PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION℠
Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

Parks Levy Oversight Committee (PLOC)

Year 3 Meeting #2 | October 26, 2023 | 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Agenda

5:30 PM	Welcome and Ice Breaker	All
5:35 PM	Announcements and Updates	Todd Lofgren, Sarah Huggins, Claire Flynn
5:50 PM	Overview of Year 2 Parks Levy Annual Report	Claire Flynn
6:35 PM	BREAK	
6:40 PM	Parks Levy Oversight Committee Annual Report	Claire Flynn
7:20 PM	Presentation Topics Rankings	Claire Flynn

Attending

Oversight Committee Members –

- Alescia Blakeley
- Silas Sanderson
- Tim Williams
- *Not in attendance, meeting materials shared and feedback collected for annual reports:*
  - *Mary Ruble*
  - *Zay Conant*

Parks Board Liaison –

- Casey Mills

PP&R Staff –

- Todd Lofgren | Deputy Director
- Sarah Huggins | Sustainable Future Program Manager
- Claire Flynn | Levy Coordinator

Members of the Public –

- None

Claire Flynn, Levy Coordinator welcomed participants and lead the group through an icebreaker.

Announcements and Updates

Todd Lofgren, Deputy Director, shared information about the City charter transition and updates.

- Based on the voter approved charter reform, starting January 2025, the City of Portland will have 12 council members from four geographic districts, as well as a new role for the mayor position and new City management structure including a City Administrator. Additional information is available on the City of Portland Transition website.
    - A draft organizational chart will be presented to City Council at an October 31st work session and a November 1st Resolution. This organizational chart will be reflected in FY 2024-25 requested budget starting in July 2024. The current council will oversee the new organizational chart for about 6 months before the new council comes on board.
    - There are no changes to advisory bodies at this time.
- Parks Levy commitments were approved by Portland voters so those funds will continue to be collected and expensed per the resolution.
- The PLOC had no questions.

Sarah Huggins, Sustainable Future Program Manager, shared an update on upcoming polling.

- This fall PP&R will go out with a poll to better understand where voters are at relative to a potential early renewal of the Parks Levy as well as bond options.
- The poll will go out in mid-November and results should be ready to share in December.
- Casey Mills, Parks Board Liaison, asked if polling would include any questions related to a special district.
    - Sarah clarified that, at this time, the state legislation would need to be changed before going out to voters with polling or a ballot measure.
    - Todd noted that polling generally has a 6-month shelf life so waiting until after the legislation is changed to determine how voters feel about a special district would be more beneficial.
- Silas Sanderson asked about the polling method and whether it would cover a wide distribution of Portlanders.
    - Sarah shared that the polling is a 600-sample poll, a larger sample size. It gets within 5% (+/-) of voting results. Half of the participants will get questions on a bond and half will get questions related to early levy renewal. The sample list is pulled from likely voters and collects geographic and demographic information of participants. In the last polling for the 2020 levy, the polling was spot on.
    - Silas asked if the PLOC will get polling results and Sarah confirmed that PP&R can share the results at the next PLOC meeting.
    - Todd shared that the firm, FM3, has done a lot of polling over the past few decades in the region, including polling for Metro's natural area bonds and levies.
- Claire announced that PP&R plans to kick off the Parks Levy independent audit in early spring 2024 with a final audit report expected fall 2024.

PP&R Year 2 Parks Levy Draft Report

Claire presented key themes and aspects of the Year 2 Parks Levy Annual Report to the PLOC, including reviewing how Parks Levy expenditures in FY 2022-23 were used to deliver on each of the commitments listed in the voter pamphlet.

Claire reminded the PLOC of the sections of *their* report, which is a response to the PP&R report. As PP&R developed the Year 2 Parks Levy Annual Report, knowing that the report would be accountable to PLOC review, PP&R aimed to align elements of the report with the PLOC review categories: adherence to the ballot language, fiscal accountability, and transparency. For adherence to the ballot language, PP&R used the 15 commitments in the voter pamphlet as the structure of the annual report to explicitly show progress on each commitment. Fiscal accountability in the PP&R report included thorough explanation of the Leveraged Funding Model and inclusion of all the FY 2022-23 financial actuals by service area and workgroup. Transparency and communication included clear explanation of report topics.

