

Minutes  
2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy Oversight Committee  
May 26, 2009

**Committee Members Present:** Doug Dunham, Chair, Neal Adams, Cindi Barker, Bill Brousseau, Dennis Canty, Don Harper, Terry Holme, Shanon Kearney, Cheryl Klinker, Sharon Lee, Matt Mega, Joyce Moty, Beth Purcell, Pete Spalding

**Staff:** Deputy Superintendent Christopher Williams, Susan Golub, Donald Harris, Chip Nevins, Terry Roche, Michael Shiosaki, Kevin Stoops, Lise Ward

**Committee Business:** The meeting agenda was approved, as were the minutes from the April 27, 2009 meeting.

**Public Comments**

**Donna Hartmann-Miller:** Ms. Hartmann-Miller is the chair of the Friends of Greater Maple Leaf Park, a subcommittee of the Maple Leaf Community Council. She would like the Oversight Committee to amend the Levy Spending Plan to include planning for the Maple Leaf project in the third quarter, rather than the fourth quarter of 2009. Doing so will help get the community fund raising effort started. The goal is to coordinate the park project with Seattle Public Utilities' construction process, so the earlier the planning can start, the better. There is a lot of neighborhood enthusiasm for the project. Also, this reservoir-lidding project has less funding per acre than other reservoir lids, so the community fund raising is critical.

**Glenn MacGilvra:** Mr. MacGilvra works with the Urban Park Project in Belltown. The Levy funding for P-Patches is for preservation of urban gardening. There is a need to protect gardens from development. Density is increasing in Belltown; therefore, the need for open space is increasing. Community gardens are a good model for downtown parks.

**P-Patch Presentation**

SuJ'n Chon and Rich MacDonald from the Department of Neighborhoods (DoN) presented a list of projects proposed for funding through the Levy's P-Patch Program. Projects were selected based on criteria presented to the City Council in 2008, and include a prioritization of development projects over acquisition. Projects were selected that would add gardening space as quickly as possible, and would be located in communities that which are under-served.

The list of projects was initially developed in 2007 by the P-Patch Trust Board, and was to be funded through the City's budget. The difficult economic climate led to the elimination of the funding. Consistent with the direction of the Levy Ordinance, the list includes four projects in West Seattle which is cited as a neighborhood of interest.

A new direction for the P-Patch Program will be launched at Marra-Desimone Park. Plots up to 2,500 square feet will be allocated to farmers who will be selling their produce at local farmers' markets. Designed as a support project for low income farmers,

the farmers' only financial responsibility will be for the water bill. Responding to a question from Beth Purcell, Michael Shiosaki described the earlier, Pro Parks Levy project at Marra-Desimone Park. This project was largely for infrastructure improvements and a comprehensive site plan for the property. In addition, there is a named development project in the 2008 Levy that will continue with infrastructure improvements.

Mr. Harper asked whether the for-profit farmers' project at Marra-Desimone was a good use of Levy money. He does not think this type of program was envisioned when the Levy was developed. Mr. MacDonald responded that Mr. Harper raises a basic philosophical question. DoN's view is that the Levy funding is intended to have a broad reach, to maximize the amount of land in food production. The Marra project does that: local people will be growing food and selling it in community markets.

Committee members asked how the Department of Neighborhoods would prioritize acquisition of new garden property as opposed to the development of existing gardens. Donald Harris responded that enhancement of existing sites was noted by the City Council as a higher priority than acquisition of new property for the Levy P-Patch Program. The criteria for acquisition of neighborhood park space (the subject of a later discussion at this meeting) are separate from the DoN acquisition v. development debate.

Sharon Lee asked three questions of DoN staff:

1. Why are community gardens so expensive?
2. How do you define Special Needs, a criterion listed for some projects?
3. Who will be doing the work for the P--Patch projects?

Mr. MacDonald responded:

1. Some locations, for example, 51<sup>st</sup> and Leo, are particularly expensive because soil remediation is required. This property is being leased at just \$100 per year from the property owner; but, this former water tower site has soil issues that must be addressed.
2. Special Needs is a broad category and includes seniors, immigrants, refugees, and those needing accessible gardening beds.
3. No decisions have been made regarding who will be doing the work to develop the P-Patch sites. Typical park procedures will be followed for all work on Parks and Recreation property. The Conservation Corps is a possibility for hiring out the work – they have been hired for other P-Patch projects.

