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TO: Barbara Levin Bergman, Chair  
Ways & Means Committee

THROUGH: Robert E. Guenzel  
County Administrator

FROM: Robert L. Tetens, Director  
Parks and Recreation

DATE: July 2, 2008

SUBJECT: Parks Millage Renewal – November 4, 2008

### **BOARD ACTION REQUESTED**

To authorize the Washtenaw County Clerk to place on the November 4, 2008 ballot the question to renew the Parks & Recreation Millage that expires after December 31, 2009 for an additional ten (10) years, beginning with the levy to be made on December 1, 2010, for the purpose of “acquiring, developing and maintaining parklands and operating recreation facilities for the benefit of Washtenaw County citizens. “

### **BACKGROUND**

The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission (WCPARC) was established by the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners on August 1, 1973. The WCPARC, which held its first meeting later that month, was initially supported with \$60,000 from the County's' General Fund budget. The Commission prepared its first five-year parks and recreation plan in 1975, outlining a strategy for developing a countywide system of parks and programs to meet the recreational needs of County residents. Since that time, the plan has been periodically updated to accommodate the growing population, land use development patterns and evolving recreational trends.

In early 1976 the Board of Commissioners authorized a ballot initiative to fund that first WCPARC plan with a 10-year, 0.25 mill levy. The initial 0.25 mill levy for operations was approved on November 2, 1976. It has subsequently been renewed on November 6, 1984; November 8, 1994; and November 2, 2004.

Opinion surveys conducted in the early 1980's noted strong support for the fledgling parks system, and an equally strong interest in the provision of additional active recreational opportunities and facilities. In short, the residents of Washtenaw County wanted a larger, more dynamic system with a broader range of recreational offerings. In November of 1988, the voters of Washtenaw County approved a second 0.25 mill to support the continued growth of the parks system. That ballot proposal was renewed in 1998, and is the subject of this current Board Action Request.

Examples of major projects made possible by this enhanced public support are evident throughout the parks system, including: the construction of the Meri Lou Murray Recreation Center, and two subsequent remodeling projects; the development of the Pierce Lake Golf Course and Park, and two subsequent expansion projects (food service, paved cart paths, improved irrigation, expanded clubhouse, etc.); construction of the Rolling Hill Water Park, including the initial development and two subsequent expansion projects (concession building, lazy river, spray zone, etc.); and the acquisition and restoration of the historic Sharon Mills site.

At Independence Lake Park, a new Beach Center with food service, a meeting room and modern bathrooms was added, and a spray zone and a paved trail/boardwalk network were constructed; new playgrounds, additional picnic pavilions, an expanded disc golf course, a remodeled Lodge building and new fishing piers were recent additions to Rolling Hills County Park; the acquisition of Staebler Farm for future recreational activities; the development of the Swift Run Dog Park; and the implementation of the county-wide non-motorized trail initiative were all made possible by this public support.

Beyond high profile facility development, this public support has enabled the parks system to grow from approximately 1,100 acres of parklands and preserves to a total in excess of 3,200 acres – all available for public use and enjoyment. For example, Rolling Hills County Park more than doubled its size to 363 acres; Independence Lake County Park grew an additional 83 acres; and 119 acres were added to Sharon Mills County Park.

## **DISCUSSION**

The approval of this request to place the renewal of the 0.25 mill levy on the ballot, and a favorable vote in November will generate approximately \$3.6 million per year, or about a third of the revenue needed to continue the “acquisition, development, maintenance and operation of parklands and recreational facilities”.

Specifically, the renewal will support:

- the uninterrupted operation and continued growth of the County Parks and Recreation system;
- the continued development of a countywide, multi-use non-motorized trail network, including the broadly supported and much anticipated Border-to-Border trail;
- the continued collaboration on the development of trails and facilities with other recreational providers and local units of government – ensuring the most efficient use of public resources and delivery of service;

- the expansion of our environmental and cultural education programs, with an increased emphasis on an environmental / historical interpretive sign initiative;
- the continued expansion of recreational programming – specifically targeting families and youth;
- the planning and development of new community recreation centers to serve the growing populations in the east and west portions of the County;
- the initiation of development of the acreage recently added to Rolling Hills County Park. The new, larger Rolling Hills will offer an expanded water park, family & group picnic pavilions, ball fields, soccer fields, a fully accessible “Miracle Field”, and dog park – along with improvements to the existing paved and unpaved trail networks and an additional 18 holes for the disc golf course;
- the initiation of planning and subsequent development of the acreage recently added to Independence Lake County Park. The new, larger park will offer a broader, more diverse range of recreational opportunities;
- the development of active recreational facilities, where appropriate, such as playgrounds, ball fields, soccer fields, picnic areas, dog parks, skate park and biking - including mountain biking;
- the initiation of development of a “farm-themed” park at Staebler Farm, ensuring the preservation of the historic farmstead and structures;
- the acquisition of the additional land necessary to meet the current and projected needs of Washtenaw County residents for active and passive recreational pursuits, particularly in underserved areas of the County;

### **IMPACT ON HUMAN RESOURCES**

The approval of this request and a favorable vote in November will provide continued support for the staff necessary to operate, maintain and expand existing parks and facilities; to develop parks in underserved areas of the County; and to provide the variety of programs offered by the WCPARC.

