that are funded with the Environmental Stewardship money; one additional crew can have a big impact. Ms. Moty noted that leaving the funding in the program areas eases the transition for those programs to the post Levy era.

Deputy Superintendent Brooks stated that the City Council asked Parks to develop a post Levy (Strategic Business Plan) is underway. The Council staff proposal second guesses this planning process.

Committee member Doug Dunham proposed a motion, seconded by Ms. Moty:

**The proposal to transfer program funds to cover new facilities costs should be tabled until the Strategic Business Plan is completed.**

The motion carried with nine in favor and one abstention. Parks staff will prepare a letter to the City Council in this regard for the Chair, Russ Brubaker, to sign.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30p.m.