Dennis Canty asked what the mechanism is for controlling sites, and the general duration of control. Mr. MacDonald responded that memoranda of understanding are developed and generally call of indefinite use of property as a community garden. Some sites have been in garden use for 36 years. For gardens on private property, a five year renewable lease is generally used.

Regarding soil remediation work at the 51<sup>st</sup> and Leo site, Pete Spalding asked whether soil remediation was a good use of Levy funds, and what would happen if additional

contaminated soil is found. Mr. MacDonald replied that a private company surveyed the entire site to locate the contaminated area. The property is particularly big for a P-Patch site (10,000 square feet), making it a special funding case.

Cheryl Klinker noted that the map of existing P-Patches showed a lack of gardens in the northeast and northwest sectors of the City. She asked whether this would be addressed with the Levy program. Mr. MacDonald responded that Ballard is named in the Levy Ordinance as a location to seek a garden. He stated Lake City also needs a garden and staff will be looking at the Levy funds regarding that neighborhood as well.

Several committee members questioned Mr. MacDonald about the need for an overall plan for the entire \$2 million the Levy allocates to P-Patches. Concern was expressed about spending one fourth of the funds without having the big picture/vision for the full program. What future projects might be missed if the \$577,000 on the current list is spent?

Mr. MacDonald responded that DoN has not had time to develop the full Levy P-Patch Program. The current list was developed with extensive public review during an earlier City budget process. Twenty projects are on a list for the next tier of funding, but the project costs have not been developed. A couple of months will be needed to completely develop the big picture.

**Motion:** A motion was made and seconded to recommend that DoN move forward with the John and Summit project funding and table the rest for 60 days.

Matt Mega asked what would be developed with the \$150,000 proposed allocation for the John and Summit project. Kevin Stoops responded that the funds would go for retaining walls, terracing and soil for the new park that is being developed at this location.

Mr. Mega, Sharon Lee and Dennis Canty expressed comfort with the list proposed by DoN, noting that considerable public review went into its initial development and that it included good opportunities for public access.

Mr. Adams asked what the impact would be of delaying for two months. Mr. MacDonald responded that it puts back decision-making, especially for projects such as Hazel Heights and Spring Street which are currently in the planning process.

**Motion:** The motion to recommend that the project list be tabled for 60 days passed, with nine in favor and five opposed.

**Motion:** The motion to recommend that DoN move ahead with the John and Summit project passed, with twelve in favor and two opposed.

Beth Purcell noted that this action by the Committee sets the stage for the future. For all programs, for example, the Forest and Stream Restoration Program, the Committee needs to see the big picture.

## **Project Updates**

Michael Shiosaki, Deputy Director of Parks Planning and Development Division, provided the Committee with an update of Levy development projects that are underway.

Jefferson Park: The lid on the reservoir being constructed by Seattle Public Utilities is almost completed. The bid to build the park on top of the lid came in approximately \$2 million below the engineers' estimate.

Magnuson Park Trail: The project is to construct a trail at the 65<sup>th</sup> Street entrance to the park. The Levy project is coinciding with continued work on the adjacent wetlands area; therefore, Parks was able to include the work as a change order to the wetland project.

Play Areas: Public meetings for five play area redevelopments are underway at the following locations:

1. Atlantic Street;
2. Bayview-Kinnear;
3. Bhy Kracke;
4. Brighton; and
5. John C. Little.

Bids for the projects will be requested in mid-June.

Northgate Urban Center: Phase one of this project is to develop paths, irrigation, drainage and lawns. Construction documents are almost complete and the project is scheduled to go out to bid in July.

Sportsfields: Conversion from a sand surface to synthetic surface will occur at Lower Woodland athletic fields #2 and #7. Construction documents are 65% complete and the project is scheduled to go out for bid in August.

Beth Purcell asked how cost savings for projects would be used, as it was noted that for Jefferson Park the cost savings would provide for additional master plan elements at Jefferson. Mr. Stoops responded that Jefferson is a unique case because the project underway is using Pro Parks Levy and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds. The 2008 Levy money will stay with Jefferson and fund elements of the Jefferson Park Master Plan that were once thought lost because of cost inflation. The new bid climate makes them possible. Mr. Shiosaki noted that the general practice will be to hold the cost savings and discuss reallocation with the Committee.

## **Acquisition Priorities**

Donald Harris reviewed information presented to the Committee at the April 27, 2009 meeting regarding priorities for the Acquisition Program. In the Green Spaces category, seven greenbelt and open space areas are named in the Levy. The goal will be to fill in gaps in greenbelts. An example is a recent opportunity to purchase a house located in the

Mee Kwa Mooks Greenbelt in West Seattle. An in-holding at Carkeek Park is another possibility.

