



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
Agenda #3
2/20/03

February 13, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Charles R. Loehr, Director, Department of Park and Planning

FROM: Lester L. Straw, Superintendent of Parks

SUBJECT: Pilot Programs of Selected Park Maintenance Activities: Status Report – Approval to Continue Pilots and to Brief County Council

Recommendation:

To authorize staff to proceed with the recommendations outlined in this report and present the status of the pilot programs to the PHED committee.

Background:

During the discussion of our FY03 Operating Budget, the County Council determined that we should initiate a series of Pilot Programs and Studies on certain cost-saving strategies. The purpose of this effort is to develop opportunities for creating new resource allocations within our operating budget.

On July 12, 2002, the Planning Board approved a series of pilots and studies, and these proposals were discussed with the PHED Committee on July 22, 2002. The five pilots include:

- Contracting Out Services
 - Ballfield Infield Maintenance
 - Custodial Services
- Increase the Use of Seasonal Employees
- Park Maintenance Resource Allocation Strategies

- Establish Trash Free Parks
- Closing Parks During Winter Months

The status of these initiatives are outlined below for the Board's review.

Contracting Out Services:

Staff identified two functions which are currently performed by Department staff for further analysis. These functions are ballfield infield maintenance and custodial services.

Ballfield infield maintenance: An analysis was conducted of the costs of contract maintenance performed at middle school athletic fields by The Brickman Group, Ltd., and the cost of a comparable level of maintenance on our local park athletic fields performed by Park and Planning staff. Costs for weekly, monthly, and yearly activities for infield maintenance and the cost of mowing, fertilizing, aerations, and seeding of turf areas were compared. The chart below outlines the cost comparison of these activities.

	Contract	Park & Planning
Infield Maintenance (Weekly Activities)	\$ 54.00	\$ 47.00
Infield Maintenance (Monthly Activities)	\$ 46.00	\$ 64.00
Infield Maintenance (Yearly Activities)	\$ 1,599.00	\$ 1,490.00
Mowing Per Acre	\$ 27.00	\$ 25.00
Fertilizing Per Acre	\$ 65.00	\$ 60.00
Aeration Per Acre	\$ 45.00	\$ 31.00

On average, our costs are very similar to that of the contractor. However, there are additional services that are provided by Park and Planning staff when working on our athletic fields that are not provided for in the contract maintenance of middle school fields. Those services are: raking of the dugout and players bench areas, litter removal, and any additional work required to make fields playable in wet conditions. Park and Planning staff also report other service needs identified in the park such as the need for trash collection, vandalism repairs, graffiti removal, landscape maintenance, repair needs in playground, and cleaning of the portable toilets.

Based on this analysis, it does not appear that there would be significant advantages to contracting out this service.

Custodial services: A comparison of annual operating costs for performing custodial services at various Departmental facilities by park staff and by a private contractor has been made. The annual costs for staff include salaries, supplies and materials, and yearly contracts for carpet and window cleaning. The information from a private contractor

compares identical activities to perform these services. Also factored into their costs is contract supervision. That firm is currently performing custodial cleaning services for the Montgomery County Department of Recreation for its offices and recreation centers.

Based on the findings of this study, it appears that the benefits and potential cost savings of contracting custodial services may offer cost savings to the Department. Therefore, staff recommends that a pilot program be initiated at both the Montgomery Regional Office and Parkside Headquarters. In this way, staff will be able to more accurately assess the success or failure of contracting all custodial services.

Increase the Use of Seasonal Employees:

In the fall of 2002, we were directed by the County Council to initiate a *seasonal employee pilot program*. The Martin Luther King Area (MLK) was selected as the test location because it is the smallest park maintenance unit in the Southern Region and it had the largest number of vacant positions when we were asked to start the pilot. The objective was to determine if the Department could effectively maintain parks using a higher percentage of seasonal employees compared to full-time career employees. Staff decided to implement the pilot program utilizing lapsed salaries to fund additional seasonal positions. The *seasonal employee pilot program* began September 2002 and will continue until December 2003. This time period will allow for a thorough evaluation of the program during the peak season of park maintenance activity.

