

**Bend Metro Park & Recreation District
Board of Directors
Special Work Session
November 12, 2008**

BOARD PRESENT: Bob Woodward, Scott Wallace, George Thayer, Ruth Williamson and Ted Schoenborn.

STAFF PRESENT: Don Horton and Bruce Ronning.

LEGAL COUNSEL: None

MEDIA: None.

VISITORS: None.

Review of District Mission and Values

The board reviewed the district's mission and values and discussed district priorities for the next five and ten years.

Excellence

Ruth Williamson stated the district is viewed as a leader in the community in areas of fiscal accountability, programming and parks. She felt the district should endeavor to maintain our level of excellence and take a position as a community leader standing along side of our values. She cited the decision to seek LEED certification in the construction of the new office building and defending the added costs associated with the project.

Environmental Sustainability

Bob Woodward stated that while park services have made good headway in implementing environmentally sustainable practices, the board is overwhelmed by paper. He expressed the hope that the move to the new building would affect our ability to streamline operations. Ruth Williamson stated we should be taking a leadership role in the community with regard to our own practices. George Thayer stated that along that same line we need to consider the amount of grass we maintain vs. natural areas in the parks and the costs to maintain the turf. Bob stated that water is also going to be a big issue.

Inclusiveness

Bob Woodward stated that one of the things that has been a real hallmark to him has been the JSFC scholarships and adaptive programs. He stated that has demonstrated an outstanding effort. Ruth Williamson stated inclusiveness also applies to the district's built environment and she would like to see this as a very high level as we consider projects. She felt the district should seek to build and develop barrier free facilities and programs.

Partnerships

George Thayer cited the partnerships with St. Charles in terms of rehab programs. Bob Woodward referred to the partnerships within the Bend Senior Center and stated those are sometimes overlooked. Ted Schoenborn stated that the district may be called upon to support the Boys & Girls Club. Bob noted that he has been in contact with the new director of the Boys & Girls Club. Scott Wallace stated that with development costs what they are the district may need to embrace the business and private community more than we have if we want to get things done, not unlike working with the developers to identify park sites in neighborhoods. He stated he is looking at how we will get a recreation center built and that will require significant public and private sources along with a bond. Bob cited an example of donated land in the Portland Parks Block. George stated he had spent a day in a public/private partnership session at NRPA, and shared an example regarding a public/private partnership in the operation of an ice arena. Bob stated that he would have no problem with naming rights. Ruth stated that she also supports interfacing

with other organizations and the times are such that we are going to need to be looking to partnerships that provide services in a broader sense than we have in the past.

Customers

Bob Woodward stated he thinks the district is doing a good job of customer service. Ted Schoenborn noted the history of the senior center has contributed to more tension between the partners. He stated it does appear to be improving and cited the tax program as one the district ought to try to take some credit for as it provides a public service for low income patrons as well as seniors. Scott Wallace encouraged more community outreach through the speaker's bureau. He encouraged support of that program to help inform the community about what it is the district does. Ruth Williamson stated it is important to take the success of the district back to the community with the message that we have spent your dollars well and this is the community's success. Bob referred to the Drake Park use that has given The Bulletin the opportunity to create controversy. Ruth stated we need to engender more ownership of the district.

Staff

Bob Woodward stated we do a good job, but there is room for improvement. He recommended changing the format of the staff introductions at board meetings with the department director or manager providing the introduction. He stated he does not want to make staff uncomfortable with a public presentation. He stated it is important to him to know who staff is when he encounters them at parks and facilities. He complimented the annual summer lunch and holiday gathering. Bruce Ronning advised the board that the holiday event has been scaled back to a drop-in event this year with participants responsible for purchasing their own food and drinks, and the district will provide some refreshments.

District Funding – Short Term

Bob Woodward stated he believes we should maintain what we have over the next five years. Scott Wallace stated that message came across with the SDC/CIP discussions to maintain what we have and finish what we have started. Bob stated that when times get tough public parks become much more used. Ted Schoenborn stated that maintaining what we have is clearly a priority and secondly in finishing the things we have started should include the river trail with the bridges, filling the gaps and acquiring the whole trail through town. He noted that surface transportation funding may be available for trails. George Thayer stated it is a good time to "buy dirt".

District Funding – Long Term

Bob Woodward stated that in the long term the district needs to develop a west side recreation center or two facilities: one with a pool, and one with fitness facilities. Scott Wallace stated that long term we need to expand the opportunities whether it is facilities or improvements and continuing to build out based on the population and demand. He stated we need to listen to the desires of the constituency. George Thayer recommended working with the schools to provide after school adult programs.

The board then discussed providing recreation services. Ruth Williamson stated the district is a social service provider to some degree specific to the afterschool programs that parents rely on and therapeutic recreation programs. Bob Woodward stated the district should be providing recreation-based programs after school. Ted Schoenborn stated it is clear to him that the district will be picking up the Boys & Girls Club in another year or two. He stated that will be a hardship for the district in staffing and maintaining the building and it is not feasible to let the building sit empty. He stated the entire recreation program, philosophy, etc. had never been presented in a consistent way that he has been able to understand. He stated we are doing lots of stuff and we're doing it well, but he would like to understand why we do the things we choose to do. Scott Wallace stated that inclusiveness is one of our values, but he did not believe in doing that it should morph at some point into a social program. He stated he believes the district should provide the recreation and opportunities for physical activities and health lifestyles, but it shouldn't be an underlying service. Ruth stated she is not suggesting that we change our mission. She stated she is

suggesting that we recognize what our program can do and where we can have multiple outcomes that should be a measure of our success. She stated this will be a very valid question if the Boys and Girls Club comes into play.

