

Minutes  
Parks Levy Oversight Committee  
March 30, 2009

**Committee Members Present:** Doug Dunham, Chair, Neal Adams, Don Harper, Terry Holmes, Cheryl Klinker, Sharon Lee, Matthew Mega, Joyce Moty, Beth Purcell, Pete Spalding, Alec Stephens

**Staff:** Superintendent Gallagher, Susan Golub, Donald Harris, Chip Nevins, Michael Shiosaki

**Committee Business:** The meeting agenda was approved, as were the minutes from the February 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

**Public Comment:**

**Glenn McGilvra:** Mr. McGilvra spoke on behalf of the Friends of the Belltown P-Patch organization. He spoke in favor of a future Opportunity Fund project that would add square footage to the Belltown P-Patch. He expressed concern that if the property is built out to the maximum that zoning allows it will shade the garden.

**Fredrica Merrill:** Ms. Merrill spoke in favor of the Beacon Mountain Playground project at Jefferson Park. She asked Parks to move up the project into the next Levy appropriation. The design development is complete, accomplished through a Department of Neighborhoods grant. The cost for the project is \$2.3 million. It is a “shovel ready” project that should be pushed forward in the scheduling of Levy projects.

In response to questions from Committee members, Ms. Merrill and staff reported on the overall funding sources for the Jefferson Park project.

**Jefferson Park Funding\***

<b>Amount</b>	<b>Fund Source</b>	<b>Project Element</b>
\$391,000	Major Maintenance	Play area
\$682,160	2000 Pro Parks Levy	Tennis Courts
\$7,536, 189	2000 Pro Parks Levy	Phase 1 Master Plan development
\$80,000	Neighborhood Capital Fund	Play area
\$5,000,000	2008 Parks & Green Spaces Levy	Completion of Phase 1 and Phase 2 Master Plan development
\$1,000,000	2008 Parks & Green Spaces Levy	Skatepark

\* Not all of this information was provided at the meeting; additional information has been added to the minutes in response to questions from Committee members.

**Casey Dietz:** Ms. Dietz, the president of Heron Habitat Helpers, noted there is \$600,000 in the Levy for the Kiwanis Ravine Heron Rookery. The project is “shovel ready” and would be ready to begin after the current nesting season ends. The nesting season is from February through July, and during this period no work can be done in the Ravine.

### Committee Introductions

The Committee spent time introducing themselves, as three new members were in attendance.

### Pro Parks Levy Status Report

Michael Shiosaki, Deputy Director of the Planning and Development Division, reported on the status of the 2000 Pro Parks Levy. Remaining Pro Parks projects include:

- **Myrtle and Jefferson Reservoir Lid Projects:** Seattle Public Utilities is completing the lids for these two reservoirs. Park work will begin when the lids are on, hopefully in the next few months;
- **Capitol Hill project at 16<sup>th</sup> & Howell:** in design; will be bid after additional community fund raising;
- **Capitol Hill project at John & Summit:** in design; community doing additional fundraising;
- **First Hill Acquisition:** looking for a site;
- **University Heights:** purchase underway;
- **Lower Queen Anne Waterfront Connection:** the new Levy adds funds to the Pro Parks project; an overpass across the railroad tracks to the waterfront will be built;
- **Morgan Junction:** almost complete;
- **California Substation/Dakota Place:** under construction;
- **Thomas C. Wales (formerly Dexter Pit):** right-of-way issues between Parks and the Seattle Department of Transportation are being negotiated. Parks is asking for an exemption from street improvements to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue N which functions like an alley in this area. The project will be bid later this year.
- **Green Lake Plaza & Shade Garden:** 75% complete;
- **Orchard St Ravine:** the trail is completed;
- **Japanese Garden Entry:** 90% complete; grand opening May 4<sup>th</sup> 10:00 a.m.;
- **Magnuson Park Athletic Fields and Wetlands:** fields almost done – 3 will be opening at a celebration on April 25; wetlands planted; hazardous clean-up will continue; the remediation contract with the Navy has not yet been finalized;
- **Cascade Park:** roof and HVAC project 85% complete;
- **Junction Plaza:** the Seattle Parks Foundation is helping with additional fund raising; the project is designed as a gathering space for West Seattle;
- **Crown Hill:** the deal to purchase the property from the Seattle School District closed; the Fire Department will be using the site as an interim station location for one year – their use will not conflict with current activities.

