

May 2, 2017  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Ober Performance Room  
7:00 pm

Commissioners in Attendance: Karen Gardner, Bob McMahon, Lu-Ann Branch  
Commissioners Absent: Scott Harvey, Doug Ostrom  
Staff in Attendance: Elaine Ott-Rocheford

Karen began the meeting at 7:00 pm.

Karen read the agenda, purpose, and ground rules for the meeting (attached).

Bob presented the recent history of the District's rationale to challenge the existing Interlocal Agreement, stating primarily that research indicated no other arrangements where Parks pay Schools a flat fee for use of school facilities. Bob indicated that this is his and Karen's first terms so are still learning – reason for the meeting.

Karen read Doug's and Scott's letters (attached).

Karen presented the present three options VPD has discussed with VISD (attached).

Elaine gave a presentation on the potential benefits to the District and sport group users of not paying the \$100k fee to VISD (attached).

David Hackett: surprised by lack of level of analysis by this Board. Hundreds of thousands of community hours have taken place on Commons facilities over the years. Pushing this all onto VISD puts the ultimate burden on the users. We rely on fields.

Your claim that "No other Districts do this" is false. I know of a legislative report that lists Districts that do this. Vashon does a great job with the current agreement. We plan VISD facilities on an as available basis.

The levy increase of \$.05 in 2010 was for the Commons. That's where the \$100k comes from. It allows the community use of 280+ thousand user hours. Go for a bond for capital needs! Rethink this. Be more transparent. Meetings have not been properly noticed. Your letter to VISD with 5 signatures deserved more transparency.

Lu-Ann: David, why didn't you pick up the phone and talk about this 2010 levy issue? Why spring it on us here?

David Hackett: I have been discussing this with Elaine.

Elaine: David, Bill Ameling just told me about it this morning. I emailed *you* to confirm this information. You emailed me back with confirmation. That was the extent of it.

Lu-Ann: When a former Commissioner sees a problem, the right thing to do is to let us know.

?: As a voter, I want to know about why you would want to destroy a 25 year agreement?

Bill Ameling: The phone works both ways. Nobody called me. The Commons was based on a Shoreline model. VISD needed to replace 2 elementary schools. Chautauqua was born – a bigger facility and with community use. VISD ran a large bond for that purpose. It is public property, not just school property. Public was promised access – a commitment to the public.

VPD increased their levy 10% to be dedicated to the Commons. If you aren't going to pay the Commons, give the public back our nickel! A nickel was to keep user fees as low as possible, so every child could participate regardless of economic status.

\$100k came from – I don't know. VISD does not have the ability to tell us. We both hired an accounting firm to try to figure it out. They said they couldn't do it. No way to measure incremental costs. At first, there was no \$100k; we did all the maintenance. We tried a joint capital fund. The schools were too underfunded and couldn't meet their obligation (despite their large budget, still underfunded).

Truman Obrien: When we first made the agreement, the first fee was \$30k. Then \$40k. Tried to find incremental costs. The original arrangement was based on VPD paying for programs. VPD no longer does programs.

Hilary Emmer: read David Hackett's 2009 White Paper. This states the levy increase was not for the Commons alone. Each Board should do their own thing. The School District got money for windows; they turned around and used it for water bottle fillers. Boards change; issues have to change with them. David Hackett turned VPD into a Maintenance District. There are no programs. All money went to VES. I love Option 3!

Bob Hennessey plays on Men's Drop-In Soccer. He stated publicly that he is a tax payer and doesn't believe in user fees. I can't wait to see what VISD does with fees if they do Option 3. You can't have it both ways.

VPD needs to fix \$5 million worth of stuff. They need to get back on solid footing. They can't do programs until they're back on solid footing.

David Hackett: Soccer is a VPD program, volunteer operated. VPD *does* have programs that operate under the VPD umbrella. The Commons represents the partnership of programs. VPD's insurance covers the club sports, because club sports are VPD programs.

Elaine: Enduris insures club sports, because they are partnership organizations under the guidance of User Agreements. Club sports are otherwise stand-alone organizations who handle their own registrations and management. They are not VPD-owned programs.

Bill Ameling: When the levy was raised to \$.50, Hackett said, "We're not here to do what is best for VPD; we're here to do what is best for the community." The Commons is the best thing for the community. You'll spend \$100k for a handful of swimmers but not the sport groups.

Teri Vickers(?): To be clear, the swimmers are not asking for \$100k. They are fundraising for the bubble.

