

City of Portland

Thursday October 1, 2020 2:00 pm
Virtual Hearing
Via Zoom Webinar

City of Portland's Five Year Local Option Levy to Restore Recreation Programs, Parks,
Nature, and Clean Water

Measure 26-213

November 3, 2020 General Election

Present:

TSCC:

Chair David Barringer, Vice Chair James Ofsink, Commissioner Margo Norton,
Commissioner Mark Wubbold, Commissioner Harmony Quiroz, Executive Director
Craig Gibons, and Budget Analyst Tunie Betschart

Absent:

None

City of Portland

Council:

Mayor Ted Wheeler, Commissioner Amanda Fritz, Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty,
Commissioner Dan Ryan, and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly

Staff:

Parks and Recreation Director Adena Long, Deputy Director Todd Lofgren, and
Analyst Sarah Huggins

Chair Barringer opened the Public Hearing for the City of Portland's five-year local option levy to restore recreation programs, parks, nature, and clean water by stating the commission is a neutral body in this matter and is holding this hearing for the public's benefit. The commission will take no formal action today. The "action" will be taken by the voters. The purpose of this hearing is to discuss and take public testimony on Measure 26-213 which the City of Portland has put on the November ballot. Those from the public who wish to testify can sign up to speak following the formal questions. He asked the TSCC Commissioners, staff and City of Portland Commissioners and staff to introduce themselves.

Following introductions, Chair Barringer asked if a City representative would like to give a brief overview of the purpose for the local option levy.

City Commissioner Amanda Fritz gave an overview of the five-year local option levy stating the levy will allow the Parks Bureau to maintain parks, natural areas and trails at the current level and do some preventative tree maintenance. She said that, if approved, the levy would deliver recreational programs such as community centers and pool operations, community food and nutrition programs, environmental education, summer programs and opportunities for youth to connect with nature, and provide funding to care for Portland's trees. The additional funds will allow parks to reduce costs to the public to participate in its offerings. Specific projects will be determined as funds are available using a variety of factors including an equity lens and assessments of the most critical needs in the park system and community input.

She explained that they put the measure on the ballot in a short period of time when the City realized the effects COVID-19 was having in this area. Because of this there was not as much community input as they would like. They will have more extended community input on exactly how to use the additional funding after the levy passes. The levy will have a Community Oversight Committee to review the expenditures. They will report to the City Council and the public on an annual basis. There will also be an external audit annually to ensure services and programs funded by the levy are consistent with the voters' intentions.

The proposed levy of \$0.80 per \$1.000 assessed value would raise approximately \$48 million per year for five years. A homeowner with a home valued at \$200,000 would pay about \$151 a year.

Chair Barringer thanked City Commissioner Fritz for her thoughtful overview.

He said the TSCC Commissioner would begin their questions. If there are any public comments they will be taken following the formal questions.

TSCC Questions:

Chair Barringer asked the asked the following questions:

How did we get here? Why does Portland Parks and Recreation have a structural deficit? What are the top three causes of this structural deficit?

Mayor Ted Wheeler answered this question saying during the development of the last budget, Commissioner Fish told the council that the Parks Bureau faced an operational funding gap that could not be fixed with one-time Band-Aid fixes. Then the council made a difficult decision to reduce the parks budget, and directed the bureau to begin addressing the longer-term structural issues. The bureau worked with a group of community members who serve on the Alternative Funding Task Force with the support of both the Trust for Public Land and Portland State University. In

November Commissioner Fish and Director Long lead a council work session that reviewed the state of the parks situation; the current system, the one desired in the years ahead, and what the pathways it will take to get there. Portland Parks and Recreation provided three basic scenarios:

- 1) What if the parks system funding were maintained at the current funding level, a scenario that would result in a decline in service over the next 15 years;
- 2) What it would take to prevent that decline and continue to deliver approximately the same level of service;
- 3) What it would take to deliver on a system that's truly equitable and accessible for all Portlanders.

The Mayor said it was clear at that work session that Portland Parks and Recreation is underfunded to provide the service levels that are needed in the community. It was clear that a declining system just was not an option. The people in the city love their parks too much to allow this to happen. Since then the Bureau has continued its sustainable future effort and is recommending the steps needed for the council to address these specific challenges.

