

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Olympia Washington

BilAnalysis

Bill No. HB 2508

Metropolitan park districts

Hrg. Date: 1/21/98

Brief title

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Sponsor

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BACKGROUND:

District Creation and Boundaries

Metropolitan park districts may be created in cities with a population of at least 5,000. A metropolitan park district is authorized to manage parks, parkways and boulevards. One metropolitan park district, the Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma, currently exists in the state.

One election is held to determine whether a park district should be created and to elect a board of park district commissioners, if the district is in fact created. Five separately elected park district commissioners serve six-year staggered terms.

The initial boundaries of a metropolitan park district are the city limits. The park district may later seek to annex adjacent territory.

District Management and Employees

The county treasurer serves as the ex-officio metropolitan park district treasurer without additional compensation. With the approval of the county treasurer, the metropolitan park district board may designate someone other than the county treasurer to act as the district treasurer. The district must obtain a bond if a treasurer other than the county treasurer is designated.

Property Tax Levies

A metropolitan park district may impose two separate regular property tax levies on all property located in the district: (1) a levy not to exceed \$0.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation and (2) a levy not to exceed \$0.25 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. As are other taxing districts, the metropolitan park district levies are subject to the Constitutional 1 percent limitation on property taxes.

Most of the 1 percent limit (i.e. \$9.50 of the \$10 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation) is segregated into two components: the state levy equal to \$3.60 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation and local senior and junior levies so a combined total of \$5.90 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. The metropolitan park district levies fall within the \$5.90 component.

A few other levies may be imposed above the \$9.50 component but within the 1 percent property tax limitation (e.g. emergency medical services).

General tax levies within the \$5.90 component and the remainder component are to be proportionately reduced if the combined rate of regular property tax levies exceeds 1 percent of the true and fair value of the property. A metropolitan park district with a population of at least 50,000 is authorized by statute to submit a ballot proposition seeking voter protection of all or part of the \$0.25 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation levy from proration in the \$5.90 component. RCW 84.52.120. The ballot must be approved by majority vote and can be effective six years following voter approval. Even though protected from proration under this component, this levy is still subject to reduction under the 1 percent limitation.

SUMMARY:

A different organizational structure for a metropolitan park district is provided.

The city legislative body may be designated as the governing body for the metropolitan park district when the creation of the park district is considered by the voters. The park district commissioners are to be selected either by direct election or by designation of the city council or commission members. The boundaries for a metropolitan park district governed by the city legislative body are coterminous with the city limits including any late annexed property.

District Creation and Boundaries

In addition to the other enumerated services metropolitan park districts may provide, metropolitan park districts are authorized to provide zoos, aquariums and other recreational, civic, cultural and interpretive facilities as well as administrative and support facilities.

District Management and Employees

A metropolitan park district is authorized to contract with any public or private entity including the city creating the district for all of its operations and services. The managing organization may appoint the chief executive officer with the park district approval.

Metropolitan park district employees may be included in a city's personnel system and civil service and retirement plans.

In cities with a population greater than 150,000, the city treasurer serves as the ex-officio metropolitan park district treasurer without additional compensation. Any city regardless of population may still designate someone other than the county or city treasurer as the metropolitan park district commissioner.

Property Tax Levies

The levy reduction provisions that keep the combined rate of regular property taxes from exceeding one percent of the true and fair value of any property are altered to insure that a levy imposed by a metropolitan park district in a county with a population of one million may not cause the emergency medical services levy, county conservation levy or low income housing levy to be reduced.

FISCAL NOTE: Not requested.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill passed.