



## COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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TO: Felicia Brabec, Chair  
Ways & Means Committee

THROUGH: Verna J. McDaniel  
County Administrator

FROM: Robert L. Tetens, Director  
Parks and Recreation Commission

DATE: May 21, 2014

SUBJECT: Parks Millage Renewal – November 4, 2014

### **BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:**

It is requested that the Board of Commissioners authorize the Washtenaw County Clerk to place on the November 4, 2014 ballot the question to renew the Parks & Recreation Millage that expires after December 1, 2016 for an additional ten (10) years, beginning with the levy to be made on December 1, 2017, for the purpose of acquiring, developing and maintaining parklands and operating recreation facilities for the benefit of Washtenaw County citizens.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission (WCPARC) was established by the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners on August 1, 1973. The Parks Commission, which held its first meeting later that month, completed its first five-year parks and recreation plan in 1975. That plan, which was based on extensive survey data and considerable public input, outlined a strategy for developing a countywide system of parks and programs to meet the growing recreational needs of County residents. The recreation plan has been updated every five years since that time to reflect current interests, available resources and demographic trends.

In early 1976, the Board of Commissioners authorized a ballot initiative to fund the 1975 WCPARC recreation plan with a 10-year, ¼ mill levy. The ¼ mill levy for park operations was first approved on November 2, 1976. It has subsequently been renewed on November 6, 1984; November 8, 1994; and November 2, 2004. The current request would seek a fourth renewal of the operational millage on November 4, 2014.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The approval of this request by the Board of Commissioners followed by a favorable vote in November will allow the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission to continue to provide a wide range of recreational facilities and services without interruption.

Independent national research conducted over many years has consistently documented that the availability of parks and recreational opportunities are major contributors to the quality of life experienced by residents of a community. They're an asset, an investment in that community. For nearly four decades, County voters have overwhelmingly acknowledged the value of that investment, and repeatedly voted to provide support for the Washtenaw County parks system.

According to the Ann Arbor Area Board of Realtors, the average cost for a home in Washtenaw County in 2013 was \$250,000. Renewing the current ¼ mill levy for operations (the 2013 millage rate is actually .2353 due to the Headlee Amendment) would cost that average new homeowner about \$30 per year. Existing homeowners would pay slightly less (average closer to \$25 per household) due to the difference between the taxable value and the State Equalized Value (Proposal A of 1994).

That modest investment by the citizens of Washtenaw County will generate approximately \$3.2 million per year for County park operations. Current operational expenses (less internal service charges and capital maintenance and development) total approximately \$6.7 million per year. The balance of the revenue needed to operate the parks system is provided by admission/gate/membership fees charged seasonally at our more highly developed facilities such as the recreation center, the water/spray parks and the golf course.

We currently have 13 parks and 27 nature preserves, a total of just over 5,400 acres, available to the public year-round. Except for the facilities mentioned earlier, all of the parks and nature preserves are provided at no additional cost to the public. The operational levy is the primary source of support to maintain those parks where seasonal entrance fees are not required.

Often overlooked, the number of seasonal employment opportunities that the parks system provides also plays a vital role in the community. Operating the parks throughout the year requires hundreds of seasonal employees working in a variety of jobs, from lifeguards and park managers to concession workers and accountants. Most of those employees are high school or college aged residents, earning an income and gaining valuable work experience -- it's often their first job -- while directly contributing to the community and the success of the parks system. Again, this millage is an investment in the community, providing employment opportunities for nearly 400 County residents each year.

The Commission has been extremely successful in using the millage revenue to leverage financial support from other sources, maximizing the return on that investment.

In the past decade the Commission has been instrumental in securing approximately \$15 million in grants and donations for both recreational and land preservation activities.

With a common mission and in the spirit of collaboration, the operational millage has also been used to assist local communities in providing the required financial match to secure additional grant support for many local recreational projects. Examples include the trail network in the Dexter area; the Ann Arbor Skate Park; the Rutherford Pool project; the Water Street Trail, etc. Without this millage, that additional support would not have been possible and those projects would not be realized.

In summary, this operational millage is of significant benefit to the citizens of Washtenaw County. It provides award winning and nationally recognized parks, nature preserves and recreational opportunities; it stimulates the local economy by providing hundreds of jobs; and it leverages considerable additional financial support for recreational opportunities in Washtenaw County.

**IMPACT ON HUMAN RESOURCES:**

The approval of this request and a favorable vote in November will provide continued support for the staff necessary to operate the facilities and provide the programs offered by the WCPARC. Importantly, approval of this request will also support hundreds of seasonal jobs during the summer months when schools are not in session.

**IMPACT ON BUDGET:**

The approval of this request will have no impact on the General Fund budget.

**IMPACT ON INDIRECT COSTS:**

The approval of this request will have no impact on Direct Costs.

**IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS OR OUTSIDE AGENCIES:**

The approval of this request will have no impact on any other county department or outside agency. The approval, however, will allow voters the opportunity to influence the quality of life in Washtenaw County by supporting the operations of the WCPARC in providing a wide range of recreational opportunities and protected natural areas for public use.

**CONFORMITY TO COUNTY POLICIES:**

This request is in conformance with all County policies.

**ATTACHMENTS/APPENDICES:**

A draft resolution seeking authorization from the Board of Commissioners to place the renewal of the 10-year, ¼ mill levy for operations of the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation system on the November 4, 2014 ballot.

A RESOLUTION SUBMITTING TO THE WASHTENAW COUNTY ELECTORS A QUESTION OF WHETHER THE QUARTER MILL PRESENTLY IN EFFECT FOR PARKS AN RECREATION PURPOSES SHOULD BE RENEWED FOR TEN YEARS, BEGINNING 2017 AND TERMINATING 2026 AND CERTIFYING THE BALLOT QUESTION FOR SAID PROPOSITION

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
June 4, 2014

WHEREAS, pursuant to Act No. 261 of the Michigan Public Acts of 1965 as amended, this Board of Commissioners by resolution no. 73-0390 on August 1, 1973, established the County Parks and Recreation Commission; and

WHEREAS, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners on September 1, 1976, approved the submission to the voters of a one-quarter mill for ten years for the purpose of planning, acquiring, developing, operating and maintaining parks and recreation places and facilities in Washtenaw County; and

WHEREAS, the voters on November 2, 1976 approved said millage; and WHEREAS, the voters on November 6, 1984 renewed said millage; and WHEREAS, the voters on November 8, 1994 renewed said millage; and WHEREAS, the voters on November 2, 2004 renewed said millage; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Commission had been successful in using said millage for the purpose of planning, acquiring, developing, operating and maintaining parks and recreation places and facilities in Washtenaw County; and

WHEREAS, said millage expires in 2016; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Commission has requested that the question of renewing the one-quarter mill for a ten (10) year period, beginning 2017 and terminating 2026, for the acquisition, operation, and maintenance of parks, recreation places and facilities be submitted to the voters of the County of Washtenaw; and

WHEREAS, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners deems it advisable that this question be placed on the ballot at the General Election to be held on November 4, 2014; and

WHEREAS, this matter had been reviewed by Corporation Counsel, Bond Counsel, Finance, County Administrator's Office and the Ways and Means Committee

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners of the County of Washtenaw, State of Michigan, as follows:

1. There shall be submitted to the electors of the County of Washtenaw at the general election to be held on the fourth (4th) day of November, 2014 from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 o'clock p.m. prevailing time, the following proposition:

" To renew the millage expiring after December 1, 2016, shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be imposed each year for all purposes on real and tangible personal property in Washtenaw County, Michigan be increased as provide in Section 6, Article IX, of the Constitution of the State of Michigan and the Board of Commissioners of the County be authorized to levy a tax not to exceed one quarter of one mill (\$0.25 per \$1,000) of state equalized valuation of such property for a period of ten years, beginning with the levy to be made on December 1, 2017, for the purpose of acquiring, developing and maintaining parklands and operating recreation facilities for the benefit of Washtenaw County citizens?"

2. The election shall be held in accordance with Chapter XXVII, the General Election Laws of the State of Michigan.

3. The Washtenaw County Clerk is hereby instructed to carry out all appropriate statutory duties as set forth in this resolution and the general election laws of the State of Michigan so that the question of adoption may be submitted to the voters on November 4, 2014.

4. The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby certifies to the County Clerk the following question as to the appropriate ballot wording for November 4, 2014, General Election for the aforesaid proposition:

PROPOSITION TO RENEW THE INCREASE IN THE TAX LIMITATION FOR PARKS AND RECREATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PLANNING, ACQUIRING, DEVELOPING, OPERATING AND MAINTAINING PARKS AND RECREATION PLACES AND FACILITIES IN WASHTENAW COUNTY FOR THE BENEFIT OF WASHTENAW COUNTY CITIZENS

“ To renew the millage expiring after December 1, 2016, shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be imposed each year each for all purposes on real and tangible personal property in Washtenaw County, Michigan be increased as provided in Section 6, Article IX, of the Constitution of the State of Michigan and the Board of Commissioners of the County be authorized to levy a tax not to exceed one quarter of one mill (\$0.25 per \$1,000) of state equalized valuation of such property for a period of ten years, beginning with the levy to be made on December 1, 2017, for the purpose of acquiring, developing and maintaining parklands and operating recreation facilities for the benefit of Washtenaw County citizens?”.

YES NO

Each city and township clerk shall give appropriate notice of the submission of the aforesaid proposition as provide by law which notice shall contain the statement of the Washtenaw County Treasurer as to previously voted tax limitation increases affecting property within Washtenaw County.