The three areas where the Bureau faces the most significant financial challenges with are:

- 1) Parks is overly reliant on a fee-based structure. More than a quarter of every dollar spent on parks comes from program fees and permits. In the recreational services division specifically, Parks has typically earned between \$.40 and \$.50 of every dollar directly from patrons. This dependence on fees means that in order to create a balanced budget, fees will need to increase to keep pace with cost increases. This conflicts with the need to keep the programs affordable and accessible. For some Portlanders, especially Portlanders of color and East Portland residents, the cost is still a barrier.
- 2) Parks operations and maintenance are continually underfunded. As Portland's population has continued to increase, the parks and recreation system has been used more intensively. The operations and maintenance system just hasn't been able to keep up. Parks currently has less staff working in developed parks than it did 10 years ago. There are 1,200,000 trees and Parks is unable to do preventative maintenance because it only has 12 arborists. Parks has over 470 community parks structures such as community centers, pools, maintenance facilities, public restrooms, and picnic shelters. The bureau just can't keep up with the required ongoing maintenance.
- 3) Parks has a capital maintenance backlog. There is \$450 million in identified capital maintenance. In order to address this lack of reinvestment, it is going to take many years and a large infusion of capital resources. The Parks Bureau's long-term effort

is focused on closing the gaps between expectations of the community and the resources available. Addressing this deferred major maintenance is a core part of that long-term work plan.

While the Bureau has been clarifying and problem-solving these issues over time, COVID-19 has exacerbated these challenges. Due to the pandemic, the Parks Bureau is effectively earning no program revenues and has experienced increased demands on its operations and the maintenance teams. As the City seeks to serve vulnerable populations, particularly those on the streets, the expenditures are increasing.

City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty expressed that the entire council was not of the same mind-set about this initiative. While the City has lost significant revenue for parks due to COVID, she said she was very disappointed because she thought the plan was for the Bureau to develop a sustainability plan for parks. Instead a letter that went out to the community saying, if you don't pass this levy, the City is not going to have parks programs. The reality is Portland will not have parks programs for a couple of years because there isn't a plan for programs during COVID-19. She expressed that with COVID-19 they know there will not be gatherings at community centers for the traditional park programs; pools will not be in use as they have been prior to COVID-19. She said she wanted to be clear about her expectations and that she was looking for a long-term plan. She feels this is a quick fix that doesn't deal with the fundamental issues.

Chair Barringer asked this follow-up question:

That is relevant to my question. What are the policy decisions that are going on behind this measure?

City Commissioner Fritz fielded this question saying that this is a stop gap measure. Council was hoping to bring something more significant and more sustainable to the table; something that would raise the hundred million dollars a year that the park system needs. That planning would have gone forward except for COVID. The park spaces are open and need maintenance and funding now. This levy is an interim step and the sustainability plan is still moving forward.

Director Adena Long added that despite COVID, Portland Parks and Recreation has continued to rise to the challenge to serve the community by offering: virtual programming; fitness in the park; a virtual preschool program; doing the volunteer work in various programs; and community gardens, pet parks, tennis centers, and golf courses are all open. So, Portland Parks and Recreation is not closed by any stretch of the imagination. COVID has limited the outreach, as it relates to community centers, because of the limitation of the number of people that are allowed to gather in indoor

spaces and also the ability to serve them in the community centers with the limited staffing resources.

Mayor Wheeler added that there's no funding stream that is certain in the current environment. He said it was his intention to continue to treat the general fund component of Portland Parks and Recreation on par with other general fund bureaus. While the levy might assist the bureau in a scenario where all the city bureaus are taking a general fund reduction to balance the city's budget, he will not use the levy to free up general fund for other resources. The decision to move this to the ballot was not a political decision. It was a decision driven by the reality of the fiscal situation.

Either the city finds the best of the options that are available to support Parks or they defer this again. If it is deferred, there are parks facilities that will not be appropriately maintained; critical taxpayer-owned infrastructure that will continue falling apart, and access to resources that is not being uniformly shared with equity across the community. The goal here is to be good stewards of what is the most beloved asset in the city-the park system. Just because the council is taking that chance collectively, it doesn't mean they all agree on everything. He said he did not see a better option.

