
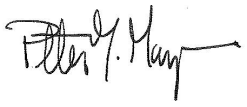


Memorandum

TO: Council Member Catherine Ushka
Council Member Chris Beale
Andrea Smith, MPT Board Chair
Aaron Pointer, MPT Board Clerk

FROM: Christopher D. Bacha, Chief Deputy City Attorney 
Pete Mayer, Deputy Executive Director

SUBJECT: Parks Policy Group – Meeting – October 2 - Background 

DATE: October 1, 2018

The Parks Policy Group (PPG) was created pursuant an interlocal agreement between the City and Metro Parks Tacoma (MPT) dated September of 2016. The PPG is made up of two members of the MPT Board and two members of the Tacoma City Council.

The purpose of the PPG is to exchange ideas and provide direction to the Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC). The ICC is a committee made up of assigned staff from MPT and the City for the purpose of coordination of activities that impact both MPT and the City, such as planning, project evaluation and information sharing. The PPG has the additional role of reporting ICC activities to the City Council and MPT Board at their joint meeting. This meeting is scheduled for later this year.

The purpose of the meeting on October 2nd is to provide the PPG with an update on four items identified on the agenda. Another meeting of the PPG is being planned for the first quarter of 2019. If you have items you want to place on the agenda, please give that information to your council assistants.

One of the items on the agenda is the ICC Guiding Principles, a collaborative project of the ICC. The process undertaken for this project is described in the core principles document prepared by the ICC. This document describes seven core principles that were developed through this collaborative process. These principals are intended to achieve the goal of consolidation of park property facilities, operation, and maintenance, with Metropolitan Parks Tacoma as the primary provider for all park services.

To assist you with understanding the underlying goal, we thought it would be instructive to background information regarding the relationship between the City and MPT.

BACKGROUND

On March 11, 1907, the Governor signed a new law (codified at Chapter 35. 61 RCW) which empowered cities of the first class to submit to a public vote a proposition for the creation of a metropolitan park district for the management, control, improvement, maintenance, and acquisition of parks. The new law provided that if a metropolitan park district was formed, the district would be empowered to manage, control, improve, maintain, and acquire parks then or thereafter located within the park district which boundaries would be coextensive with the limits of the City creating the district. On March 13, 1907, the Tacoma City Council enacted Ordinance No. 2894, which ordinance authorized such a public vote for the formation of the MPT. Thus, MPT having been authorized by public vote on April 2, 1907, took over sole management and control of Parks inside the City and was further authorized to impose a levy in support of the purposes set forth in the new law.

While the clear intent of the voter's approval of formation of the park district was to vest management, control and funding of public parks within MPT, this intent has lost meaning as the City over the past 111 years has acquired and developed numerous properties that serve as public parks and over which the City retains responsibility. These parks and park-like spaces are either maintained directly by the City or maintained by MPT through various agreements with the City. There are no less than nineteen parks currently being maintained by Public Works, street operations. Additionally, while the City and MPT have responsibility for parks planning, such planning efforts are not performed jointly to ensure compatibility and consistency between the City and MPT. Ultimately, what has occurred is a dual park system that lacks a cohesive and functional relationship between the City and MPT.

As early as 1982, in recognition of the need for MPT and City to work collaboratively, a memorandum of agreement was adopted setting forth the responsibilities of each entity with reference to recreational properties and services. By 1997, the City and MPT determined that this memorandum must be updated through the adoption of a master agreement clarifying roles and responsibilities of each entity. This agreement recognized that MPT should have responsibility for park and recreation programs and maintenance of active park and recreation spaces, while the City should have responsibility for open space and maintenance of streetscapes and urban aesthetics.

In 2004, the City and MPT entered into a service agreement that, among other things, recognized 9 guiding principles. These guiding principles reiterated the division of responsibility set forth above and further recognized the need to improve communication, maximize service delivery, and work cooperatively to find cost effective ways to deliver services.

In 2008, the City Council and MPT Board approved an interlocal agreement which expanded upon the principles and responsibilities set forth in the prior agreements. More importantly, in this agreement the two entities recognized the need to consolidate

park management and maintenance within MP. This agreement sets forth the following in its purpose statement,

The parties agree that it is to their mutual benefit and the benefit of the citizens of the City to centralize all parks facilities, operation, and maintenance, with Metro Parks as the primary provider, whenever possible. . . .

This recognition resulted in the work necessary to begin a transfer of City park properties to MPT in order to unify the parks function within one entity, the Metropolitan Park District. While the transfer of some City park properties to MPT occurred, there remain numerous parks that have not been transferred, including McKinley Park and Point Defiance Park. Accordingly, in 2016 the City Council and MPT Board approved another interlocal agreement. This agreement reiterated the same core purpose of consolidation of park management and maintenance within MPT but added recognition of the need for alignment of core competencies and reduction in duplication of services. Toward that end, this agreement established the Interagency Coordination Committee and the Parks Policy Group.

The purpose of these two groups is to develop mechanisms for achieving the purpose of this agreement and bring them before the City Council and MPT Board for review and approval. In furtherance of this effort, the ICC has engaged in a series of facilitated meetings to develop a core set of principles that will support effectuation of the goal of consolidation agreed to by the City Council and MPT in 2008 and again in 2016. These core principles are set forth below.

1. MPT and COT will engage in consistent, systematic, joint planning.
2. MPT and COT will create an overarching document that clearly defines ownership and management responsibilities for properties in the City's park system.
3. MPT and COT will develop an improved system for property transfers and dispositions.
4. MPT and COT will develop a new framework for collaboration to ensure that the services they provide are being delivered: a) by the entity best suited to provide that service; and b) in a manner that minimizes the unnecessary duplication of services.
5. MPT and COT will provide greater transparency on funding sources and develop funding structure in alignment with management responsibilities.
6. MPT and COT will collaborate to develop a financial approach to meet the park system's future needs.
7. MPT and COT will work more cohesively to inform elected officials about the park system.