

CITIZENS LEAGUE REPORT

No. 76

**Recommendation for 1-mill increase in  
Minneapolis Park District levy**

**May 1957**

Resolution as drafted by  
Messrs Windhorst, Minda and Black

In view of the present needs of the park system, the Board of Directors of the Citizens League by a vote of 7 to 4 voted to recommend a yes vote on the Park Board's one-mill referendum. In making this recommendation, the Board deploras the continued sole reliance on the property tax as the almost single source of support for local governmental functions and urges that continued efforts be made to obtain other sources of local tax revenue to meet other needs and partially to relieve the burden of the property taxpayers.

Citizens League  
601 Syndicate Building  
Minneapolis 2, Minn.  
5/24/57 - h

REPORT ON JUNE 11 PARK BOARD ONE MILL REFERENDUM  
by the  
PARK SECTION OF THE CITIZENS LEAGUE OF MINNEAPOLIS AND HENNEPIN COUNTY  
May 1957

Background

The 1957 legislature authorized the Minneapolis Park Board to submit to the voters the question:

Shall the tax levy limit for park, recreation and playground purposes be increased to six mills?

The Park Board voted on May 1 to submit the question on June 11, 1957. a 53% favorable vote of all those voting is required to pass the referendum.

The Park Board's taxing power was limited to 3.38 mills up until 1952 when the legislature increased it to five mills with continuance of the five requiring voter approval. 78% of the voters favored continuation of the five mill limitation. The Citizens League supported the referendum in September 1952.

The five mills will produce \$1,840,560 for park and playground purposes in 1957. In addition, the Park Board collects about \$295,000 in other income from other taxes and miscellaneous revenue, for a total estimated available funds of \$2,136,200.

There is uncertainty as to whether the passage of the referendum will give the Park Board merely one mill or one mill plus the homestead adjustment on the six mills for a possible tax of 6.7 mills. If it is one mill and the Park Board levies it all for 1958, it will add \$385,000 to the Park Board's income. If it is a 1.7 increase and the Park Board levies it all, it will add \$654,500 to the Park Board's income. Indications are that only one mill would be added for 1958.

The Park Board's budget for 1957 shows these allocations:

Sports and Recreation	\$ 631,100	29.5%
General Accounts	553,400	25.9
Maintenance and Special Repairs	799,700	37.5
Horticulture and Floriculture	139,200	6.5
Other	12,800	.6
	\$2,136,200	100 %

Source: Budget Estimate - 1957 - Board of Park Commissioners

How New Money Will Be Used

No commitments have been made by the Park Board as to how the additional moneys will be used, but the Park Staff has indicated that its recommendation for the use of \$375,000 from one mill will be about as follows:

1. Restore and maintain standard of service carried on in 1956. \$200,000  
While there is approximately the same amount of money available in 1957 as 1956, salary adjustments granted and contemplated amount to about \$100,000. Private industry has entered into a labor contract for 1958 and 1959 on the same basis as 1957 and as the wage adjustments for city labor have been predicated on those contracts, it is anticipated that it will cost another \$100,000 for wage adjustments in 1958.

1.	(Brought forward)		\$200,000
2.	Water in the chain of lakes: Repayment to City Council.	\$50,000	
	Pumping from Bassett's Creek.	<u>10,000</u>	60,000
3.	Balance for increased program, standards of maintenance and rehabilitation.		<u>115,000</u>

\$375,000

Tentative distribution of this \$115,000 is as follows:

	<u>Priority Needs</u>	<u>Included in Proposal</u>
1. Winter sports activities. Additional warminghouses, additional hockey rinks, lengthen season, improve sliding hills, improve Logan speed track, improve ski area at Minnehaha, additional service - small rinks.	\$ 88,000	\$ 18,000
2. Recreation promotion and supervision. Community centers, neighborhood centers, summer playgrounds, after-school programs, grade school programs, hockey rink supervision, athletic clinics, city-wide specialists and clerical.	92,300	22,000
3. Park police.	35,800	17,400
4. Life guard and bath house service.	4,800	4,800
5. Administration. Clerical and new administration office furniture.	18,500	5,000
6. General maintenance of properties. Assignment of parkkeepers to various parks, additional personnel for miscellaneous crews on mowing, cleanup, spraying and emergency maintenance. Trucking and materials and supplies for above.	58,000	24,800
7. Special repairs and rehabilitation. Restoration and improvement of grounds; installation and repair of recreational facilities; repair of shores and walls on lakes and creeks, walks and curbs, roads, buildings and bridges, drains and water lines, park facilities -- such as picnic tables, settees, fireplace grates, etc.	100,000	20,000
8. Park forestry and gardens. Trimming and clearing large park areas, re-planting in parks such as Isles and Calhoun, enlargement of special garden areas.	20,000	3,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	\$417,400	\$115,000