He concluded by explaining that for four budgets in a row he has had to cut back the resources to the Parks Bureau. The public wanted to know why the council had not found a solution to help fund the parks. Many people asked why the City hadn't asked the citizens to help support the parks. So now we are doing that.

Commissioner Quiroz asked the following questions:

The City currently invests over \$90 million in General Fund in the annual Parks budget for basic park services. How will you assure voters that the City will maintain this financial commitment for underlying parks programs and the levy will not replace that funding?

Mayor Wheeler said while it is true that the Portland Parks and Recreation general fund budget is over \$90 million, only about \$76 million of that total is made up of tax resources or what the council refers to as general fund discretionary funding. The remainder is made up of fees from customers and a long list of miscellaneous funding sources. The council referred this levy in order to both preserve and enhance parks and recreation services and manage the physical and green assets responsibly.

There is about \$26 million provided by fees and charges. To what extent will the levy will be able to reduce that fee revenue?

Director Long answered saying while they are not looking to eliminate fees altogether, they certainly want to lower the barrier for participation and have been looking at

different approaches. She said they will continue to talk with the community and others about what the best approach is, but they have been thinking about a sliding scale and other progressive, different fee schedules for different folks. She said they haven't zeroed in on exactly what the approach will be and don't imagine that anything will be completely free, but they do want to make sure that cost is not a barrier for the most vulnerable in the community and the people who need the services.

Commissioner Hardesty added that when the city was threatening to close community pools, they heard from the community that they were willing to pay more. But council has done absolutely nothing to actually get them to pay more as of yet.

She said her concern is this measure was really rushed to the ballot because of fear; and there was not enough internal conversation about why council is doing this at this moment, knowing the economic devastation that many of the community members are facing, knowing that on this particular ballot there is about \$15 billion in new taxes from lots of governments.

She went on to say that without a plan for what they are going to do both short term and long term, this was an ill-thought-out process. She was very disappointed that it did not do what she felt she had been told it would do; which was developing a long-term plan to provide sustainability for the parks. She feels it is short term, gap funding, but with no plan for what programming looks like over the five-year life of the levy. It does a disservice to the voters when council sends something to the ballot that they have not thoroughly worked out.

Commissioner Fritz said that even though all the details are not worked out, the overall framework is there and the details will be worked out later. They didn't have time to do a full, comprehensive community process. And so, they are asking the voters to approve this stop gap measure with the pledge that these decisions will be made using a full, inclusive process.

Commissioner Hardesty said she appreciates that but is not confident that that is what is going to happen.

Commissioner Quiroz said TSCC appreciates the multiple perspectives.

Commissioner Wubbold asked the following questions:

Why did the Bureau choose an \$0.80 rate for this levy and why is the Bureau projecting an effective rate of \$0.66?

Portland Parks Analyst Sarah Huggins fielded this question saying nearly a year ago in the Park's Financial Sustainability Work Session, City Council encouraged the

Parks Bureau to seek additional funding so they could end the trend of declining services, rectify inequitable service delivery, and meet service levels the community has expected from their parks and recreation system. They modeled the cost to deliver those service levels. In late May public polling was conducted as part of that effort. She said they looked at voters' willingness to pay for different levy amounts. Of the voters they polled there was very little change in support at the different levy rates. The \$.80 rate would enable delivery of a services that had been described, as opposed to reduced set of services.

They are projecting an effective rate of \$.66 cents due to compression. She said they hired the Portland State University Northwest Economic Research Center to estimate the amount of compression and what other local option levies would be compressed as a result of this local option levy if it was passed by voters. Their analysis indicated that for a rate of \$.80 per \$1,000 of assessed value, the effective rate would be \$.66 cents per \$1,000 AV due to compression.

