

Metro Parks and Greenspaces Advisory Committee
February 1, 2000
6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Metro Regional Center

Chair Jim Battan called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Committee members present, in addition to Battan, were: Bob Akers, Rick Charriere, Julie Garver, John Griffiths, Mike Reid, Richard Reynolds, Brian Scott and Seth Tane. Also in attendance were Jim Desmond, Lupine Jones, Heather Nelson Kent, Ron Klein, Fritz Paulus and Patricia Sullivan.

Introductory Comments and Announcements

Charles Ciecko informed committee members that the Parks' Open Spaces Acquisition Program will be the target of *Willamette Week's* February 2nd cover story. *WW* also provided local TV station KGW the story for inclusion with today's news.

According to Jim Desmond the primary point alleged by the writer of the article was that Metro has in many cases overpaid for open space acquisitions. It further purported the following :

- In certain transactions, property sellers realized what seemed to be unreasonably high profits in a relatively short period of time.
- Metro sought out high appraisals in order to accomplish some of these sales.
- The Implementation Work Plan was amended in a way that facilitated obtaining high appraisals.
- The voters were led to believe that most of the land would be bought inside the urban growth boundary and that has not been the case.

The article spotlighted three transactions, one each in: Burlington Bottoms in Multnomah Channel, Canemah Bluff and Forest Park. The particulars in each were reduced to oversimplified and incomplete depictions of what transpired.

A 14-point fact sheet was distributed by Metro staff to the committee in response to the article. It included the following:

- figures demonstrating good value received for properties purchased to date, (e.g. in total, what was paid for the properties was more than 2 million less than the appraisal values)
- references to the responsible, independent appraisal process in place to ascertain current, fair market value
- that in the specific transactions highlighted in the article, important land use decisions were ignored.

Ciecko stated Metro will strive to get out its version of what actually occurred throughout the process. These transactions are complicated, however, and while *WW* used quick short "sound bites", Metro's response, out of necessity, has become technical and much lengthier than any sound bite. Ciecko emphasized that he has nothing but the utmost respect and confidence in the integrity of the Open Space Acquisition Division. It has delivered exactly what the taxpayers of the region were promised in the bond measure and it has done so in a professional and businesslike manner.

Committee members responded to news of the forthcoming article/TV report with comments of support and encouragement for the parks staff. Typical of the comments were those of Seth Tane, who could not foresee the article hurting the program appreciably, if at all. Measure 26-26 was such an overwhelming winner, he stated, he could not imagine anyone who would look at the acquisition record and conclude it was a mistake on any level. In the interim, he added, since these purchases occurred, the properties have all continued to appreciate in value. If they were to be re-appraised now, they

would be worth far more than even Metro paid for them. What was obtained for the taxpayers money, Tane summarized, is something that is irreplaceable at any price.

Review Committee Letters re: FY 00-01 budget and federal funding

Patricia Sullivan circulated two sets of letters from the committee for individual members' signatures. One set was to congressional delegates from the region expressing support of continued federal funding for the greenspaces program and the grants program. The second letter, drafted by committee members and approved at the last meeting, was to Executive Officer, Mike Burton, in support of the Parks and Greenspaces FY 00-01 budget.

Greenspaces Protection Plan – public involvement

Ron Klein reviewed the public involvement effort for the Greenspaces Protection Plan and followed that with a slide presentation. Metro will be conducting five open houses in February throughout the Metro area. Participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire on Metro's Natural Resources Protection Strategy. The same questionnaire was provided to committee members who were encouraged to complete it. The point being emphasized by Metro is "We want your opinions!"

Suggestions followed which included involving school environmental classes and land use planning classes as well as local PTAs in the process. According to Heather Nelson Kent, the questionnaire /survey will be available on the Metro website. It is hoped eventually to have all the data being developed accessible to residents from their computers, to be able to make comments or ask questions.

Regional Parks and Greenspaces Volunteer Services Report

Time did not permit the presentation of Lupine Jones' Volunteer Services Report. It will be re-scheduled for next month.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.