



**MONTGOMERY PARKS**

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
2425 Reedie Drive | Wheaton, MD 20902  
MontgomeryParks.org

MCPB Date: 10/19/23  
Agenda Item #4

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** October 13, 2023

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** Michael F. Riley, Director of Parks *MR*  
Miti Figueredo, Deputy Director of Administration *mf*  
Gary Burnett, Deputy Director of Operations *GB*  
Shuchi Vera, Chief, Management Services Division *S.V.*

**FROM:** Nancy Steen, Budget Manager, Management Services Division *Nancy C. Steen*  
Kate Bentley, Assistant Budget Manager, Management Services Division *KB*

**SUBJECT:** Department of Parks FY25 Proposed Operating Budget for the Park Fund

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**Staff Recommendation**

Approval to prepare the FY25 Park Fund operating budget at the Base Budget plus Program Enhancements level.

**Background**

At its September 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, the Planning Board received a presentation from the Central Administrative Services (CAS) staff on the FY25 budget process including key trends and the budget outlook, strategy, and timeline.

The Planning Board then provided general guidance for developing the FY25 Budget with the recognition that the Department of Parks has mandated requirements and other essential needs to operate our park system. The Board asked that we request what is needed to provide the services that the Planning Board and the County Council have requested of us, being cognizant of the County's fiscal challenges and the likely impact that these challenges will have on our eventual budget. Staff has made an effort to ensure that any requests for program enhancements and/or critical needs be well described and justified.

**Known Increases**

At the September 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, CAS provided preliminary estimates for increases associated with the Park Fund for salaries, benefits, retirement, Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), and debt service on general obligation bonds. Since then, staff have been refining these estimates. The FY25 projected change for the compensation base (excluding the markers for merit/COLA and reclassification) is a

decrease of \$353,353, a -0.3% change. Pension cost is decreasing by \$34,936. This pension amount is pending the final actuarial review and updated estimates based on the FY23 actual expenditures.

The Department of Parks also has known inflationary, contractual, and mandated increases as well as increases for operating budget impacts (OBI) for CIP projects and developer-built parks. The OBI increases total \$369,983 (0.3% over the FY24 adopted budget). Additional information on these increases is provided later in this memo. Of that total, \$40,426 is related to the Water Quality Protection Fund (WQPF), and if approved, will be offset by increased revenue from that Fund. Our debt service on general obligation bonds for CIP projects is increasing for FY25 by \$756,628.

**The overall increase in major known commitments totals \$3,364,635 which is a 2.7% increase over the FY24 adopted budget.**

### **Budget Preparation**

To prepare for the October 19<sup>th</sup> Planning Board meeting, Parks staff worked diligently over the past several months identifying deficiencies in our work program as well as looking at emerging trends to determine the needs of the future. Additional requests were received from the divisions, considered by the Director and Deputy Directors, and narrowed down to the most important ones that address the top priorities of the Department. **The funding required for these program enhancement requests totals \$1,556,472 and includes fifteen positions. Of those fifteen positions, the cost for six of the positions are included at a net zero cost impact and do not increase our Park Fund costs.**

### **Budget Summary**

**After the review of our Major Known Commitments as well as the Program Enhancements that we are proposing, the total increase for our department (excluding the compensation markers) for FY25 is \$4,921,107, or a 3.9% increase over the FY24 budget. With the addition of the compensation markers, the overall increase (excluding OPEB) comes to \$9,559,917, a 7.7% increase over the FY24 total.**

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS  
FY25 OPERATING BUDGET REQUEST**

		% Change	# of Positions
<b>FY24 Adopted Budget</b>	<b>\$ 124,842,255</b>		
 <b>FY24 BASE BUDGET INCREASES</b>			
Salary/Benefit Changes(excluding salary markers) *	(353,353)	-0.3%	-4.0
Pension Increase	(34,936)	0.0%	
OBI	329,557	0.3%	2.0
Contractual Increases	767,741	0.6%	
Inflationary Increases for Supplies and Materials, Services and Capital Outlay	711,696	0.6%	
Utilities/Telecommunications Costs	85,730	0.1%	
Risk Management	603,800	0.5%	
CAS Charges (Chargebacks/CIO/CWIT, etc.)	248,791	0.2%	
Chargebacks (CIP/Enterprise/Special Revenue Funds/Wheaton HQ)	97,878	0.1%	
Transfer to Debt Service (CIP)	756,628	0.6%	
Water Quality Fund	151,103	0.1%	
<b>Subtotal Increase - Base Budget Request</b>	<b>\$ 3,364,635</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>-2.0</b>
 <b>PROPOSED CHANGES - PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS</b>			
Park Activation	164,385	0.1%	1.0
Improving Customer Service	99,048	0.1%	2.0
Data Analytics	418,922	0.3%	2.0
Enhancing Public Safety	49,306	0.0%	1.0
Promoting Social Equity	394,669	0.3%	3.0
Supporting CIP Implementation	116,524	0.1%	4.0
Maintaining and Improving What We Have	313,618	0.3%	2.0
	<b>\$ 1,556,472</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>15.0</b>
<b>Subtotal Program Enhancements</b>	<b>\$ 4,921,107</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>13.0</b>
<b>Total Increase FY25 Proposed Budget Request</b>			
<b>Non-Departmental - Salary (Merit/COLA) and Reclassification Markers</b>	4,638,810		
<b>Total Increase Excluding OPEB</b>	<b>\$ 9,559,917</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	

**KNOWN OPERATING COMMITMENTS**

The preliminary known changes in the Park Fund for salaries, benefits, retirement, Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), and debt service on general obligation bonds were reviewed by CAS at the September 21<sup>st</sup> Planning Board meeting, and our revised updates to these totals are included in the summary above.