Commissioner Norton asked the following question:

And compression was what was on my mind for our next question. The "C" in TSCC is for conservation, but with the state property tax control measures, this question became an area that we are interested in and have to take into consideration when we look at these measures. Your material and the resolution authorizing this levy talks about the impact specifically on the City's own Children's levy; on the Multnomah County's Historical Society's levy; and on Metro's Park levy. You also talked about holding the Children's levy harmless by a direct payment, and that you were looking to mitigate the impact on others. Can you talk more about that?

Commissioner Fritz responded saying you're right, for some taxpayers this levy isn't going to increase their taxes. It's going to change the way the pie is sliced. So in the resolution, the council acknowledged the compression impact and resolved to mitigate the impacts. She said they resolved to make an appropriation in the annual budget from the Parks Local Option Levy fund to the Children's Investment Fund so changes in revenue caused by compression would not affect the Children's Investment Fund. As many of the Parks programs are aimed at helping families and children, it wouldn't make sense to rob one to pay the other. So, the council wants want to make sure that the Children's Investment Fund is held harmless. The Bureau will also work with Metro and Multnomah County's Historical Society to transfer funds or identify another method to mitigate the compression impact. The ballot submission will include the authority for levy funds to be used for grants to other jurisdictions or as a City programs to mitigate the impacts of property tax compression.

Clearly the impact on the Children's levy is substantially more than the others, according to one of the charts that was provided to us as part of your ballot measure.

It looks to me like an average is about a half a million a year for each of the five years, which is a substantial amount. You indicate that the source of the hold harmless funds will be directly from the levy funds, is that correct? And if that is the case, did you express that in the ballot material that was submitted to the Multnomah County Elections Office?

Mayor Wheeler explained that it actually comes out of the General Fund. It is not necessarily specifically coming out of the levy itself.

Commissioner Ofsink asked the following question:

The ballot measure lists five purposes for this ballot measure. Briefly put, they are:

- Enhance and preserve parks
- Provide park and recreation services to diverse populations
- Increase opportunities for communities of color and children
- Prevent cuts to recreation programs and community centers
- Enhance park maintenance to keep parks clean and safe

How will the bureau allocate spending between these five purposes and how will you make those decisions if they change year over year throughout the life of the levy?

City Commissioner Fritz said before committing the council to specific amounts for the first year, or even for five years, the bureau is going to have continued community listening sessions, to learn more about how it can best meet community needs, especially historically underserved communities, such as black, indigenous, and people of color, as well as low income communities and areas of the City that have not previously had to good park services.

The specific fund allocations will occur during the budget processes where council will review and decide on allocations each year. What is heard in these listening sessions may change future recommendation. For a sense of scale, on average, the levy is estimated to raise about \$48 million each year. Council is thinking about two thirds would be spent on operating and maintaining parks and natural areas and trees; keeping the parks cleaner, safer, more welcoming for all; planting new trees in low canopy areas; and performing work in the natural areas that ensures clean water, protect wildlife, and diminishes the impacts of climate change. That area of operations has been historically challenged and underfunded.

The levy council is proposing would be used to provide recreation programs that would reduce dependency on fees. So for some people that would potentially be no fees; for others, that could be a sliding scale; and then if there are folks who are able to pay more, the council will look at that as well. Currently the City does not have a robust

scholarship program. That's something that the council hopes to amend with this levy to server current underserved Portlanders and provide funding to safely reopen the community centers and pools and resume programming.

I heard at the beginning of your answer this is going be a community driven process. I think that that is really important. I wondered if the council or Director Long might be able to speak about how you are picturing that community engagement process in this COVID world. How will the City approach making sure that a real representative slice of the community gets to weigh in on this really important issue of how of money will be allocated to the parks system?

City Commissioner Fritz said in a normal summer she would have been going to several community events every week; at events in the parks they would have had booths; talked to people just wandering around; talked to anybody to tell them about this and about the process. That clearly has not been happening. She said she is still doing the neighborhood association and other community meetings, which in some cases they are getting better participation with the opportunity to be virtual. Obviously with the digital divide, they know that some people are left out of that process and there's often a tendency for the loudest voices and the strongest advocates to get themselves signed up early and make their point known.

