

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 2557

C 88 L 02

Synopsis as Enacted

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).

House Committee on Natural Resources
Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Parks & Shorelines

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 simultaneously when the voters are deciding whether a metropolitan park district should be formed. Candidates run for specific positions. No primary is held for these positions, and 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 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:

A metropolitan park district may include territory located in portions or 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. 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. In either case, the city or county legislative authorities must approve a resolution designating them to serve in that capacity when the proposition is being made by citizen petition. 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 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 a metropolitan park 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.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 76 21
Senate 26 20 (Senate amended)

House 84 10 (House concurred)

Effective: June 13, 2002