Bill Ameling: Operating costs to VPD will be well over \$100k for that bubble. There isn't a pool anywhere that makes money.

Bob McMahon: Pool users pay more in fees than sport users.

Lindsay Tracy: Will families pay more in fees?

Bob McMahon: Only if fees are increased. There would be no increases with Option 1. We are concerned about increased fees. When we raised fees recently, the users objected.

Bob Hennessey: VISD spends \$700k maintaining fields and gyms. Community use is 75%. We are not in the business of parks and recreation. We would have to raise user fees to recover our loss.

Lindsay Tracy: There is a Local Initiative Support Foundation. Funds are available for shared facilities. I have been reaching out about this, but nobody has gotten back to me.

Elaine: I have never heard from you. Please drop me a note.

Nancy O'Conner: Bob Hennessey, how does parks and recreation use 75% of your \$700k?

Bob Hennessey: For example, VISD has one girls soccer team and one boys soccer team. Soccer club has many.

Karen Gardner: There is no other park/school that has this relationship. We're still trying to figure out why this makes sense. We want to make sure we are doing the right thing with taxpayer dollars.

Bob McMahon: The notion is that ALL is community. This isn't about "VPD use."

Mary O'Brien: Why do we say "users?" We are all public!

Megan ?: VES, pool, and BARC are VISD's. We have public use paid for by VISD, and that supports VPD. \$100k seems like a good deal.

Truman O'Brien: They are not part of the Interlocal. They are guided by separate leases.

Angela London: I appreciate VISD and using their facilities. User fees are reasonable. This is an arrangement that works.

Bill Ameling: It comes down to semantics. All pay taxes to VISD and VPD. Nobody says, "Those are school kids, and those are park kids." It's our island, our children. If you think we shouldn't pay VISD, give us our nickel back. If you don't pay \$100k, and you're still collecting that nickel, VISD must raise fees. The children will feel it. The role of government is to level the playing field.

Lu-Ann: But if we save \$100k, the children will benefit elsewhere. How else will we pay for fixes? The VPD has never passed a bond measure.

Teri Vickers: It doesn't matter what other Districts do. It works here. Vashon is unique by geography.

Bob Hennessey: Is a subsidy from VISD to VPD occurring? Yes. Why are you comfortable with us paying \$700k for your 75% use?

Bob McMahon: VPD has more acreage to maintain than VISD. We are over 500 acres; you are over... 50? We are more than just fields.

Lu-Ann: This is why taxpayers elected this Board – to ask these questions.

Karen: Others not present here agree with us.

Megan ?: I appreciate this new Board. But why the urgency? The public hasn't had time to digest this. Use has grown since 25 years ago. Engage the user groups.

Steve Sussman: This is getting into arguing. What are next steps?

Karen Gardner: There are 3 options now.

Steve Sussman: No, what happens in June?

Hilary Emmer: I would like to point out, despite the Interlocal Agreement having been written by two attorneys, David Hackett and Laura Wishik, that come June 30, this agreement is over. It was signed 2013. If no dispute in 2 years, it automatically renewed 2 years. Those new two years are coming up. There is nothing that says it renews again.

Bob McMahon: The goal is to have an agreement. We'll take what we've heard here and consider.

David Hackett: Soccer started May 1. Our fees are set. If something upsets the apple cart, this would be very bad. I love VPD – a great forum for getting a lot done. I am concerned about VPD walking away. I have no trouble with you re-negotiating. But walking away will impact your next levy.

Mary O'Brien: What happens June 30? The facilities will still be here. The world won't come to an end. The \$100k is the question.

Teri Vickers: The public perception is that this works. Change it, and your levy won't pass.

Bob McMahon: No levy means no parks. I doubt the levy will not pass.

?: West Seattle fees are considerably higher than VPD's. Thanks for keeping ours low.

Bill Ameling: VPD has never passed a capital bond. Run a higher levy and use the extra for capital. Did you call any former VPD Commissioners about this? The public is ignorant.

Truman O'Brien: They called me.

Bill Ameling: If you cut this program, you *will* learn what people think.

Hilary Emmer: I'll tell you where the \$100k came from. VPD did maintenance for VISD for \$250k. VES ran out of money, so Bill said we won't maintain VISD anymore. We'll just pay \$100k instead. It just came out of Bill's mouth. There was nothing more to it than that.

Michael Stuart: I'm confused about what is being accomplished here. There is a wealth of information in this audience. Who knows the inherent benefits? Think of the public as beneficiaries. You are our trustees. You should use these people to help with your decision. Continue the dialogue. Move forward collaboratively.

