

Minutes
Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee
February 25, 2008

Committee Members Present: Doug Dunham, Chair, Alan Alabastro, Cindi Barker, Lisa Chun, Gwen Colwell, Cheryl Klinker, Sharon Lee, Joyce Moty, Alec Stephens

Staff: Kevin Stoops, Susan Golub, Donald Harris, Joelle Ligon

Committee Business: The meeting agenda was approved, as were the minutes from the November 26, 2007 meeting.

Public Comment:

1. Frederica Merrell – Ms. Merrell spoke about the Jefferson Park project and noted that many elements have been removed from the Master Plan for the Park because there is not enough funding. Staging for the project begins next fall and Ms. Merrell urged Parks to think about efficient use of funds – get as much out of on-going, existing projects while they are underway. Jefferson Park serves a broad community. Fund raising is underway for \$750,000 to complete the playground project and the community wants a City match. Also the community is interested in adding a water feature to the Park to recognize the historic presence of water at Jefferson. Ms. Merrell estimated the unfunded features in the plan total \$3.75 million.

Mr. Dunham asked Ms. Merrell to provide the Committee with a prioritized list of the unfunded projects.

2. Sam Star – Mr. Star is a volunteer with Groundswell Northwest, a northwest Seattle community development organization. He asked that some of the Neighborhood Park Development Program funding be allocated to the acquisition of property at 9th Avenue between 70th and 73rd in Ballard. He noted Ballard was identified in Parks Gap Analysis as underserved with open space. The property has a house and small church and the neighborhood would like to keep the church for a community gathering site. A property appraisal is underway.

Donald Harris, Parks Property Manager, stated that the asking price for the property is over \$3 million and that the Levy has \$175,000 allocated for this project.

3. Marianne Powell – Ms. Powell asked the Committee to use funding from the Neighborhood Park Development Program for skateparks, and to especially focus on Roxhill Park and the Delridge Community Center. She noted that Seattle currently has only one skatepark, at Ballard Commons Park, and that the south end of the City is especially in need of one.

4. Morris Wainwright – There were no skatepark projects in the original Levy and skateboarders have been left out of Seattle recreation opportunities. Now there are

skateparks included in some Levy project designs, but no funding available to get the parks built. Please allocate funds from the Neighborhood Park Development Program to skatepark development, especially for a south end park.

5. Jonathan Chicquette – Mr. Chicquette is a disc golf player and described the activity as great for families. He stated the Lakewood Park course may be eliminated. He would like to see a central location for disc golf, and noted the Mineral Springs course is not great.

6. Mira Latosek – Ms. Latosek asked for funding to make Jefferson Park more of a naturalistic park. The current plan and the funding allocations from the Levy are for a lot of infrastructure, such as the electrical system, water pipes, pathways and re-grading. Things that are left out of the plan are amenities such as trees – things that make a park a park. She would like to see more natural areas and water features that would reflect the water history of the park. It is important to retain a link to past history. And the playground needs financial support as well.

7. Mark Holland – Mr. Holland agrees with Frederica and Mira: Seattle needs more land for parks because there is a lack of open space in Seattle. He urged the Committee to finish existing Pro Parks projects before moving to new ones. And a lot of the Jefferson Park master plan is not funded.

Annual Newsletter

Joelle Ligon, from Parks Communication Office, presented the draft Pro Parks Levy 2007 Annual Newsletter. The message from the Mayor focuses on the end of the Levy and the Neighborhood Park Development Program. The message notes that Pro Parks programming funds have now been included in Parks base budget. The Newsletter lists 2007 development and acquisition projects and reviews programming highlights.

Mr. Alabastro suggested showing a “before” picture that would contrast greatly with the “after” picture of Ella Bailey Park. He also commented that he thought the Newsletter looked great.

Ms. Moty suggested including the amount of leveraged dollars that went into the 2007 projects. She also noted that the Newsletter usually lists Committee members.

Mr. Dunham suggested a notation that could direct citizens to more photos of the 2007 projects on the Parks website.

Ms. Ligon stated that the Newsletter would be distributed by mail to the 13,500 Levy mailing list, and copies would be distributed to community centers, libraries, neighborhood service centers, and would be posted on the Parks web site.

Neighborhood Park Development Program

Kevin Stoops, interim Director of Parks Planning and Development Division described the Neighborhood Park Development Program (earlier called the Orphan Park Wish Fund). The Program originally had \$7 million, but the City Council spent \$2 million with the 2008 budget. (Phinney Neighborhood Center, University Heights acquisition, p-patch funding). The money technically is from the City's General Fund, but is being treated as if it is part of the Levy. Parks intent is to stay faithful to the Levy purpose and the previous Opportunity Fund focus. This includes a focus on areas where there are open space gaps, revitalization areas and projects with strong community support.

