

Minutes
2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy Oversight Committee
July 27, 2009

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

Staff: Susan Golub, Karen O'Connor, Terry Roche, Kevin Stoops

Committee Business: The meeting agenda was approved, as were the minutes, as amended, from the June 22, 2009 meeting.

Public Comments

Donna Harman-Miller: Ms. Miller is the Chair of the Friends of Greater Maple Leaf Park. She invited the Committee to the Summer Social at Maple Leaf Park on Wednesday, July 29.

Bill Farmer: Mr. Farmer is a Phinney Ridge resident and was active in the Levy formation and election campaign. He is interested in the three Levy projects in the Phinney Ridge neighborhood and will be involved with the community to implement the projects.

Project Updates

Kevin Stoops, Director of Parks Planning and Development Division provided the Committee with updates on Levy projects. The Acquisition Program recently completed purchase of three fourths of an acre in the Me Kwa Mooks Park in West Seattle, and made an offer on property in the Duwamish Head Greenbelt. Also, staff member Chip Nevins is meeting with communities in the urban villages to discuss the Levy Acquisition Program.

Mr. Stoops provided the following news of Development Program projects:

- **Jefferson Park:** The project combines funding from the Pro Parks Levy, 2008 Levy and the City budget's Cumulative Reserve Fund. Good bids were received in May, the contractor is on board and the project is underway.
- **Magnuson Park:** A change order to the Pro Parks wetland and ballfield project allowed the new Levy project – a trail at 65th – to begin construction right away. The six foot wide trail will provide a safe link from the sportsfields to the boat ramp. Also at Magnuson, the Navy has begun the removal of contaminants.
- **Queen Anne Boulevard:** The project to provide sidewalks along the boulevard will be underway soon – the contract was awarded in early July.
- **Lower Woodland Playfields #2 and #7:** The work to change the field surface from sand to synthetic is underway at Lower Woodland fields #2 and #7. The goal is to finish the project quickly in time for the fall soccer, lacrosse and ultimate Frisbee seasons.
- **Five Play Areas:** Four play areas have been through the bid process, received good bids and are proceeding: Atlantic Street, Brighton, Bhy Kracke, and John C. Little. The fifth project, Bayview, will have a bid opening July 29.

- Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center: Design work for seismic and electrical improvements is underway; the project will go to bid in early 2010.
- Camp Long Lodge: Design work for a new boiler and kitchen is underway; the project will go to bid in early 2010.
- Chinook Beach: Design work is underway for continued restoration at this beach, which was once a marina. Shoreline restoration began in 2003 and will continue with Levy funding.

Don Harper asked whether the field renovations at Lower Woodland would be following the Use of Synthetic Turf Policy that the Board of Park Commissioners is considering, and he questioned the effect of heat and off-gassing from synthetic fields. Mr. Stoops responded that the Department is using two different synthetic surface types at Lower Woodland; one type is Field Turf that has been used at other locations, and the other is a new type of Astro Turf. Extensive storm water run-off monitoring will occur, consistent with the policy being evaluated by the Park Board. Regarding heat, Mr. Stoops stated that in some warm climates, for example, Southern California, synthetic fields are watered during extremely hot weather. Parks will be testing the synthetic fields for heat impacts.

Responding to a question from Beth Purcell, Mr. Stoops stated that the cost of testing the fields is being paid for by cost savings from better than anticipated bids on the field projects. Regarding the Use of Synthetic Turf Policy, Mr. Holme noted that the Board of Park Commissioners had three months of process on synthetic turf guidelines, including a substantial public process. The Policy requires the Department to rely on King County Public Health to review industry data and changing products. Matt Mega commended Parks and Recreation for monitoring the fields and suggested that this be advertised more, as the community is largely unaware of the monitoring. Mr. Mega has some concerns about the crumb rubber used under the synthetic surface.

Dennis Canty thanked Mr. Stoops for the project updates. Noting that it is difficult to view the individual reports in the context of the overall Levy, he requested material that would help define the full program, such as a master list of projects.

