

Minutes  
Parks Levy Oversight Committee  
February 23, 2009

**Committee Members Present:** Doug Dunham, Chair, Neal Adams, Cindi Barker, Don Harper, Terry Holmes, Cheryl Klinker, Joyce Moty, Alec Stephens

**Staff:** Superintendent Gallagher, Susan Golub, Donald Harris, Michael Shiosaki, Kevin Stoops

**Committee Business:** The meeting agenda was approved.

**Public Comment:** There was none.

**Status Report on Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee**

Several new projects were completed in the fall of 2008:

- **Burke Gilman Trail Extension;**
- **Lake Washington Boulevard Trail** – addition of plantings and paths;
- **Queen Anne Boulevard** – removed encroachments and completed 2/3 mile of sidewalks;
- **Queen Anne Counterbalance Park** – still working on adjustments to lights;
- **Arboretum Pacific Connections** – significant contributions from the Arboretum Foundation for this project;
- **Orchard Street Ravine** – trail and new plantings added;
- **Mt. Baker Ridge Viewpoint;** and
- **Ballard Corners Park.**

Projects underway include:

- **Magnuson Park Athletic Fields and Wetlands** – The wetlands restoration is 20 acres. The athletic fields will include two baseball fields, two soccer fields and one rugby fields (also available for soccer). While working on this project we uncovered significant amounts of Navy junk and a lot of contaminated soil. The Navy will remediate some of the problems this spring and summer. Also, City Light is restoring power to the Park so that we can re-open the restrooms this summer.
- **Morgan Junction** – underway;
- **Myrtle Reservoir** – design work has started;
- **16<sup>th</sup> & Howell** – underway;
- **Thomas Wales** – The Seattle Department of Transportation is requiring curbs, gutters and sidewalks on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue West in front of the Park. This street functions much like an alley, so we are trying to negotiate less expensive street standards. If we have to do all of the street improvements SDOT is currently requiring, it would cut into funding for the Park.
- **Cascade People's Center** – The Opportunity Fund provided money for a new heating system and a new roof. The project has been delayed because we had to hire a new design consultant.

Projects on hold include:

- **Crown Hill** – Later this year will resume design work, with construction scheduled to be in late 2010, after all of the acquisition funding is secured. In the interim, a fire station is to be located at the site.
- **First Hill** – working on acquisition;
- **University Heights** – The total purchase price for the site is about \$7 million, with the park component approximately \$2.6 million. We are trying to get State funding for the project.

Responding to a question from Cheryl Klinker, Mr. Stoops noted that the International District acquisition has been concluded. It is the United States Post Office site adjacent to Hing Hay Park. The Post Office will stay until they can find a new location, or until 2013, whichever comes first.

Don Harper asked about Thomas Wales Park and which aspects of the Park might we not be able to do because of the SDOT requirements. Mr. Stoops responded that if we have to do the full set of street improvements, we would not have funding for the wall, although this is a feature that could be done in phases. Mr. Harper asked about the possibility of using Levy contingency funds to complete the project. He stated that Parks and the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs have wasted a lot of money on this project, so it should be a higher priority to receive contingency funds. He urged putting in whatever funds are needed to complete the design.

Mr. Stoops responded that there is between \$200,000 and \$300,000 contingency funding remaining. There are also several Levy projects that have not gone out to bid and some contingency needs to be reserved for these projects.

Mr. Holme asked for more information about the First Hill Project. Donald Harris responded that Parks has not been able to find the right site at the right price. Property we were pursuing at 8<sup>th</sup> and Madison was too expensive (\$7 million) and it was not an ideal site. We are back looking at the Philippine Consulate site at Cherry and Terry. The Frye Art Museum bought this property recently, but may be interested in selling.

### **2008 Parks and Open Space Levy Overview**

Kevin Stoops provided an overview of the new Levy, approved by voters on November 4, 2008. The Levy is a six year, \$126 million program, largely modeled after the 2000 Pro Parks Levy. The Oversight Committee structure and responsibilities are much the same.

**Acquisition:** The Levy has \$24 million in the Acquisition Program. The funds are to be used in Urban Villages; however, this is probably not enough money to get property in all of the Urban Villages. The nature of Urban Villages makes it difficult to find open space. The expectation is that we will get additional funding through grants to increase the acquisition budget, much as we were able to do with Pro Park acquisitions. The King County Conservation Futures Tax (CFT) program and the State of Washington

Recreation and Conservation Office are two potential sources of grant funding. Our initial task in the Acquisition Program will be to consider where to focus our efforts. Alec Stephens remarked that one of the first challenges for the new Oversight Committee will be to make clear what the criteria are for acquisition. He asked what the impacts might be of the downturn in the City's economy.

Regarding acquisition criteria, Superintendent Gallagher remarked that we will need to develop clear guidelines – with flexibility and creativity. Transfer of publicly owned land to parks use is an option to consider.

Mr. Harris remarked that the CFT program is property tax based, and the assessments remain high. The City should continue to get our “share” of this funding, although he anticipates competition will increase among jurisdictions, because financial pressures have reduced other acquisition funding sources. The City is hoping CFT funds can be allocated to the Webster and Crown Hill acquisitions. He noted that market conditions are in favor of buyers, so there could be some deals – but it has to be good property, suitable for a park.

Cindi Barker noted that the Department of Neighborhoods is beginning work on sector plans and will be assessing where green space is lacking. This could help in Parks efforts to identify Urban Villages for acquisition.

**Green Spaces:** The Levy allocates \$6 million to purchase properties in green spaces, listing major City greenbelts and natural areas as location to focus on.

Terry Holme asked about the process and what the Committee's role will be. Mr. Stoops responded that the City is hoping to use the Levy funds as an economic stimulus and will start some projects this year. Superintendent Gallagher noted that Parks is working with the Department of Finance to “upfront” the Levy money so that we can take advantage of a good bid climate and stimulate the economy. Responding to a question from Mr. Adams, Mr. Stoops described the economic stimulus impact as being public dollars providing work for private contractors, many of whom may be without work in the current economy. Projects that are being selected for an early start are those where planning work has already begun and/or can be done with in-house designers. Projects that may start this year include:

- **Playground Renovation** – five of the playground renovation projects;
- **Athletic Fields** – resurfacing two athletic fields at Lower Woodland Park;
- **Magnuson Park** – new path at 65<sup>th</sup> Street entrance;
- **Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center** – design work; and
- **Queen Anne Boulevard** – continue sidewalk project.

Cindi Barker raised a skateboard park issue. The skateboarding community wants funding for a skatepark at Delridge Park, but the Levy has money for a park at Myrtle. Mr. Stoops stated that a switch in projects from what is specified in the Levy requires

approval by the City Council, but can be considered if the skaters what to reallocate the funds.

The Department is planning to hold four public open houses this spring to inform citizens about the Levy, to serve a Levy kick-off. Site-specific public meetings will occur for each individual project as well.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00.