Information regarding the known operating commitments for OBI, mandated, contractual, and inflationary increases for Park operations is provided below.

The chart below outlines the increases for known operating commitments (**excluding compensation and debt service for CIP**) with detailed information about each line item provided in the following narrative.

<b>FY25 Park Fund Base Budget Known Operating Commitments</b>	<b>Personnel</b>	<b>Positions/ Workyears</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>% Increase from FY24 Adopted</b>
Operating Budget Impact (OBI) (Excluding WQPF)	Career/ Seasonal	2 positions/ 4.1 wkyrs	329,557	0.3%
Contractual Increases	N/A	N/A	767,741	0.6%
Inflationary Increases for Supplies and Materials, Services and Capital Outlay	N/A	N/A	711,696	0.6%
Utilities/Telecommunications Costs	N/A	N/A	85,730	0.1%
Risk Management	N/A	N/A	603,800	0.5%
CAS Charges (Chargebacks, Unemployment, LTD, CIO/CWIT Base)	N/A	N/A	248,791	0.2%
Parks Chargebacks (CIP/Enterprise/Special Revenue Funds and Wheaton HQ)	N/A	N/A	97,878	0.1%
Water Quality Protection Fund (WQPF cost is reimbursed by County) *	Seasonal	0.9 wkyrs	151,103	0.1%
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$2,996,296</b>	<b>2.4%</b>

\*WQPF total includes OBI associated with stormwater management projects.

**Operating Budget Impacts (OBI)**

Operating Budget Impacts (OBI) are the costs associated with the operating, maintaining, and policing of new and expanded parks. If we do not get additional resources each year to care for new facilities, it equates to an incremental reduction in service level as existing resources must be spread across a larger work program. Much of the land is acquired and developed through the CIP, while some is obtained through partnerships and developer dedicated parks and amenities. New and expanded park facilities require additional operating, maintenance, and safety resources.

The staffing and non-personnel impacts of the projects expected to be completed in or before FY25 total \$369,983. This OBI funding amount is ostensibly approved when the capital budget is approved. This funding total also includes \$40,426 for OBI that falls under the Water Quality Protection Fund (WQPF), and if approved, will be offset by revenue. Since the WQPF portion of projects will be funded from a different taxing source, associated costs are split out separately.

The chart below details the resources associated with new or expanded park infrastructure. A description of each OBI project is included in the Appendix.

Project Name	Park/Project Location	FY25 OBI Expenditures	FY25 Career Workyears	FY25 Seasonal Workyears
<b>CIP PROJECTS</b>				
Broad Run Stream Valley Park	Poolesville	\$84,693	0.5	0.7
Caroline Freeland Urban Park Renovation	Bethesda	\$42,473	0.2	0.4
Ednor Soapstone Quarry Special Park	Silver Spring	\$25,190	0.0	0.5
Fairland Recreational Park - North End Court Upgrades	Fairland	\$1,398	0.0	0.0
Glenmont Local Park - Softball Field Upgrade	Wheaton	\$40,820	0.3	0.0
White Flint Civic Green (Grand Park)	North Bethesda	\$13,800	0.1	0.0
Mt. Prospect - Hanson Farm	Travilah	\$6,507	0.0	0.2
Olney Mill Neighborhood Park - Playground Replacement	Olney	\$2,179	0.0	0.0
Powerline Trail - Cabin John Area	Bethesda	\$8,591	0.0	0.1
Reddy Branch Trailhead at Yinger Property	Olney	\$7,585	0.0	0.1
Rosemary Hills - Lyttonsville Local Park Renovation	Silver Spring	\$23,146	0.2	0.1
Strathmore Local Park Renovation	Aspen Hill	\$24,676	0.2	0.0
Ten Mile Creek Conservation Park	Boyd's	\$43,512	0.5	0.0
Valleywood Neighborhood Park Renovation	Wheaton	\$4,554	0.0	0.0
Wheaton Forest Local Park Renovation	Wheaton	\$433	0.0	0.0
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>		<b>\$329,557</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.1</b>
<b>CIP - WQPF PROJECTS</b>				
Caroline Freeland Urban Park Renovation	Bethesda	\$4,860	0.0	0.1
White Flint Civic Green (Grand Park)	North Bethesda	\$2,431	0.0	0.1
Kemp Mills Estates Local Park - Stormwater Management	Wheaton	\$2,851	0.0	0.1
Powerline Trail - Cabin John Area	Bethesda	\$18,133	0.0	0.3
Rosemary Hills - Lyttonsville Local Park Renovation	Silver Spring	\$4,860	0.0	0.1
Strathmore Local Park Renovation	Aspen Hill	\$4,860	0.0	0.1
Wheaton Forest Local Park Renovation	Wheaton	\$2,431	0.0	0.1
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>		<b>\$40,426</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$369,983</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>

**Inflationary Increases for Contractual Obligations - \$767,741**

The Department has a variety of contracts with known escalation clauses built in. These include maintenance services, tree removal services, custodial services, office services, software maintenance/licensing fees, and insurance premiums. Many of our contracts have escalation clauses linked to Consumer Price Index (CPI) rates. Although inflation, especially in the DC metropolitan area, has fallen back closer to normal levels in the last few months, our department is still seeing significant cost increases for both contracts and purchases of goods as our vendors attempt to level costs with the past year’s high inflation levels.