Deputy Director Todd Lofgren explained some of the things they have been doing in the virtual world to further the outreach. He said they are having simultaneous translation on the virtual platforms. He gave the example of having a meeting next week in Vietnamese. They will be doing targeted outreach meetings to make sure that they have the multilingual, multicultural approach. He said one really important benefit of the levy funding is to enhance the community engagement capacity so they can give direct community grants to culturally specific organizations. They can then bring community voices to program design; determine whether a person feels welcome in a park; ensure they have access to one of the community centers and other programs. He concluded by stating they are really excited to be in a position where they could be giving community grants to culturally specific organizations and geographic based organizations.

Commissioner Quiroz asked the following question:

Does the bureau have performance measures for this? Will the bureau differentiate between deficit reduction spending and program enhancement spending?

City Commissioner Fritz said she would like to have some discussion about what is meant by deficit reduction spending and program enhancement spending. But to answer the first question she said they have set, and will continue to have, performance metrics, tracking access participation, demographics and their location

of tree planting efforts. She said the City has really moved a lot more toward performance metrics and gauges success on that.

They will certainly be transparent about how levy funds are spent with the oversight committee, the annual audit, and the reporting to council every year, describing the services provided, the outcomes, and the metrics. She said if "enhancements" means that parks would fund operation and maintenance of parks and keep them cleaner, safer and more welcoming, about two-thirds of the levy funding would be spent for that enhancement. And if by deficits, you mean that the parks would provide recreation programs that have a dependency on fees or restore lost revenue with the levy, about third would be spent on deficit.

She asked for clarification on TSCC's definition of deficit reduction spending and program enhancement spending and then she could better answer the question.

The background and the history of the park system is that there's a structural deficit. So we're interested to what extent does the levy balance the budget? How it is filling the gap of that structural deficit versus adding new programming or shifting programming?

Director Lofgren responded saying that the challenges are the reliance on fees and the underfunded operation and maintenance. The levy directly helps with those issues by taking the bureau off of this reliance on fees and enhancing the operation and maintenance funding so the bureau can take better care of the park structures, community centers, pools, maintenance facilities, green infrastructure, trees, and natural areas across the city. All of those will be better cared for. In addition, preventative maintenance funded by this measure will extend the life of the capital assets. But this will not solve the capital maintenance backlog problem.

City Commissioner Fritz added that the levy would add \$48 million a year, and the need is about a \$100 million dollars a year to properly fund parks. It's a beginning. Included in the parks budget this year is ongoing work on the sustainability plan that is still needed. The levy is written in such a way that it doesn't fund major maintenance capital and capital improvements. She said they have made some headway on that problem over the past several years. She added that the city is requiring that half of all of the one-time money that's left at the end of the fiscal year has to be spent on major maintenance in parks, transportation and emergency management. Parks has received about \$70 million through that major maintenance account. Still, the assets are a hundred years old, so even that dedication is not enough to catch up.

City Commissioner Hardesty said she would like to weigh in on this question as well. She expressed that she thinks the honest answer to the question is this levy is not doing anything to get the City where it needs to be. The reality is that they don't know financially what kind of mine fields will need to be addressed coming out of this pandemic. This is a short term solution to a systemic problem that the city has had for

quite some time. It is not known if the Parks Bureau will get the same amount of general fund funding that they have been receiving in the past, because City Council will be forced to make some really tough choices.

She said she can see a scenario that parks will get less general fund money because they have gone out and just put this levy on the ballot without a real plan for what happens, programmatically, during this this pandemic. In her opinion it is a misnomer to say that any enhancements will be taking place because they are not at an enhancement stage. They are basically in a running in place stage.

Commissioner Wubbold asked the following questions:

We understand that levy expenditures will be accounted for in a new fund. What will differentiate a Local Option Levy expenditure from a General Fund expenditure?

Mayor Wheeler responded saying that local option levy resources are restricted based on ballot language. All the resources are going to be deposited in a separate fund for both tracking and compliance purposes. All non-levy eligible expenditures are expected to continue to be funded in the general fund or by other eligible sources. Since the levy is intended to preserve and enhance existing services and address gaps in service and access, many expenditures will be eligible for both general fund, and levy funding. In those instances, council is planning to use general fund sources first, preserving voter approved resources as much as possible. There will be a robust engagement oversight structure around the use of the funding, including a public oversight committee, annual audits, and the annual review and budget approval with council allocating resources to eligible expenses.

