

[STAFF REPORT FOR USE FOR WORK SESSIONS AND COUNCIL MEETINGS]

2019 PARKS AND NATURE BOND – IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

Date: 1/21/2020
Department: Parks and Nature
Meeting Date: 2/4/2020

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Presenter(s) (if applicable): Jon Blasher
Length: 20 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

On November 5, 2019, Greater Portland voters overwhelmingly approved a \$475 million Metro parks and nature bond measure developed through diverse and comprehensive community engagement.

Metro's Parks and Nature department has been steadily working to hire staff and build foundational components in order to efficiently implement the bond measure and begin the refinement process. As with previous parks and nature bonds approved by voters in 1995 and 2006, the refinement process will, among other things, clarify priority locations and processes for investing bond funds.

On Feb. 4, the Parks and Nature department director will provide a high level overview of the refinement process work plan. This presentation will include a general timeline and highlight opportunities for Council to engage in the process.

ACTION REQUESTED

No formal action is requested. Council feedback will be sought on recommendations regarding Councilor engagement in the refinement process.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

The Metro Council has recognized the need to work together as a region to make greater Portland a more livable place for everyone. The council recognizes the importance of parks and nature investments to this mission, alongside investments in affordable housing and transportation.

The Metro Council referred the 2019 Parks and Nature bond to voters in June 2019 with Resolution No. 19-4988.

The resolution and exhibits included 11 foundational principles to guide the bond's investments and implementation. These include:

- Serve communities through inclusive engagement, transparency and accountability.
- Advance racial equity through bond investments.

- Protect clean water for people, fish and wildlife.
- Protect and restore culturally significant native plant communities.
- Protect, connect and improve habitat for native fish and wildlife.
- Take care of what we have.
- Make parks and natural areas more accessible and inclusive.
- Connect more people to the land and rivers of our region.
- Invest in trails for biking and walking.
- Support community-led parks and nature projects.
- Make communities more resilient to climate change.

The resolution described the following program areas and allocations:

1. Protect and restore land (\$155 million)
2. Support local projects – “Local Share” (\$92 million)
3. Nature in Neighborhood capital grants (\$40 million)
4. Take care of Metro parks (\$98 million)
5. Create trails for walking and biking (\$40 million)
6. Advance large-scale community visions (\$50 million)

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The 2019 parks and nature bond was developed with deep involvement of community members and partners throughout the region. The guidance provided through this diverse involvement has built enthusiasm across the region for the outcomes that the investments of this bond will produce.

Advancement of Metro’s racial equity and climate action goals is foundational to the bond language. Specifically, investments made by the bond have to satisfy a set of community engagement, racial equity and climate resiliency criteria included in the bond referral. These criteria are listed below:

Community Engagement and Racial Equity Criteria

- Meaningfully engage with communities of color, Indigenous communities, people with low incomes and other historically marginalized communities in planning, development and selection of projects.
- Prioritize projects and needs identified by communities of color, Indigenous communities, low-income and other historically marginalized groups.
- Demonstrate accountability for tracking outcomes and reporting impacts, particularly as they relate to communities of color, Indigenous communities, people with low incomes and other historically marginalized communities.
- Improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of developed parks.
- Include strategies to prevent or mitigate displacement and/or gentrification resulting from bond investments.
- Set aspirational goals for workforce diversity and use of COBID contractors and work to reduce barriers to achieving these goals; demonstrate accountability by tracking outcomes and reporting impacts.

Climate Resilience Criteria

- Protect, connect and restore habitat to support strong populations of native plants, fish and wildlife that can adapt to a changing climate.
- Protect and restore floodplains, headwaters, streams and wetlands to increase their capacity to handle stormwater to protect vulnerable communities from flooding.
- Increase tree canopy in developed areas to reduce heat island effects.
- Use low-impact development practices and green infrastructure in project design and development.
- Invest in segments of the regional trail system to expand active transportation opportunities for commuting, recreation and other travel.

BACKGROUND

The most recent work session presentation to Council regarding the bond took place on November 12th, 2019. Department director Jon Blasher outlined general findings from the election and the staff's plans to begin preparations for bond implementation. At the time, Parks and Nature department staff were beginning to compile a comprehensive scoping report outlining the full breadth of work that would need to be accomplished by the department during the impending refinement process.

Staff have since completed the full scoping report. Based on its findings, the department is working to hire staff, build out the process for refinement, and establish foundational components in order to efficiently implement the new bond measure. Through the Regional Investment Strategy, Parks and Nature leadership and staff are also engaging with colleagues implementing the 2018 affordable housing bond and developing the potential 2020 transportation investment measure, to seek opportunities for learning and collaboration between these important investment programs.

The information that will be presented at this work session will be general in nature. Staff's intent is to provide a high level overview of the upcoming bond work with specifics around Council engagement opportunities. At Councilors' request, Parks and Nature staff are available to provide more detailed information via briefings. This is an opportunity for Councilors to receive more specifics about the work plan and to ask more detailed process questions.

[For work session:]

- Is legislation required for Council action? ☐ Yes ☒ No
- If yes, is draft legislation attached? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- What other materials are you presenting today?