Included in this contractual increase total is the \$212,049 for the cost of maintenance for the upgraded dispatch and records management system for Park Police. This system was under warranty in FY24. The new system must be implemented concurrently with the old system until implementation is finished to ensure full coverage. The department should see a cost savings in FY26 when the old system is taken offline. Also included is \$51,600 for the pilot program to add GPS fleet tracking to select vehicles which will streamline vehicle tracking and mileage records. The total also includes \$50,000 for the mandated

inspection of the Lake Needwood and Lake Frank dam risers. This inspection must be completed once every five years, so this cost is a recurring one-time cost which will be removed in the FY26 budget request. Other funded requests related to mandated activities are \$7,500 for Health Supervisor consultant services for the Nature Center camp programs, and \$10,071 for the Bonifant Landfill groundwater and gas monitoring contract. Also included is \$42,567 for tasers for Park Police, which are now acquired under a 5-year subscription with Axon. This amount is about half of the total cost of the subscription as the remaining cost will be offset by a decrease in supplies funding. Finally, with the increase in park usage and the success of the Park Activation program, the department has seen increased need and requests for portable toilets in parks. Therefore, an increase of \$45,000 is being requested for the department's portable toilet contract.

**Inflationary Increases for Supplies and Materials, Services and Capital Outlay - \$711,696**

The Department of Parks is requesting to increase the supplies and materials, non-contractual services, and capital outlay by \$711,696 to keep up with inflation and increased costs for vehicle parts, custodial supplies, security cameras, maintenance equipment and supplies, computer and communications supplies, uniforms, office equipment and supplies, horticultural supplies, and other miscellaneous supply items.

This total includes \$75,000 to "right size" funding for our fleet maintenance costs, \$100,000 to cover drastically increased costs for diesel fuel and gasoline, \$117,933 for minor equipment and capital outlay electric conversion costs, and \$62,424 for computer supplies and equipment. Also included is \$75,000, which will be mirrored in the Planning Department's request for the replacement of aging switches, routers, and firewalls by the ITI Division.

**Debt Service for Internal Service Fund (ISF) Capital Equipment - \$0 (Park Fund)**

The Department of Parks finances vehicles and equipment through an Internal Service Fund (ISF). The Department's ISF funding covers vehicles and large pieces of equipment costing more than \$10,000 and with a life expectancy of greater than six years, which include work trucks, construction equipment, large mowers, and computer and information technology system upgrades. The Planning Board approves these purchases by approving the debt service payment each fiscal year.

For FY25, the Department of Parks requested funding level is \$2,000,000 for replacement of older fleet as well as requests associated with Program Enhancement and OBI requests.

This FY25 ISF funding of \$2M will provide for the following items:

- Park Fund total:
  - \$160,000 for Information Technology (IT) cabling and infrastructure improvements and networking and communication switch replacements. The total cost will be split 50/50 with Planning.
  - \$152,000 for vehicles for new positions and a required electric Z-turn mower associated with OBI for the FY25 budget.
  - \$1,688,000 for replacement of older vehicles and equipment that have exceeded their useful life cycle.

Based on the timing of debt service payments, and the department's efforts to prepay debt service in previous years, there will be no increase to the capital equipment debt service amount for FY25.

The other way that the Department purchases equipment is through capital outlay funds which are used for equipment that costs more than \$10,000 or equipment that may have a life expectancy of fewer than six years. This equipment is purchased through the Park Fund. The capital outlay funding request for FY25 is increasing from \$552,108 to \$1,001,403. That total increase of \$449,295 includes the \$75,000 of ITI cost for the replacement of aging switches, routers, and firewalls, a program enhancement request of \$135,439 to purchase Foamstream machines, a transfer of \$150,000 from supplies to capital outlay (a category change based on increased equipment costs) and \$191,669 to offset the increased cost of equipment and to facilitate our conversion to electric mowers and equipment.

### **Risk Management and CAS Charges - \$852,591**

Risk management, unemployment insurance, long-term disability benefit costs, CAS chargebacks and adjustments to the projected base cost for the CIO and CWIT are adjusted each year based on actual expenses on behalf of the Department of Parks. Changes included in this total include:

- Risk management – increase of \$603,800.
- LTD Fringe benefit – increase of \$21,700.
- CAS chargebacks – increase of \$6,711.
- CIO/Commission-Wide IT Initiatives (CWIT) – increase of \$250,380 comprised of:
  - CIO Allocation – increase of \$261,542 – this increase is mainly attributable to the departmental share of Commission-wide IT maintenance and license fees.
  - CWIT - decrease of \$11,162 for departmental share.