POTENTIAL CUTS DURING THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

Don Horton explained that strategies to address the economic downturn may include raising user fees vs. reduced programs vs. programs that we currently don't charge for, i.e., no admission for the senior center. He identified the general fund contribution to the CIP as a source for funding operations, and stated that would mean we couldn't fund CIP projects.

He referred to the closing of the Boys & Girls Club and explained that they are reducing their expenses; however, most of their expenses are related to operating the building. He explained the district leases the club the building for \$1 per year, and the district pays the property insurance for which the club reimburses the district. He stated the district has not been reimbursed for the last six months. He stated he has talked to the director of the Boys & Girls Club about moving to the district's current administration building, and the district taking over the Boys & Girls Club building. He stated that would add expenses for the district, and he anticipates the building will need some improvements. Ruth Williamson asked what kinds of programs would be offered at the Boys & Girls Club building. Don explained that he has asked Sue Jorgenson and Sue Boettner to develop a general outline of programs and expenses, from which a budget would be developed similar to JSFC.

The discussion returned to potential program cuts and adjustments during the economic downturn. Don stated one strategy would be a general fee increase based on the pricing pyramid. He stated the things at the top of the pyramid that are further away from our mission would be considered first, followed by adult programs and reservation fees. He stated a modest fee increase is implemented every year. He stated he thinks we ought to start looking at charging something for the senior center. Scott Wallace stated that anything we do with fee increases at this time is going to be criticized. Don stated that currently the district subsidizes the seniors more than any other age group, and he believes most of the seniors we serve tend to be lower income. Ruth Williamson stated that seniors vote. Bob Woodward stated that the seniors on the lower income scale use the senior center and those on the upper end tend to use Juniper. Ted Schoenborn stated that we charge for some of the programs at the senior center. Bob noted the facility is also rented out to the community. Ruth stated that the community of seniors needs a place to congregate and participate in programs. Don stated the newer model for operating senior centers is moving toward multi-generational centers and facilities. Bob stated he would favor raising some of the program fees rather than charging an admission fee. Scott asked about staffing levels compared with a year ago. Don explained we are at the same level of full time people. He stated all of our programs with the exception of the before and after school programs are still meeting expectations. George Thayer suggested looking at the Heart of Oregon program through AmeriCorps to provide staff. Ruth recommended looking at the pricing pyramid before considering cutting programs or fee increases. Don stated the board has never approved fee increases in the past and explained that staff looks at comparable programs across the state and within the community and try to be consistent with those fees. George stated we need to look at the use of the parks and fees for special events, and the pricing of facilities such as Aspen Hall, the meeting room at the new district office, etc. Don explained that Aspen Hall and Hollinshead are operated under an enterprise fund where the fees remain to maintain and operate those facilities, and they are not subsidized.

Discussion of CIP Priority and Projects List

Ruth Williamson asked about Tillicum Ranch. She stated it has a lot of potential in terms of an education facility where the district could partner with the school district in programming to reconnect kids with nature and the outdoors, and reconnect families with the outdoors. She stated she doesn't think it would be a costly undertaking. Don stated that staff has discussed similar uses for outdoor classroom space, use of the BLM trails connections, etc. He stated it has not been at the top of the list of recreation program facility needs due to the location and associated transportation issues. Ruth stated it may be an opportunity to expand our services when we don't have a lot of money.

Scott Wallace stated there appears to be a consensus of the board to maintain what we have and finishing what we have started, e.g., trails; the community parks underway, and neighborhood park acquisition. He suggested talking with Deschutes County regarding the property that surrounds the park services shop. Ted Schoenborn suggested developing a list of properties the district would like to have. Don stated the Green Print Plan will help with that, particularly identifying those lands on the periphery of the district. He noted that the CIP/SDC Committee had discussed whether the district should be taking advantage of the lower land prices. George agreed that it is important to identify those lands the district is interested in and to be able to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. Ruth stated that she is in favor of continuing to run the district's business efficiently, keep the staff employed, keep services and affordable fees, and pursue property acquisition when money is available.

CIP Priority

Scott Wallace stated he thinks the board needs to look at when we may be considering a bond and specifically what the bond will include such as built facilities, site acquisition, etc. He stated that with the price of land coming down it is a great time to buy land, and if we wait five years to execute funding, we may be waiting too long. Ruth Williamson stated that preceding any bond effort, there needs to be a lot of PR work and implicit in that work is that the district is a worthy steward. She stated she would like to focus on delivering that message over the next couple of years through an expanded outreach effort. Bob Woodward stated he believes we can have a successful bond measure if people realize you have a deal for them. He stated you have to have something that meets the public demand and they are inspired by it. George Thayer stated his preference would be to buy land cheap out of the general fund then look at a five-year plan for building. Don Horton stated he thinks if the downturn hadn't occurred the district would be in a position to go for a bond now. He stated if we choose to wait, we will need to test the public again to determine their priorities and what they are willing to pay for. Scott stated entertaining a bond today is not feasible or appropriate, however, we need to keep this under consideration within the next two or three years because we will have to do some of the work we have already done with the surveys, and we need to be prepared. Bob stated that is why over the next few years we need to be fiscally conservative.

Prepared by,

Paula Lowery
Executive Assistant

Bob Woodward, Chair

Scott Wallace, Vice-Chair

Ted Schoenborn

George Thayer

Ruth Williamson