Peter Ray: Where will the \$100k go if it continues as is? VISD wanted to put it in a kitty for their turf field. The \$100k would not benefit the community as a whole; it would benefit a narrow football field. It is better left with VPD.

My partner manages a pool with Seattle Parks. She shares her pool with the Seattle School District. No shared money in this, and it all works out with a shared agreement. Most parks/schools in the country do not share money.

Meeting adjourned 8:45 p.m.



## **SPECIAL MEETING**

**Ober Park Admin Building Performance Room  
May 2, 2017, 7:00 p.m.**

### **Agenda for May 2, 2017**

**Interlocal Agreement Renegotiation Discussion and Options**

**Purpose of meeting: bring sports groups up to date on the Commons Agreement Renegotiation**

**1. Ground rules**

- One person speaks at a time for no longer than 3 minutes
- Members of the public that have not yet spoken have precedence
- Respect the agenda and the opinions of others (Disagree without being disagreeable)

**2. Meeting Objectives**

- Rationale of VPD Board of Commissioners re Commons Agreement Renegotiation
- Brief history of the Commons Agreement (Bob)
- Statements of commissioners not present (Karen)
- Current state of renegotiation of Commons Agreement (Karen)
  - o 3 options (2 from VPD and one from VISD)
- Benefits to Sports Groups from \$100k savings (Elaine)

**3. Next steps in renegotiation of Commons Agreement (Bob)**

**4. Public comments/questions**

	Parks Budget Levy Dollars	Commons Fee Parks to Schools	Commons Fee Relative to Levy	Add'l Commons Costs (1)	Parks Total Commons Costs	Commons Costs Relative to Parks Levy	Schools Local Revenues (Tax +Non-tax)	Commons Costs Relative to School Local Revenues	Schools Total Revenues	Commons Costs Relative to School Total Revenues
1989	\$ 64,000			\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	102%				
1990	\$ 69,227			\$ 2,310	\$ 2,310	3%				
1991	\$ 75,000			\$ 9,995	\$ 9,995	13%				
1992				\$ 7,675	\$ 7,675					
1993	\$ 133,000			\$ 10,100	\$ 10,100	8%				
1994	\$ 134,215	\$ 10,000	7%	\$ 12,395	\$ 22,395	17%				
1995	\$ 137,044	\$ 20,000	15%	\$ 115,243	\$ 135,243	99%				
1996	\$ 137,000	\$ 20,000	15%	\$ 80,570	\$ 100,570	73%				
1997	\$ 388,048	\$ 20,000	5%	\$ 26,110	\$ 46,110	12%				
1998	\$ 455,406	\$ 10,000	2%	\$ 104,645	\$ 114,645	25%				
1999	\$ 476,700	\$ 20,000	4%	\$ 63,100	\$ 83,100	17%				
2000	\$ 490,989	\$ 20,000	4%	\$ 125,060	\$ 145,060	30%				
2001	\$ 532,241	\$ 30,000	6%	\$ 72,690	\$ 102,690	19%				
2002	\$ 536,147	\$ 30,000	6%	\$ 44,405	\$ 74,405	14%				
2003	\$ 740,073	\$ 30,000	4%	\$ 113,978	\$ 143,978	19%				
2004	\$ 759,395	\$ 30,000	4%	\$ 76,750	\$ 106,750	14%				
2005	\$ 769,371	\$ 40,000	5%	\$ 61,680	\$ 101,680	13%				
2006	\$ 784,194	\$ 42,500	5%	\$ 70,340	\$ 112,840	14%				
2007	\$ 973,114	\$ 45,000	5%	\$ 59,900	\$ 104,900	11%				
2008	\$ 998,355	\$ 45,000	5%	\$ 62,783	\$ 107,783	11%				
2009	\$ 1,017,314			\$ 146,374	\$ 146,374	14%				
2010	\$ 1,307,281			\$ 236,545	\$ 236,545	18%				
2011	\$ 1,163,417			\$ 273,510	\$ 273,510	24%				
2012	\$ 1,125,298			\$ 145,478	\$ 145,478	13%	\$ 4,586,751	3%	\$ 14,975,724	0.97%
2013	\$ 993,000	\$ 100,000	10%	\$ 45,972	\$ 145,972	15%	\$ 4,720,751	3%	\$ 15,303,020	0.95%
2014	\$ 1,050,520	\$ 100,000	10%	\$ (3,563)	\$ 96,437	9%	\$ 4,688,603	2%	\$ 16,288,159	0.59%
2015	\$ 1,223,638	\$ 100,000	8%	\$ 7,440	\$ 107,440	9%	\$ 4,662,569	2%	\$ 17,292,052	0.62%
2016	\$ 1,226,996	\$ 100,000	8%	\$ 7,284	\$ 107,284	9%	\$ 5,075,923	2%	\$ 19,351,193	0.55%
TOTAL	\$ 17,760,983	\$ 812,500	6%	\$ 2,043,769	\$ 2,856,269	16%				

(1) Additional Commons Costs are other contributed costs to the Commons, to include Access staffing, supplies, CIP funds, program support, and misc overhead. These costs are net of revenue.