Beth Purcell raised the question of how decisions were being made regarding the use of project cost savings. For example, the cost savings at Lower Woodland are being used for field monitoring, and the cost savings at Jefferson are being used for additional features. Is there a process for deciding the use for cost savings funds? She noted the importance of tracking funds, especially for large projects that may have more than one phase. Mr. Adams concurred, noting that going forward Parks should think about adopting a policy for accruing and allocating excess funds to ensure that there is equity for later projects.

Mr. Stoops responded that, in the short term, cost savings are staying within their project category; staff will get advice from the Committee if there is a proposal to move funds to another category. Responding to a question from Mr. Dunham, Mr. Stoops stated that the decision to use the Lower Woodland funds for field monitoring was in response to a City Council resolution that placed a proviso on the Levy field funding until a review of synthetic turf was completed. Mr.

Adams stated that the Board of Park Commissioners recently recommended approval of a Use of Synthetic Turf Policy which includes a field monitoring provision.

Mr. Spalding requested a spreadsheet showing cost savings and where savings are being spent, if they have been committed to a project. Mr. Harper noted that the cost savings for Jefferson Park are being used for a change order to add features to the project. He is concerned that later projects may lose out if savings are quickly folded back into a project. Mr. Stoops stated that the Levy includes an inflation factor that is designed to account for the increased costs of projects started later. Mr. Canty and Mr. Holme noted that there should be some flexibility or a threshold so that the use of smaller amounts of cost savings could occur without a process. Mr. Dunham stated the issue was one of equity; a concern that later projects may suffer when the economy turns around.

Mr. Stoops noted that project budgets are fixed – staff are instructed not to go over the budget established in the Levy. The budgets include a contingency of 10 to 15% for unforeseen issues. A future meeting will include a briefing on how savings can be moved and spent.

Spray Parks

Mr. Stoops presented the Committee with a recommendation for spending the Levy funds in the Spray Park category. The Levy includes \$400,000 for converting the wading pool at Georgetown Playfield into a spray park. Also included is funding to convert two additional wading pools to spray parks. Parks recommendation is to build new spray parks at Northacres Park and Highland Park Playground.

There are 26 wading pools in the park system. Most are old, WPA era pools. The larger pools at Lincoln Park, Volunteer Park and Green Lake are open every day in the summer. The others operate when the weather is expected to reach 70 degrees or warmer. Wading pools are costly to run: all the pools are staffed with lifeguard-trained staff, the water is chlorinated, and the pools are filled and drained each day. There are spray parks at Pratt Park and Judkins Park, and fountains used as spray parks at Miller, Ballard Commons and John C. Little Park. Spray parks do not have to be staffed and water use is considerably less than use at wading pools.

The recommendation to convert the wading pools at Northacres and Highland Park to spray parks is based on an evaluation which considered:

- Proximity of the existing spray parks;
- Use of the wading pool (highest used pools were **not** considered for conversion);
- Geographic distribution; and
- Optimization of resources.

Northacres in North Seattle rose to the top of the list partly because there are no spray parks in the region and partly because the project could capitalize on the Levy play area renovation also scheduled for the park and achieve economies of scale by doing the projects at the same time. Highland Park is recommended because there is no other spray park in West Seattle.

Cindi Barker asked why the South Park wading pool was not recommended for conversion. Mr. Stoops responded that it was screened out due to the proximity to Georgetown which will be getting a new Levy-funded spray park.

Mr. Dunham asked how much Levy funds were allocated for the conversions. Mr. Stoops said there is \$400,000 for two projects -- \$200,000 for each – and that this is very low. Each project will probably need more funding. Mr. Canty asked whether, given the underfunding, it might be better off to move ahead with just one project, rather than two. Mr. Stoops said the features would have to be scaled down, and that other grant funding may be pursued.

Cheryl Klinker asked why the largest wading pools were not considered for conversion. Mr. Stoops responded that the big pools are very big attractions and Parks did not want to shift the focus of these sites. The wading pools are used mostly by tots and very young children, while spray parks are popular with children up to ten years old.

Mr. Mega asked whether the criteria looked at the issue of underserved, densely developed areas. Mr. Stoops responded that the existing spray parks at Pratt and Judkins and the fountain features at Miller and John C. Little help meet this need. Mr. Dunham noted that Highland Park fits the criterion of serving a needy area.

