



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
Public Works



Date: July 23, 2012
Board Meeting Date: July 31, 2012
Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: James C. Porter, Director of Public Works
Subject: Parks Funding Workshop

RECOMMENDATION:

Review and discuss funding alternatives for San Mateo County Parks.

BACKGROUND:

Since the dedication of Memorial Park in 1924, the San Mateo County Park System has been in continuous operation for 87 years and serves approximately 1.7 million visitors a year. It is comprised of 17 parks totaling 16,183 acres which include: 147 family campsites; 42 picnic sites; 20 youth campsites; playgrounds and sports fields; 186 miles of hiking, equestrian, cycling and multi-use trails; three regional trails; and three visitor centers.

Parks staff maintains, among other facilities, roads, restrooms, benches, trash collection and recycling containers, parking lots, signage, and water, sewer and electrical infrastructure. Parks staff also offers a wide variety of visitor services and volunteer programs.

Since 1991, Parks staff has decreased from 65 to 51.6 full time positions today. Moreover, to save administrative costs, the Parks Department was consolidated with the Public Works Department in 2011. Severe budget constraints have resulted in staff reductions, facility closures, delayed projects, and deteriorating infrastructure.

At your Board's FY2012-13 budget hearing in June of this year, it was requested that a workshop be held to discuss funding options and ideas for future operation of the County's park system. Additionally, your Board asked that the discussion include the County's role in maintaining community parks; identification of sustainable funding sources; use of conservation apprenticeship programs, inmates and realignment clients; and a plan for financing and operations options.

DISCUSSION:

The Parks budget for operations is \$8.4 million a year, which includes a \$6 million allocation from the General Fund. In order to achieve recommended staffing and operating levels, it would be necessary to dedicate \$11.1 million annually towards Parks operations and maintenance. This figure was calculated based on a needs analysis performed prior to the failed 2006 and 2008 sales tax revenue ballot measures.

During the FY2012/13 budget hearings, your Board added back \$350,000 to the Parks budget for staff, fire fuel load reduction efforts, and health and safety related maintenance and repairs. Your Board also provided \$1.9 million in funding for the Devil's Slide Project, \$1,300,000 for Alpine Road improvements and repairs, and \$925,000 for the planning phases of water and wastewater treatment plant renovations at Memorial Park. The Parks FY2012-13 budget for capital improvement projects is \$7.5 million, which includes a \$4.475 million allocation from the General Fund. Over the next five years, approximately \$12.1 million in capital project improvements have been identified.

Staff has prepared a presentation that outlines issues, ideas, and options related to Parks funding. The presentation provides a brief summary of funding requirements; capital, operational, and programmatic needs; upcoming fiscal challenges; and funding ideas for your Board's consideration.

FY2012-13 initiatives include in-depth fee review, expanded or renegotiated concession agreements, expanded use of Sheriff's Work Program, expanding the Volunteer Program, and internships.

The "big ideas" are anticipated to take several years to evaluate and implement, and may include more extensive management contracts for our facilities, new concession contracts, a review of land use/lease opportunities, and marketing. Examples include providing camping opportunities at the Medium Security Facility in La Honda, a sports field complex at Coyote Point, and concession/lease opportunities at the Peninsula Humane Society site and Captain's House site.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no cost in reviewing these options. Anticipated revenue from implementation of these ideas would be dependent on the scope and size of the projects pursued.