I believe that VPD and VISD have a valuable agreement in the interlocal, but one that in the interests of fairness needs to be amended in important ways.

The Park District's job is to provide park and recreation facilities to all age groups on Vashon Island; the school district's is to provide educational services to school-age children and possibly to adults. Despite the park district's much broader mandate, it has a budget equal to about 5% of the school district. The question is who should bear the burden of activities to children and the public in not-strictly-educational situations such as after-school sports activities? The Park District bears much of this burden and will continue to so regardless of how the interlocal agreement is changed. VES and the pool will remain facilities operated entirely at VPD expense, for example, and serve mostly school age children.

My strong impression is that in most places and most times, the school district has made its facilities available at minimal cost, thereby sharing the burden. I have reviewed practices from the distant past when I was a participant in after-school programs on Vashon Island as a child, the experiences of my children in a wealthy suburb of Washington, D.C., and the programs in places such as Bainbridge Island and Poulsbo. While it is hard to know for sure, my strong impression is that the local park district or its equivalent does not contribute a lump-sum to the school district for these activities even though these activities on school grounds are widespread. My children played soccer through a private organization exclusively on public school playgrounds during their elementary and middle school years in Columbia, Maryland. The idea that park districts and schools in larger communities such as Columbia always operate their own separate facilities is not true or in my experience even generally true. The county government of Columbia rejected a proposal that it build soccer fields for use of the private soccer clubs on county-owned land, leaving the public school fields the only choice, at least at that time. In the case of Poulsbo the North Kitsap School District even provides its indoor pool to the public based on a brochure I read last week. The Poulsbo Parks Department offers programs at this pool.

My impression from talking to Vashon voters is that they are largely unaware that these payments have transpired between VPD and VISD. The reaction when told is outrage that their tax dollars intended for parks are going to the schools. This is easy enough to understand; when the voters approve a school levy, they are voting for schools, when they approve a park levy they think they are voting for parks and not, as they see it, voting for schools a second time. In another instance, a voter used the word "extortion" to explain her understanding of what VISD is doing to VPD. Unfair, perhaps, but that feeling is out there. Finally, at least voter asked "you mean the park district doesn't even get details as to how the money is spent?"

The current arrangement blurs accountability in another way as well. The public appears to believe that the schools currently make available their facilities at no cost to the public. In fact, VISD is providing a benefit to the public in the form of low cost access to its facilities that VISD is not paying for, at least not in full. Conversely, ten percent of the park district budget (the amount of the interlocal payment) leads to no identifiable benefits to the public. In a sense, VPD appears to be wasting the money whether or not the payments make sense or not; appearances matter when we go the voters and ask for money.

What to do? I would hope that the Park District and the School District continue to share these facilities, but in a way that more accurately reflects public perception of what is going on. The Park District should compensate VISD for identifiable costs resulting from damage, for example, but not offer a lump sum with no accounting for how the money is spent. In the case of wear and tear that may or may not result from VPD related activities in school facilities, I would hope that VISD sees the cost as not large enough to make great efforts to document and instead views the expense, if any, as one of the small costs of making facilities available to the public and reaping the reward in the form of public support. VPD's and VISD's facilities need to be made available to the island in an equitable way and in a way that benefits the largest number of members of this community.

Doug Ostrom



To The Attendees of the VPD Special Meeting May 2, 2017,

I regret a previous commitment as a presenter at a Small Business Awards event in Seattle prevents me from attending this very important Park District meeting.

As most of you know, I ran on and was elected on a platform of fiscal responsibility and inclusion of all Park District users. In keeping with these priorities, the Board commissioned an independent community survey to identify what was important to Islanders.

In that regard, I was disappointed to discover that fiscal mismanagement by previous Boards had resulted in the Park District being unable to address hundreds of thousands of dollars in deferred maintenance, while providing the programs and facilities the Island expects.

