

Vashon Park District
Maintenance and Operations Levy
PROPOSITION 1 – NOVEMBER 5, 2019



- **NEW LOWER LEVY RATE: 45 cents** per \$1,000 of assessed property value –
 - \$18.75 per month for a property assessed at \$500,000
 - 3% of a property tax bill.
- The new levy is not in addition to the existing levy – it is a renewal. Levy votes are required every 4-6 years.
- The current levy, which expires at the end of 2019, was approved by voters at 50 cents.
- The levy we voted on in April asked for 52 cents - 54% of voters approved - 60% was required.
- The November levy is required to fund the Park District from 2020 – 2023 – there are no other alternatives.

Questions Answered

How fiscally stable is the Vashon Park District?

In 2013, the Washington State Accountability Audit found that the "District's financial condition puts it at risk of not being able to meet financial obligations and maintain current service levels." At that time, VPD's percent of debt to revenue was 37.3%. **Today, VPD is debt-free. The most recent audit in December, 2018 stated, "District operations complied with applicable state laws, regulations, and its own policies, and provided adequate controls over the safeguarding of public resources."**

Does the Vashon Park District have millions in the bank?

No. VPD's policy is to maintain a reserve of \$400,000 at the end of the year to manage cash flow. Prior to establishing this reserve, VPD utilized a line of credit, which cost taxpayers in interest payments and was highly frowned upon by the Washington State Auditor's Office. The District's reserve policy also serves as an emergency fund. All other funds go towards programming, operations and maintenance.

Is there room for both the newly proposed Hospital District and the Park District?

A Hospital District and Park District can co-exist under the present allowances. A Hospital District is higher in the "pecking order," so it is possible that the rate they choose could lower the Park District's levy rate and funding. Voters do not approve a Hospital District's levy rate -- the Hospital District's Board does, but the decision would be subject to public input.

Is the new levy for luxury items and costly projects?

No. The levy is for maintenance and operations, as well as an increase in recreational programming, which is in response to the 2016 Community Survey.

If the Park District levy fails, will King County or the Vashon Island Land Trust take over?

No. If VPD were to dissolve, the District can name a successor taxing district, but the County has stated it is not safe to assume they would accept it. When King County transferred properties to VPD in 1995, the properties came with a covenant that requires VPD to operate the facilities as parks or open spaces in perpetuity, but the covenant does not state they would revert back to the County. In addition, the Vashon Island Land Trust is not a taxing district.

Are Park District Employees Paid a Living Wage?

Between 2018 – 2019, employees cumulatively received a 19.5% wage increase in response to challenges in maintaining and recruiting staff due to uncompetitive wages (27.3% below industry) and cost of living. Moving forward there are no planned increases other than cost of living. VPD wages are still 10% lower than the average for park districts in the Puget Sound region. As a point of comparison, in September 2019, the maintenance staff at the Vashon Island School District will receive an 18% wage increase to be distributed over the next 3 years. In 2018, VPD wages were 11.6% below like positions at the Vashon Island School District; in 2019 wages are generally comparable.

Is it true that facilities such as the skate park and community swimming pool can be funded with private money rather than the Park District?

While VPD is very grateful for the generous fundraising efforts of those user groups, we cannot rely on private funds to operate and maintain those facilities.

Can grants pay for the Park District’s capital improvement needs?

While VPD has successfully obtained grants for capital improvement projects, grants do not cover everything. Grants are highly competitive and usually require matching funds, which comes from levy dollars. Capital projects often require permits and architect/engineering services -- costs that are not covered by grants. Grants are not available for maintenance-related needs such as structural repairs and equipment purchases.

Is there anything in it for me? I don’t use the parks.

Do you attend after-hour meetings at the School District? VPD staff provides after-hour access to the School District facilities. Do you attend Drama Dock theater productions? Drama Dock rehearses in VPD facilities. Do you live next to and enjoy undeveloped open space around you? VPD owns 530 acres of property on Vashon – 48 properties, of which 30 are undeveloped. Visitors to Vashon parks, lodging facilities, and athletic events provide income to island businesses. VPD sponsors the Food Bank’s Picnics in the Park, Strawberry Festival, and numerous Vashon community events. VPD owns the Concerts in the Park series. The Farmer’s Market is held at the Village Green – a VPD park. You may not use the parks and facilities, but it is quite likely your life is touched by the presence of the Vashon Park District.