



**Minneapolis
Park & Recreation Board**

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March 28, 2016

Mayor Betsy Hodges
Minneapolis City Hall
350 S. 5th St., Room 331
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Mayor Hodges,

Thank you very much for the phone call on Saturday to follow up on your parks and roads proposal of last week. We are pleased that you recognize the need to provide funding to fill the \$15 million annual gap facing Minneapolis neighborhood parks. We are, however, concerned that your March 25 news release announcing a new 10 year proposal to fund parks and streets does not address many essential elements necessary to fund neighborhood parks adequately. The new 10 year proposal falls short in addressing the needs of the park system by not providing increased funding for annual neighborhood park maintenance, not providing protections for existing funding for Minneapolis parks, and by not being long enough to address the backlog and ongoing annual needs of neighborhood park maintenance and repair. Your 10 year proposal does not provide any indication on how your proposal will be codified to ensure a long term financial agreement between the City and the Park Board. You indicated that your proposal is to be addressed as part of the 2017 budget process, which is well after our deadline for a November 2016 parks ballot initiative. It is critical for the Park Board that both agencies, this spring, approve concurrent ordinances that address the parks needs as articulated in Park Board Resolution 2016-211 or the negotiated 20 Year Neighborhood Park Plan.

In comparing your proposal to the 20 Year Neighborhood Park Plan proposal presented March 16 by Council President Barbara Johnson and Council Member Goodman, there are several areas of stark differences.

Proposed Investment Period

The 20 Year Neighborhood Park Plan equitably addresses the funding gap for all neighborhood parks throughout the city, as identified in fact based materials shared with the community during our year-long Closing the Gap educational initiative. Today, there is a 15 year backlog of neighborhood park needs, in addition to the on-going annual maintenance and capital gap. The 20 year Neighborhood Park Plan provides maintenance, rehabilitation, and capital funding and also provides the needed time to address the neighborhood park backlog and on-going annual needs. Your 10 year proposal would only allow us to address half of the park repairs needed and hamper our ability to equitably and effectively address the needs system wide. After 10 years only one half of the city will be served; we worry that as many as 40 of our neighborhoods would be left behind. We do not believe that is a fair approach.

Proposed Timeline and Commitment

The 20 Year Neighborhood Park Plan addresses the need for both the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to take action in a collaborative, timely manner that would include public hearings to allow residents to weigh in. If both agencies concurrently approve ordinances this spring to address the

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neighborhood park funding gap, the efforts behind a proposed November referendum will cease. Your 10 year proposal is for a tax increase to be included as part of your 2017 budget process, which is too late and too risky. Your proposal does not provide long term stability. We hope you can appreciate our concerns that your proposal is a reminder of the 2000 agreement made between the City and Park Board to address the neighborhood park capital needs. A proposed referendum that year was halted, but the agreement ended in 2002 as the City addressed its own funding needs, and ultimately placed our neighborhood parks in the challenging situation they are in today. The Park Board needs to ensure that the funding needed to provide quality neighborhood parks will not be in jeopardy in the future.

Annual Maintenance Funding

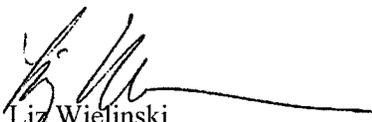
The 20 Year Neighborhood Park Plan addresses the needs for increased funding for annual maintenance of the neighborhood park system and for not supplanting other existing operations funding for neighborhood parks. The 20 Year Plan includes a one-time \$3 million tax levy increase of 1 percent for annual maintenance funding. Your 10 year proposal does not reference or address the critical annual maintenance needs of our neighborhood parks.

City/Park Board Fiscal Relationship

In addition to the new funding commitment contained in the 20 Year Plan, the proposed concurrent ordinances secure existing funding levels for LGA, payment by the MPRB of reasonable city administrative and benefit administrative fees, and secures the necessary project review process through CLIC. Each of these elements signal improved and more stable City/Park Board relationship that we believe in. We were also persuaded by your original veto to include a provision in the ordinance to grant the City the flexibility it may need in the event of significant future financial challenges. In short, we believe that a comprehensive package is in both the City's and the Park Board's best long-term interest.

We must remain committed to investing in our neighborhood parks and addressing the maintenance, rehabilitation and capital improvement funding gap that currently exists. We welcome the opportunity to partner with the City to address these needs, but we must do so in an authentic and timely manner.

Sincerely,


Liz Wielinski
President


Jayne Miller
Superintendent

Cc: Minneapolis City Council Members
Mark Andrew, Chair, Save Our Minneapolis Parks