Ms. Purcell stated that she appreciated the methodology Parks used to prioritize spray parks. She asked what other projects might have offered a similar economy of scale that is available at Northacres. Mr. Stoops responded that Fairmont playfield has a spray park and a Levy play area upgrade, but it is a small park. There really is nothing similar to Northacres.

Regarding the cost issue, Ms. Moty stated the Department of Neighborhoods Matching Fund may be able to help; many Pro Parks Levy projects received Matching Fund grants. She and Ms. Barker suggested possible use of Levy art funds to supplement the spray features. Mr. Dunham asked for a future follow-up regarding the funding issue, and Mr. Holme asked for a briefing on the art plan. Regarding art funding, Mr. Stoops noted that there is no 1% art contribution for renovation/improvement projects, just for new development.

Mr. Harper asked what the community involvement process would be. Mr. Stoops stated the process would occur later, closer to actual project development. Ms. Barker suggested having the community process sooner rather than later.

Motion

Mr. Spalding made the following motion:

Approve the staff recommendation to convert the wading pools at Northacres and Highland Park to spray parks.

The motion was approved with twelve in favor and one abstention.

Opportunity Fund Schedule

At the June meeting the Oversight Committee reviewed two alternatives for scheduling the Opportunity Fund. Based on comments from Committee members, Kevin Stoops presented the Committee with a third alternative (Attachment A). Of the two timelines presented in June, the Committee favored the proposal that most closely matched the process used for the Pro Parks Levy Opportunity Fund, and there was support for moving quickly.

Doug Dunham expressed approval for the proposed timeline, with one exception. He prefers to have the application process in two steps, with the first step a simple one sheet proposal that allows the community to put their ideas forward before completing a long application. He felt the two step process of the Pro Parks Opportunity Fund helped screen projects that clearly did not meet the criteria. Dennis Canty expressed support for a two step process, noting it is a similar format to many grant applications which require a letter of intent as the initial step.

Don Harper stated the proposed schedule does not fit with the Department of Neighborhoods Matching Fund grant application schedule for the Small and Simple awards. Many community groups used the Small and Simple grants during the Pro Parks Levy to develop proposals for the Opportunity Fund. Other Committee members noted that the Small and Simple process occurs more than once during the year, so that there was no need to try and synchronize schedules.

Considerable discussion followed with Committee members expressing support for an initial step in the process that helps the community see where their project fits with the criteria, and provides support in preparing the full application. Consensus was reached that the Opportunity Fund process should include two application steps.

A subcommittee was formed to begin work in August on criteria for the Opportunity Fund. The first subcommittee meeting will be August 24, in place of the regularly scheduled meeting. Volunteers to be on the subcommittee include: Bill Brosseau, Don Harper, Shanon Kearney, Matt Mega, Joyce Moty and Beth Purcell. *[Note: A decision was later made to hold a regular Committee meeting on August 24. The subcommittee will begin its work in September.]*

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Attachment A Proposed Opportunity Fund Timeline

Date/Timeframe	Action
July 2009	PGS Oversight Committee approval of timeline and approach
September 2009	Staff develops draft criteria in consort with subcommittee
October 2009	Criteria reviewed by PSG Oversight Committee/subcommittee
November 2009	Criteria reviewed at PSG Oversight Committee hearing (early Nov)
November 2009	Criteria adopted by PSG Oversight Committee
January 2010	Mail/e-mail announcement flyers, set meetings, post web page
February 2010	Hold four public workshops in late Jan/early Feb
Feb-March 2010	Conduct outreach and provide technical assistance
March 2010	Applications due mid March
April 2010	Staff assistance and follow-up over 6 week period
April 2010	Staff forward initial listing/reviews to PGS Oversight Committee
May 2010	PGS Oversight Committee reviews at two meetings during May
June 2010	PGS Oversight Committee site tours (early June)
June 2010	PSG Oversight Committee Prioritization of projects
July 2010	PSG Oversight Committee holds hearings on prioritization
August 2010	PSG votes on final slate of recommendations
September 2010	Department recommendations to Mayor and Council
December 2010	Council approval
January 2011	Design and construction to follow
February 2011	Brace for the upcoming 2012 process!