### **Parks Chargebacks – \$97,878**

Chargebacks between the Park Fund and the Enterprise Fund, Special Revenue Fund, and the Wheaton HQ Service Fund are reviewed and adjusted each year based on projected expenses. This increase is attributable to the following:

- Compensation adjustments for Park Police who provide support for the Wheaton Headquarters building.
- A reduction in chargebacks to the Special Revenue Fund for MCPS Ballfield Maintenance (this change is explained below under "Position Changes") and to the CIP based on staff and CIP funding capacity; and
- An increase in the Enterprise chargeback for a small portion of the shared cost of a new position being requested in the Enterprise Fund for FY25 to support Brookside Gardens. In addition, the portion of the Enterprise chargeback cost that was previously in Support Services has now been moved to the Information, Technology, & Innovation Division (ITI) since that chargeback is for a portion of the cost provided by the IT staff for the ActiveMONTGOMERY system.

### **Water Quality Protection Fund (WQPF) - \$151,103**

The Department of Parks received its first National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Small Separate Storm Sewer System (NPDES MS4) permit from the Maryland Department of the Environment in the spring of 2010. The purpose of this permit, which is based in the Federal Clean Water Act, is to reduce stormwater pollution coming from impervious surfaces and thereby improve water quality. The

permit requires the Department to develop Best Management Practices for each of the six Minimum Control Measures which include: Personnel Education and Outreach, Public Involvement and Participation, Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination, Construction Site Runoff Control, Post Construction Stormwater Management, and Pollution Prevention and Good Housekeeping. Although the Department was required to obtain this permit and fulfill its requirements, no federal or state funds were available to offset this mandate.

Accordingly, in FY12 the Department was appropriated funding from the Montgomery County Water Quality Protection Fund to offset costs associated with ongoing water quality related work across the M-NCPPC's 37,220-acre park system and implementation of the Department's NPDES permits. Ongoing water quality related work includes maintenance and management of streams, lakes, non-tidal wetlands, and stormwater management facilities as well as the implementation of the Department's NPDES industrial permit for its twelve maintenance yards. As requirements have continued to increase, the amount has increased each year to its current FY24 budgeted amount of \$4,138,538.

While many improvements have been initiated under the permit, deficiencies remain in the Post-Construction Stormwater Management measure as the department continues to add stormwater amenities each year throughout the park system. These constraints continue to pose challenges in meeting the requirements of the NPDES MS4 permit. In addition, the Department was issued a new MS4 permit which went into effect in FY19 that requires our department to delineate impervious surfaces, drainage areas, and best management practices such as stormwater management retrofits and stream restoration projects.

These on-going requirements are the basis for the budget items listed below.

- **Additional funding for Contractual Increases - \$11,515**
- **OBI - \$40,426 – project detail was provided earlier in the memo in the section on OBI.**
- **Impact of personnel increases from FY24 (Merit/COLA pay) of \$99,162 – for current staff funded through WQPF.**

Note that if this request is approved, it will be offset by increased revenue from the Water Quality Protection Fund. Further breakdown of the proposed funding is shown in the chart below.

<b>New FY25 WQPF Funding Request</b>	<b>Personnel</b>	<b>Supplies and Materials</b>	<b>Other Services and Charges</b>	<b>Total</b>
Stormwater Management - Contractual Increases	\$0	\$0	\$11,515	\$11,515
OBI for Stormwater Management Amenities	\$30,693	\$9,733	\$0	\$40,426
Merit/COLA Impact - Increases from FY24	\$99,162	\$0	\$0	\$99,162
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$129,855</b>	<b>\$9,733</b>	<b>\$11,515</b>	<b>\$151,103</b>

**Position Changes and Reorganizations**

The department is requesting to convert two term contract positions to full-time (FT) for the Public Affairs and Community Partnerships Division and the Management Services Division. Both positions' work programs involve responding to mandated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, so



the on-going work requires a FT employee. The incremental cost to the Park Fund of converting these two positions from term contract to FT is \$14,774.

The department will also eliminate four positions from the Southern Parks Division. These positions were added in FY24 with the intention of moving a portion of the contracted MCPS ballfield maintenance services in-house. However, based on the inflated cost of supplies and equipment to support the program, the department has made the decision to continue contracting these services for the near future. This change will have a net-zero impact to the Park Fund because the cost of these positions was budgeted to be charged back to the Special Revenue Fund for MCPS Ballfield Maintenance and to the CIP.

For FY25, the department is also requesting to move several positions among divisions based on realignment of work programs. Seven positions providing support to the MCPS Ballfield Maintenance program including renovations of MCPS fields under the CIP are being moved from the Southern Parks Division to the Park Development Division, and one position providing long term planning for the athletic program will be moved from the Southern Parks Division to the Park Planning and Stewardship Division. There is no cost impact to the Park Fund as the associated personnel, supplies, and services costs are being transferred to the new division.

**PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS FOR THE FY25 BUDGET**

In addition to Known Commitments, the Department of Parks is proposing Program Enhancements that will expand our current work program to help meet emerging needs. The chart below gives a snapshot of the proposed Program Enhancements followed by specific descriptions.