Claire then led PLOC members through each of the 15 Parks Levy commitments, as included in the Year 2 Parks Levy Annual Report draft, with details on financials, key performance measures, and featured stories and interviews in the report.

PLOC members asked questions throughout the presentation:

- Tim Williams noted that some performance measures in the report don't include enough context to really know or understand what the significance of the number is.
    - Claire noted that the Year 2 report includes numbers for years 1 and 2 of the Parks Levy but does not include pre-levy numbers due to the significant changes in performance measure collection and new performance measures in the past two years.
    - Silas commented that the public needs to understand what would happen if the levy was not renewed or the funding stream went away – and that is hard to contextualize without pre-levy numbers. Silas encouraged PP&R to creatively find a way to represent what service levels would be without the Parks Levy.
        - Sarah acknowledged that there are areas where that information is shown in narrative form such as with scholarship dollars and financial assistance prior to the Parks Levy.
        - Claire shared that most of the performance measures in the Year 2 report were completely new. Where there is data available for pre-levy numbers, PP&R can highlight the Parks Levy impact (ex: tree planting, financial assistance, estimated attendance).
    - Todd encouraged the PLOC to emphasize the narrative of change with the Parks Levy in their annual report. Specifically that, prior to the Parks Levy, PP&R had removed 1000 employees from payroll and there was not a path to equitably restarting programming post-pandemic. With the Parks Levy, services have returned and enhanced. There is also opportunity to show or indicate what would happen if the Parks Levy went away – with one-third of the bureau's operating budget supported by the Parks Levy, all the performance measures could, generally, be cut by one-third.
        - Claire shared that one comment from Mary was to lean more heavily into the Parks Levy funding one-third of the operating budget to demonstrate the impact of the Parks Levy.
- Tim asked if maintenance and work order information could better demonstrate the maintenance needs in the park system, particularly with any work order backlog, and if additional context and information could be provided to show why maintenance impact might not be as great – as well as if additional Parks Levy funding should be allocated to maintenance.
    - Sarah noted that there aren't any Parks Levy funds available anymore to allocate to new investments without reducing other services supported by Park Levy funds.

    - Tim asked if the nearly $600 million capital maintenance backlog could be mentioned in the PLOC annual report, particularly in that Parks Levy-eligible maintenance could help that backlog from growing.
        - Sarah shared that the levy-itself can't address any capital projects since it is an operating funding source. However, it can help with day-to-day maintenance and has increased PP&R's professional repair and maintenance staff with over 20 new positions, and the PLOC annual report can reference that.
- Silas asked about other funding that has come in for tree planting in the City and if the bureau has identified where there is overlap in those funds and if Parks Levy funding can be directed and used more efficiently regarding tree planting and care.
    - Todd shared that the City has multiple funding sources going into tree planting and maintenance from development fees, General Fund and Parks Levy support, and the new Portland Clean Energy Fund investment, which is giving $45 million over five years ($40 million in planting and $5 million in maintenance). Additional support is coming from community-based partners who are managing federal funds. While the current and historic goal for tree canopy coverage has been 33%, PP&R has indicated that there is probably space for more like 50% canopy coverage.
        - Silas clarified that, if there is funding focused on tree planting, Parks Levy funds might be better used for maintenance or another complementary Urban Forestry effort.
    - Casey asked if the annual report tree planting numbers are reflective of the changes in tree planting responsibilities between PP&R and the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES).
        - Todd clarified that the increase in tree planting is reflective of the Parks Levy and other funding sources, not the BES impact. BES was investing $1 million in tree planting and is now investing around $650,000. The Parks Levy has been key to building capacity in PP&R's Urban Forestry team to make the bureau a better partner for managing additional funds or scaling up program. Without the Parks Levy, a Urban Forestry team with limited capacity might not have been able to manage the increased funding.
        - Claire noted that, while Parks Levy funds might not directly purchase the tree to be planted, the funding supports critical capacity like staff to distribute the trees and funding to support analysis for where trees should be planted.
        - Casey emphasized that this would be good to highlight in the report, particularly in showing that, if the Parks Levy went away or hadn't passed, less trees would be planted.
- Casey clarified that the $5 million work order system upgrade was *not* a new investment. Claire and Todd confirmed that the investment was from FY 2021-22 but that the bureau moved forward work towards implementation of that upgrade from the initial investment.
- Tim asked for clarification on the total Parks Levy spending. Specifically, the report indicates that the total spending on Parks Levy eligible program and services expenses was $74.22 million with one-third being Parks Levy. However, the overall budget, including the full General Fund allocation, is more than $74.22 million.
    - Claire clarified that the $74.22 million only includes expenses that would be eligible for Parks Levy funding and could receive Parks Levy allocation.
    - Sarah shared that there's 172 service categories that the bureau provides and about 87 of those are receiving Parks Levy funds and most directly relate to Parks Levy