Commissioner Norton asked the following questions:

There are fewer parks in East Portland than in other areas of the city, well below the often-cited benchmark of a park within one-quarter mile of neighborhoods. We have noticed the same thing with libraries. Multnomah County has a property tax measure on the November ballot, too, and it has allocated over half of the funding from that measure for East County facilities. So this makes us wonder, what about this local option levy? What about East Portland? What can you tell us?

City Commissioner Fritz said the lack of equitable services in East Portland is something that is owned and shared by the council. If the levy passes, it will absolutely be a priority. She said they have built new parks in East Portland, notably Gateway Discovery, Lewisville, and others. Portland Parks and Recreation Bureau has partnered with the community working to make sure that the community is much more engaged. They have employed people from the community in building new parks. Others are coming on line. Parklane Park is the Eastern most park near the Gresham border. They've been waiting for that community facility for literally decades. So that

is now funded and will get done; Gateway Green and Mill Park with the bicycle facility are getting done. So, there are now a number of parks in east county that are funded.

The 2014 bond measure made improvements in many parks in East Portland and put play equipment in parks that didn't have any. The levy funds will continue to address some of the disparities.

She mentioned the East Portland Community Center, and Montavilla, saying these surrounding communities are not able to pay for the swim lessons and for the use of the facility. The levy will make sure that the cost is not the barrier.

She said they are very much aware of the lack of trees in East Portland. They have done some work to try to protect the ones that are still there. They have a program to plant trees in low canopy, low income neighborhoods. They recently advertised that they were going to give away 1,500 fruit trees, and the program was set up to make sure that it was offered first to the low-income communities.

She said they have installed some food courts in East Portland and these require maintenance over time. There are certainly significant amounts of parks now in East Portland that are going to need funding. It was absolutely tragic to give East Portland the parks that they deserve and then turn around and say the city is unable to maintain them or provide the programming needed. So that is what this levy will help address.

You raise an important point with the prior measure to provide for expansion of park services. You just talked about the difference between new park lands, development of capital park lands, and then the ultimate burden of O&M. Is there a natural limit to acquiring new parks?

City Commissioner Fritz responded saying they don't have enough money to provide parks when they're already have some. But everybody pays property taxes. In fact, East Portland pays proportionately more property taxes compared with that value because of how Measure 5 was set up.

The bureau has a policy that when a new park comes on board or becomes operational, it gets an ongoing allocation for operations and maintenance from the general fund. There's sometimes some discussion between the council and the budget office about the amount that parks will receive and whether it is the correct number. But as parks are added, they are funded for operations and maintenance.

Chair Barringer asked the following question:

This levy ends in five years. What happens then?

Mayor Wheeler said this is a first step toward building a sustainable future for Portland Parks and recreation systems. That's clearly the goal, and council will continue to explore other funding options such as parks becoming a special district; a prepared

food and beverage tax; an income tax; a general obligation bond; among other possibilities. He said he believes the Parks Bureau did a very thorough job of prepping and identifying the specific mechanism that the council sent to the ballot. They will continue working to identify long-term funding plans for the Bureau. The future city council can decide to refer to the voters a different funding mechanism to support parks.

Chair Barringer asked if anyone had expressed a wish to speak at this hearing. No one had. He thanked Mayor Wheeler, City Commissioners and staff for their thoughtful answers to the questions. He said with that the hearing will close since the commission will take no action on the measure but rather leave that to the voters.

Minutes Approved by Commission on November 5, 2020

C. Gibons



Portlanders for Parks

Yes on Measure 26-213

TOPLINE MESSAGES:

Opportunity

This November, we have the opportunity to ensure our parks serve all Portlanders—by restoring recreation programs and protecting parks and natural areas and by making all of our parks programs more accessible to those facing financial challenges.

Parks Need Our Help

Portlanders love our parks—and parks need our help.

The coronavirus pandemic, closure of community centers and pools, and cancellation of recreation activities have created a multi-million-dollar deficit for Portland Parks & Recreation.

