

Minutes  
Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee  
October 22, 2007

**Committee Members Present:** Doug Dunham, Chair, Neal Adams, Cindi Barker, Don Harper, Terry Holme, Cheryl Klinker

**Staff:** Colleen Browne, Tim Gallagher, Susan Golub, Donald Harris, Kevin Stoops, Christopher Williams

**Committee Business:** The meeting agenda was approved, as were the minutes from the September 24, 2007 meeting, as amended.

**Public Comment:**

**Denise Derr:** Regarding the proposed Opportunity Fund: this funding is unexpected money and can create a legacy project. It should not be broken up into tiny pieces, but should be kept as an opportunity fund so that citizens can come to the Committee to request special projects. One example would be a community center at Smith Cove. This project could include an aquatics center and/or an events center and would have a world class view.

**Sharon LeVine:** Ms. LeVine expressed her excitement at potentially having an extra \$7 million to spend. She agrees with Ms. Derr regarding Smith Cove. She noted that the west yard, owned by the Port of Seattle could be swapped with the ballfield land. She believes strongly that there should be a full, disclosed, open public process for distributing the \$7 million. All citizens should have the opportunity to propose projects. The money should not be spent on maintenance, but should be used to implement a grand vision.

**Joan Sienkiewicz:** Ms. Sienkiewicz lives near Magnuson Park and would like to see the potential \$7 million opportunity fund used to reinstate parts of the Magnuson Park Master Plan that were deleted due to budget cuts. Her priorities include:

1. Restrooms – there are no operating restrooms at the park now, just porta potties;
2. Safe entry for pedestrians and bicycles at NE 65<sup>th</sup>;
3. Trained professionals to monitor wetlands;
4. Building 27 redevelopment; and
5. Senior center at Magnuson.

**Kim Wells:** Ms. Wells has reviewed the Levy Ordinance regarding the process for distributing Opportunity Funds. She asked when the process for disbursing the funds would be developed and what opportunities would there be for public comment.

**Lynn Ferguson:** Ms. Ferguson stated that if there is additional money, she would like to see it allocated for open space at Magnuson Park and to create a connection between the wetlands and the shoreline. She would like to see the funds used to remove the internal

road at Magnuson and for restrooms, but development of the wetlands is her highest priority.

### **Orphan Park Wish Fund**

Kevin Stoops, Director of Parks Planning and Development Division, described the proposal in the Mayor's budget which allocated \$7 million for what has been described as an Orphan Park Wish Fund. The \$7 million is the amount in the Levy allocated annually to operations (programs and maintenance). The Mayor's budget increases the General Fund allocation to Parks to cover the Levy operations costs, fully funding within Parks base budget the Levy programming projects. This creates a one time \$7 million windfall for capital projects.

Mr. Stoops described the Levy's original \$10 million Opportunity Fund. It was designed to capture projects that were not well developed when the Levy was put together – for projects not named in the Levy. Allocations were made based on the following criteria:

1. Projects in areas that were underserved – that did not have a lot of existing parks;
2. Projects in areas projected for growth – the urban villages and urban centers identified in the City's neighborhood plans; and
3. Neighborhood revitalization areas – areas identified by the City as low income and in need of redevelopment assistance.

The Oversight Committee decided to allocate \$6 million in a first round of allocations and \$4 million in a second round. The first round, conducted in 2001, set aside \$1 million each for the Denny Triangle, International District/Pioneer Square, and University District. The remaining \$3 million was allocated after an extensive public process. Recognizing that the price of land in Seattle was destined to increase, the Committee emphasized acquisition in the first round. Forty applications were received, and funding was approved for 7 development projects and 12 acquisition projects.

The second round, in 2005, allocated funds to 3 acquisition and 15 development projects. Many of the development projects were for properties that were bought during the first round. Leveraging increased the original \$10 million of the Opportunity Fund to \$20 million, mostly through successful application to King County's Conservation Futures Tax for acquisition projects.

Mr. Stoops suggested some guidelines that could be used to distribute a new opportunity fund. Priority could be given to:

- Development of properties purchased in the first two rounds of the Opportunity Fund;
- Levy projects that were not fully developed; and
- Projects in underserved areas of the City.