Dennis Canty asked how the acquisition funds will be spent: will it be a flat line as shown in the cash flow chart, or will Parks try to front-load projects as is occurring with the development program. Mr. Harris responded that the goal is to buy property as fast as possible. Economic stimulus extends to acquisition as well as development, and the City needs to move fast in a down market.

Cindi Barker asked why Beach Drive and Wedgwood are listed as priorities for neighborhood park acquisition when they are not urban villages. Chip Nevins responded that these two single family neighborhoods are specifically listed as priorities in the Levy – they are single family areas lacking in parks.

### **Skatepark Funding**

Kevin Stoops presented a proposal to transfer \$250,000 of Levy funds from the Myrtle Skatepark to the Delridge skateboard park project. Delridge was intended for CIP funding, but the money was cut when the real estate market declined. There is good neighborhood support for the Delridge project, while Myrtle created a neighborhood civil war. In addition to the \$250,000 from the Levy, Parks will allocate an additional \$500,000 of CIP project savings to enable development of a 12,000 square foot skatepark at Delridge.

Cindi Barker stated the Citywide Skatepark Plan called for a skatepark in central West Seattle, but was vague about the exact location, with the intent that there would be a community process to select a site. The Levy put the skatepark at Myrtle. She asked that the Department continue looking for opportunities in the future for a skatepark in the central area of West. Seattle.

**Motion:** The following motion was moved and seconded:

The Committee recommends transferring \$250,000 from the Myrtle Skatepark project to the skatepark proposed for Delridge.

Pete Spalding noted he attended the Delridge skatepark meetings and the neighborhood is very supportive, as is the Park Department's Skateboard Park Advisory Committee.

**Motion Vote:** The Committee voted all in favor and none against in support of the motion to recommend transferring \$250,000 from the Myrtle skatepark to the Delridge skatepark.

Mr. Stoops noted the next step is consideration of the funds transfer by the Seattle City Council.

### **Levy Spending Plan**

Kevin Stoops presented projected cash flow for the life of the Levy. Because of the push for economic stimulus, the peak of spending will be in 2010.

Acquisition Program: Although the chart shows a straight line of spending, the Department will be responding to acquisition opportunities as they arise. Also, the expectation is that Levy funds will be supplemented by King County Conservation Futures grant money, State of Washington Recreation Conservation Office grant money, and perhaps other sources that will be sought to help leverage the Levy dollars.

Development Program: Projects off to a quick start include five playgrounds, two playfield surface conversions at Lower Woodland, Jefferson Park, Queen Anne Boulevard and a new trail at Magnuson Park. Projects that will occur in the later years of the Levy include the two reservoir parks, West Seattle and Maple Leaf, which need the reservoir lids built first; Hing Hay Park, where development cannot occur until the Post Office that is currently on the site leaves; and the Asian Art Museum in Volunteer Park where the community is raising \$12 million in private funds to supplement Levy funding.

Inflation Adjustment: Funding allocated in the Levy for inflation adjustments will probably not be needed in the early years because of the good bid climate.

Trails: The Burke-Gilman Trail project will begin this summer; the Potlatch and West Duwamish Trails will occur later in the Levy after planning.

Forest and Stream Restoration: Forest restoration through the Green Seattle Partnership will be front-loaded during the early years of the Levy, with the expectation that the CRS will fund the later years.

The expectation is that because of the economic stimulus plan to start more projects in the early years of the Levy, the Levy fund will be earning less interest than originally anticipated. Grants will provide additional funding; for example, the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center received a \$400,000 grant from the State Recreation Conservation Office to supplement the Levy project.

Responding to a question from Sharon Lee, Mr. Stoops stated, while it is hard to predict, leveraged funds are expected to significantly boost spending for the Levy, expanding project scopes.

Mr. Dunham asked about the plan for the Opportunity Fund, noting that citizens would like the program to begin as soon as possible. Mr. Stoops stated that Levy overhead will fund the Opportunity Fund planning, which will occur in 2010; the projects will begin in 2011.

Joyce Moty asked who is the lead for the Shoreline Access and Street Ends Program. Mr. Stoops responded that the Seattle Department of Transportation is the lead. The overall

program for that program and for the Forest and Stream Restoration Program will be presented to the Oversight Committee at a future meeting.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.