The major facility in the Martin Luther King Area is the Martin Luther King Recreational Park. This is a 95-acre park containing four fenced athletic fields (soccer field, baseball field, softball field, and a lighted football field), a maintenance facility, accessible playground, picnic area, restrooms, basketball courts, tennis courts, trails, and a one-acre pond. The Montgomery County Department of Recreation operates an indoor swimming pool in the park, and they are scheduled to open an outdoor pool facility in the summer of 2003. Horizon daycare (through Montgomery County) also operates a center on the premises. The remainder of the Martin Luther King Area parks total over 1,400 acres and include local parks, neighborhood conservation areas, stream valley parks, and neighborhood parks. This pilot will be conducted utilizing funds from three career vacancies.

Staff have met with CASA of Maryland to explore the possibility of using their work force in this effort. The initial conversations have been encouraging and staff intends to employ up to ten individuals for the upcoming season.

Staff recommends continuing this *pilot program* through the spring, summer, and fall seasons to properly assess the impacts during peak park usage.

Park Maintenance Resource Allocation Strategy:

The primary effort of this pilot is to create a process, which can guide Park Managers in allocating resources for park maintenance activities. The pilot will also test the use of tiered maintenance activities for parks based on a variety of factors, which include:

- Level of Use – number of visitors, intensity of use, programming, and permits.
- Population- population density surrounding parks.
- Funding Level- the amount of resources available.
- Public Demand- the number of complaints or requests for services.
- Special Events- festivals, dedications, community events.
- Age of Facilities- older facilities often require intense maintenance.
- Geographical Location/Accessibility- the time it takes to get to a park in traffic, community agreements, design or operation restrictions.
- Physical Topography, Characteristics- potential for storm damage (i.e. water, wind, mud on trails built in a flood plain).
- Statutory Laws- laws governing environmental protection, stormwater management, pesticide regulations, legal liability.
- Percentage Developed- the quantity of facilities, amenities, buildings, size and age of park facilities, i.e. athletic fields, buildings, tennis courts, multiuse courts, trails, facilities and amenities.

These factors aid in determining the level of resources needed to carry out various park maintenance activities. In addition to basic classifications of parks, which are also an indicator of the type of maintenance required at a particular park, these resource allocation factors provide greater detail regarding the intensity of maintenance required. We believe that this knowledge will provide a more organized approach to distributing supplies, materials or equipment and scheduling labor. For example, parks in different areas of the County may have similar characteristics but require varying levels of funding based on these allocation factors. We believe that the differences will be reflected in the frequency maintenance that is required to maintain parks in a safe, usable, and desirable condition.

The following chart (Exhibit 1) depicts the various frequencies for 15 major activities associated with park maintenance specific to Montgomery County operations. These activities are consistent with the core functions of the Commission and comparable to primary services delivered by other park jurisdictions. These activities include:

- Trash Collection
- Mowing/ Trimming
- Athletic Field Renovation/Maintenance
- Landscape Installation/Maintenance
- Building/Facility
- Equipment Maintenance
- Trails Maintenance (Paved/Natural Surface)
- Court Maintenance

- Playground Inspection/Maintenance
- Reforestation/Tree Care

The chart is divided into three different levels of service delivery for 15 park maintenance activities. These categories are based on the level of use and the corresponding level or intensity of maintenance activity necessary to protect the taxpayer investment and provide the user with a safe and aesthetically pleasing experience. The Park maintenance levels are not intended to be an exact match for every park but more of a general guide to the different levels of service provided. Some parks may cross multiple levels of maintenance based upon the individual characteristics identified in the resource allocation factors. Because of these characteristics, a range of different types of parks could fall into either level of service.

Level I

These are parks that usually experience the highest level of use and require a greater portion of the maintenance budget. These parks generally include a variety of facilities such as multiple athletic fields, large playgrounds, large-scale enterprise operations, extensive landscaping or other characteristics that demand more resources to maintain a park at an acceptable level.

Level II

The majority of parks in the County are maintained at this level. These parks experience moderate use, which requires frequent maintenance but not as often as a Level I park. Generally these parks include multiple athletic fields that are not lighted, play equipment, tennis courts, multiuse courts, a recreation building or a picnic shelter.

Level III

Parks that do not require extensive park maintenance. These parks are typically undeveloped areas that require infrequent inspection and maintenance. This level typically includes undeveloped stream valley parks, natural conservation areas or land that has been acquired for future development. Parks at this level require a small portion of the maintenance budget.

