

**ST. LOUIS COUNTY PARKS  
GREEN RIBBON COMMITTEE REPORT  
TO COUNTY EXECUTIVE & COUNTY COUNCIL**

February 2013

In July of 2012 the St. Louis County Parks Green Ribbon Committee submitted an Interim Report to the St. Louis County Executive and the County Council. That report was a summary of the work that the Green Committee had done since its formation in February of 2012. At that time the committee recommended that \$500,000 be allocated to the Parks Department 2013 budget from the General Fund in lieu of any operational budget reductions, or that some other form of overall County budget adjustment be made.

Starting in October the Committee also pointed out that it was projected that in 2014 there will not be any reserves available and that the expected budget shortfall will be in the \$4,000,000 range. It was pointed out that without a significant transfer of County funds, or a new revenue source, County Parks will face the prospect of major cuts in services and facilities including the closing of some parks and recreational facilities.

The Committee worked with the Parks staff during the 2013 budget process. The final budget did not include any major reductions in personnel or services and included the addition of \$1,000,000 from the General Fund, which was utilized to keep the un-appropriated (reserve fund) close to 10%. The 2013 appropriation amount is \$22,945,211. This compares to the 2012 appropriation of \$22,922,042. This budget is essentially a keep things open and operating budget that continues to defer a lot of maintenance.

The budget difficulty will arise in 2014 if there is no new revenue. One problem is that the reserve balance amounts will have been spent down. It has also been made clear by the Administration that no further General Funds will be provided to the Parks Department and that the year-end fund balance (Reserve Fund) must be about \$1,000,000. It is projected that the 2014 balance available for appropriation will be around \$19,400,000. Compared to the \$22,945,211 in 2013, this would require a budget appropriation reduction of \$ 3,500,000. **A reduction in available funds of this level would result in a drastic reduction in personnel, park services, and the possible closing of parks.**

The County recently enacted an ordinance to put the Safe and Accessible Arch and Public Parks Initiative on the April 2, 2013 ballot. If this initiative is approved, St. Louis County will receive an estimated \$10,000,000 in new revenues each year. The County Parks Department would receive \$6,000,000 and the County Parks Grant Commission would receive \$4,000,000 for use by municipalities.

This influx of new funds to the County Parks Department will allow an acceptable operating budget for maintaining current staffing levels and services. In addition some of the new funds could be used as a revenue stream to support the sale of bonds to finance substantial infrastructure repairs that have been deferred in the past, and to construct new facilities. The municipalities could similarly use the new funds to continue to improve their park systems.

The choice of what kind of parks system we will have in St. Louis County will be in the hands of the voters on April 2, 2013. We can either make further reductions in personnel, reduce programs, and close parks, or we can continue to operate our existing parks along with making substantial repairs to correct deferred maintenance, and possibly add new programs and facilities. If successful, a stable dedicated funding source for parks will be established that will not be dependent on annual appropriations by the elected officials.

**The St. Louis County Parks Green Committee has the following two recommendations:**

**1. That the St. Louis County Executive, the St. Louis County Parks Department, along with the St. Louis County Council support the passage of Proposition P in April. This can be done under the law by making sure that all information possible about the current condition and the current outlook for all of the St. Louis County parks is communicated to the voting public.**

**2. That the County government assure the voters that all of the funds from this new tax, along with all of the current funds received from the County dedicated parks property tax, will not be diverted directly, or indirectly by a revision in tax rates, to any other County government use.**

We appreciate the opportunity to present this second report to both the County Executive and the County Council. A final report with a summary of our work and all of our documentation will be submitted shortly. We look forward to actively working with the County Council and the County Executive in supporting Proposition P, the Safe and Accessible Arch and Public Parks Initiative.

Sincerely,

Skip Mange, Chairman  
Former St. Louis County Councilman  
Town & Country

Wayne Goode  
Former State Senator  
Normandy

Bob Hall, Vice Chairman  
Former St. Louis County Parks Director  
Kirkwood

Monica Huddleston  
Mayor City of Greendale  
Great Rivers Greenway Board Member

T.R. Carr, Ph.D.  
Former Mayor Hazelwood  
Hazelwood

Anne Klein  
Assistant St. Louis County Parks Director  
Webster Groves

Ron Coleman  
Executive Director The Open Space Council  
Ballwin

Lindsey Swanick  
Former St. Louis County Parks Director  
South County

Matt Conley  
City Administrator St. Ann  
St. Louis County Municipal League

Bob Nelson  
St. Louis County Parks Advisory Board  
Kirkwood

Patty DeForrest  
Parks Director City of Clayton  
St. Louis County Municipal League

Tom Ott  
Acting Director of St. Louis County Parks  
North County