Terry Holme asked whether there were potentially any “no-go” projects. Mr. Shiosaki responded that finding an affordable site to purchase on First Hill has been a problem; Superintendent Gallagher added that Parks is still committed to finding a First Hill site. If there is a need to re-direct the funds, the decision will come before the Oversight Committee.

### **Overview of 2008 Parks Levy and 2009 Projects**

The Superintendent described four public workshops the Department will be hosting in early May to inform citizens about the Levy. They will be held in the north, central west and south sectors of the City. Ms. Purcell asked what the purpose of the meetings is, and whether there would be any staff recommendations. She noted that it is helpful to know what you are seeking from the public. Mr. Shiosaki responded that the purpose of the meetings is to share information about the Levy with the public and to find out what neighborhood priorities are. There will not be any staff recommendations. Superintendent Gallagher stated we are initiating a dialogue with the public, hoping to find out their priorities and identify which projects might be controversial.

Committee Chair Doug Dunham asked if the City was planning to lend money to up-front projects – to get more projects started than could be funded with available Levy proceeds. Superintendent Gallagher responded that the Levy revenue will start coming in April. There will be \$24.5 million per year. The Department is front loading projects that are ready to go, and these projects fall within the expected cash flow. Unlike with the 2000 Pro Parks Levy, staff is on board, and some projects are already completely designed. Also, because the City's Real Estate Investment Tax receipts have fallen so sharply, resulting in a loss to Parks and Recreation of \$8 million in Capital Improvement Program funding in 2009, the Department is cutting back on CIP projects, freeing staff for Levy work. The City is not planning to borrow until 2010 or 2011.

A question was raised whether the loss in CIP funding would trigger the Levy ordinance prohibition on supplanting the CIP with Levy funds. Mr. Shiosaki responded that the reduction in CIP is not near the \$12 million minimum set in the Levy ordinance.

Donald Harris, Parks Acquisition Manager, described the Levy Acquisition Program. There is \$24 million in the program and twenty specific neighborhoods are identified to target purchases. The \$24 million is not enough funding to purchase property in all of the neighborhoods, so the Department is establishing priority recommendations for Committee review. Areas that probably will be priorities are Capitol Hill which has experienced significant growth and has a park gap, and the University District, where an addition to the Pro Parks Levy funded purchase at University Heights may be considered.

In addition, the Department is looking to the Levy to fund green connections, using existing City property, especially in neighborhoods where property is relatively expensive such as Downtown, Belltown and First Hill. (Two parking lots on First Hill were valued at \$7 million.) Joyce Moty noted that the Citizen's Committee that worked on developing the Levy program discussed "accessquisition," the idea that publicly owned land, such as streets and schools, could be used for Levy projects.

Regarding the funding for green spaces, Mr. Harris stated that the Levy designates broad areas of focus, and gives the Department discretion to purchase land within these areas. A strategic plan for where the green space focus will be is being developed, and will be brought to the Committee for its review.

Mr. Dunham asked if gaps in park services were being considered in developing acquisition priorities, and if a map showing gaps was available. Mr. Harris responded that staff is working on exactly this and will present the information to the Committee at a future meeting.

Don Harper asked for the study the Department conducted on field turf be sent to the Committee.

Matthew Mega asked how the timing of the acquisition program coordinates with the overall City Neighborhood Plan Update that is underway. Mr. Harris responded that the Plan Updates are focused on transit area development and that there may be a connection in the North Rainier neighborhood.

Mr. Mega also asked if there were priorities for green street connections. Mr. Harris responded that Downtown is the only neighborhood identified in the Levy in this regard. Mr. Holme asked who would be responsible for the maintenance of green streets. Superintendent Gallagher responded that it would be handled on a case by case basis; in some locations streets would become boulevards maintained by Parks and Recreation.

Superintendent Gallagher stated that the Department would be hitting the ground running: the Department wants to take advantage of the current good bid climate and real estate market; and the City is hoping to stimulate the economy with Levy funded projects.

Alec Stephens asked for more information at a future meeting on Urban Centers and Urban Villages: are we limited to acquisitions in these areas and how do green streets fit into this concept. He noted that a Committee retreat might be needed in the future. Ms. Purcell noted that there is a lot of new vocabulary that the Citizens' Committee learned while developing the Levy program. There is a need to understand the concepts of green streets and green infrastructure. Reviewing the resolution that the City Council approved with the Levy ordinance would be helpful.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00.