
Environment Committee

HB 2667

Brief Description: Concerning administrative processes of the state parks and recreation commission that require a majority vote of the commission.

Sponsors: Representatives Farrell, Holy, Pollet, Shea, Nealey, Walsh, Scott, Kagi, Senn, Johnson and Short.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires at least four of the seven members of the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) to support a proposal in order for the Commission to act on that proposal.
- Extends the maximum length of property leases by the Commission from 50 years to 80 years.

Hearing Date: 1/26/16

Staff: Jacob Lipson (786-7196).

Background:

The State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) manages a system of over 100 parks with a variety of facilities, historic buildings, and recreation programs. The state parks system is administered by a seven-member citizen commission appointed by the Governor, with one commissioner appointed as the Commission chair. The Commission hires a director, who reports to the Commission, and the director then manages day-to-day state parks operations. Commissioners serve six-year terms, with any vacancies to be filled by gubernatorial appointments.

For most committee business, a quorum of four Commission members must be present. Certain items of committee business, such as obtaining or leasing lands for the state parks system, including through condemnation, require a majority vote of the Commission. However,

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unanimous consent of the Commission is required in order for a lease of state parks land for a period of longer than 20 years, and in order to sell or exchange state park land.

Commission leases and concessions must be renegotiated at five-year intervals. Leases are limited to a maximum of 50 years. The Commission may sell or exchange land that it determines cannot be advantageously used for park purposes. When disposing of gifted state parks lands, the Commission may return the lands to the donor; otherwise, state parks lands are auctioned to the highest bidder, if a bid is made that exceeds fair value, or exchanged for lands of equal value.

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) establishes a review process for state and local governments to identify environmental impacts that may result from government decisions. The Commission has adopted rules requiring all Commission actions to be subject to SEPA review. Under SEPA rules adopted by the Commission the Commission provides public notice at certain stages in the SEPA environmental review process, including when a draft environmental impact statement is issued or if an action is determined to not have significant adverse environmental impacts.

Summary of Bill:

In order to conduct Commission business, a quorum of four members must be present, and at least four members must vote in favor of any proposal in order for the proposal to be approved. However, the Commission may adopt rules to specify that more than four members of the Commission are required for proposal approval.

Unanimous Commission consent is no longer required in order to issue leases longer than 20 years or to sell or exchange lands.

The Commission may enter into leases of up to 80 years. The issuance, amendment, or modification of a lease exceeding 20 years must receive a majority vote of the Commission after the lease proposal's SEPA analysis has undergone public review and comment. Lease terms must be reviewed at least every five years, and modified at the Commission's discretion to reflect changed market conditions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.