PARK MAINTENANCE LEVELS

Exhibit 1

1. Trash	Conditions	Level I	Level II	Level III
Remove/collect trash from picnic area, trash cans, around lakes, trails, stables, etc. Goal: Maintain Parks free of trash and debris.	In Season: May - September Out of Season: October – April	7x week 2x week	4x week 2x week	2x week 1x week
2. Custodial				
Cleaning maintenance facilities, restrooms, office buildings, nature facilities etc. Goal: maintain office buildings that are clean, pleasant, and odor free.	Year round	Daily	2-3 days	1x week
3. Athletic Field Maintenance				
Drag and line baseball/softball fields. Regional/Recreational Parks Local Parks Lines soccer/football fields.	Season: March – November April - December	Daily 7-10 days 1x week	Daily 10-15 days 1x bi- weekly	N/A N/A N/A
4. Athletic Field Mowing				
Mow athletic fields to a level that is conducive for play. Goal: Grass is maintained at optimum heights so as to promote turf health and provide an acceptable surface for activities.	March- November	7-10 days	10-15 days	N/A
5. Athletic Field Turf Maintenance				
Agricultural practices performed on athletic fields--aeration, overseeding, etc. Fertilization	March- November	2 x annually 3 x per year	1 x year 1 x year	N/A N/A
6. General Mowing				
Mowing common use areas Goal: Grass is maintained at optimum heights so as to promote healthy turf.	March- November	7-10 days	10-15 days	2x year

7. Trimming

Weeding around structures, facilities, fences, etc.	March- November	10 days	10-15 days	N/A
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8. General Turf Maintenance

Agricultural practices performed on turf--aeration, overseeding, fertilizing etc.	March- November	Annually	Annually	N/A
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9. Court Maintenance

Inspect, clean and maintain, repair, or replace nets, windscreens, fences, surfaces etc.	Year round	2x month	Monthly	N/A
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10. Landscape Installation/Maintenance

Install and maintain landscape beds around buildings, facilities, amenities, tree planting.	Year round	Monthly	Quarterly	Tree planting only
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11. General Maintenance

Facility repair and upkeep of benches, tables, shelters, painting, graffiti, roads, grounds, maintenance facilities, organizing inventories, supplies and storage.	Year round	As needed	As needed	As needed
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12. Equipment Maintenance

Maintaining, fueling, repair of vehicles and equipment.	Year round	As needed	As needed	As needed
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13. Trails (Paved and Natural Surface)

Inspection and maintenance Paved Unpaved	March- November	Weekly Quarterly	Quarterly 2x year	2x year 1x year
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14. Playground Inspection/Maintenance

Repair and maintain surfacing and equipment.	Year round	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly
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15. Park Inspections

Inspect parks for maintenance and upkeep.	Year round	Monthly	Quarterly	1x year
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As part of this pilot, staff will develop a format for a park management plan, which will be developed for each park. That plan will include the level of maintenance to be provided and the estimated staff resources required to carry out those services. Ultimately, this plan can be tied to data developed through our **Smart Parks** program as a means of actually tracking costs for maintenance activities by park. We believe that this plan would also become an important management tool in developing park budgets.

Staff will evaluate the usefulness of these plans throughout the pilot that we believe should run for several months as we move toward the development of a formalized process for guiding the allocation of our park resources.

Establish Trash Free Parks:

Trash free parks were established in the following parks in late summer 2002:

- Olney Manor Recreational Park
- South Gunners Branch Local Park
- Sligo Stream Valley Park
- Beach Drive Stream Valley Park
- Capital Crescent Trail
- Gregerscroft Neighborhood Park

All trash cans were removed except in the area of athletic fields in the stream valley parks and local recreation centers. Trash bag dispensers were placed in strategic locations in the parks and signs requesting park users to remove trash were installed.

To date, this program has had mixed results. Olney Manor Recreational Park, Beach Drive and Sligo Creek Stream Valley Parks, and the Capital Crescent Trail have experienced an increase in ground litter. Some users are filling the trash bags with trash or dog waste and leaving them hanging from park fences. Staff has experienced some bag dispensers being vandalized. However, staff will continue to monitor our experiences of the pilot locations, and make adjustments as appropriate, to ensure that this pilot is fully evaluated.

Staff recommends that this pilot be continued through the spring and summer seasons in order to adequately determine its value.

Closing Parks During Winter Months:

Staff has considered the possibility of closing parks during the winter months and has concluded that it would be impossible to actually close a park, unless there is a single entrance and there was some physical barrier prohibiting people from entering. However, we do reduce or stop certain activities during the winter, such as:

- Many restrooms are winterized and locked eliminating the need for cleaning and repair.

