



**Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District Special Work Session Meeting
Tuesday, October 3, 2023, at 6:00 pm
Hood River Fire Station Community Room**

In Attendance:

Board: Anna Cavaleri, Mike Howard, Christy Christopher, Nan Noteboom, Martha Oretaga-Verdusco

Staff: Mark Hickok, Marcie Wily, Kelsey Barnes

Consultants: Bob Keefer (SDAO), Miranda Everitt (FM3 Research),

Hood River City Council: Grant Polson, Mark Zannmiller, Mayor Paul Blackburn, Tim Counihan (on zoom) Dustin Nelsen (Staff)

Hood River County Commissioners: Arthur Babitz, Jennifer Euwer, Jeff Hecksel, (Staff/Zoom)_

Port of Hood River Board of Directors: Tor Bieker, Heather Gehring (Zoom) Kristi Chapman (Zoom) Kevin Greenwood (Staff)

Hood River Schools Board of Directors: Chrissy Reitz, Bill Newton

Public: Aaron Baumhackl (Owner of Solstice Pizza), Matt Swihart (Owner of Double Mountain Brewery)

Regular District Board Meeting

Call Regular Meeting to Order

President Noteboom called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

1. Welcome from HRVPRD Board

- a. Noteboom opened the meeting by stating that HRVPRD is planning to put a financial ask on the May 2024 ballot. She reminded everyone that no decisions would be made at the meeting, and that HRVPRD just wants to get support and feedback from the other agencies in Hood River County. All the elected officials in the room proceeded to introduce themselves.

2. Brief History of Parks Management in Hood River Valley

- a. Hickok gave a brief history of parks management in Hood River Valley. In 1988 The Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District was formed to save the aquatic center. Currently the district manages eight parks, six miles of trail, the community aquatics center, and multiple recreation programs. Aside from those parks there are numerous agencies that manage different parks throughout the county. Hickok explained the multi-jurisdictional master plan that was passed in October of 2020 by all five agencies in Hood River. It was designed so that all the different agencies owning and managing parks in the Hood River Valley could come together as a partnership with the goal of enhancing parks and recreation in the valley. Since the plan was adopted HRVPRD has been working to implement the goals, acquiring 34 1/2 acres of parkland and partnering with the school district to take over "Community Education" (Recreation Programming). As HRVPRD has expanded services and parks in the district, its tax rate has stayed the same. He showed tax rates for other parks and recreation districts within the state of Oregon, and Hood River Valley comes in as one of the lowest tax rates in the state at \$.34 cents/\$1000. The current level of service for the district is not sustainable, and HRVPRD will need more funding to expand services associated with the operation of a new aquatic and recreation center and the development and operation of the newly attained

parklands.

3. Overview of Parks Funding Options

- a. Keefer gave a breakdown of exactly what the parks and recreation district needs to do to get more funding. The overall capital development need is \$47.8 million. He goes over the different options at hand and gives the pros and cons to each.
 - i. Option A: Capital Bond and Operation Levy. This option would require the passage of a 5-year local option levy at a rate of \$.41/\$1000, in addition to a 25-year capital bond at a tax rate of \$.86/\$1000. Combined this would be a total tax increase of about \$1.27/\$1000 and would cost the average Hood River homeowner \$23/month or \$280/year. This option is more understood by voters and would make funding streams consistent and available. The downside to this option is that it would not provide any funds to the other agencies that own parks in the area, and it would also need to be renewed every 5 years.
 - ii. Option B is a reduced Capital Bond and a 5% prepared food and beverage tax. Based on current analysis from the county, this option could generate \$3million annually. It is projected that this would cost the average Hood River homeowner less than \$90 annually. Examining other cities that have done this, the PFBT would put most of the tax burden onto tourists, and only about 25% would be covered by local citizens. This option generates most of the funds which will be able to be divided between the different agencies for park operations. This option is dependent upon the approval of the Hood River County Board of Commissioners and voters within the county. Although this option would generate the most funding the capital development and land acquisition would be limited to annual appropriation of an estimated \$900,000/annually, which means some projects may be delayed until enough funds are available to complete the projects. HRVPRD does not have authority to propose this type of tax and would need to develop a process for the collection of these funds. Also, this type of tax may be strongly opposed by the food and beverage service industries.

4. Parks and Recreation Funding Survey

- a. Everitt from FM3 Research spoke on the survey results of 294 Hood River Valley residents. The goal of this survey was to hear the concerns of the community and their willingness to support different funding options for the district.
 - i. Highlights of the Survey:
 - HRVPRD is the most favored government agency within the county.
 - Nearly 2/3 say there is at least some need for additional funding of parks and recreation.
 - More than 4/5 approve of the Parks and Recreation District's current performance.
 - Around 3/5 use the aquatics center and visit Hood River Valley parks monthly.
 - 62% of voters support or somewhat support a ballot measure to raise additional funding to maintain/improve parks and recreation facilities.
 - More than 3/5 are willing to pay \$20/month to invest in parks and recreation facilities.
 - Most voters seem to favor Option 1: Capital Bond and Operation Levy vs the PFBT.

5. Facilitated Discussion of Interest, Ideas, & Next Steps

- a. Bob Keefer opened the floor to questions and comments from the other agencies in attendance. He asked the other agencies for their opinion on the presented proposals. He stated that HRVPRD understands that both proposed options are a generous ask to the community, but it is extremely necessary and vital to the District's long term planning of building a new pool. Noteboom noted that there has been an entire year's worth of outreach done to come up with the proposed estimate for the construction of a new aquatic facility, and the Parks & Rec District is being transparent with the current funding needs. The majority of officials agreed that there needs to be better collaboration of all the agencies in order to provide better services and amenities to the community. Many stated that Option A, the Capital Bond and Levy would be understood by the public. Some feared that a PFBT may create a divide in the community, and that it would be opposed by most of the food and beverage industry. The idea was suggested that there could be an Option C, which would place an extremely small sales tax on all goods and services in all industries. Agency leaders stressed how much work it will be to garner support, no matter what type of funding mechanism was put on the ballot, so to be prepared to work hard. It was also suggested that HRVPRD take a look at the numbers proposed to determine if there was anything that could be refined.

6. Comments From Food and Beverage Industry

- a. Matt, owner of Double Mountain Brewery said he is not in favor of the PFBT and thinks that it would hurt the smaller restaurants. He stated that HRVPRD has a need and stated his support for the District.
- b. Aaron Baumhackl, owner of Solstice Pizza said he is opposed of a PFBT but thinks the Parks & Recreation District is important and wants to be involved and help find a different solution.

Noteboom adjourned the meeting at 8:03pm.



Approved



Attest

11-15-23

Date

11-15-2023

Date