



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Item# 14

MCPB

11/13/03

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 7, 2003

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

Via: Charles Loehr, Director

From: Terry H. Brooks, Special Program Coordinator
Office of the Director

Subject: Policy and Guidelines on Donations and Public/Private Partnerships

Staff Recommendation:

Approve the proposed Policy and Guidelines on Donations and Public / Private Partnerships as a replacement for the adopted May 8, 1996 Public / Private Development Guidelines.

Background:

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (the "Commission") maintains public stewardship over some 382 parks sprinkled across parklands comprising more than 30,000 acres. The Commission, in partnership with the Montgomery County Recreation Department and the Public School System, helps to deliver a remarkable array of athletic and recreational opportunities, including trails, athletic fields, playgrounds, boating, golf, ice skating, tennis, recreation centers, historic structures, and conference facilities. Serving this role for Montgomery County's citizens is at the core of the Commission's mission and is an important reason why County residents enjoy the quality of life they do today.

As the Commission addresses the uncertainties of the new millennium, several fiscal, park user, and park resource trends are readily apparent and

good stewardship demands that they be taken into account and addressed in a proactive and dynamic manner.

Creating and sustaining a flexible approach for financing new or expanded park features requested by the public in circumstances where tax-funded resources are unavailable or insufficient requires the Commission to proactively engage in and seek out partnerships with others that serve to enhance and maintain Montgomery County's nationally recognized, award winning Park System. There are two key factors leading toward this conclusion:

First, for the foreseeable future, the Commission will continue to be challenged by serious budget constraints with a limited tax base struggling to support current services, new programs and initiatives.

Second, and at the same time, the demand for parks and recreation services is expected to grow as the number of children and elderly are expected to balloon over the next few decades.

For these reasons, the Commission began grappling with a growing pressure on the park system for more active and passive park development and recreational services and facilities. Another growing influence has been the Commission's recognition and acceptance of the need for shared responsibility and ownership for assistance in delivering both park conservation and recreational services. Often this involves the non-profit, civic, religious community, educational establishment, clubs, businesses, and, for some projects, the for-profit community.

Toward this objective, over the course of the past several years, the Commission has entered into approximately 16 public/private partnerships. The types and sizes of these partnerships have varied considerably in their purpose, nature and scope.

Also, in 1992 the Commission sponsored the creation of a very important organization to support the Commission's mission, the Montgomery Parks Foundation (the Foundation).

The Foundation is a public, 501©(3) tax-exempt organization founded to solicit large and small corporate and private citizen donations in order to help the Commission fund the unmet park and open space needs in Montgomery County. The Foundation works in cooperation with private citizens, businesses, foundations, the Commission, and the Department of Park and Planning to improve and sustain park properties. The Foundation also assists the Commission by facilitating the acquisition of new parkland and/or facilities. In addition, the Foundation facilitates efforts to promote park related programs, purchase needed equipment and solicit private

funding to augment the growing unfunded and unmet needs of the park system in Montgomery County.

Prior to 1996 the Commission did not have a well defined process or procedure to receive, review, evaluate, accept or reject unsolicited proposals by either for-profit or non-profit groups wishing to partner with the Commission to use parkland for various park related, privately funded projects.

In March of 1996 the Commission adopted Public/Private Development Guidelines for both solicited, as well as unsolicited proposals requesting the use of parkland for park related projects.

Over the course of the past several years the Commission has used those guidelines to receive, review and evaluate a wide variety of partnership proposals ranging in size, budget and scope from regional recreational facilities to single recreational amenities. Two examples of public/private partnerships are: the non-profit Maryland Soccer Foundation's \$15.7 million private donation supported South Germantown Soccerplex which is 162 acres in size with 19 soccer fields with a 3,200 seat championship field and indoor arena in Germantown; and the non-profit Red Wiggler Foundation, Inc.'s initial \$ 10,000 private donation for the development of a 10 acre organic farm park for mentally and physically challenged youth and adults at Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park in Clarksburg.

The Commission's partners and our staff found the adopted 1996 Public/Private Partnership Guidelines to be helpful but lacking in certain areas. Small donation projects like playground equipment donations from small community groups were not as easily accommodated. The typical proposal review and evaluation often took too long to render a decision; did not clearly identify the Park Foundation's role; and was not consistently staffed, causing frustration and disinterest from both potential private donor partners as well as among Commission staff in receiving, reviewing and evaluating a proposed partnership program and/or facility.

During the past year staff as well as a consultant have been re-evaluating the Public Private Partnership guidelines, processes and our responsiveness to private proposals.

As a result of this public private partnership program re-evaluation effort, a new and modified program document has emerged. The new program (See Attachment # 1) addresses the concerns expressed by the public, our partnership partners, the Foundation, the Department, and the Commission.

The new July 24, 2003 Policy and Guidelines on Donations and Public/Private Partnerships program document:

- **Defines the types of donations and public private partnerships;**
- **Defines the roles and responsibilities of the donor, the Foundation, the staff, the Commission and the general public in the process;**
- **Creates a dedicated departmental staff to provide a responsive, coherent assessment of all proposals submitted to the Commission;**
- **Creates time-frames for responsive reviews of proposed donations and/or public/private partnership proposals;**
- **Identifies the process the Commission will use to establish partnership priorities within the park system; and**
- **Identifies the criteria by which all proposals will be evaluated for either acceptance or rejection by the Commission.**

In order to summarize the processes identified in the report, three (3) public/private partnership process flow diagrams are attached illustrating: (1) the unsolicited proposal process (See Attachment # 2); the Request for Expressions of Interest (REOI) (See Attachment # 3); and the Request for Proposals (RFP) (See Attachment # 4).

Community Outreach:

The proposed draft policy document on donations and public / private partnerships inviting comments was placed on the Commission's web site in June.

In addition, during the month of June staff issued letters inviting comments to: the Commission's current Public Private Partnership Partners; The Montgomery Parks Foundation, Inc.; the Montgomery County Government; civic, and citizens groups; the Montgomery County Recreation Advisory Boards; park user groups as well as local business organizations like the Chamber of Commerce.

Staff also issued a second letter inviting comments again in October notifying the public that the Planning Board would be considering the subject policy and program for adoption on November 13, 2003.

Staff has received general public comments that the proposed policy and guidelines are much improved and will serve the Commission well in

receiving park donations and engaging in future public private partnerships.

Summary & Recommendation:

Based upon the attached report, staff recommends the proposed Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning Policy and Guidelines on Donations and Public/Private Partnerships document dated July 24, 2003 be approved by the Planning Board as the new policy and guidelines to replace the adopted March 8, 1996 Public/Private Development Guidelines.