- Mowing
- Trash collection is significantly reduced.
- Snow removal is only done to allow emergency vehicle access to buildings. Parking lots and paths are not cleaned.
- Picnic shelters are not permitted.
- Boating activities are prohibited.
- No athletic field maintenance.
- General inspections of parks are reduced from once per week to monthly.

Given this reduced level of effort during winter months, staff uses this time to catch up on many activities that cannot be completed during busier times of the year. A list of these activities is attached (Attachment 1).

LLS:dlf
Attachment

REGIONAL WINTER PROJECTS

Leaf removal from tennis courts, parking lots and turf areas
Trash removal from grass areas, fields and wooded areas
Trim tree limbs
Check/replace pond warning signs
Install picnic tables
Construct/repair picnic tables
Construct Bluebird boxes
Install/replace chain gates
Lubricate all Master Padlocks
Aerify field and turf areas
Service and paint mowers
Clean/paint shop and storage areas
Clean maintenance shed
Grade/seed bare turf areas
Clean/repair grills
Renovate athletic fields, add ballfield mix, edge
Repair install players benches
Repair backstops
Paint trash cans
Paint routed signs and posts
Clean parking lots
Reset parking blocks
Remove storm damage
Clean and wax trucks
Assist landscape crews with tree planting
Boat removal, cleaning and repair
Nature center maintenance and extensive cleaning
Kengla house maintenance and extensive cleaning
Needwood Mansion maintenance and extensive cleaning
Playground maintenance and inspections
Trail clearing, pruning and maintenance
Dam wall and riser maintenance and inspection, including storm water management ponds
Check property boundaries in all stream valley parks for encroachment
Managed Deer hunts – Little Bennett, Ag. History Farm Park, Black Hill, Rock Creek Regional
Goose egg Oiling
Annual Meadow mowing
Fire extinguisher and smoke detector inspections
Dead tree removal
Carpet cleaning
Floor stripping and waxing
Clean and restock boxes with turface and field liner
Inspect and repair bleachers
Construct home plates and pitching rubbers
Renovate playground surfacing
Clean Gutters
Renovate horse stall surfacing
Inventory tools, repair and replace
Install snow stakes
Lay sod on ballfields
Replace trash barrels
Paint and Repair Trailers
Install and paint pipe gates
Resurface and regrade gravel access roads and pull-offs
Replace missing buoys on lake
Clear areas for reforestation projects
Wrap trees with hardware cloth and tubes to prevent beaver/deer damage
Replace/repair soccer goals
Replace split rail fence
Post No Hunting signs
Paint property poles
Remove debris from newly acquired properties

Construct new park amenities: horse shoe pits, volley ball courts, archery range, bulletin boards, steps to shelters, guard rails, porta-pot screens, routed signs

Renovate existing amenities: replace boards, floats and cleats on boat docks and ramps, repair boats
Inspect and repair bridges

New Construction: material storage bays, concrete slabs(bathrooms, grill pads, soda machines)
equipment sheds, gas sheds, tool sheds and kayak shed

Make anchors for buoys

Construct, install, repair and monitor Wood Duck boxes

Basketball and Tennis Court repairs

Install mulch rings around existing trees

Planting bed maintenance

Mow wildflower areas

Close recreation buildings for one week for extensive cleaning (schedule through Park Permits)

Build and install Kiosks

Construct and maintain swales

NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION

Winter Work Projects

HORTICULTURAL SERVICES:

Arboriculture:

Work as usual. Tree inspections, hazard tree removals, stump grinding, tree trimming, some snow removal, equipment and shop maintenance, service requests, pruning, emergency response work, In-Service Training.

Horticulture:

Tree digging, tree planting, equipment and shop maintenance, In-Service Training

Stormwater Management:

Administration and execution of annual maintenance contract (outsourced)

Pope Farm Nursery:

Production of spring and summer annuals, production of spring and summer perennials, production of reforestation crops, facility equipment and shop maintenance, tree reserving, tagging and preparation, herbaceous plant production, record keeping, In-Service Training

All Horticultural Cost Centers:

Training, paperwork, planning, safety meetings, supervisory meetings, union meetings, leadership training

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT:

Managed deer hunts, November through January

Sharpshooting program, February through March

Non-native invasive (NNI) plant management, October through March. This is a new initiative that will not get into full swing until next season, though we will do some projects this winter; uses existing staff during winter months.