commitments. 85 of the service categories don't relate directly so only a portion of the services that the bureau provides are being included.

- Tim asked what types of services are excluded from receiving Parks Levy funds and what the source of the non-General Fund money is that is used for the budget.
  - Sarah shared that in additional to capital projects which are not funded by the operating Parks Levy, more internal-facing service areas with administrative costs like Finance, Accounting, Workforce Development, etc. don't directly receive Parks Levy funds. The levy resources are focused on the costs of delivering the programs instead of the internal costs to support the program. Additional financial support, outside of General Fund and the Parks Levy comes from things like fee revenues.
  - Sarah also clarified that the total PP&R budget amount is far higher than what is actually spent at year-end. The budgeted amount includes fund revenue balancing, enterprise funds, and capital – so the Parks Levy actuals are a small snapshot of the total bureau actuals, which are generally significantly less than the budgeted amount.

PLOC Annual Report

The PLOC discussed their annual report, organizing the conversation around the three key areas outlined in their charter for review. The PLOC reviewed the FY 2021-22 Parks Levy Annual Report categories and definitions in advance of the meeting.

Adherence to the Ballot Language

- Claire shared that Mary asked that the value of community partnerships and Community Partnership Program grants, including that to the Portland Park Foundation's Small Grant Program, be included as a way PP&R is fulfilling a Parks Levy commitment. She also asked for an emphasis on tree canopy and commended PP&R for equity efforts.
- Silas noted wanting to include a recommendation to showing what outcomes look like with and without the Parks Levy.
- Tim encouraged PP&R to push beyond adherence (i.e. eligible spending, all expenses are tied back to ballot language) and consider refinement of performance measures or goals to speak to qualitative success on the Parks Levy commitments.
  - Claire noted that PP&R is enhancing performance measure tracking and goals as part of the Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland strategic framework that can help speak to goals and measuring progress for commitments.
  - Silas shared that, in addition to performance measures, stories and interviews are an important way to communicate Parks Levy success. He also encouraged refining measures to only include numbers that make sense to the public or to add additional context to the more complex and internal performance measures.
- Tim asked what the impact would be if the PLOC found that PP&R wasn't adhering to ballot language.
  - Sarah shared that if the PLOC found that there were no actions being taken towards a ballot commitment, the bureau would use that analysis and findings to make budget decisions and program changes to better address the commitments to adhere to ballot language. For adherence to ballot language, the analysis level is focused on eligibility – i.e. if an action or program seems ineligible per the ballot language, it should not be supported by the Parks Levy or, conversely, if there is a Parks Levy commitment that has no actions being taken towards the language in the

