

Minutes
Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee
May 21, 2007

Committee Members Present: Doug Dunham, Chair, Neal Adams, Alan Alabastro, Lisa Chun, Don Harper, Terry Holme, Jeff Hou, Cheryl Klinker, Sharon Lee, Joyce Moty, Alec Stephens

Staff: B.J. Brooks, Interim Superintendent; Bill Blair, Colleen Browne, Erin Devoto, Susan Golub, Korie Voorheis, Lise Ward

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

Contingency Status: Korie Voorheis, Parks CIP Manager, reviewed a summary of spending for development projects. Of the original development project budget of \$102,826,024, with 55 projects completed and 35 underway, there remains \$585,874 available contingency funding for the remaining projects in the Neighborhood Parks subcategory. The development project budget is \$100,000 over budget due to a grant that was received for the Cheasty Boulevard project that went directly to the project rather than through Parks budget as had been anticipated. Neal Adams asked what the extra funding for Cheasty was spent on and Ms. Voorheis stated she would provide that information at the next meeting. *[Note: The money went directly to Earthcorps and was used for site restoration.]*

Alec Stephens questioned the format of the chart, saying that the parentheses around each number is confusing, making it appear as if each line item is over budget. Ms. Voorheis said that the parentheses are to indicate a deduction from the \$102 million total. Ms. Devoto explained that each project has contingency funding built into the project budget and that the numbers described by Ms. Voorheis are for the overall program. The contingency is fund balance in the Neighborhood Parks category that is not earmarked for a particular project. There was discussion over whether the format for the chart showing the contingency figures should be revised. Ms. Voorheis will prepare a revision, changing the line item descriptions.

Lisa Chun asked what percentage was allocated for contingency within project budgets. Ms. Devoto responded that the percentage varies based on how complicated the project is expected to be. The usual amount is 15%; for the South Lake Union project, the contingency is 25% because it is a complex project with pilings and a bulkhead. Of the 55 projects that have been completed thus far, less than 10 have required additional Levy contingency funding.

Responding to a question from Mr. Stephens, Ms. Devoto explained that at the end of the Levy when all Neighborhood Park category projects are completed, if there is a fund

balance, the City Council could pass legislation transferring the funds to a different Levy category.

Mr. Harper asked if this process could have occurred for the fund balance that was in the Playfields and Facilities category, which the Committee recommended be allocated to the fields at Magnuson Park, the only remaining project in that category. Ms. Devoto responded yes, the Committee could have recommended transferring the funds to another category, and the Council, by a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote, could have authorized the transfer.

Introduction of Colleen Browne: Ms. Devoto introduced Colleen Browne who is replacing Michael Shiosaki as the Development Projects Manager. Mr. Shiosaki is now the Deputy Director for Parks for the City of Sammamish. Ms. Browne has worked for Seattle Parks since 2001 and has managed the Major Maintenance projects and most recently oversaw the successful Aquarium piling project.

Seward Park Audubon Center: Ms. Devoto informed the Committee about the Audubon project at Seward Park which has been allocated \$90,000 from the contingency fund. Audubon has an agreement with Parks to renovate the Seward Park Annex Building, which Audubon will use to run programs.

The project went to bid in December 2006 and only one firm submitted a bid, and it was \$180,000 over the project budget. The bid was later rescinded. The project was re-bid with a reduced scope and three bids were received, all over the budget amount. The National Audubon Society has pledged to raise additional funds for the project and Parks committed an additional \$90,000.

Mr. Stephens asked what the amount is for the total project budget. Ms. Devoto replied that the original budget was \$1,000,000, with \$325,000 from the Levy and the rest to be raised by Audubon.

Doug Dunham asked for clarification regarding the project budget because the Levy ordinance shows \$618,000 allocated for this project. Ms. Devoto stated that the Levy amount is divided between 2 projects at Seward Park, the building annex and the fish hatchery which has been completed. Regarding the over-budget bids, Ms. Devoto explained that there are 13 projects remaining which have not gone to bid. Most of these are landscape projects which should not have the same budget/bid problems that the Seward Park annex building had.

Laurelhurst Community Center: The renovated, expanded Laurelhurst Community Center recently opened. Ms. Devoto invited the Committee to visit the Center and see what a wonderful addition and renovation was achieved at a beautiful building.

A combination of the concrete strike which occurred in late 2006 and a slow contractor resulted in the project requiring \$87,000 in additional funds.

Acquisition Project Briefing: Bill Blair and Lise Ward, Pro Parks Levy acquisition staff, provided the Committee with an update briefing on the status of acquisitions since the Committee was briefed on acquisitions in January 2007. So far, Levy and leveraged funds have purchased 42.3 acres and 36 additional acres are either in negotiation or closing. There are three categories for acquisition:

- Neighborhood Parks – 15 of 18 names projects completed;
- Green Spaces – 19.2 acres purchased; and
- Opportunity Fund – 9 completed projects, 5 remaining.

Neighborhood Parks: The Levy identified 18 named projects in the Neighborhood Parks category, most drawn from neighborhood plans. These acquisitions help create new parks, add to existing parks, or preserve open space. Of the 18 projects, 15 have been completed, totaling 20.8 acres; one site (Sylvan Way) was abandoned because we were unable to purchase it and it has been developed; and 2 projects remain to be completed. These are East Capitol Hill where we are in the process of purchasing property at 16th and Howell, and First Hill where appraisals are in process for a site at 8th and Madison.

