

MEMORANDUM

April 15, 2010

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee

FROM: Jennifer Renkema, Research Associate
Office of Legislative Oversight

SUBJECT: **Examples of Proposed FY11 Reductions to Local Park and Recreation Budgets**

The County Executive recommends funding the Montgomery County Department of Parks at \$68.2 million in FY11.¹ This is \$14.5 million (17.5%) less than the M-NCPPC request of \$82.7 million and \$10.8 million (13.7%) less than the approved FY10 budget of \$79.0 million. To provide some perspective for the Council when considering the FY11 budget, this memorandum describes reductions to selected park and recreation budgets in other local government jurisdictions. Specifically, this memo provides:

- Examples of proposed budgets and cuts for park and recreation departments in three jurisdictions; and
- Detailed description of proposed cuts to the Fairfax County Park Authority.

The examples provided in this memo are not intended to be a representative survey of cuts to park and recreation budgets, but rather to provide some examples of reductions being considered in other places. The information in this memo represents information that was easily accessible via the internet.

Among the jurisdictions that expect budget cuts, a few jurisdictions propose raising fees to generate additional revenue. Several jurisdictions propose reductions in:

- Mowing cycles and other park maintenance;
- Capital maintenance;
- Program staff;
- Administrative staff; and
- Training and travel budgets.

Despite significant service reductions proposed by jurisdictions reviewed in this memo, the reductions proposed are smaller than those proposed in Montgomery County. Further, none have the same structure or provide the same complement of services as Montgomery County Department of Parks.

In general, the Montgomery County Department of Parks has proposed most of the types of cuts proposed by jurisdictions reviewed in this memo.²

Budgets for some jurisdictions in the Washington, DC metropolitan area are still being prepared (e.g., Howard and Anne Arundel Counties), and other park and recreation budgets in the country will face reductions. For example, the City of San Francisco instructed all departments to reduce General Fund support for FY11 by 20% compared to the FY10 approved budget and submit a 10% contingency reduction.³

¹ Excluding debt service, grants, and reserves.

² Memorandum from Marlene Michaelson, Senior Legislative Analyst, to the Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee (April 15, 2010).

³ City & County of San Francisco Mayor's Office Instructions and Controller Technical Instructions Budget Year 2010-2011. (December 11, 2009).

The FY11 proposed budget for the Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation includes a 1.9% *increase* of \$4.93 million. However, the Prince George's County M-NCPPC is in a unique situation as its budget is not subject to the local tax limitations present in Montgomery County.

A. Case Examples of Combined Parks and Recreation Budget Cuts

This section describes proposed FY11 budget reductions for park and recreation departments in Kansas City, MO; Virginia Beach, VA; and Washington, DC.

Kansas City, MO. Kansas City's proposed FY11 budget includes a 12.7% (\$6.74 million) reduction in spending for the Department of Parks and Recreation. This includes a 19.5% reduction of workyears (75.5 vacant and filled positions).⁴ Specific service changes and other reductions include:

- Reducing mowing for parks by 29% from 14 to 10 times per year and for boulevards by 22% from 18 to 14 times per year;
- Reducing ballfield renovation by 64% (\$225,000);
- Reducing capital maintenance funding for lake restoration and park roads; and
- Eliminating 40.1 positions due to outsourcing swimming pool maintenance and golf course management and privatizing tennis center management;
- Eliminating numerous vacant positions in administration, planning, park property maintenance, community centers, tree trimming, and other areas.

Virginia Beach, VA. Virginia Beach's proposed FY11 budget includes a 3.4% (\$1.77 million) reduction in spending for the Department of Parks and Recreation that includes a 1.9% cut in staff (16.8 workyears).⁵ Despite the relatively small percentage cut, the FY11 budget proposes substantive reductions in maintenance and services, including:

- Lengthening mowing cycles for highways, parks, and municipal buildings by 28% from 18 to 23 days; for the resort area by 17% from 12 to 14 days; and for the municipal center by 43% from 7 to 10 days;
- Reducing plant replacement and flower planting in the resort area by 72%;
- Eliminating sports camps that serve about 210 children (about 7.4% of summer camp registrations);
- Reducing golf course maintenance, including reduced fertilizer application and irrigation repair;
- Reducing staffing for some programs; and
- Eliminating advertising for free community events that do not generate revenue.

The proposed FY11 budget also includes fee increases for recreation center memberships, out-of-school time programs, athletics, and aquatics.