Since the Commons Agreement \$100,000/year commitment represents the largest single expense for the Park District, it was only natural to review the Agreement that is up for renewal this June.

We researched the subject and could not find a single Park District in the Puget Sound area, nor even on the national level, that pays a School District a flat fee for the use of its facilities. Furthermore, in only one occasion since the Commons Agreement was first established was there any correlation between increased facilities available and the increased fees paid by the Park District.

When we presented this information to the School District, its solution to the fact that the cost of the Commons Agreement was substantially higher than the fees we collected from users was to increase users fees by over 200%. While the Park District Board agrees modest fee

increases might be appropriate, it could not support such a draconian approach.

As such, we offered two options to renew the Commons Agreement. The key item in-play is that the School District would establish the fee schedule, with the Park District collecting and forwarding the funds to the School District.

In closing, the Park District is in the process of crafting a long-term Strategic Plan to serve all our users, whether they are program users, dog walkers in our parks or leagues with multiple team that use the fields and gym facilities. Unfortunately, we have very limited resources, so we are unable to address everyone's needs. I trust you understand and will work with us to create a better Park District for all.

April 25, 2017

TO: VISD SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD MEMBERS  
FROM: VPD BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RE: THE INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE VASHON ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE VASHON PARK DISTRICT

Colleagues,

Since our last meeting, the Vashon Park District commissioners have continued to research facility-use arrangements between park and recreation districts and school districts nationwide. We remain unable to find a single interlocal agreement in which park districts pay school districts a fixed fee for the community to use its own school district athletic facilities.

Between 1983 and about 2004 the park district was able to provide financial assistance to the Vashon schools in its facility improvement programs. Since 1994 fixed fees have been paid by the park district to the school district for the use of these facilities by the community. More recently the park district's facility inventory has increased while levy funds have not. As a result, the park district is no longer able to contribute to either the school district's capital improvement projects or to the school district's facilities maintenance programs.

Our goal has been and continues to be to find ways to partner with the schools to best serve the needs and desires of the community. With this in mind, after considerable discussion, the Vashon Park District Board of Commissioners respectfully presents to the Vashon Island School District the following options.

OPTION 1:

The **Payment** clause of the current Interlocal Agreement is deleted, as is the last sentence of the **Maintenance of Facilities** clause. This change has the effect of eliminating the \$100,000 payment from VPD to VISD. All other terms of the current agreement remain the same. VPD will continue scheduling use of the facilities and will control access to these facilities as well; or

OPTION 2:

The last sentence of the **Maintenance of Facilities** clause is deleted. The **Payment** clause of the current Interlocal Agreement is deleted and the following language is inserted in its place: "The Vashon Island School District will assign user fees to be charged by the Vashon Park District to community users of school-district-owned facilities. The Vashon Park District will publish these new user fees to the community. The Vashon Park District will collect these fees and will deliver the funds collected to the

school district in full.” The **Access** clause will be deleted and the following language will be inserted in its place: “VISD will control the keys to its facilities and will unlock and lock them for scheduled users.” In the clauses **Use of Facilities** and **Scheduling**, “park district” will be replaced with “community”. VPD will continue to schedule the public’s use of the VISD facilities without charge. In addition, VISD and VPD will continue to maintain their own facilities. All other terms of the Agreement will remain the same.

As a result of these changes VISD will be paid the fees that they feel are appropriate for the use of their facilities by the community, and VPD, through scheduling facility use and through collecting and transferring these fees to VISD, will be providing access to the community’s recreational facilities, which is consistent with its core mission and values.

We believe that both options provide the opportunity for VPD and VISD to demonstrate our commitment to work as partners to serve the community.

We would appreciate knowing which option you prefer at your earliest convenience.

Kind regards,

Karen M Gardner, PhD  
Chair, VPD Board of Commissioners

VPD Board Commissioners  
Bob McMahon  
Lu-Ann Branch  
Doug Ostrom  
Scott Harvey

### **ADDENDUM: VISD OPTION 3**

Eliminate the VPD payment to VISD. VISD to take over all Commons scheduling to include VES, Agren, and Sunrise Ridge. VISD to set the fee schedule and collect and keep all revenue.

The benefits to saving the \$100k are obvious, but there are some examples that specifically pertain to you.

The Commissioners feel it gets us closer to our reserves goals.

- 1) The Permanent Reserve will help manage cash flow and keep us from renewing the TAN line of credit, which the state auditors have been highly critical of; and
- 2) The Capital Reserve will address capital project needs, whether for outright maintenance, stand-alone capital projects, or match funds for grants.