This measure—a five-year local option levy—is essential to restore these cuts, re-open community centers and pools, protect essential programs for families with lower incomes, and provide the recreation services we all count on.

BACKGROUND ON THE LEVY:

What the Proposed Parks Levy Will Do

The proposed Portland Parks & Recreation levy is also a critical first step towards fulfilling our shared vision for a more stable parks and recreation services that can better serve all Portlanders, by:

Restore recreation



- The levy would restart recreation programming, ending a reliance on user fees to deliver programming, and make equity and affordability the primary goals.
- The levy would support fitness classes, arts, senior programs, youth programs, and environmental education.
- The levy would keep the doors open at Multnomah Arts Center, Community Music Center, and Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, and fund the operations of a North Portland pool to name a few.
- The levy would provide programs for children experiencing poverty—including a summer playground lunch program, life-saving swim lessons, outdoor camps, and recreation scholarships.

Protect natural areas and parks

- The levy will help protect the 8,000 acres of natural areas and care for the 1.2 million trees on parks lands surrounding Portland’s rivers, creeks and streams, which are vital to preventing pollution and ensuring clean water.
- This levy will protect our urban forest and plant more trees in the city parks lands that currently lack them, like East Portland.

Boost Maintenance

- The levy will keep parks and restrooms cleaner and safer for all Portlanders, improving service in existing parks while also ensuring new parks get their necessary care as well.

Improve Equitable Access



- The levy will reduce Parks' reliance on fees, expanding recreation opportunities for communities of color, refugees and immigrants, and families experiencing poverty.
- Reducing reliance on fees will also expand access to programs for children experiencing poverty, including a summer playground lunch program, life-saving swim lessons, outdoor camps, and recreation scholarships.
- The levy will make sure our popular culturally specific and most popular programs, such as Stand with Refugees and Immigrants, Portland World Soccer Tournament, and Summer Free For All continue.

Preventing further job cuts

- PP&R has the City of Portland's largest—and one of the most diverse—workforces, and the bureau is the city's largest summer employer of youth. But as a result of the COVID-related closures, 1,700 recreation program employees were either laid off or not hired for the summer.
- The levy will prevent further job cuts for the frontline parks workers who care for our parks and provide recreation services.

Without this levy, PP&R will struggle to restore services and programs post-COVID

The coronavirus pandemic, closure of community centers and pools, and cancellation of recreation activities have created a multi-million dollar deficit for Portland Parks & Recreation.

This proposed levy is essential to restore these cuts, re-open community centers and pools, and provide the recreation services we all count on – just at the moment when local families need them most.

Without this levy, PP&R will face considerable challenges to caring for natural areas and parks, maintaining playgrounds, community centers, and restrooms, and will struggle to overcome the COVID-related deficit in time to restore recreation services for summer 2021.



With this levy, PP&R's funding will stabilize, increasing access to recreation

Before the coronavirus crisis, PP&R was evaluating options for long term sustainable funding —to better maintain the city's parks, watersheds and natural areas to ensure access to recreation programs for everyone, without depending on fees that are a hurdle for many.

The proposed levy will not only mitigate the revenue impact of COVID-19, it will also fix this long-standing and inequitable reliance on fees—increasing access to recreation opportunities for children and seniors, communities of color, refugees and immigrants, and families experiencing poverty.

Now, more than ever, vote YES on the proposed levy

Now, more than ever, we need the physical and emotional benefits of our parks, natural spaces and recreation programs. All Portlanders deserve safe, well-maintained parks and affordable access to recreation facilities and programs.

Vote YES on the proposed levy to maintain our parks and natural areas and restore vital recreation services for the equitable park system that our community deserves.

What does the levy cost?

The proposed levy rate of .80 per \$1,000 will raise an estimated average \$48 million per year over five years. For a home with an assessed value of \$200,000, the owner would pay about \$13 a month.

The median assessed value of a home in Portland--meaning half are assessed higher, and half lower--is 188,780

BACKGROUND ON THE CAMPAIGN

Portlanders for Parks to support the levy, and urge Portlanders to vote yes on Measure 26-213 this November. More information, including links to endorse, at portlandersforparks.org.