

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2557

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to metropolitan park districts.

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to metropolitan park districts.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Lovick, Sump, Doumit, Buck, O'Brien, Pearson, Rockefeller, Ogden, McDermott, Mitchell, Boldt, Ericksen, Morell, Kenney and Jackley).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 1/30/02 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/12/02, 76-21.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 3/2/02, 26-20.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows metropolitan park districts to be formed by cities, counties, combinations of cities or counties, and combinations of cities and counties.
- Provides additional methods for electing metropolitan park district commissioners.
- Limits boundary review board authority to review metropolitan park district creations or annexations under certain circumstances.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Doumit, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Buck, Eickmeyer, Ericksen, Jackley, McDermott, Orcutt, Pearson and Upthegrove.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background:

Cities with a population of at least 5,000 may create a metropolitan park district to manage, create, control, improve, maintain, and acquire parks, parkways, and boulevards. The proposition to create a metropolitan park district may be submitted to the voters on the motion of the city legislative authority or by the filing of a petition signed by 15 percent of the registered voters in the city. The proposition may be voted upon at a general election or a special election. The district is formed if a majority of voters who vote in the election approve its creation.

Five park commissioners are elected at the same time the voters are deciding whether a metropolitan park district should be formed. Candidates run for specific positions. No primary is held for these positions, the candidate who receives the most votes for that position is elected as a commissioner. After the initial commissioners serve staggered terms, commissioners are elected to six-year terms.

Metropolitan park districts may issue both voter approved and nonvoter approved indebtedness. The combined indebtedness cannot exceed 2.5 percent of the value of the taxable property in the district. Metropolitan park districts may issue general obligation bonds up to a maximum term of 20 years. These districts may also impose a levy not to exceed 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value of the property in the district.

Although this law was enacted in 1907, only one metropolitan park district has been created in the state. The creation, annexation, or dissolution of a metropolitan park district is also subject to potential review by a boundary review board.

The Legislative Task Force on Local Parks and Recreation Maintenance and Operations recommended in its report to the Legislature that the chapter of law governing metropolitan park districts be amended to make it easier for these districts to be formed, including allowing combinations of cities, counties, or cities and counties to form them. The task force also recommended that the governing structure of these districts be amended to provide more flexibility.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A metropolitan park district may include territory located in portions of all of one or more cities or counties, or in one or more cities and counties. A ballot proposition is submitted to the voters either by resolution of the city and county legislative authorities proposing the creation of the district, or by a petition signed by at least 15 percent of the registered voters within the proposed boundaries of the district. The petition must be filed with the county auditor for the county in which the property is located.

The resolution or petition submitting the ballot proposition must designate the composition of the board of commissioners of the metropolitan park district. In addition to the current method for electing commissioners, two additional methods are added for

selecting the board of commissioners. If a district is wholly located within a city or within the unincorporated area of a county, the legislative authority of the city or county may serve as the governing body of the metropolitan park district, so long as the city or county legislative authority approves a resolution designating them to serve in that capacity when the proposition is being made by citizen petition. If the proposed district is located in more than one city, more than one county, or any combination of cities and counties, each of the legislative authorities may be designated to collectively serve as the board of metropolitan park commissioners through the selection of one or more members to serve on the board. Within six months after the election results have been certified, the size and membership of the board must be determined through an interlocal agreement. The interlocal agreement must specify the method for filling vacancies on the board.

If a city with a metropolitan park district annexes territory, a boundary review board may not separately review the annexation of the additional territory into the metropolitan park district independent of the review of the city's annexation of territory. A boundary review board may not review a proposed district if the boundaries of the proposed district are located entirely within one or more cities. In other instances, when a boundary review board exists within a county, notice to create a metropolitan park district must be filed with the board in accordance with its procedures. The special election on the ballot proposition calling for the creation of the district is held at the next special election that is 60 or more days after the date the boundary review board has approved the proposal.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

The Senate amendment requires that the composition of the governing board of the proposed metropolitan park district must be clearly stated on the ballot, specifies that the governing structure of existing metropolitan park districts may not be changed without approval of the voters, specifies that only separately elected metropolitan park commissioners may receive compensation for performing their duties, and amends the proration schedule for property taxes so that metropolitan park district levies are prorated or eliminated before fire districts, libraries, or the first 50 cents of the public hospital levy are affected. The schedule does not change for the existing metropolitan park district.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This is a unanimous recommendation from the Local Parks and Recreation Maintenance and Operations Task Force. Many communities are waiting for

this legislation to pass. This bill helps empower local governments and communities. Youth groups use park and recreational facilities on a daily basis for as many hours as they are open. There is an increased demand for these facilities, but there are more and more permanent and seasonal closures. Conditions of fields and facilities are in need of major repair.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Lovick, prime sponsor; Wes Peterson, city of Aberdeen; Richard Bemm, cities of Longview and Kelso; Vern Veysey, Association of Realtors; Mike Dobb, Washington Recreation and Parks Association; Fred Mendoza; Maya Mendoza; and Earl Dierking, Skagit County Parks, Recreation, and Fairgrounds.