Parks is proposing criteria for the Committee to use in evaluating projects seeking funding from the Neighborhood Park Development Program. The criteria and projects which qualify are listed below. Mr. Stoops estimated that these projects would cost between \$7 and 8 million.

1. Place the highest priority on development of sites that were purchased in the first round of the Opportunity Fund, but for which no development funding was provided;
 - a) Denny Triangle
 - b) International District.
2. Place priority on full development of projects for which existing Pro Parks funding is limited and additional money is necessary to adequately complete the project;
 - a) Capitol Hill acquisitions – very limited development funding;
 - b) First Hill acquisition – very limited development funding;
 - c) Jefferson Park redevelopment and reservoir lid – lost about \$1.5 million in buying power over the last year and a half.
3. Give consideration to completing additional improvements of a significant scale (at least \$250,000) for parks that were only partially completed in earlier Pro Parks projects;
 - a) Brighton Science Park – elements not completed;
 - b) Martin Luther King, Jr. Park – unable to do any improvements to upper part of the Park which were part of master plan;
 - c) Meadowbrook Playfield – able to make improvements on softball field only, and not on baseball diamond, which had been part of plan.
4. Suggest that projects be of significant size to provide tangible benefits and not create significant maintenance or operational cost increases.

Mr. Stoops noted that some projects that have come later in the Levy, such as Jefferson Park, have seen the buying power of the Levy dollar whittled away by inflation. Some projects have inadequate budgets, such as the First Hill project which has only \$130,000 allocated for development.

Ms. Moty asked whether it would be necessary to extend the work of the Levy beyond December 31, 2008. Mr. Stoops responded that yes, development of the projects funded through the Neighborhood Park Development Program would probably extend through 2009 and beyond.

Ms. Lee stated it would be good for Seattle to get another round of Levy funding, but she is concerned that attention should first be paid to big gaps in current Levy projects. Also, she is concerned about exciting the community regarding the new program since the funding is limited, and it is probably not realistic that new projects, outside the Levy, would get funded.

Responding to a question from Ms. Barker, Mr. Stoops stated the proposed criteria place greatest priority on projects within the Levy, but leave the door open to non-Levy projects. Mr. Dunham stated the Committee does not want an open, Opportunity Fund process, and had voted as such at the November Committee meeting.

Mr. Stephens commented that he does not want a wide open process. He asked what the end game of the Neighborhood Parks Development Program is intended to be, noting that the Program was not appropriate for new acquisition projects. He reiterated Mr. Dunham's comment that the Committee previously voted to restrict the funding to existing Pro Parks projects and stated that we should stick with this.

Ms. Lee cautioned against new acquisitions because the Mayor has expressed his opposition to a new Levy, so where would additional development money come from. Ms. Moty noted that while citizens and the City Council are interested in a new Levy, time may be running out to put one on the fall ballot.

Mr. Stephens agreed, stating that we should assume there will be no future Levy and therefore should not use the money for acquisition. Ms. Lee suggested that if the decision was to allow new projects to apply for funding, we should be clear up front that a percentage will be for existing projects and a percentage for new, perhaps a 70/30 split. Ms. Chun suggested using the application process to limit citizen expectations – make it clear in the process that existing projects would have priority.

Several Committee members, including Mr. Dunham, Ms. Barker, Mr. Stephens, and Ms. Colwell expressed strongly that the funding should be limited to existing Pro Parks projects.

Committee Consensus: The Committee agreed by consensus that allocations from the Neighborhood Parks Development Program be limited to projects within the Pro Parks Levy.

Regarding what the minimum award should be, Ms. Barker suggested keeping the same minimum for all projects, no matter which criterion they fit. A \$250,000 minimum would identify projects with significant gaps.

Motion: Ms. Moty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stephens, to have the minimum award be \$250,000. The Committee agreed by a 9-0 vote.

A question was raised about whether development funding should be made available for acquisition projects that Parks and Recreation will not have control over for some time. For two projects, the International District expansion of Hing Hay Park, and the Denny Triangle acquisition, Parks will not be able to do any work on the property for several years. Ms. Lee stated that the Neighborhood Park Development Program should be a quick, short, clean process, with the money spent on projects that are ready to go. We should not bank the money.

Committee Consensus: The Committee agreed, by consensus, to spend the funds on projects ready to go now, and not on ones that we do not currently control.

The Committee discussed further the process for making recommendations, and concluded that the Committee should have final review of all applications and the timeline for the process should be short, with Superintendent's recommendations by June or July.