Doug Dunham asked how oversight would occur if the Committee is scheduled to expire in December 2008 with the end of the Levy. Mr. Stoops responded that the Levy

Ordinance provides for continuing the Committee for oversight purposes after Levy collections conclude in 2008.

Mr. Dunham also asked about the issue of the Levy Ordinance prohibiting the use of Opportunity Funds for named projects – those that received funding in another Levy category. Mr. Stoops replied that the firewalls of the Levy prohibited use of the original Levy Opportunity Fund for named projects. However, Mr. Williams pointed out that with this \$7 million the question is what happens to General Fund money when it is moved into the Levy, so the answer may be broader than the limits on the first Opportunity Fund. The Mayor has a broad, open vision for this money, but it will have to fit within the legal limits.

Ms. Barker asked why the Mayor titled the fund Orphan Park Wish Fund. Mr. Williams responded that the Mayor recognizes the name should be changed. He respects the work of the Oversight Committee and wants the Committee to have a role in the allocation of the funds. Mr. Gallagher noted that Parks anticipates the Oversight Committee will have an active role in the process and at a future meeting we will present the Committee with draft allocation criteria.

Ms. Klinker asked how, if it is a totally open opportunity fund process, will under funded Levy projects get completed. And similarly, if the fund is used for acquisition, where will the money come from to develop those properties. Mr. Gallagher noted that the Committee could adopt criteria that would give priority to finish what was started.

Mr. Harper expressed his strong interest in have any Pro Parks project be eligible to receive funds, and that there not be any prohibition in having named projects eligible.

Ms. Colwell and Mr. Holme asked about the process for approval of this fund. Mr. Williams responded that the \$7 million is part of the Mayor's budget that is being reviewed by the full Council operating as the Budget Committee. There will not be City Council Parks Committee review of the funding.

Ms. Barker asked how well projects that received funding in the earlier rounds of the Opportunity Fund met the criteria established by the Committee. Mr. Stoops responded that staff worked a lot with potential applicants and that most, if not all, of the projects that applied met the basic criteria. The Committee then had to select the best projects.

Mr. Dunham noted that at the September meeting the Committee drafted a letter to send to the City Council regarding this funding. That letter has not yet been sent. At that meeting, the Committee focused on under-funded projects. Now Mr. Dunham thinks it may be best to keep the message from the Committee to the Council simple, such as saying the Committee supports inclusion of this funding in the 2008 budget.

Mr. Harper stated that he wants the Committee's letter to refer to creation of a new opportunity fund and that the Committee should be part of the allocation process. He noted that he was not happy with the process that was used several months ago when

Parks allocated \$1.8 million surplus Levy funds. He felt that process was too short and not open enough. He wants the \$7 million allocation process to be open, and he wants all projects, new and existing, to be eligible.

Ms. Klinker stated her first priority would be for Levy projects and a second or lower priority for non-Levy projects.

Mr. Dunham stated the basic need right now is for the Committee to express support for the Mayor's budget, and that perhaps it would be better to leave the process questions for a later time. There was consensus among Committee members to send a simple letter to the City Council endorsing the Mayor's budget and inclusion of the \$7 million for capital projects.

### **Development Project Update**

Colleen Browne, Parks Pro Parks Levy Development Manager, provided the Committee with an update on Levy development projects. All Levy projects are underway, whether in planning or design, except for those yet to be acquired. Projects reported upon included:

Peace Park: Parks is working with the Seattle Department of Transportation to improve bicycle access and make additional improvements to the Park.

Counterbalance Park: Bidding on this project has been delayed to November or December when there should be a better bid climate.

Cesar Chavez Park: Bids came in way over budget and some design elements will be eliminated.

Mt. Baker Ridge: As with Cesar Chavez, bids were significantly over budget and some design elements will be eliminated.

Neal Adams asked whether projects reported as completed meant that the total scope of the project had been finished, or would projects be coming back for more money to complete additional elements. Ms. Browne responded that a project reported as complete is closed, but may not have been developed to 100% of the plan for that park. Mr. Stoops provided Jefferson Park as an example. The Master Plan for the Park has high expectations and the first phase will do a limited piece of the plan, a piece that is being reduced as construction costs increase.

The Committee expressed an interest in understanding which projects had significantly under completed scopes and Mr. Stoops and Ms. Browne responded that they would provide this information to the Committee at the November 26 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.