<b>Summary - Program Enhancements</b>					
<b>Item &amp; Description</b>	<b>Career Positions</b>	<b>Career Wkys</b>	<b>Term Contract Wkys</b>	<b>Seasonal Wkys</b>	<b>Funding</b>
Park Activation	1.0	1.0	-	-	\$164,385
Improving Customer Service	2.0	2.0	-	-	\$99,048
Data Analytics	2.0	2.0	-	-	\$418,922
Enhancing Public Safety	1.0	1.0	-	(0.7)	\$49,306
Promoting Social Equity	3.0	3.0	-	2.0	\$394,669
Supporting CIP Implementation	4.0	1.0	-	-	\$116,524
Maintaining and Improving What We Have	2.0	2.0	-	(4.1)	\$313,618
<b>Total</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(2.8)</b>	<b>\$1,556,472</b>

<b><u>PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT – PARK ACTIVATION</u></b>	<b><u>1.0 Career Position; 1.0 Career Workyear</u></b>	<b><u>\$164,385</u></b>
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**Additional Event Funding for Parks Activation Program – \$164,385**

This enhancement will add a full-time Park Maintenance Worker and \$85,000 in services funding. Over the past few years, the Activation Team has continued to build a strong repertoire of events to bring the public into park spaces and build community. As the program continues to grow, additional staffing is needed to manage the work associated with the increasing event attendance and to facilitate adding new events. The first request is for a park maintenance worker position to provide a dedicated resource to handle the loading and unloading of equipment, equipment delivery, event setup and take down, and repair and cleaning of equipment. In addition, services funding is requested to facilitate expansion of events and to add a signature event. A signature event, like a festival or large concert, will bring out a greater number of participants and truly showcase the diversity and community of Montgomery County. The services funding will allow the team to contract with performers and to procure equipment rentals to outfit these events.

<b><u>PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT – IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE</u></b>	<b><u>2.0 Career Positions; 2.0 Career Workyears</u></b>	<b><u>\$99,048</u></b>
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**Insourced Help Desk Support Specialist - \$0**

Help Desk Information Technology (IT) services are currently outsourced. This request is to bring these Help Desk services in-house to provide improved end-user support with an onsite employee who will be integrated with our current Technology Team. This enhancement includes one full-time IT/Telecom Support Specialist. Since there will be a reduction in services costs for the outsourced services, this position will have a net-zero cost impact to the Park Fund. This position will provide dedicated support to Montgomery Parks and Planning end user needs, including incident management, user support, change management, the creation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), continuous improvement practices, and compliance audit management.

**Parks Information and Customer Service (PICS) Assistant Manager - \$99,048**

The Parks Information and Customer Service (PICS) office typically handles 300-500 calls per week, with at least 200 written cases per week originating via email. The office currently houses just enough staff to answer all incoming calls during businesses hours while replying to most written cases within 24 hours (or on Monday for those received over the weekend). This request is for a full-time PICS Assistant Manager. The Assistant Manager will provide the operational flexibility that we currently lack allowing for increased flexibility and advanced planning within the team as well as providing coverage if a staff member is out sick or on leave. The additional staffing will also allow the department to expand hours of coverage to evening or limited weekend hours enabling the department to be more responsive during peak times of patronage usage.

<b><u>PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT – DATA ANALYTICS</u></b>	<b><u>2.0 Career Positions; 3.0 Career Workyear</u></b>	<b><u>\$418,922</u></b>
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**Data Analyst Position and Data Engineering and Data Scientist Services -\$209,461**

The Parks Data Analytics Team has made strides in utilizing technology to ensure that the staff across the department are making data-driven decisions and that crucial data is available and accessible to more Parks employees. To continue to expand these opportunities, the department is requesting a full-time Data Analyst position along with \$100,000 in services funding. The Data Analyst position will work with all divisions to translate data into actionable information, conduct analysis to ensure decisions are truly data-driven and help achieve a multitude of goals outlined in the 2022 Parks, Recreation, and Open- Space (PROS) plan. The additional services funding will cover Data Engineering and Data Scientist Services to allow for better resource planning and allocation, and return on investment on various programs and services. This position and services will enable our department to expand our analysis of park visitation information, amenity usage patterns, quantity and quality of amenities, and their accessibility to the public to better analyze how well we are serving our patrons.

**GIS Specialist -\$109,461**

To assist the above effort the Parks Data Analytics Team is also requesting a full-time GIS Specialist position. Parks staff and decision makers must have a comprehensive method to visualize the physical world. Geographic Information System (GIS) is the first and best avenue to achieve this wholistic view. This position will perform analysis, feature updates, tool creation, layer development, enhancement, and troubleshooting. This position will support the department and allow staff to utilize GIS on more projects which will increase efficiency and effectiveness in creating solutions.

**PROS Implementation Research -\$100,000**

The 2022 PROS Plan introduces several important innovative ideas to the Parks Department and includes multiple recommendations to guide the future development and management of our park system. Effectively implementing these recommendations and substantively delivering on the objectives requires answering complex questions like the following: What do residents mean when they say the condition of parks should be improved? What makes users feel safe or unsafe in our parks? How do we best serve our increasingly diverse county? What are the best opportunities to develop innovative urban parks? To that end, this enhancement will provide \$100,000 in services funding to create a research budget to help find answers to these questions. The funds will be used to expand our capacity to conduct social science research utilizing randomized, scientific public opinion surveys, focus groups, professional development, best practices research, data collection and analysis, and the visual presentation of qualitative and qualitative findings. These research findings will help provide direction on how to streamline and optimize our services.