We are currently working on our long term Strategic Plan, for the next 3 – 6 years, guided by the results of the Community Survey which serves as the foundation for the planning process, as it verifies community-stated priorities for District projects going forward. Obviously, the Commissioners can't do everything at once, but there are a number of needs as they relate to the sport group users that the Commissioners KNOW we need to plan for. For example:

1) Agren Park –

1. adding drainage, leveling the fields, and regrading the road and parking lot. Only ranked with a 48% approval on the survey, but we KNOW that addressing these items speaks to safety concerns and increased usability of the park, especially in the rainy season.
2. Putting in a permanent restroom in this and all parks – received a 76% approval rating so has surfaced to the District as a high priority item.
3. Installing an outfield fence – not a high priority, but a pretty low price tag at @ \$25k – an excellent consideration for a grant with only 50% matching funds.

2) VES –

1. Currently securing an additional water right – only received a 51% approval rating, but we're doing it anyway. We have to per Dept of Ecology requirements.
2. Discussing putting in a permanent restroom – this, too, we have to do, per King County permitting requirements.
3. We know that installing permanent outdoor lights is a high priority to the sport groups – pricey at \$530,000 and only receiving a 42% approval rating, but I watch for grants all the time that might apply. We need to plan for making this happen.

These are amongst just a few examples of where an additional \$100k per year will meet many community needs. It goes without saying that the Commissioners, on the behalf of the community, would prefer addressing these needs sooner rather than later.

TO: Vashon Park Board

From: David Hackett

Vashon Island Soccer Club

Date: May 2, 2017

***The Vashon Commons: Pooling Resources on An Island***

Since the late 1980s, the Vashon School District (“VISD”) and the Vashon Park District (“VPD”) have entered a series of Interlocal Agreements for joint school and community use of properties owned by both districts. Known as the “Vashon Commons,” these Interlocal Agreements have encouraged investment of tax funds, grant dollars, and volunteer efforts on the school campus for both school and community use. For example, the Mariner Baseball Field and McMurray lights were constructed with substantial park district grants. Park user groups have committed both volunteer hours and money to improve school facilities like the theatre and gyms. In passing school bonds, the use of school facilities for community groups through the commons has been explicit, including efforts by VISD to plan facilities that are consistent with larger community needs.

Because of this cooperative venture, school children enjoy the use of higher quality facilities during the day. Those same school children, along with the larger Vashon community, also have a place to play sports, exercise, meet, and attend cultural events in the evenings. Through the Commons agreement, Vashon gets the maximum benefit from our scarce public dollars by building and maintaining quality facilities that are available to the schools during the day and open to the larger community (including school children) during non-school hours. At its core, the Vashon Commons is about bringing our community together for shared solutions and pooled resources that benefit both school and community programs. Both districts are to be applauded for working beyond artificial jurisdiction lines to embrace the commons agreement and inter-district cooperation.

***Reimbursement of VISD for Incremental Costs of Commons Use***

The primary mission of VISD is to educate our school children. As part of this mission, VISD incurs certain *fixed* costs to maintain classrooms, other meeting spaces, gyms, fields and performance spaces. We provide tax dollars, through our school levy, to satisfy these basic maintenance and operational needs.

Community use, however, results in the need for additional maintenance and operational costs associated with community use of the school properties. The enhanced costs that result from community use of the school facilities, known as incremental costs, are not the responsibility of

the school district. Over the long life of the commons, both boards have readily agreed that these incremental costs are the responsibility of the park district, which is the islands park and recreational district.

The Executive Director of the Park District has estimated that the incremental costs of community use to the school facilities are \$110,000, which is in line with the current \$100,000 commons payment that VPD makes to VISD each year. In addition, VPD covers operational costs of the commons by providing a scheduler and access staff. A portion of the commons expenses are recouped through user fees, which are expected to be \$20,000 for 2017. For the Vashon Island Soccer Club, user fees of \$16 are paid by each participant in the fall season. The total cost to VPD of the Commons is expected to be \$109,705 for 2017.

### ***A Nickel for the Commons***

The commons is easily the most used VPD facility. Per recent figures, the Commons accounted for over 280,000 person-hours of use. The major commons user is youth sports, but the commons also regularly host other events. The usage hours do not include the countless grandparents, friends, etc. who show up to watch games. Nor does it include off island groups that come to the island for commons events and buy lunch, shop, etc. on Vashon.