Washington, DC. Washington, DC's proposed FY11 budget includes an 11.1% (\$5.34 million) reduction in spending for the Department of Parks and Recreation. This reduction includes a shift of \$1.7 million in administrative activities (finance, procurement, and human resources) to other departments and elimination of a \$300,000 FY10 one-time expense.⁶ In addition, the budget:

- Reduces discretionary purchases in equipment, supplies, and other services;
- Eliminates 17 vacant positions;
- Reduces travel and training funds;

⁴ City of Kansas City, Missouri Submitted Activity Budget FY 2010-2011

⁵ City of Virginia Beach FY 2010-11 Proposed Resource Management Plan, Operating Budget

⁶ Government of the District of Columbia FY 2011 Proposed Budget and Financial Plan

- Reduces printing costs by focusing on doing more outreach via website resources;
- Eliminates 13 FTE administrative positions; and
- Reduces funds for contractual tennis program partners.

Despite these reductions, the DC budget includes additional staff and expenses for summer activities and camps, facilities improvement, park landscaping, recreation equipment upgrades, and operating costs for a new pool and recreation center.

B. Fairfax County Park Authority Proposed FY11 Budget Reductions

1. Comparison of Montgomery County and Fairfax County Park Systems

Table 1 provides some comparative information about the two park systems. However, the two systems differ in considerable ways.⁷ For example:

- The Fairfax County Park Authority manages recreation facilities and programming that is part of the Department of Recreation in Montgomery County (e.g., aquatics).
- The Fairfax County Park Authority manages eight golf courses, while Montgomery County’s four courses are managed by the Revenue Authority.
- The Montgomery County Department of Parks budget includes costs for athletic field maintenance, while these costs are allocated to a separate fund in Fairfax County (although the Parks Authority maintains the fields).⁸

Table 1: Comparison of Select Characteristics of the Montgomery County and Fairfax County Park Systems

	Montgomery	Fairfax
FY10 Adopted Budget	\$83.7 million	\$67.1 million
FY10 Budgeted WYs	688.5	598.5
Acres of Parkland	34,600	22,600
Athletic Fields	299	289
Campgrounds	3	2
Equestrian Centers	5	1
Formal Gardens	2	1
Ice Rinks	2	1
Miles of Trails	201	300
Nature Centers	4	5
Parks	410	417
Playgrounds	291	220
Reservable Picnic Areas	76	49
Tennis Courts	305	200

Source: M-NCPPC Proposed Annual Budget FY2011; Fairfax County FY 2011 Advertised Budget Plan (Vol. 1 and 2); Fairfax County Park Authority website

⁷ The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) Proposed Annual Budget FY2011 for Montgomery County; Fairfax County FY 2011 Advertised Budget Plan (Vol. 1 and 2); Fairfax County Park Authority website (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks)

⁸ The Montgomery County FY11 Recommended Budget includes a transfer from the General Fund to the Department of Parks to reimburse the cost of athletic field maintenance, however this does not affect the Department of Parks’ MARC.

2. Summary of Fairfax County Park Authority FY11 Proposed Budget Reductions

Overview. The Fairfax County Park Authority receives operating funds from two sources: the County General Fund and the Park Revenue Fund. The County General Fund is primarily tax supported, although it includes some revenue from user fees that accounted for 8.6% (\$2.3 million) of the FY10 General Fund expenditures. The Park Revenue fund is entirely self-supported from user fees and charges at revenue-supported facilities such as recreation centers, golf courses, and nature centers. The Park Revenue Fund supports 60% of the Park Authority budget compared to the General Fund that supports 40% of the Park Authority budget.⁹ The Park Authority also receives supplemental revenue from the Fairfax County Park Foundation which contributed \$345,000 to the Park Authority in 2009.¹⁰

Table 2 shows proposed changes to the budgeted expenditures and staffing for the Fairfax Park Authority between the FY10 adopted budget and the FY11 proposed budget.

**Table 2: Changes to Fairfax County Park Authority Budget and Staffing
(\$ in millions)**

	FY10 Adopted	FY11 Proposed	Change in	
			\$/#	%
Budgeted Expenditures				
General Fund	\$26.93	\$24.60	-\$2.34	-8.7%
Park Revenue Fund	\$40.03	\$41.81	\$1.78	4.5%
Total Funding	\$66.97	\$66.41	-\$0.55	-0.8%
Budgeted Workyears				
General Fund	361.5	321	-40.5	-11.2%
Park Revenue Fund	236	237	1	0.4%
Total Workyears	597.5	558	-39.5	-6.6%

Source: Fairfax County FY 2011 Advertised Budget Plan (Vol. 1 and 2)

Overall, the agency expects only a small decrease in operating costs (\$550,000). However, the \$2.34 million decrease in General Fund support is expected to result in elimination of 40.5 positions and service reductions (summarized below in Table 3). The proposed increase in expenditures from the Park Revenue Fund reflects increased personnel costs for additional instruction hours for recreation programs; post-employment benefits; operating expenses due to repairs, maintenance, and utility costs for Park Authority facilities; and capital equipment replacement. In addition to these changes, the proposed budget shifts some staff costs from the General Fund to the Park Revenue Fund.