<b><u>PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT – ENHANCING PUBLIC SAFETY</u></b>	<b><u>1.0 Career Position; 1.0 Career Workyear; -0.7 Seasonal Workyears</u></b>	<b><u>\$49,306</u></b>
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**Assistant Barn Manager – \$49,306**

This request for Montgomery Park Police is for a full-time Assistant Barn Manager position replacing support currently provided by seasonal staff. Working with horses is skilled and dangerous work. Currently, our mounted program includes fourteen horses being managed by two FT staff and supplemented by seasonal staff. Adding a FT position will improve support and consistency which will increase the safety of horses and staff. In addition to patrol and ceremonial duties, this team plays a critical role in emergency situations when the horses are necessary for civil disturbances and mutual aid requests. An additional position will allow for more preparation time for the horses so that they can be readied for an officer to ride for patrol, to perform trail checks and to support community events. Filling this position will also enable the Special Operations Section to expand its autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities programs thereby developing a rapport with underserved communities. The cost of this new position reflects a reduction in seasonal funding to partially offset the cost.

<b><u>PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT – PROMOTING SOCIAL EQUITY</u></b>	<b><u>3.0 Career Positions; 3.0 Career Workyears; 2.0 Seasonal Workyears</u></b>	<b><u>\$394,669</u></b>
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**Nature and Outdoor Programming for Senior Community -\$203,993**

This enhancement will add one full-time Principal Park Naturalist, two seasonal staff, and \$24,000 in services funds to create a program focused on supporting the physical and mental wellness of our increasing elderly population. This program will provide outdoor and nature recreation as well as community and social connections. The program will identify and fill gaps in service for senior citizens and serve the distinct needs of senior citizens. This enhancement directly aligns with PROS recommendations by making outdoor, healthy physical activity accessible and enticing to senior citizens and by providing sustainable and appropriate access to our best natural areas. Programming will include naturalist led excursions and transportation. This will be a fee-based program for selected activities, so the cost will be partially offset by increased revenue projected at \$41,400.

**Public Outreach Staff -\$190,676**

The Parks Public Affairs office participates in hundreds of park projects and initiatives every year. Each of these projects involve community outreach, engagement, and promotion. The team currently has one dedicated outreach specialist and one graphic designer to manage these tasks for all park projects. This enhancement request will add a full-time bilingual Outreach Specialist and a full-time Graphic Designer to allow the department to keep up with and to broaden engagement efforts while attracting new audiences and increase efficiencies. These positions will further enable the department to deepen engagement within diverse communities and equity focus areas and to meet the community where they are. They will also help the department to continue to improve its branding and community presence, both online and off, with engaging and attractive imagery.

<b><u>PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT – SUPPORTING CIP IMPLEMENTATION</u></b>	<b><u>4.0 Career Positions; 1.0 Career Workyear</u></b>	<b><u>\$116,524</u></b>
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**Grants Administrator - \$116,524**

The Parks Department has received over \$16 million in grants, earmarks, and bond bill funding over the last year alone and staff is actively engaged in seeking more outside funding opportunities. This enhancement would hire a full-time Grants Administrator to manage grant applications and support procurement efforts needed to implement all CIP grants pursued and received. The Grants Administrator will seek out additional funding to augment the CIP, track and coordinate ongoing grants, and build out the internal infrastructure to ensure funds are spent appropriately and all requirements are met. This will help to expand the grants program within the CIP while making certain that no funds are lost due to non-compliance or missed deadlines.

**Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Implementation Staff - \$0**

A sizable portion of the above-mentioned grants funding is focused on building and improving trails and making much needed infrastructure improvements throughout the park system. To support the increased workload in implementing these projects, this enhancement is for a full-time Hard Surface Trails Construction Project Manager, full-time Hard Surface Trails Design Project Manager position, and a full-time Building Renovation Architectural Project Manager. The Trails Construction Project Manager and Trails Design Project Manager will manage design, permitting, and construction of the increased number of trail-related projects, coordinate designs through the review process, implement operational needs along with planning objectives, improve constructability review, bidding process, construction oversight, and project closeouts/transitions of trail projects into operations. They will also collect data for the Enterprise Asset Management system and support asset condition assessments. The Architectural Project Manager will design and coordinate the increased number of building renovation projects required by our aging infrastructure and energy conservation needs. The position will also provide in-house design for building renovations and coordination with operations staff on needs assessments and work directly with Facilities Management Staff to facilitate implementation of major renovations and CIP projects. Because the cost impact of positions will be charged 100% to CIP projects, the cost and workyears reflect a net-zero impact to the Park Fund. The increased annual CIP chargeback will be \$349,572.

<b><u>PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT – MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING WHAT WE HAVE</u></b>	<b><u>2.0 Career Positions; 2 Career Workyears; -4.1 Seasonal Workyears</u></b>	<b><u>\$313,618</u></b>
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**Foamstream Initiative- \$150,439**

This enhancement will add \$135,439 in capital outlay funding and \$15,000 in supplies funding. This funding will be used to acquire two Foamstream units (two utility carts and two trailers) and cover the associated supplies costs to outfit the trailers. Foamstream is an herbicide-free solution used in the control of unwanted vegetation, including weeds and non-native invasives (NNIs). Its low-pressure process combines hot water with a biodegradable foam. This acquired technology will increase efficiency of our current work program while continuing to reduce pesticide and herbicide use in developed areas, reducing concerns of park users about exposure. This technology enhances NNI mechanical control and meadow mowing to improve habitat and save beneficial trees and plants.

Foamstream machines are used to safely eradicate weeds in patron heavy areas such as playgrounds, sidewalks, landscape beds, athletic field bench areas, skinned infields, and warning tracks, and in critical bioretention areas.

#### **Weed Eradication Playground Team- \$0**

This enhancement will add two full-time Park Maintenance Workers to perform weed removal utilizing existing Foamstream units to keep weeds in control without the use of pesticides and hand pulling. This effort will ensure the removal of unwanted weeds like thistle growing in playgrounds, on paths, and courts but continue to reduce the use of dangerous pesticides. It is especially important to keep paths and walkways weed free for ADA purposes. Weed removal helps to reduce the request for surface repairs to playground, concrete, and asphalt areas. Weed control also slows down decomposition of engineered wood fiber reducing replacement costs. Additional staff will initially focus on playground areas with the goal of expanding to improving weed control at other amenities including walkways, ballfield areas, and fence lines. The net-zero cost reflects a reduction in seasonal funding to offset these new positions.

#### **Pilot Program - Lease of High-Volume Mowers- \$163,179**

The department has experienced drastically increased delivery times for the purchase of new and replacement vehicles and equipment. This enhancement will add \$163,179 of services funding to create a pilot program to lease five high-volume mowers. Replacement costs for these mowers has increased significantly and the acquisition of replacement mowers can take months or even years. Leasing equipment will enable continued and enhanced efficiencies, since these high-volume mowers cover the same ground in a third of the time of a traditional z-turn mower. The lease agreement includes both the provision and repair of equipment by the vendor. The agreement also includes minimal downtime guarantees, and a replacement mower will be provided if repairs cannot be made within the contracted service time parameters. This leasing program will allow mechanics to devote time to other high priority repairs and eliminate the cost of replacement parts and maintenance. The estimated cost savings for labor and parts over a five-year lease are \$74,000.

#### **Summary**

The Department of Parks is continuing to refine the FY25 Proposed Budget. Being mindful of the cost pressures facing the Park Fund from salaries, benefits, retirement, and mandated obligations, the **FY25 budget request shows our commitment to continue to provide the best services possible to our customers with a 3.9% operating increase (excluding compensation markers) over the FY24 budget. With the addition of the compensation markers, the total increase (excluding OPEB) comes to 7.7%.**

Staff is requesting approval from the Planning Board to proceed to prepare the FY25 Park Fund operating budget at the Base Budget plus Program Enhancements level.

Staff will be available at the work session to provide any additional information on the budget request.

The Department is scheduled for a final work session on the operating budget on November 16th to seek approval of specific funding levels for the FY25 Proposed Budgets for the Park Fund, Enterprise Fund, Property Management Fund, Special Revenue Fund, and Internal Services Equipment Fund.

APPENDIX

**FY25 Operating Budget Impact (OBI) Project Descriptions**

<b>CIP PROJECTS</b>			
<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>CAREER WYS</b>	<b>SEASONAL WYS</b>
<b>Broad Run Stream Valley Park</b>	<b>\$84,693</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Broad Run is a recently acquired conservation area. This second phase of OBI will fund NNI and plant management and the development of strong historical and archaeological research that will inform the interpretive signage and outreach materials.			
<b>Caroline Freeland Urban Park Renovation</b>	<b>\$42,473</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.4</b>
The renovated park will feature a new central lawn and a large seating terrace. Accessible pathways will provide easy access to new amenities, including a larger playground, bench swings, and bicycle parking. The entire streetscape fronting the park will be improved, including a new entry plaza. Hampden Lane will be renovated into a more pedestrian-oriented plaza while maintaining required emergency vehicle access through the park.			
<b>Ednor Soapstone Quarry Special Park Acquisition</b>	<b>\$25,190</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.5</b>
This acquisition will create a new park to interpret the Indigenous history of Montgomery County. The Ednor Soapstone Quarry Special Park will provide for conservation, research, and interpretation of significant cultural resources and will serve to address an educational programming gap in Montgomery Parks cultural resources outreach. The new park will provide stewardship of an Indigenous soapstone quarry, a rare resource within the state and hands-on educational activities focused on daily life in Montgomery County over the last 5,000 years. In addition to interpretive amenities and activities, the new park will provide a natural surface loop trail connecting the activity areas within the park, as well as providing opportunities for potential future connections to the stream valley within this park and to adjoining parks.			
<b>Fairland Recreational Park - North End Court Upgrades</b>	<b>\$1,398</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
This project adds lighting to the courts and makes minor upgrades to expand park user access.			
<b>Glenmont Local Park - Softball Field Upgrade</b>	<b>\$40,820</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>
This project upgraded the softball field from local park standards to recreational park standards to facilitate an increase in field permitting requests.			
<b>White Flint Civic Green</b>	<b>\$13,800</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>
This new developer-built park will consist of an open green area for unprogrammed play, a concrete sidewalk, picnic area, a sitting area, ping pong table, lighting, landscape planting and a micro bio retention area.			
<b>Mt. Prospect - Hanson Farm</b>	<b>\$6,507</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.2</b>

This will be a new developer-built park. The park will contain a picnic area half of which will contain ADA accessible tables, grills, and trash receptacles. It will also contain a large dog park with separate areas for large and small dogs and an ADA accessible trailhead area with multiple amenities. This initial OBI funding is to cover mowing costs until the park is developed.			
<b>Olney Mill Neighborhood Park - Playground Replacement</b>	<b>\$2,179</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
This project will replace an existing playground, make enhancements to access and stormwater management, and improve the area surrounding the playground.			
<b>Powerline Trail - Cabin John Area</b>	<b>\$8,591</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>
This first phase of the Powerline Project will add 2,450 feet of bituminous trail and make improvements to stormwater management.			
<b>Reddy Branch Trailhead at Yinger Property</b>	<b>\$7,585</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>
This property was acquired recently, and the department is in the process of demolishing the few buildings on the property. After the last house is demolished, Parks will be adding a ¾-mile to 1-mile natural surface trail, small trailhead parking lot and an informational kiosk. This funding will be for NNI management, trash collection, and a small amount of mowing near the trailhead and parking lot.			
<b>Rosemary Hills - Lyttonsville Local Park Renovation</b>	<b>\$23,146</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.1</b>
The first phase of this park renovation will include ADA and infrastructure improvements, including the path system access to the existing fields and stormwater management improvements.			
<b>Strathmore Local Park Renovation</b>	<b>\$24,676</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>
This renovation project renovates a large part of the park to include an onsite parking lot, a loop path, a soccer court, and basketball court (to replace the existing tennis courts), a new playground, improved soccer field, accessibility upgrades, additional park improvements, and stormwater management.			
<b>Ten Mile Creek Conservation Park</b>	<b>\$43,512</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Ten Mile Creek Conservation Park features undeveloped land for the benefit of the natural environment at this park. This project covers the conveyance of an additional 208 acres. While the land will not be open as a park for a few years it will require forest, NNI, and deer management			
<b>Valleywood Neighborhood Park Renovation</b>	<b>\$4,554</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
This project will renovate the existing playground to include a set of swings (accommodating toddlers, older children, and children with physical disabilities), a new play structure for children 2 to 5 years old, a new play structure for children 5 to 12 years old, a freestanding teeter-totter, and a freestanding spring rider. It will also provide improved accessibility, additional park improvements, and stormwater management.			
<b>Wheaton Forest Local Park Renovation</b>	<b>\$433</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
This project will renovate the tennis court, picnic shelter, and restroom building. It will also expand and renovate the parking lot and sidewalk, add an asphalt loop path, bike racks, benches, and landscaping.			
<b>TOTAL OBI FOR CIP PROJECTS</b>	<b>\$329,557</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.1</b>



<b>CIP PROJECTS - WQPF</b>			
<b>Caroline Freeland Urban Park Renovation</b>	<b>\$4,860</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>
The renovated park will feature a new central lawn and a large seating terrace. Accessible pathways will provide easy access to new amenities, including a larger playground, bench swings, and bicycle parking. The entire streetscape fronting the park will be improved, including a new entry plaza. Hampden Lane will be renovated into a more pedestrian-oriented plaza while maintaining required emergency vehicle access through the park.			
<b>White Flint Civic Green</b>	<b>\$2,431</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>
This new developer-built park will consist of an open green area for unprogrammed play, a concrete sidewalk, picnic area, a sitting area, ping pong table, lighting, landscape planting and a micro bio retention area.			
<b>Kemp Mills Estates - Stormwater Management</b>	<b>\$2,851</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>
This project will retrofit an existing parking lot and add a bioretention area.			
<b>Powerline Trail - Cabin John Area</b>	<b>\$18,133</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.3</b>
This first phase of the Powerline Project will add 2,450 feet of bituminous trail and make improvements to stormwater management.			
<b>Rosemary Hills - Lyttonsville Local Park Renovation</b>	<b>\$4,860</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>
The first phase of this park renovation will include ADA and infrastructure improvements, including the path system access to the existing fields and stormwater management improvements.			
<b>Strathmore Local Park Renovation</b>	<b>\$4,860</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>
This project will renovate a large part of the park to include an onsite parking lot, a loop path, a soccer court, and basketball court (to replace the existing tennis courts), a new playground, improved soccer field, accessibility upgrades, additional park improvements, and stormwater management.			
<b>Wheaton Forest Local Park Renovation</b>	<b>\$2,431</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>
This project will renovate the tennis court, picnic shelter, and restroom building. It will also expand and renovate the parking lot and sidewalk, add an asphalt loop path, bike racks, benches, and landscaping.			
<b>TOTAL OBI FOR CIP PROJECTS - WQPF</b>	<b>\$40,426</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$369,983</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>