In 2009, the VPD Board recognized that the overwhelming success of the commons for park users required a steady funding source to meet incremental costs. The traditional levy rate for VPD was \$.45 per thousand. To fund the commons, the levy rate was raised an additional 5 cents to \$.50 per thousand. The nickel for the commons was not intended to displace funding out of the \$.45 levy, but to provide *additional* funds. The VPD levy, including the additional nickel for the commons, was passed overwhelmingly in the Fall 2009 levy election.

When the VPD levy was renewed in 2015, the extra nickel for the commons was maintained by the current board. Voters were asked to once again pass the higher \$.50 rate. The commons was featured in the voters' pamphlet and other campaigning in support of the levy. Once again voters passed the levy, with significant support from youth sports and other commons users.

The 2017 levy funds for the district are expected to be \$1,252,792. A nickel for the commons amounts to \$125,279.20, which is more than the amount that VPD has budgeted.

## TRANSFORMING THE PARK DISTRICT: A Sustainable Model for Serving the Public

By Commissioner David Hackett

The Vashon Park District (VPD) was formed by islanders over 20 years ago in order to *locally* operate and maintain public recreational facilities. Over time, VPD's mission and expenses have expanded beyond facilities management to include a substantial programmatic element, with the district operating sports leagues, providing classes, and hosting large public events. The number of VPD employees expanded significantly in order to provide direct program services and to support the larger VPD bureaucracy necessary to support extensive program operations.

The reality is that VPD no longer has the tax base to offer extensive program services. The district's primary mission – to provide quality public facilities that are well-maintained – is suffering due to the split focus on facilities and programs. Fortunately, many of the programs that VPD has nurtured over the years have fully matured and are largely self-sufficient. The wealth of talent and energy on Vashon is sufficient to ensure that valued programs will continue to operate even without VPD's management of the program *as long as our available public facilities are sufficient to support operation of the program.*

This proposal is designed to address VPD's budget problems by re-embracing VPD's primary role as a Public Facilities Maintenance and Operations district. By off-loading most of our current program operations and the expenses associated with those programs, including significant employee costs, we can refocus our efforts on operating and maintaining the quality public facilities that are necessary for Vashon's recreational pursuits. In addition to parks, natural spaces, athletic fields, and gyms, the money that we save by re-focusing on facility maintenance and operations should allow VPD to continue operating the Vashon Public Pool, the skate park, and the Kayak Center.

**The Problem:** The Vashon Park District (VPD) has undergone a substantial period of declining revenues and increasing expenses. Absent substantial cuts in expenditures, VPD is anticipating a negative fund balance of about \$88,000 at the end of 2012 despite deferring some substantial payments into January 2013. With 2013 tax revenues expected to decline by another 11.88% and VPD's various reserve accounts largely depleted, the need for the district to reduce its expenditures is both acute and long-term. A few highlights:

- As a result of lower assessed values for Vashon properties, tax revenues have declined sharply since 2010. The 2009 assessed value of the island was \$2,806,791,475. For 2013, the assessed value is \$1,985,020,809, which represents a decrease in assessed values of 29%, or \$821,770,660, since 2009. Unlike other taxing districts, the VPD tax base falls at the same rate as assessed value. If assessed values rebound, however, VPD is permitted only



to increase its tax revenues by 1% over the previous year absent passage of a new levy.

- In 2009, before property values crashed, the park district passed a higher levy rate (\$.50 per thousand) *in preparation* for increased expenses attributable to assuming operation of the Vashon Public Pool, the Vashon Commons, and reconstruction of the VES Athletic Fields. If property values had remained stable, as they had during every year of VPD's existence, the district would have collected an additional \$430,944 through 2012 with additional amounts over the life of the levy.
- The district has been slow to react to bring its increasing expenses in line with decreasing revenues. In a tight budget environment, it has become apparent that VPD's accounting procedures are inadequate to track expenditures and provide accurate information regarding the performance of district cost centers like the pool, the VES field project, the commons, administration costs, etc. Importantly, the district's financial systems substantially lag behind the "real time" financial posture of the district. The result is that decision-makers have based financial expenditures and planning on inaccurate numbers that were often many months out of date.
- The district's expenses have exceeded available revenues in several important areas, including the pool and the VES field project. During this period of decreasing revenue, VPD also expanded its staffing while facing increased costs for benefits and wages. VPD has employed as many as 14 FTE employees plus temporary staff. Employee costs have constituted an ever increasing portion of the VPD budget.