ballot then action should be taken to ensure Park Levy funds are utilized to support meeting that voter commitment.
    - Tim noted that, beyond just adherence, perceived success and progress is important to communicating the impact and importance of Parks Levy funding. He also liked the charts and appendices that show exactly how performance measures, spending, etc. line up with the Parks Levy commitment.
        - Claire stated that Mary also felt that some key information in the appendices should be pulled into the Executive Summary and full report. Claire indicated that, where possible, additional key information could be pulled into the body of the report.
- Silas felt that all the commitments and ballot language is being adhered to and asked that PP&R, particularly in later years of the Parks Levy, take a high-level approach to whether a commitment/goal was met and then further explore if more firm goals can be set to indicate progress.
    - Claire noted that using outcomes and actions from the Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland can help line up bureau goals with Parks Levy commitments to speak to qualitative progress.
- Casey asked if accounting related to the Leveraged Funding Model and ensuring maximizing Parks Levy funds should be included in the report.
    - Sarah noted that the PLOC included support of the Leveraged Funding Model in the FY 2021-22 PLOC report under the Fiscal Accountability section. The Leveraged Funding Model ensures that any underspending the Parks Levy-allocable service areas is preserved in the Parks Levy fund for future use. Sarah asked if PLOC members wanted to include this again in their annual report, and PLOC members indicated support.

Fiscal Accountability

- Tim expressed curiosity on the gap between what's been collected as tax revenue and what has been spent to date.
    - Claire shared that unspent revenue from FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23 gets added to the fund balance and can be spent in future years of the Parks Levy, not restricted to the five-year collection timeframe.
    - Sarah noted that report includes information on the reasons for underspending, primarily the continued ramp-up to filling positions, purchasing equipment, and more related to Parks Levy supported positions.
    - Tim asked if funds will be spent by the end of year 5 and Sarah shared that, as currently projected, funds will likely be spent down by the end of year 6.
        - Tim also shared that, anecdotally, spending down the balance would be more beneficial in making a case for renewal and proactive stewardship of funds.
        - Sarah mentioned that the bureau has a 10-year forecast and, currently, if the Parks Levy was renewed at the same rate, by year ten, the bureau would be be over-committed in fully covering levy supported activities – so, in the long term, the spending of the Parks Levy is on track.
- Casey brought up that the Parks Levy does not solve the nearly $600 million capital maintenance backlog. If the capital maintenance backlog was reduced or fixed, Parks Levy funds would be more effective. PLOC members in attendance agreed and indicated wanting to include a note regarding the backlog in the PLOC report.

Transparency

- Silas felt that the information shared was transparent and appreciated that, this year, a lot more time was given for questions and comments compared to last year. Alescia agreed.
- Claire shared that Mary appreciated the transparency around underspending and the explanation of ramp up impact on timing of spending – and expects greater outcomes and full spending in future years.
- Silas asked that more information be included on the benefits of the Parks Levy on preventative maintenance that will help keep the capital maintenance backlog from increasing.
    - Tim asked what the dollar amount threshold is for an expense to be considered capital.
        - Sarah shared that roughly $10,000 is the line but for some things to be maintenance bond eligible, it also has to extend the life of an asset.
        - Silas asked if under $10,000 maintenance costs are being covered by the Parks Levy and Sarah confirmed that maintenance work orders that are not capital are being completed by the Professional Repair & Maintenance team.
    - Tim emphasized that, in talking about the capital maintenance backlog, it would be good to delineate why Parks Levy funds cannot be spent on capital expenses.

Claire shared the timeline for report review, acceptance, and presentation to City Council on December 13.

Presentation Topics Ranking

Following the topic ranking survey sent to PLOC members, Claire presented the results of the rankings and PLOC members confirmed that the list, in-order, looked good for future meeting presentations:

1. Program access *including financial access for low-income communities, access for senior and disabled community members*
2. Climate resilience *including updates on initiatives for 2024*
3. Funding decisions and budget expenditures related to Parks Levy *including how the Parks Levy work assimilates into overall Bureau budget planning*
4. Community partnerships *including hearing directly from community partners, equity-centered engagement and outreach, and plans/initiatives for 2024*
5. Urban Forestry *(tree/park planting and canopy beyond what has previously been)*
6. Colors of money *(capital vs. operating expenses, development and expansion, etc.)*
7. Racial equity and inclusion
8. Specific program offerings and data of users *(preschool, sports, etc.)*
9. Teen programs and involvement
10. Houselessness and park resources for all

Claire thanked all for attending and adjourned the meeting.

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