Based on conclusions reached in its previous studies\* and its appraisal of the current situation, the committee gives these arguments in favor of the referendum:

1. Park Board has had no increase in its millage limitation since 1952, despite increasing population, use of the parks and costs.
2. Park Board is falling behind on its maintenance work again because of increased costs and more property to maintain.
3. Delay adds materially to the cost of rehabilitation and maintenance.
4. Salary increases already granted have forced cuts in services and such cuts will continue unless the referendum passes.
5. The Park Board may levy less than the maximum and it should have some leeway in meeting its needs.
6. No other source of money is presently available.
7. Increase in the number of teenage children in Minneapolis over five years ago necessitates an expanded recreation program. There are nearly 4,000 more students in grades seven through 12 than there were in 1952.
8. Increase in the number and percentage of senior citizens and shortening of the work week add to the needs for park and recreation program.
9. If referendum is adopted, Park Section will follow through to see that it is well spent.
10. Expansion of recreation program as well as extension of it is needed.
11. Additional funds may permit employment of a staff member to work full time with volunteer neighborhood groups.
12. There are too many unsupervised parks.
13. There is too much use of part time, seasonal help.
14. Many recreation areas are unlighted and buildings are closed much of the time.
15. Swimming and skating seasons are too short.
16. More professional full time supervisors are needed.

- \*No. 1. Report on increase in Park Board millage. September 1952.  
 No. 18 Report on operations of the Minneapolis park system -- 1951 vs. 1953 and 1954. November 1953.  
 No. 24 Report on Minneapolis Park Board policies on acquisition, retention and disposition of real estate. August 1954.  
 No. 28 Minneapolis Park Board budget and budgeting. September 1954.  
 No. 37 Survey of park facilities. February 1955.  
 No. 47 Survey of park facilities; second report. October 1955.  
 No. 50 Report on long range capital improvement program for the Minneapolis park system. December 1955.

- 17. There is less expense for maintenance repair and replacement where there is full time supervision.
- 18. Local groups are expressing desire for neighborhood recreation programs and their willingness to assist in same.
- 19. New joint school-park facilities being built by special assessments require additional funds for programming.
- 20. Parkways are being heavily used as thoroughfares, thereby increasing maintenance and policing loads.
- 21. An ounce of Park Board expenditures for recreation now is one of the means of avoiding compulsory expenditure of pounds for mental and penal institutions later.

In summary, the committee concludes that the Park Board does not have the funds to discharge its legal responsibility to provide an adequate recreation program in a well-maintained park system.

AGAINST

These are the arguments being used against the referendum:

- 1. Property tax is already too high, resulting in business and residents leaving the city for the suburbs and other locations.
- 2. Park Board should cut its program to fit the cloth and not continue a larger park system than it can maintain.
- 3. Park Board has already had a larger percentage increase in its revenues than other city departments since 1940 or 1946.
- 4. Other sources of revenue should be found if Park Board expenditures are to be increased.
- 5. Some portion of needed funds may be obtained from further increases in efficiency and reconsideration of fees charged.

Action by Other Groups

In support:

- Central Council of PTA
- Central Labor Union

Judge Lindsay Arthur is campaign chairman; Florence Lehmann is campaign director

Recommendation

The Park Section urges the League's Board of Directors to support the referendum with the full influence of the League.

Inez Crimmins, Chairman  
Park Section

Citizens League  
601 Syndicate Bldg  
Minneapolis 2, Minn.  
5/21/57 - h