PUBLIC GARDENS:

Brookside Gardens Facilities and Grounds Unit:

- Custodial Staff (2 PMW II and a non-career part time seasonal) have more Visitor Center meetings for set-up and take-down in winter than in summer plus the daily routine cleaning of 6 buildings. Winter is a busiest-time-of-year for this staff. One PMW II also manages the paperwork and records for the fuel tanks and the mileage records for the fleet.

- Gardener III and PMW III operate and then take down Light Show until end of February. They also help plan and order for light show for following year. Both participate in snow and ice removal.

Gardener III does late winter aeration on 12 acres of turf and then a crab grass control treatment of 12 acres and a broad leaf weed control of 12 acres of turf. In late winter he recruits and trains a seasonal and volunteers for the coming season's turf program. He does inventories for FACCS and CM records, Pesticide Recertification Training, tool and vehicle repairs, and special projects which vary with needs of gardens.

PMW III does small repair projects to 6 public buildings and many other physical features of BG grounds including touch-up painting projects. He also handles Central Maintenance Service Request projects and paperwork. He maintains the 10 + acres of the Service Hill by picking up trash daily, performing SWPPP inspections and repairs to drains, leaf clean-up, hedge trimming, woody plant pruning, mulching of all flower beds, cutting back of all perennial plants. He also

does planning and ordering plantings and flowers for following year. He does tool repairs and inventories. He helps with special Brookside projects as needed and assists Central Maintenance crews when they are here and need help.

Horticulturist III, Supervisor of Facilities and Grounds plans light show for following year. He creates new designs, orders materials and creates templates for welders to build new forms for Show. He also designs computer programs for animations for custom made controllers to be built for Light Show. He analyzes the previous light show for ways to improve the show, the financial returns, and the process. He performs budget reports on projects.

He supervises 54 volunteers in four arts and garden and turf programs at Brookside Gardens and McCrillis Gardens. He supervises four career employees and up to ten seasonal employees in various programs including facilities' and grounds' maintenance of Brookside Gardens. He plans and coordinates unit's work and participates in many special projects directed by the Manager or the budget including CIP, ISF and other budget programs, purchasing of fleet and ISF equipments. current projects include Irrigation system for BG, Permanent Night Lighting and Sound for BG, Master Plan and Strategic Plan on-going. He undertakes and plans and coordinates large scale renovations for PLAR projects at BG including, currently, renovation of the Visitor Center HVAC, renovation of Stadler House, renovation of Fritz Greenhouse Headhouse, supplemental electric service for the Conservatory. Other projects for this winter include creation of a Plan File for Brookside Gardens and attempting to train two employees to take over the Light Show next year.

Collections Section:

Note that there are many winter days when ground not frozen or snow-covered

Outdoor:

- Mulch all paths in azalea and aquatic garden whenever they are not too sloppy or snow-covered. (Stored mulch is now covered so usable at any time, and frozen paths can be mulched). Touch up mulch in beds or remulch completely as needed.
- Refresh/remulch ca. 100 tree circles; edge them if ground is not frozen
- Edge beds when ground not frozen
- Cut back extensive ornamental grasses collection throughout, incl. bamboos
- ALL tree and shrub pruning is done at this time, incl. shearing of specimen hollies and hemlocks and tree ivy containment, twig dogwood rejuvenation, etc.
- Woodland edge tree encroachment accomplished: major pruning and small tree removal, brush chipped
- Removal of woody exotic invasives, including trees
- Cutback of all emergent aquatic vegetation along all ponds
- Chipping (mulching with chips) of selected large beds (e.g. parking lot, Glenallan Ave.)
- Tree planting according to project(s)
- Repairing/restoring plant labels throughout garden
- Plant inventories of selected areas
- Planning for major bed renovation, incl. soil prep., old plant removal, designing, ordering plants and soil amendments
- Occasional infrastructure renovation projects, such as building/reorganizing equipment bays
- Attending to service requests on equipment, incl. sharpening. Ordering tools for staff and volunteers.
- Snow and ice removal; repair of storm and light show impacts

Indoors:

- 2 major show changes: holiday and winter/spring plus winter-spring minichanges
- planning for Butterfly show
- design deadlines for 2 shows occur now.

Word: e:/ NRD winter work projects