Notably, neither the General Fund nor the Park Revenue Fund FY11 proposed budgets include employee salary increases (i.e., performance pay or COLAs).

⁹ Fairfax County FY 2011 Advertised Budget Plan (Vol. 1 and 2)

¹⁰ Fairfax County Park Foundation, www.fxparcs.org

Budget Reduction Strategies. The following table summarizes proposed FY11 cuts to the Fairfax County Park Authority staffing, programming, and services.

Table 3: Fairfax County Park Authority Proposed FY11 Program and Service Reductions

Program/Service Area	Specific Reductions
Park Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce trash collection from three times per week to once or twice a week • Reduce park land mowing from once a month to every three months • Reduce athletic fields mowing from more than once per week to once per week or less • Reduce trail inspections from 1-2 times per month to 3-4 times per year • Close restroom facilities at 15 parks • Reduce logistical and preparation support for special events • Reduce grounds maintenance management staff • Reduce tree trimming and eliminate ability to trim trees that require more than two climbers or are 75 feet or taller • Reduce pest control for athletic fields
Facility and Equipment Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase facility maintenance and repair backlog by 10-15% • Increase backlog from 45 days to 75 days for certain facility maintenance needs • Increase equipment maintenance backlog from 15 days to 30 days • Increase backlog for maintenance to roads, bridges, parking lots, stream banks, and storm water ponds from 135 days to 180 days
Recreation Programs and Service Reductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate two park staff positions • Eliminate lighting at 123 tennis, basketball, and volleyball courts. All courts will close at dusk. • Eliminate 5 of 52 affordable six-week summer recreation program sites and eliminate summer program field trip • Close one outdoor swimming pool facility
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate position that provides oversight to strategic plan, accreditation program, and other coordination and long-range strategic planning functions • Eliminate training and travel support • Reduce management and coordination for staff training • Reduce technology support for staff computers and printers • Eliminate seven other administrative positions that provide a variety of support functions
Capital Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce limited term funding that supports CIP projects (could result in delays and additional CIP costs)

Source: Fairfax County FY 2011 Advertised Budget Plan (Vol. 1 and 2)

3. Other Fairfax County Budget Reductions Impacting Parks: Athletic Field Maintenance

Fairfax County provides General Fund support for athletic field maintenance for school and Park Authority fields through the County Construction Fund in the CIP. Field maintenance also receives revenue from an Athletic Services fee (\$1.1 million in FY10).¹¹ The proposed FY11 budget proposes significant reductions in field maintenance due to a decrease in General Fund support, as shown in Tables 4 and 5 below.

Table 4: Fairfax County Proposed FY11 Reduction in General Fund Support for Athletic Field Maintenance (\$ in millions)

	FY10 Adopted	FY11 Proposed	Change in	
			\$	%
General Fund Support*	\$4.31	\$3.77	-\$0.54	-12.6%

*Athletic Field Maintenance also receives funding from an Athletic Services fee (\$1.1 million FY10)
 Source: Fairfax County FY 2011 Advertised Budget Plan (Overview)

Table 5: Fairfax County Proposed FY11 Athletic Field Maintenance Reductions

Type of Field	Maintenance Reductions
Elementary and Middle School Fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate aeration and seeding for all 626 fields • Eliminate routine maintenance and repairs due to vandalism and damage to player benches and bleachers • Reduce mowing from 30 to 29 times per year • Eliminate diamond field warning track maintenance • Eliminate vegetation control in infield skin areas
High School Fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate aeration and seeding for all 55 diamond fields
Park Authority Fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate aeration and seeding for all 289 parks • Reduce mowing from more than one time per week to once per week or less* • Reduce pest control*

*Previously describe under Park Authority Proposed FY11 Service Reductions
 Source: Fairfax County FY 2011 Advertised Budget Plan (Overview)

¹¹ Fairfax County FY 2011 Advertised Budget Plan (Overview)