



COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORT

OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Date: May 27, 2015

Agenda Item #: 7

Agenda Item: Discuss the proposed amendments to the parkland dedication code provisions, in accordance with Resolution No. 20141211-219.

Vote None due to lack of quorum.

Sponsors/Department: Parks and Recreation Department

Summary of Discussion

Randy Scott from the City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department provided an overview of the Parkland Dedication Program, its current requirements, a chronology of past Council directives, the proposed new ordinance, and the proposed steps in order to adopt the ordinance. Austin's parkland acres are not keeping pace with the City's growth and currently Austin's fee ranks among the lowest in the country.

In August 2014, City Council directed the City Manager to analyze and recommend an adjustment to the Parkland Dedication (PLD) fee. By November 2014, staff submitted recommendations to City Council after conducted board briefings and stakeholder meetings.

Staff held five stakeholder meetings in 2014 between August and November which included the Real Estate Council of Austin, the Austin Apartment Association, the Greater Austin Buildings Association, the Downtown Austin Alliance, the Executive Board of the Austin Neighborhood Council and members of the Parks and Recreation Board and Community Development Commissions. Feedback from the stakeholder meetings encompassed the increased quality of life in Austin through the use of public parkland, increasing fees across the board to contribute to higher development costs, and a desire for credit for park facility construction.

In December 2014, City Council directed the City Manager to develop the following: an ordinance that implements the recommendations regarding PLD fee-in-lieu, Park Development Fee, and a land dedication requirement; a proposed ordinance that implements the staff recommendations to integrate PLD fees into the Annual Fee Adoption process of the FY15-16 Council Budget; a plan to explore options for applying PLD requirements to commercial developments. The proposed code amendment requires 9.4 acres per 1,000 residents instead of the 5 acres adopted in 1986 with fees calculated on a per person demand while establishing an annual fee review. The amendments would also include a land requirements or a fee-in-lieu of land based on current land costs and would designate a Park Development Fee based on current park construction costs.

Scott described the immediate next steps which include consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council by June of this year. Staff foresees Council adopting a new fee schedule by October and then executing educational campaigns for internal and external stakeholders throughout the remainder of the calendar year. By January 2016, staff anticipates that new park fees will go into effect with a grace period given to developers for additional time to incorporate the new fees into project pro formas.

Cora Wright from the City's Parks and Recreation Department explained that with Council's support and recent adoption of staff recommendation to move it forward, staff is provided the opportunity to allow for sufficient parkland and amenities for what is one of the fastest growing cities in the country. For many years the City was at \$650 as a flat fee per unit without any opportunity to analyze the cost of building and developing parks. This new fee schedule would provide the opportunity to catch up with the national average. The proposed new fee schedule would allow staff to review the fees on an annual basis and to make adjustments depending on the market at that time.

- *Process of the code amendment*

MPT Tovo inquired about the board process of the code amendment. Staff explained that the item had gone to the Parks and Recreation Board for their support and recommendation to Council, therefore it will not need to return to that board for consideration.

- *PLD and commercial development*

MPT Tovo noted that she would like to further discuss at a later time the element of commercial development. She would like to see some understanding of whether other cities have PLD tied to commercial development, and in particular hotel and motel development considering the wide expansion of that market in Austin. With the increased use of parkland by tourists visiting Austin, it seems to be a natural connection. Randy Scott noted that the consultant did recommend that it would not be defensible to charge PLD to hotels and motels. There are cities that use hotel and motel tax dollars in order to partially fund parks departments as an alternative approach. Wright added that whole premise behind the PLD ordinance is to get to the standards that City Council has set which is to provide accessible and quality parks for area residents and that they are within walking distance from areas in which people live. Wright also noted, according to the consultant, Dr. Compton, that it is very difficult to quantify the amount of additional impact to a park system based on employees and on the location of their work places.

Public Comments

In favor: David King

Against: Heidi Gerbracht

Direction

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Cora Wright would like to suggested including Dr. Compton in future discussions of this item

when possible.

The Committee would like to have this item sent forward to City Council for approval.

Recommendation

Both CM Pool and MPT Tovo voiced their support in sending this item forward to City Council.