



**Legislative Department  
Seattle City Council**

April 14, 2014

TO: Select Committee on Parks Funding

FM: Meg Moorehead, Council Central Staff

RE: Parks Funding Proposal

**EXECUTIVE PROPOSAL**

The Mayor has proposed to collect \$54.3 million per year through a newly created Seattle Metropolitan Park District (Seattle Park District). Two ordinances have been submitted to implement the proposal. C.B. 118055 places the question of whether to create the Seattle Park District on the August 2014 ballot. C.B. 118056 authorizes the Mayor to sign an interlocal agreement (ILA) between the City and Seattle Park District that commits 100% of District revenue to the City to implement Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) major maintenance of parks and facilities, recreation programs, community center hours, park acquisition, new park development and other services. Spending in the first six years would follow a list of Parks Investment Initiatives and related spending plan.

**POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS**

At its March 17 and March 31 meetings, the Parks Funding Select Committee (Select Committee) discussed the key policy choices embedded in the Mayor's Park Funding Proposal (the Proposal):

- Funding Mechanism. Should a levy be considered instead of the proposed Park District?
- Spending Levels. Is the proposed \$54.3 million per year the right level of spending?
- Service Priorities. Are the proposed District-funded services the right ones?
- Ballot Timing. Should the new park funding measure be placed on the August 2014 ballot?

The following potential amendments to the Proposal have been identified so far:

**1. Funding Mechanism**

Although levies have been used to fund added park services in the past, both the Parks Legacy Citizen Advisory Committee (Legacy Committee) and the Mayor have proposed forming the Seattle Park District to establish a more stable long-term park funding source. The Select Committee considered whether to pursue a levy instead, but has concerns about the inability of a short-term levy to fund long-term maintenance needs and the effect of a park levy on the City's ability to use levies for other priorities. The Select Committee currently is considering the following funding mechanism options:

### **Option A: Park District with Further Amendments to the Interlocal Agreement (ILA) or Ordinances**

A Park District is new to Seattle, but would provide stable, long-term park funding. If a Park District is selected as the funding mechanism, the Council wants to ensure that the District will be efficiently run, accountable to the public, and well integrated into City procedures. To address those interests, the Select Committee may consider the below-listed amendments to the proposed ordinances and ILA. Amendments 1 through 5 are shown in Attachments 1, 2a, 2b and 3 to this memorandum.

- 1) Performance Management. Provide for increased effort to design efficient service delivery models and establish performance indicators during the 2015 ramp-up, and increased performance monitoring in 2016-2020, to ensure that DPR is well positioned to successfully deliver the new level of service (Attachment 1).
- 2) Community Oversight. Provide more specificity about Community Oversight Committee (Oversight Committee) qualifications, role in reviewing the effectiveness of District-funded programs and changes in spending, and role in ensuring broader public involvement in District decisions (Attachments 2a and 2b).
- 3) Labor. Clarify the employment implications of District funding, including the intent that the District will have no employees and all staff working on District-funded services will remain City employees working under applicable labor contracts (Attachments 2a and 2b).
- 4) Revenue Ceiling. Set a more specific ceiling on District revenue collection (Attachments 2a and 2b).
- 5) Linking the Legislation. Strengthen the link between formation of the District and the City's commitment to implementing the ILA (Attachment 3).

### **Option B: The Mayor's \$54.3 Million/Year Park District Proposal**

Approve the Mayor's proposal.

## **2. Spending Levels**

Proposed spending is more than twice the level of the 2008 Parks Levy. To reduce tax payer impacts and allow DPR to demonstrate its ability to deliver an expanded level of service, reduced spending levels could be considered. Lower spending could remain constant during the six-year period. Or, initial lower spending could be increased in later years as DPR demonstrates its ability to deliver District-funded services.

### **Option A: Mayor's Proposed \$54.3 Million Level**

Fund services at the proposed \$54.3 million per year level, which is 53% allocated to major maintenance but also expands recreation programs, acquires and develops new parks and increases routine maintenance of park lands and facilities. Operations and maintenance (O&M) activities would receive 38% of the new funds, with the rest spent on capital projects heavily weighted towards major maintenance. The Proposal includes 96.51 new full time equivalent staff (FTEs).

### **Option B: \$38 Million Level**

Fund \$38 million per year of services as shown in Attachment 4. The services would maintain the Legacy Committee's strong emphasis on maintaining existing parks and facilities while also providing some funding recreation program expansion, park acquisition, and new park development. Sixty one percent of funding would be allocated to major maintenance, with more limited expansions of recreation programs, routine maintenance, and new park acquisition and development.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Final amendments will be prepared for a Select Committee vote at its next meeting on April 21. The Full Council must act no later than May 5 to place a park funding measure on the August 2014 ballot.

#### Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Amendments to 4.10 Performance Monitoring and Strategic Planning Investment Initiative
- Attachment 2a: DPR Park District Interlocal ORD v3 (CB 118056)
- Attachment 2b: Attachment 1 to DPR Park District Interlocal ORD v3, An Interlocal Agreement between the City of Seattle, Washington, and the Seattle Park District
- Attachment 3: DPR Park District Ballot Measure Title v6 (CB118055)
- Attachment 4: Investment Initiative Spending at \$38 Million Per Year