

DATE: November 18, 2010
TO: The Snohomish County Council
FROM: Kymber Waltmunson
TOPIC: Follow Up of the Park Maintenance Performance Audit

The purpose of this memo is to provide information regarding the current status of Snohomish County Parks in implementing audit recommendations made in the performance audit of the department completed in December 2007.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with Snohomish County on this project.

Summary of Findings

Parks has made remarkable progress implementing audit recommendations since 2007 and has completed a significant amount of work. A new Parks Director, Tom Teigen, came on board as the audit was initially being conducted. Parks subsequently implemented audit recommendations and otherwise enhanced practices in park maintenance. Of the four recommendations made in the audit, each have been fully implemented and can be closed. Details regarding each of the recommendations can be found below.

#	Recommendation	Status
1	Plan/Organize	CLOSED
2	Lead	CLOSED
3	Assess/Enhance	CLOSED
4	Contract Planning	CLOSED

Plan and Organize

Recommendation 1:

Park Maintenance should improve planning and organizing using rigorous processes to:

- set strategic direction and objectives;
- define activities, service types, and corresponding standards;
- collect reliable and accurate data;
- take inventory and assess condition of assets;
- address the maintenance backlog;
- identify resources needed; and
- develop work programs and budgets.

Parks has substantially completed all elements in Recommendation 1. They have developed a strategic plan that guides park maintenance operations. They have developed clear service

types and standards which they have applied across their park amenities to guide the level of maintenance activities for each. Parks staff provided several examples showing that the amount and quality of park maintenance data has improved substantially. They have developed an inventory of Snohomish County park amenities and documented the condition of each as recommended.

Parks has enhanced their work order system. The number of work orders on the backlog has been reduced from 450 items at the time of the audit to 40 total open work orders. This has been achieved as a result of clear definitions of backlog, systematic management, and focus on ensuring that the most important maintenance work was completed.

Parks has shifted their approach to maintenance equipment ownership and report that making strategic investments in equipment have reduced costs overall. Parks has applied a significantly increased rigor to planning and budgeting that allows them to invest reduced budget dollars much more strategically.

Lead

Recommendation 2:

Park Maintenance should build on its strengths in leadership to develop and implement systematic approaches to:

- skills gap analysis;
- communications up and down the organization;
- seeking out promising practices;
- prioritization of work orders;
- work assignment and deployment;
- supervision and feedback;
- accountability for completion, timeliness, and quality; and
- protection of assets.

Parks has fully implemented Recommendation 2. They utilize skills gap analysis in work assignment and deployment as well as in seasonal and permanent hiring decisions. A restructuring of the park maintenance group has addressed some elements of this recommendation including communications, supervision, and some aspects of accountability in the work group. Parks reports that performance evaluations are conducted annually, touching on staff goals and roles within the organization to ensure that the strategic plan and initiatives are operationalized.

The Maintenance Supervisor holds a leadership role in the park maintenance section of the Washington Recreation and Park Association, increasing the sharing of promising park maintenance practices across the industry and providing specific benefit to Parks.

Work orders have been prioritized based on the strategic plan, service level assignments, and risk. The park maintenance staff are assigned work and deployed guided by the work order system. Parks reports that they have realized efficiencies in team approaches and varied work schedules and deployment patterns.

Park maintenance staff have focused effort on the inventory and protection of park assets since the audit. They report that an inventory management system including item descriptions, durable markings, secure storage, and regular inventory audits has been put in place.

Assess and Enhance

Recommendation 3:

Park Maintenance should assess and enhance their program by implementing:

- section-level performance measures;
- park inspections;
- data-based decision-making; and
- outcome reporting.

Parks has implemented all elements of Recommendation 3. Park maintenance management and park ranger management collaborate to inspect a sample of parks every two weeks and report that there are systems for responding to problems identified during inspections. The results of these inspections are reported publicly on the SnoStat system. Park maintenance has identified a set of section-level performance measures that flow from their park maintenance strategic plan.

Parks provided several examples showing how they effectively utilize data to make decisions. They also have systems in place to report parks outcomes that can be further leveraged as performance measurement becomes routine.

Contract Planning

Recommendation 4:

The Parks Department should:

- plan sufficiently before they enter into contracts; and
- carefully review contract components with the prosecuting attorney's office to ensure that the best contract for each situation is drafted.

Parks' improved contract planning processes have increased their ability to secure effective, cost-effective contracts for park maintenance services. They have implemented processes to assess potential contractors' maintenance service capacity, they understand maintenance costs at a granular level so can fully estimate the costs of various approaches to providing or contracting for maintenance, and they understand the costs to administer contracts.

Parks' recent contracts are significantly improved over those reviewed during the audit and they report working closely with the prosecuting attorney's office. Contracts are currently more thorough, complete, and appropriate.