

Metro Parks and Greenspaces Advisory Committee
December 7, 1999
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, John Griffiths, Jay Hamlin, Sylvia Milne, Mike Reid and Seth Tane. Also in attendance were Charles Ciecko, Heather Nelson Kent, Ron Klein, Dan Kromer, Jim Morgan, Pam Novitzky, Patricia Sullivan and Laurie Wulf.

Introductory Comments and Announcements

Seth Tane reported on progress being made on Goal 5 (fish and wildlife) in the Water Resources Policy Advisory Committee (WRPAC). The next effort will focus on separating Goal 5 from Goal 6 (water quality) and Goal 7 (protection from natural disasters and hazards). There is no consensus yet on stormwater issues.

Informal discussions took place between RPAGAC members following the October meeting. Mike Reid summarized the two main points:

1. Following the introduction of FY 2000-2001 budget issues and options at the last meeting, it was thought to be advantageous if this committee, as a group of citizens apart from the staff, requests Metro Council consider committing anticipated savings from the re-negotiated solid waste contract to an endowment fund for the cemeteries.
2. It was also deemed important for the Parks Dept. to adopt the practice of calculating volunteer hours in applying for grants which require matching funds. Over 1,000 volunteers put in more than 12,000 volunteer hours in 1999, an invaluable resource which can be used to attract additional revenue.

Proposed Easement on Pete's Mountain Road

Laurie Wulf reviewed an easement application from Sprint. A wireless communication site is being located in a BPA right-of-way, located on property owned by Oregon Parks and Recreation. The site is east of property owned by Metro within the Willamette Narrows target area. Sprint is requesting access through approximately 1000 feet of the Metro property. Wulf reported the application has been reviewed and minimal impact is anticipated on the Metro property as the road is an existing one and all work will be confined to that roadway area. The idea was suggested of constructing a vault for anticipated multiple utilities. It was decided to postpone further discussion of vaulting for a future meeting. *A motion was made and passed by a quorum of committee members that the easement application be approved as recommended.*

Director's Requested Budget for FY 2000/2001

Charles Ciecko gave an overview of the budget status. Although Metro is anticipating \$6 million per year in savings from the re-negotiation of the solid waste contract, financial problems do exist. An agency excise tax shortfall in the amount of \$763,372 (based on a forecasted reduction in solid waste tonnage) is projected for the current fiscal year (1999-2000). This will result in Parks and Greenspaces fund reductions estimated at \$134,140. Spending cuts will include, but are not limited to, the Tualatin River Master Plan, which is now on hold; seasonal help and a reduction of \$22,000 to deferred maintenance. It was also noted that, per a recently issued Executive Order, meals will no longer be provided for committee members at the evening meetings. Light snacks, however, will continue to be furnished, courtesy of Ciecko and Ron Klein.

On the plus side, however, a regional park fund balance does exist, having been created during a period of better financial conditions. Some of those funds are restricted to be spent on specific items. A substantial portion, though, is unrestricted. According to Ciecko, the proposal in the FY 2000-2001 budget is to utilize approximately \$361,000 from the unrestricted fund balance rather than absorbing the full impact of the general fund cuts. There will still be impact to level of services, but they will be minimized. It would be possible to spend between \$400,000 and \$500,000 from the unrestricted fund balance over the next three years before its depletion. The hope is, in that three year period, to resolve the financial needs of the department. Resorting to the unrestricted fund balance is not ideal financial management, but given the circumstances, it is the best available option.

Heather Nelson Kent presented the Planning & Education Division overview, describing which programs were included in the base budget and how various programs will be affected by the excise tax reductions.

A Natural Resources and Property Management Program is a new addition to the Administration Division. Jim Morgan was introduced as the recently appointed supervisor of the program. "Landbanking" was moved from the Operations and Maintenance Division and "Stabilization" from the Open Space Acquisition Division to create the program. It is hoped that by combining the personnel working in those areas, those activities can be better managed. It was pointed out that while stabilization has been funded by bond funds, landbanking has been funded by the general fund. Although revenues from Open Space leased properties are exceeding projections, acreages are growing at a much more rapid pace than the funding for the required services.

Committee members emphasized the importance of identifying ongoing, continuous funding to be able to reach long term department goals. Ron Klein noted that in re-evaluating the regional system of greenspaces, part of the parks and natural areas protection plan will have a financial strategy component. The concept of CO2 sequestration was introduced by Mike Reid as a revenue-generating opportunity to be considered.

Budget discussions on the remaining department divisions will be carried over to the January 4th meeting. Also at that meeting, Battan will present a draft of the letter from the committee to the Metro Council concerning budget issues including deferred maintenance, use of the unrestricted fund balance and volunteer services.

Nomination Process for Year 2000 RPAGAC Members

On March 31, 2000 the term for five positions on the advisory committee will expire. Although Jay Hamlin and Jim Battan may apply for an additional term, the committee will lose the services of Bob Akers, John Griffiths and Mike Reid. Klein and Lupine Jones, Volunteer Services Manager, hope to meet with the latter three to find "new compelling, exciting niches for them" should they choose to continue serving the department in some capacity.

Other

Klein requested the committee's assistance in showing its support of the greenspaces grants program, which is federally funded. To that end, and with the consensus of the committee, Klein will draft a letter on its behalf to Congress expressing that support.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm