

## **Outreach Strategies**

### **O-1: Cities**

#### **Strategy**

Initiate new and continue existing outreach activities to ensure the County is working closely with cities on plans and proposals for the park system transition.

#### **Recommendation**

Outreach to cities should continue to ensure cities are kept informed of the County's plans and are able to assist the County in problem solving by providing feedback and ideas. The next significant outreach task is to engage the cities on their request for a regional aquatics task force: the County is currently awaiting the cities' official proposal for how this task force should proceed.

The County should work collaboratively with cities to build support for proposed legislation that will amend state law to allow REET (Real Estate Excise Tax) and CFT (Conservation Futures Tax) funds to be expended in part on park maintenance. City support for authorization to use these revenues for maintenance will be important to a successful lobbying effort in Olympia.

#### **Policy Issues**

A comprehensive outreach strategy is based on a policy of seeking communication and collaboration with regional partners. The parks transition also revolves largely around issues of determining what is regional and what is local, and how to shape the County's future role in a manner consistent with the Growth Management vision for King County. That vision calls for the County to continue to serve as a regional government, with a shrinking local government role in the unincorporated urban areas as a result of annexations and incorporations and a permanent local-government service role in the rural areas.

#### **Discussion**

The cities are key stakeholders in the parks transition as the County is seeking transfer of dozens of local facilities to cities (as well as a few facilities that have been characterized as regional facilities in earlier County park system comprehensive plans). In terms of financial impact, the local pools are the single most critical set of facilities transfers being proposed.

The County has met regularly with the city managers' group in 2002 (to which all cities are invited, and most regularly participate, including Seattle and Bellevue), providing monthly updates of work on parks issues. This outreach should continue. In addition, parks staff has worked to ensure more frequent e-mail communication with cities, and has met periodically with the King County Parks Director's group. This should also continue.

The cities proposed to the Metropolitan Parks Task Force that a regional aquatics task force be formed. In early July, the County asked the cities for a specific proposal; to date, no response has yet been submitted. County staff is now attempting to initiate this discussion with the cities.

#### **Alternatives**

- *Do not pursue discussion on regional aquatics issues.* Given the public visibility of this issue, this is not recommended.
- *Focus staff energy on internal transition issues.* Again, given the importance of transferring parks to cities, and the importance of potential changes in state law to stabilizing the parks budget over time, this is not recommended.

#### **Background**

The city managers meet monthly to discuss issues of common concern. This has proven to be an excellent forum for the County to communicate and discuss issues with cities. As noted above, staff has attended all of the city manager meetings this year to update cities on parks issues and get feedback. In addition, staff has worked with a subcommittee formed by cities on parks issues, communicating with them frequently (with copies to the Suburban Cities Association, Bellevue, and Seattle).

The Metropolitan Parks Task Force invited City participation at several of its meetings, and incorporated virtually all of the cities' recommendations into its final report.

On a statewide level, discussions are ongoing between the Association of Washington Cities and the Washington State Association of Counties to develop a joint legislative agenda related to finance issues. Opening up authorization to use CFT and REET for maintenance is part of that effort. Work should continue to find a consensus proposal that cities and counties can jointly advocate to the legislature in 2003.

## **Outreach Strategies**

### **O-2: King County School Districts**

#### **Strategy**

Work with King County school districts to develop an outreach plan. Contact the school districts in King County to make them aware of the severity of the County's fiscal crisis and its implications for King County's parks and pools. Explore a partial contribution to short- or long-term funding of pool operations by school districts.

#### **Recommendation**

The County should continue its outreach to school districts in connection with the challenges to future operation of the pools.

#### **Policy Issues**

School districts are one of the County's most important public partners. It is critical that King County continues to build upon an overall positive relationship with the district superintendents and their staff, particularly given the County's and districts' shared missions of public service. However, the budgets of both entities are under increasing pressure. Increased mandates from the state and declining revenues have forced both entities to face the reality that County pools may have to be mothballed.

#### **Discussion**

Continued outreach with school districts should begin immediately and any possibilities for funding partnerships should continue to be explored. The districts have been advised that, for planning purposes, they should assume County pools will be mothballed as of December 2002. The districts have also been informed that fall 2002 fees for school swim team use will be increased to the maximum allowed under the County's current rate schedule, from \$32/hour to \$46/hour. Outreach should extend to school district superintendents; district activity and athletic coordinators; water sports coaches; team members; students who take physical education classes in pools; and parents.

The advantages of increased outreach activities include strengthening existing partnerships; providing notice if mothballing does in fact occur; and exploring potential for increased fees. The disadvantages of pursuing funding partnerships with school districts is the potential for disparity if pools in some districts are able to remain open because of increased contributions by those districts while pools in other districts are mothballed.

#### **Alternatives**

- *No further outreach with school districts.* (Not recommended.)
- *No further efforts toward securing funding partnerships with school districts.* (Not recommended.)

#### **Background**

The County has periodically contacted school district administrators on this issue. Examples of similar partnerships between the County and school districts include

agreements for ballfield developments on or adjacent to school property, increased community access to school facilities, development of a uniform liability contract for reciprocal facility use with ten districts, and grant programs such as Youth Sports Facility Grants and 21st Century Learning Center federal grant partnerships. A number of schools now use County facilities and park programs at school sites.

School district superintendents were briefed last year by County staff about the work of the Active Sports and Youth Recreation Commission, including a reminder of the Forward Thrust contract for pools, our partnership agreement, and their ultimate ownership by contract.

The County has fewer regular intergovernmental interactions with school districts than with other partners, such as cities. A key barrier for regular and potentially more aggressive pursuit of partnerships is County staff time.

## **Outreach Strategies**

### **O-3: Parks Workforce Outreach Plan**

#### **Strategy**

Engage in outreach to Parks Division employees regarding the parks transition plan and in particular to provide services to those Division employees who are laid off as a result of the budget cut backs in the Division.

#### **Recommendation**

A multi-faceted workforce outreach plan should be implemented to provide services to those losing their jobs as a result of the changes facing the Division. Internal communication to all employees is a critical part of this plan, to help facilitate the tremendous transition the Division is undergoing.

#### **Policy Issues**

Treatment of employees facing lay-offs raises a number of important policy issues. One policy change recently approved by the Executive Labor Council that should be well received by parks employees is to extend internal candidate status to those Parks employees who voluntarily leave Parks for work *outside of the County* prior to receiving an official layoff. Current policy requires those who voluntarily leave King County employment to compete as an external candidate for job openings that occur in the County. The policy change being proposed will provide Parks employees who voluntarily separate from County employment prior to receiving a layoff notice with the opportunity to apply for and be treated as internal candidates for vacant career service positions in their former job classifications and programs or functions for a two-year period. The Executive Labor Council has approved this policy change and it is currently in effect. It applies only to Parks Division employees.

#### **Discussion**

The purpose of the workforce management plan is to strategically prepare for the impact that budget reduction measures will have on the Parks Division operations and its employees. The goals of this plan are to:

- Mitigate the need for layoffs by transferring as many qualified Parks employees as possible to current vacancies within the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP).
- Develop and execute a communications strategy to keep key stakeholders informed of developments occurring in the Parks Division.
- Provide Parks employees with access to internal and external transition services, e.g. skills assessment, resume writing, interviewing and job search skills, employee assistance program, Worksource, etc.
- Maximize the use of the County's layoff/recall services.
- Ensure that the Parks workforce management plan is applied in a way that is consistent with the King County workforce management plan, labor contracts and other applicable requirements.

- Maintain, to the extent possible, the continuity of critical Parks operations and services.

Several elements of the workforce plan have already been implemented. There is a 60-day prior notification to Local 925 per the labor agreement. As many services are being offered in advance of the layoff notices to allow employees time to make personal decisions about their futures. The timeline includes:

- April 2002: Parks and DNRP management conducted three orientation meetings with Parks employees. The first was with Parks managers/supervisors and the last two were with all staff. The orientation meetings covered the budget shortfall, the possible impact of layoffs, and the Executive's task force. In addition, the County's Layoff/Recall program provided an orientation to its services. Representatives from Washington State Unemployment Service, Worksource, and the Searching for Training and Employment Program (STEP) training program also presented. A preview of upcoming workshops on transitional services was also presented.
- April – June 2002: The County's Layoff/Recall program staff conducted one-on-one skill assessments for approximately 100 Parks staff. The skill assessment is the first step in the County's process to refer employees to other positions within the County and serves as the foundation to resumes.
- August – September 2002: Transition Skills Workshops will be conducted for all Parks employees that include How the Job Search Really Works (one day), Resume Writing (half day), and Interviewing Skills (half day).
- August 15, 2002: Layoff notices issued to approximately 65 employees and formal referral to other positions begins through the County Layoff/Recall program.
- August 15 – December 31, 2002: Parks employees who have been laid off will be assisted by the County Layoff/Recall program.
- December 31, 2002: Effective layoff date

The advantage of using the Parks workforce management plan is that it prepares for and deals with issues in a proactive manner. This plan also recognizes the importance of providing on-going communication and support for those employees impacted by the budget reductions. The plan also provides for contingencies in this situation where there are still many unknown variables and risks. The effect of not utilizing a workforce management plan will be an increased amount of confusion and disruption for the Parks operations and its employees.

### **Alternatives**

Alternatives to the plan would include scaling back the level of support services being provided to employees who are impacted by layoffs. Training classes on the subject of resume' writing, interviewing skills, and job search strategies could be eliminated. The negative effect of this alternative is that many Parks employees would be ill prepared for entry into the general job market, especially those employees with very specific skills (pool attendants, parks specialists).

**Background:** The proposed workforce management plan is consistent with and follows the directives found in the King County Personnel Guidelines, King County Workforce Management Plan, Reductions in Force and Reorganization Implementation Policies and Procedures of May 2001, and the appropriate labor agreements.

## Outreach Strategies

### O-4: State Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC)

#### Strategy

Coordinate with IAC in the event that parks or facilities funded by IAC funds must be mothballed.

#### Recommendation

The team recommends working closely with the State Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) to avoid or mitigate any issues that could arise in the event that parks or facilities funded by IAC funding are mothballed. Specifically, the Parks Division should communicate to the IAC regarding any mothballing of parks or facilities with IAC funding, identifying clearly the impacts of the Division's budget crisis.

In addition, as new revenue ideas are put into place--for example, driving ranges, advertising signage, restaurants--care must be taken to address any concerns of possible "conversion" of IAC-funded parks.

#### Policy Issues

More than 50 King County parks and facilities have been funded with IAC grants, including Marymoor, Lake Wilderness, Big Finn Hill, Sammamish River Trail, the Burke-Gilman Trail, Luther Burbank, Cottage Lake, and Tolt-MacDonald. In accepting an IAC grant, the County signs a contractual agreement stipulating that the property will be properly maintained, and utilized for recreation purposes in perpetuity. If the County does not meet its obligations under the contract, a "conversion" can be triggered. In a conversion scenario, the County is obligated to replace the converted land with land of equal recreational and monetary value elsewhere. In theory, the IAC could sue to force the County to meet its contractual obligations.

#### Discussion

The IAC staff has stated that for good cause facilities funded with IAC funds can be temporarily mothballed. For example, if a major capital project is to be developed at a park with IAC money, the park can be closed while the project is completed. IAC staff has stated that a budget crisis of King County's magnitude would be viewed as a good reason for a temporary mothball scenario. To make a decision in the case of King County mothballing, the IAC requires written justification from the County, including periodic updates.

#### Alternatives

- *Do not mothball any facilities with IAC funding.*
- *Ignore the IAC, move forward to mothball parks, and see what happens.*

#### Background

The IAC is the state agency that administers a variety of parks and recreation grant programs (state and federal pass-through), develops policies regarding recreation and conservation, researches and documents statewide trends in recreation and conservation,

and provides technical assistance. Over the years, King County has successfully applied for many grants from the IAC, helping to build the parks system King County has today. IAC grants have contributed tens of millions of dollars toward acquisition and development of King County parks.

## **Outreach Strategies**

### **O-5: State Departments of Parks and Natural Resources**

#### **Strategy**

Perform outreach activities to State Department of Parks (State Parks) and State Department of Natural Resources (State DNR) to examine the feasibility of combining solutions to shared parks budget problems.

#### **Recommendation**

It is important to maintain contact with State Parks and State DNR, both of which are facing severe budget challenges. At this time, it does not appear feasible to seek either funding support from the state or to transfer County park facilities to the state, given their fiscal problems. However, the common mission—and fiscal challenges—shared by these agencies and King County may create some opportunities for new cost-saving initiatives in the future. King County should continue to work with State Parks and State DNR on land management collaboration. The state could also assist with outreach to the State Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (see Appendix O-4).

#### **Policy Issues**

Collaboration with the state may provide some cost savings for Division operations.

#### **Discussion**

State Parks and local park agencies statewide are facing similar funding problems. King County representatives recently met with State DNR, State Parks, and other agencies to build collaboration for efficiency in land management costs. Two subcommittees were formed to further analyze the topics of trailhead maintenance and regulation enforcement agreements. It is hoped that some cost-savings opportunities for both agencies may be developed from this effort.

## **Outreach Strategies O-6: County Council**

### **Strategy**

Keep County Councilmembers informed of Departmental and Division efforts to preserve and maintain the park system

### **Recommendation**

Staff will continue to ensure County Councilmembers are informed on the County's parks and recreation system plans, primarily using briefings to the Natural Resources, Parks, and Open Space (NRPOS) Committee.

### **Policy Issues**

The County Council is responsible for the adoption of County policy and the County budget. The Executive is responsible for proposing policy, budgets, and for conducting park negotiations with cities and others.

### **Discussion**

The potential mothballing of parks and pools is an unfortunate possible outcome of the current budget crisis. Continuing communication between the Executive and Legislative branches of County government is an important tool for resolving the 2003 Parks Division budget challenge.

### **Background**

Executive and DNRP staff have met regularly all year with the chairs and staff of the NRPOS Committee to keep them informed as to Executive action to address the parks budget crisis. In May, Council adopted Motion 11426, calling for the exploration of all reasonable alternatives to preserve the park system for the public. Staff has regularly briefed the NRPOS Committee since the target budget cut for parks was announced earlier this year. Most recently, in July staff presented the substance of this Phase II report to the NRPOS Committee. All Councilmembers have been contacted regarding potential park transfer discussions within their respective districts, and staff is committed to keeping Councilmembers informed of significant developments in these discussions.

## **Outreach Strategies**

### **O-7: Solutions Used Elsewhere**

#### **Strategy**

Investigate solutions to parks funding problems used in other areas of the country.

#### **Recommendations**

Nationally, there are many innovative programs aimed at generating revenue for acquisition and development of parks. Solutions to generate money for maintenance and operation of parks are less common. This paper provides a quick survey of ideas and programs across the Country. Many of these ideas are incorporated into this Phase II report.

#### **Survey of Alternate Revenue and Cost Savings Ideas from Around the Country**

##### **Special districts**

Special districts of many types have been formed to provide parks funding. In some cases, *dedicated revenues are passed through a special district* to a park agency operated by the local jurisdiction. In Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, the Allegheny Regional Asset District funds about 75 percent of the maintenance costs of the Allegheny County Parks Division. The Regional Asset District also finances a number of other regional assets, including cultural groups, libraries, and sports facilities. The district is funded by a one- percent countywide sales tax.

Some park agencies operated by local jurisdictions have *dedicated revenues without the use of a special taxing district*. In Oakland County, Michigan, a quarter of a mill (25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value) property tax assessment is dedicated to the Oakland County Parks Department. This accounts for about one half of the total maintenance budget.

Some of the better-known local park agencies around the country, including East Bay Regional Park District in California, and the Hennepin Regional Park District in Minnesota. The size of these districts vary from quite large – like the East Bay Regional Park District, to smaller districts operating only a few park facilities – like the Vashon Park and Recreation District. In Illinois, more than 90 percent of local parks and recreation services are provided by park districts: there are more than 300 park districts in Illinois. In Washington State, there are several park districts, the largest and best known being the Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma.

The taxing authority for most park districts is a property tax levy. However, some park districts and systems are supported by sales tax. In 2000, the Washington State Legislature gave Pierce County the option of asking voters to increase the sales tax by .10 percent to fund parks throughout the county, including cities, (50 percent of the revenue) and Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium (50 percent of the revenue). Voters subsequently

approved the measure. It raises about \$8 million annually. This option is not available currently in King County.

A couple of interesting iterations on the special purpose district idea should also be noted:

- **Maintenance Assessment Districts**, similar to local improvement districts under Washington state law, are utilized by the City of San Diego. Under this scenario, neighborhoods tax themselves extra to pay for maintenance beyond what the city can afford.
- The **Regional Trails District** that benefits East Bay Regional Parks. In this case, a \$5.44 household tax is assessed to pay for East Bay regional trails.

**Corporate partnerships—concessions, privatization, advertising, naming rights**

Many park agencies are aggressively pursuing significant partnerships with corporations. In Montgomery County, Maryland, naming rights are being sold for a new athletic complex to raise revenue for maintenance and operations. In Montgomery County, naming rights are being sold for the entire facility, or for individual features, such as a soccer field. The City of San Diego has established a program to promote corporate partnerships of this kind.

Corporate partnerships can also take on the form of any number of concessions. At one end of the spectrum, these include partnerships to operate major facilities, such as restaurants and hotels. For example, the Lower Colorado River Authority owns and operates a 940-acre park called Canyon of the Eagles. To pay for maintenance of the site, the Authority allowed a developer to build and operate a 64-unit “Eco Lodge” on the site. In exchange, the developer must maintain and operate the 940-acre park for the public to use.

Other jurisdictions have partnered with the private sector to locate restaurants in parks. A local example is the City of Renton and the restaurants at Gene Coulon Park. The City of Vancouver, British Columbia, also has increased revenue with restaurants in Stanley Park. The City of Sacramento revitalized Plaza Park through a number of concession deals, including one for a café.

Many jurisdictions have partnered with smaller concessions, such as skate rentals along paved trails. Advertising in parks has also been used extensively. Advertising on the outfield fences of baseball fields is a common method of raising revenue to support parks.

In some cases, these corporate partnerships are essentially privatizing formerly public functions, by turning over facilities such as golf courses and marinas to private operators. In other instances, government has contracted out work, such as security services, building maintenance, and garbage collection. Many jurisdictions around the country have outsourced some park-related functions, including Indianapolis and Chicago.

### **Other Revenue Sources**

A few states use a **state lottery** to generate revenue for local park agencies. In Colorado, 40 percent of the revenue generated by state lottery games is distributed to local park agencies based on population. The revenue can be used for a variety of capital purposes and maintenance and operations.

Many park agencies have adjusted **user fees** to better reflect what services are actually worth from a market perspective. One of the best-known examples is in Indianapolis, where fees were increased significantly to match the benefit of the service. In Suffolk County, New York, user fees account for about 60 percent of the maintenance and operations budget. Suffolk County charges day-use fees at swimming beaches, parking fees, and has camping and hunting fees among others to generate revenue.

**Volunteers** are used by park agencies across the country, to varying degrees.

Collecting **parking fees** in the parking lots associated with popular parks has been used by a number of jurisdictions, including the City of Chelan, City of San Francisco, and Pierce County.

### **Park Foundations/Non-Profits**

Park Foundations are a long-standing method for raising money from individuals and corporations, and are used by many park agencies, including Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, and East Bay Regional Parks. In some cases, a non-profit organization actually takes over operations of a park. Two of the most notable examples are in New York City. The Central Park Conservancy contracts with the City of New York to operate Central Park. Another is the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, which operates Bryant Park.

### **Other options that raise money for parks and recreation, but not necessarily just for maintenance and operation funding:**

- Special license plates (North Carolina)
- Tax on bingo (South Carolina)
- Motor vehicle registration fee (California, Illinois, Montana, Oklahoma)
- Dedicated portion of state gas tax (Idaho, Wyoming, Washington)
- Tax on tobacco products (Minnesota, Texas, Alabama, California)
- Tax on alcohol (Kansas)
- Dedicate a portion of revenue from speeding tickets (Florida)
- One-year, one-cent sales tax for endowment (New Jersey)

### **Sources/bibliography**

Urban Parks Institute  
National Recreation and Park Association  
Texas A&M University  
The Trust for Public Land

Study on Park and Recreation Funding Strategies for Maintenance and Operations by  
Kyungyong Lee, University of Washington

## **Outreach Strategies** **O-8: Federal Funds**

### **Strategy**

Pursue federal appropriations and grants for maintenance and operation of County parks and facilities.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the County pursue federal appropriations for County parks and facilities, but cautions that federal appropriations do not hold much promise for either generating revenue or creating significant savings. Specifically, staff recommends initiating a dialogue with the State about the possibility of receiving grant funds under the Stateside Land and Water Conservation Fund.

### **Discussion**

Opportunities to secure federal appropriations appear limited. Staff has identified two federal programs that could be investigated further: the Stateside Land and Water Conservation Fund, and Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Grants. Dollars from both programs go directly to Washington State for distribution.

*Stateside Land and Water Conservation Fund.* This program is divided into two accounts. In one account, the federal government buys property for conversion into federal parks (and therefore isn't applicable to the County's needs). The second is a formula grant through which states can fund their own park priorities and initiatives. The formula grant program is administered by Governor Locke's Office, which transfers the funds to the Washington Interagency Commission for Outdoor Recreation for distribution. The grant program distributed \$144 million in 2002, of which about \$3-\$4 million was received by Washington State.

*Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Grants.* This is a \$30 million National Park Service federal grant program to which any state, city, county, or other nonprofit agency can apply. Washington State received about \$2 million in 2002 in grant monies for this program. The National Park Service office in Washington, D.C., is the contact.

Cities and counties are eligible to apply if they meet established criteria. Area populations must also meet low-income criteria. This severely limits the number of County facilities that would be eligible. Matching funds are required. The focus of the program is on distressed communities. Extensive planning documents, including demographics and detailed strategic rehabilitation plans, are required. Grant categories include rehabilitation grants, innovation grants and planning grants. Programs and services can be funded in the innovation category, but for this year all projects selected are rehabilitation projects.

**Background**

King County has investigated the Urban Parks program in the past. It appears to have very limited applicability for the County and requires a rather extensive application process.

## **Outreach Strategies**

### **O-9: Public Outreach**

#### **Strategy**

Continue public education and opportunity for public input regarding proposed park system transition.

#### **Recommendation**

The County should continue to ensure there are opportunities for public education and input regarding the proposed transition of the park system, through multiple means.

Included in this outreach strategy should be:

- An internet-based tool for public and user group interaction, on which public information can be posted over the coming months leading up to the budget and beyond.
- Email updates to Listserve, representing those individuals and groups that have submitted inquiries and asked to be kept abreast of parks issues.
- Continued communications with the press about progress in implementing the transition, including key transfer accomplishments, etc.
- Public hearings conducted as part of the budget process.
- Opportunities to comment in connection with the proposed new user fees.

#### **Policy Issues**

Public input on the proposed park system transition is a basic element of County process. Outreach is most effective when multiple avenues and opportunities are offered. The Metropolitan Parks Task Force conducted extensive outreach at a formative stage of the discussions. Further outreach and education is needed to inform the public about how the transition will affect them, and to solicit input as the parks department seeks to enhance user experience.

#### **Discussion**

The Executive's office and the Department of Natural Resources and Parks will continue to conduct outreach along the lines outlined in the recommendations above. The Council's own budget outreach should be coordinated with this Executive and Departmental outreach where feasible.

## **Outreach Strategies**

### **O-10: State Government Outreach**

#### **Strategy**

Ensure outreach to Governor Locke and state legislators to identify additional ideas, potential solutions, possible new revenues, comments, and concerns regarding the County parks fiscal crisis and business plan.

#### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the County contact the Governor and his policy, budget, and agency staff, King County state legislators, legislative leaders, and appropriate committee chairs to make them aware of the severity of the County's fiscal crisis and its implications for King County's parks and pools. Efforts should be taken to explore possibilities of short or long-term funding from the State and potential state legislative proposals for the 2003 session, including particularly legislative proposals for funding parks maintenance and operations from REET and CFT.

If legislation is passed during the 2003 legislative session or if funding is included in the next biennial state budget, this item could generate revenue as soon as July 1, 2003. However, it is quite possible that the Legislature will not act on these proposals again next session.

Annual revenue estimates for these proposed REET and CFT changes are about \$2.5 to \$3 million and \$8+ million, respectively, that would be available for parks maintenance.

#### **Policy Issues**

The State of Washington is an important public sector partner of King County. It is critical that the County continues to build upon its overall positive relationship with the Governor, his staff, and key state legislators and keep open lines of communication as severe budget reductions are made to County government. A majority of the services the County delivers are mandated by the State, yet the County does not have adequate revenue options to effectively deliver these services. However, with a deficit projected to be as high as \$2.5 billion, the State is under increasing budget constraints itself and is ill-equipped to offer support from its own funds.

#### **Discussion**

Continued outreach to the Governor and key state legislators regarding park closures, the likelihood of the mothballing of pools, and the County's efforts to avoid closure is critical. The County should continue to actively lobby for state legislation (previously SB 6334) to increase the Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) to be used for maintenance and operations of parks. If there is not adequate stakeholder support for an increase in REET, it should seek support for legislation allowing a portion (25 percent) of revenue from REET to be used for maintenance and operations. Additionally, the County should seek support for state legislation (previously 2SSB 5104) to increase Conservation Futures

Tax (CFT) revenue and allow the increased collection to be used for maintenance and operations of lands purchased with CFT revenues.

Increased mandates from the State and declining revenues have put the County in a difficult position of having to face up to the reality that some parks face winter closures and some of the County's pools and parks inside cities may have to be mothballed. The Governor and state legislators need to understand this dilemma and be asked for support for legislation to provide funding for maintenance and operations of parks.

Key stakeholders are the Governor and his budget, policy and agency staff; state legislators and caucus and committee staff; other local governments and their statewide associations; parks directors (Washington Recreation and Parks Association), users, and other supporters; Washington Association of Realtors; environmentalists; open space advocates; business and labor.

Continued outreach should begin immediately and any possibilities for funding partnerships should continue to be explored. The state legislative session commences in January 2003.

#### **Alternatives**

*No further outreach – not recommended.*

*No further efforts toward funding partnership – not recommended.*

#### **Background**

The County has an active state outreach/lobbying team and has a history of reasonably positive relationships with the Governor and the State Legislature.

The Parks Division developed a REET proposal in 1999 and drafted a bill that was introduced in the 2000 legislative session. This bill did not receive a hearing in the policy committee (Senate Local Government). In 2001, the same bill was passed out of the policy committee but died in the Senate Rules Committee. In the 2002 session, the bill did not move out of the policy committee (Senate Parks and Natural Resources). The realtors have successfully killed the bill each year and, unless they are convinced otherwise, would undoubtedly attempt to do so again in 2003.

The Parks Division supported CFT legislation introduced in the 2000 legislative session as well as subsequent CFT bills. In 2002, a CFT bill that would have increased the collection from 6.25 cents to 10 cents and allowed 10 percent of the revenue to be used for maintenance and operations was passed out of the Senate and passed the House policy committee, but died in the House Rules Committee.

The REET bill and CFT bill have been legislative priorities for the Washington Recreation and Parks Association (WRPA) during the last three years. WRPA has lobbied hard for passage of these bills. The Legislative Task Force on Local Parks and Recreation Maintenance and Operations has also recommended the bills as high priorities for the State Legislature.