

Esteemed Council Members,

I am Yolanda Goettsch, an Up County Representative on the Countywide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board. I want to express my gratitude and wholehearted support for the County Executive's allocation of funds to the Recreation Department and the Montgomery County Parks Department (under the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission). It is imperative that you fully fund the proposed budget requests from these departments to ensure that they can provide vital operations and services to our communities. The Recreation Department manages senior centers, community/neighborhood recreation centers, over a dozen indoor and outdoor swimming pools and the Parks Department manages an extensive park system of over 37,000 acres in 420 parks.

In recent years, despite commendable efforts, these departments have faced challenges due to insufficient funding, resulting in subpar outcomes. The proposed budget proposals are intended to address these needs. In particular, the Parks Department will be unable to meet the needs of the community under the proposed County Executive funding levels. The Parks Department has requested a 7.2% budget increase over 2025 in order to maintain current services and a small amount of funding for increased programming and enhanced maintenance. However, the County Executive has recommended only a 3.2% increase. In contrast, other county departments received an average 6.7% increase to maintain the same level of services. Given inflation in supplies, materials and compensation, this shortfall will seriously hinder the ability of the Parks Department to maintain and improve our beautiful County parks that are one of the most treasured and used amenities in our County. As a citizen, it is not clear to me why the Parks Department is not receiving an increase comparable to other departments.

Our parks have been a haven of solace and tranquility for many during the pandemic, serving as vital community assets. With the resurgence of sports, events, and facility rentals, park usage has reached unprecedented levels. Therefore, I urge your support for the proposed funding for the Parks Department to maintain and enhance our park system for the collective enjoyment of all county residents.

The County Executive's budget also should enable the Recreation Department to establish a robust infrastructure for a diverse range of programs and fulfill critical equity goals and meet the department's mission of providing these services for all county residents.

I know many community members, including my family, who use the resources provided by these departments on a daily basis. These include families in my neighborhood that take advantage of the summer camps, students that hike and play sports in the parks, seniors that frequently use the pickleball courts and sign up for activities at the senior centers, and my family members that use the swimming pools for swim meets and recreation and visit the dog parks with our dog Chloe on a regular basis. It is my fervent hope that you will lend your support to the proposed funding for both the Department of Recreation and our parks.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Yolanda Goettsch