Green Spaces: The Levy provided \$10 million toward preservation of green space. The Oversight Committee recommended 13 of the City's designated green spaces for priority consideration for acquisition and subsequently identified several additional priority green spaces. Property acquisitions have been completed or are in process in all of these green spaces, with one exception. Since the January report to the Committee:

- **NE Queen Anne Greenbelt** – Parks purchased a key inholding below MacLean Park, and the existing house will be removed as part of the acquisition project;
- **St. Mark's Greenbelt** – a third acquisition has been completed;
- **Westlake Greenbelt** – a deal is in process for a key inholding at 8th N & Wheeler;
- 19.2 acres have been acquired to date.

Green spaces in negotiation or planning

- **Longfellow Creek Natural Area** – Parks is negotiating to acquire a site at 28th SW & SW Findlay, which has been held by the Cascade Land Conservancy while we secure grant funding. The project has received \$300,000 from the State Interagency Committee on Outdoor Recreation (IAC) and we are hoping to receive \$300,000 in King County Conservation Futures Tax funds;
- **West Duwamish Greenbelt** – a transfer of jurisdiction is in process for the 23.7 acre Soundway property currently held by Seattle Department of Transportation;
- **Duwamish Head Greenbelt** – working on three sites, including a potential acquisition (property above Salty's Restaurant), a donation (on the southwest side of the Greenbelt), and a transfer of jurisdiction (Admiral Substation);
- **Maple School Ravine** – beginning to work on a transfer of jurisdiction from Seattle City Light;
- **Kubota Garden** – 2 acres purchased and continuing to pursue a potential third acquisition;

- **Arroyos Natural Area** – exploring potential donation in cooperation with the Seattle Parks Foundation; and
- **Harrison Ridge Greenbelt** – we have begun discussions with an owner who has recently listed a property we have been pursuing for well over a decade.

Green spaces on hold

One green space that was identified for consideration for acquisition is currently on hold:

- **North Beach Natural Area** – the property that has been our highest priority is held in a private estate; it is currently unavailable but also is not under threat of development.

Don Harper asked if the City placed any restrictions on the use of greenbelt property. Mr. Blair responded that Greenbelt is a City designation but there is no regulatory meaning or legal restrictions. Many of the greenbelts are also designated environmentally critical areas, a designation which **does** confer development restrictions. Future development at any of the newly acquired properties would include a community process. Development could be similar to what occurred at Trolley Hill Park on Queen Anne.

Opportunity Fund Acquisitions

The Levy provided \$10 million for park acquisition and development projects that were not already included in the Levy, and set criteria for project selection. The Oversight Committee conducted two extensive public process cycles to seek community nominations and recommend projects.

- The first cycle of the Opportunity Fund provided \$5 million for acquisition of 12 sites; and
- The second cycle of the Opportunity Fund provided \$770,000 for acquisition, and targeted two additional sites.

Of the 14 Opportunity Fund projects:

- 9 sites have been acquired or are in closing;
- 5 projects are in negotiation or planning; and
- 2.3 acres have been purchased to date.

Remaining Opportunity Fund sites

- **12th Avenue** – Following several large community meetings, legislation is being prepared to transfer the recommended City-owned site at 12th Avenue & E James Court to Parks;
- **Gateway North** (Georgetown Pump Station) – the environmental issues have been resolved for this City Light property at 8th Ave S, on the eastern shore of Duwamish Waterway, and the legislative process for transfer to Parks is underway;
- **International District** – after a recent and well-attended public meeting, the property adjacent to Hing Hay Park continues to be the preferred site;
- **University District** – Parks’ priority site is the “south lot” at University Heights School and negotiations with the Seattle School District are underway;

- **Denny Triangle** – Parks is in negotiations for a site on Westlake Avenue in partnership with Cornish College of the Arts and a private developer; Parks may also co-locate a second new park with a new City Light substation.

Lisa Chun asked what happens to funding when/if a named project falls through. Mr. Blair responded that it would take City Council action to abandon a named project and reallocate the funds. However, if the funds can be redirected to a project in the same neighborhood, no Council action is required. Responding to a question from Mr. Hou, Korie Voorheis stated that this is the same situation for Opportunity Fund projects.

Don Harper asked if the King County Parks Levy which will be before voters this fall includes any funding for Seattle parks. Interim Superintendent Brooks responded that there is funding for urban trails and for Woodland Park Zoo operations and maintenance.

Terry Holme asked what the timing is for the acquisition at University Heights School. Ms. Brooks stated the City is exploring the situation with 5 schools that the School District is surplussing and expects a School District vote in June with a Mayor's recommendation to follow.

Committee Business

Dexter Pit Project: Don Harper provided an update on the Dexter Pit project. He noted that the project got off to a rocky start but that Parks has responded to the community concerns and has done a good job shifting the project to a better track. The community is working with the artist and landscape architect selected for the project and he believes the community ideas are now being incorporated into the planning.

Mr. Harper remains concerned about how Dexter Pit became an artist-led project. He stated that originally it was “to be considered an artist-led project” and no where has he been able to determine how the decision was made to have the artist be the lead. Ms. Devoto noted that Parks had not focused on what it would mean for a project to have an artist in the lead. In response to the community concerns, Parks has scaled back the scope of the art project.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00.