### **IMPACT ON BUDGET**

None.

### **IMPACT ON INDIRECT COSTS**

None.

### **IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS OR OUTSIDE AGENCIES**

The approval of this request will have no impact on any other county department or outside agency. The approval, however, will allow voters the opportunity to influence the quality of life in Washtenaw County by supporting the mission of the WCPARC in providing a wide range of recreational opportunities for the public and protecting important natural areas throughout Washtenaw County.

**CONFORMITY TO COUNTY POLICIES**

This request is in conformance with all County policies.

**ATTACHMENTS/APPENDICES**

A draft resolution seeking authorization from the Board of Commissioners to place the renewal of the 10-year, 0.25 mill levy for operations of the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission on the November 4, 2008 ballot.

A RESOLUTION SUBMITTING TO THE WASHTENAW COUNTY ELECTORS A QUESTION OF WHETHER THE QUARTER MILL PRESENTLY IN EFFECT FOR PARKS AND RECREATION PURPOSES SHOULD BE RENEWED FOR TEN YEARS, BEGINNING 2010 AND TERMINATING 2019, AND CERTIFYING THE BALLOT QUESTION FOR SAID PROPOSITION

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

July 2, 2008

WHEREAS, pursuant to Act No. 261 of the Michigan Public Acts of 1965 as amended, this Board of Commissioners by resolution no. 73-0390 on August 1, 1973 established the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission; and

WHEREAS, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners on April 6, 1988 approved the submission to the voters of a one-quarter mill for ten years, for parks and recreation purposes including acquisition, development, maintenance and operation of park lands and recreational facilities for the benefit of Washtenaw County residents; and

WHEREAS, the voters on November 8, 1988 approved said millage; and

WHEREAS, the voters on November 10, 1998 renewed said millage; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Commission has been successful in using said millage for the purpose of acquisition, development, maintenance and operation of park lands and recreational facilities; and

WHEREAS, said millage expires December 31, 2009; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Commission has requested that the question of renewing the one-quarter mill for a ten (10) year period, beginning 2010 and terminating 2019, for the acquisition, development, maintenance and operation of park lands and recreational facilities be submitted to the voters of the County of Washtenaw; and

WHEREAS, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners deems it advisable that this question be placed on the ballot at the General Election to be held on November 4, 2008; and

WHEREAS, this matter has been reviewed by Corporation Counsel, Bond Counsel, Finance, the County Administrators Office and the Ways and Means Committee

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners of the County of Washtenaw, State of Michigan, as follows:

1. There shall be submitted to the electors of the County of Washtenaw at the General Election to be held on the fourth (4th) day of November, 2008, from 7:00 o'clock a.m. to 8:00 o'clock p.m. prevailing time, the following proposition:

“ to renew the millage expiring after December 31, 2009, shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be imposed each year for all purposes on real and tangible personal property in Washtenaw County be increased as provided in Section 6 Article IX of the constitution of the State of Michigan and the Board of Commissioners of the

County be authorized to levy a tax not to exceed one quarter of one mill, reduced by the Headlee Amendment to 0.2367 (\$0.2367 per \$1,000.00 of State equalized valuation), on the taxable value of such property for a period of ten years beginning with the levy made on December 1, 2010 (which will generate estimated revenues of \$3.6 million in the first year) for the purpose of acquiring, developing, operating and maintaining park lands and recreational facilities for County citizens?"

2. The election shall be held in accordance with Chapter XXVII, the General Election Laws of the State of Michigan.
3. The Washtenaw County Clerk is hereby instructed to carry out all appropriate statutory duties as set forth in this resolution and the General Election laws of the State of Michigan so that the question of adoption may be submitted to the voters on November 4, 2008; and
4. The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby certifies to the county Clerk the following question as to the appropriate ballot wording for the November 4, 2008, General Election for the aforesaid proposition:

**PROPOSITION TO RENEW THE INCREASE IN THE TAX LIMITATION FOR COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION PURPOSES INCLUDING ACQUISITION, DEVELOPMENT, MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION OF PARK LANDS AND RECREATION FACILITIES FOR THE BENEFIT OF WASHTENAW COUNTY CITIZENS**

" to renew the millage expiring after December 31, 2009, shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be imposed each year for all purposes on real and tangible personal property in Washtenaw County be increased as provided in Section 6 Article IX of the constitution of the State of Michigan and the Board of Commissioners of the County be authorized to levy a tax not to exceed one quarter of one mill, reduced by the Headlee Amendment to 0.2367 (\$0.2367 per \$1,000.00 of State equalized valuation), on the taxable value of such property for a period of ten years beginning with the levy made on December 1, 2010 (which will generate estimated revenues of \$3.6 million in the first year) for the purpose of acquiring, developing, operating and maintaining park lands and recreational facilities for County citizens?"

YES

NO

Each city and township clerk shall give appropriate notice to the submission of the aforesaid proposition as provided by law which notice shall contain the statement of the Washtenaw County Treasurer as to previously voted tax limitation increases affecting property within Washtenaw County.