**THE SOLUTION.** The park district has tried to be "all things to all people." In a period of declining tax revenue, this approach is no longer feasible. VPD needs to re-focus its mission both to suit its tax base and to provide the most public benefit for each tax dollar spent. I proposed re-instituting VPD as a Facilities Maintenance and Operation District, where we are focused on providing quality natural spaces, parks, arts spaces and athletic facilities for our users with only a minimal programing component. Below is an outline of staffing and responsibilities under this model.

- **Facility Maintenance and Access.** Under the proposed model, the primary mission of VPD would be to maintain our existing facilities and make those facilities available for public use. In accord with current practices, a user group would schedule time for a space with VPD and enjoy the use of a quality public space to put on the user group's program. Individuals would be free to enjoy our parks using well-maintained trails and open spaces.
  - We would focus our efforts and resources on maintenance of our existing parks and facilities. Although we would carry a number of full time maintenance staff, I would suggest that we make extensive

use of temporary and seasonal workers based on demand. We should also explore contracting for services where they can be provided outside the district in a more cost effective manner. **Anticipated Staffing: 1 FTE Maintenance Supervisor, 2 FTE Maintenance Worker IIs (including one proficient in grounds keeping).**

- Our equal focus would be on customer service in providing and scheduling access to our facilities. Front office staff would maintain the scheduling and oversee access operations. Where possible, we would continue the use of trained volunteers to allow access for various groups at appropriate activities. **Anticipated Access Staff: 3 non-benefited part time staff as needed.**
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- **Front Office Administration.** The front office administrative staff would consist of a working Executive Director and an Office Assistant. The duties of the Executive Director would be to oversee all district employees, ensure compliance with district policy, process district expenditures, process district expenditures, maintain our website, attend to the fiscal health of the district and interface with the public. The Office Assistant employee would assist the Executive Director in these tasks and be primarily responsible for scheduling access to facilities, including the vacation rental houses. Because VPD would no longer be registering persons for classes, etc., we would have less need for a public counter and might operate a counter on a limited schedule consistent with available staffing. **Anticipated Staffing: 1 FTE Executive Director, 1 FTE Office Assistant.**
  - **Limited Programs.** Under the proposed model, the district would offer few programs and would no longer provide administrative support for existing programs.
    - Many of our "Vashon Park District Programs" run completely independent of the district, including the soccer club, etc. Other program providers like VIJB, Baseball, Swimming and Rowing are mature organizations with the capacity to run independently of the park district. Still, other major user groups, like Drama Dock, Vashon Opera, the Vashon Rowers, the Horse Association, etc. have always run independent of the park district. All user groups have a need for quality facilities to operate their programs, but there are alternatives to the current administrative support that some organizations receive from VPD at substantial expense to the district.
    - I would also propose we stop being a purveyor of classes and exercise programs. The administrative overhead far outstrips the revenue that these programs provide to the district. Other island organizations, including VYFS, VAA, the Vashon Athletic Club, already offer classes similar to those sponsored by VPD. To the extent that an

instructor wishes to remain independent, the instructor could rent space from VPD and operate his/her own program.

- I would end some of the miscellaneous things that we do like renting out sound equipment, tents, etc. The limited revenue does not justify the staff time.
  - I would limit our programming to the provision of large events open to the general public in close conjunction with our partner organizations. For example, I would continue the popular Low Tide and Kite Festivals, as well as the Concerts in the Park. A part time Program Coordinator, working in conjunction with the Executive Director and Office Assistant could facilitate these events and assist in other administrative duties. **Anticipated Staff: ½ FTE Program Coordinator.**
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- **Special Facilities.** We have certain special use facilities that require seasonal staffing for operations. The VPD Board has determined to run some of these facilities, like the pool, with a tax subsidy. Other facilities, like the Skate Park and Kayak Center, are required to cover their operating costs. Expenses associated with the facilities would need to be tracked better than the current VPD accounting systems allow. A primary driver of this proposal to re-focus VPD toward facilities operation and maintenance is to ensure that we have the revenues to continue operation of our special facilities.
    - **The Skate Park and Kayak Center.** These facilities would continue to operate on a cost neutral basis. The Skate Park and Kayak Center would be expected to cover all operation costs and costs associated with equipment replacement. **Anticipated Staffing: Part-time non-benefited staff supported by facility revenues.**
    - **The Pool.** The pool would continue to operate within the budget established by the VPD Board. **Anticipated Staffing: Seasonal Pool Manager and Lifeguards consistent with budget and revenues.**
    - **Rental Houses.** VPD would continue to operate the rental properties with front office staff and contracted cleaning services. The rental houses would be expected to cover costs and generate a profit for park improvements.