

City Council Budget Testimony
Department of Parks and Recreation
April 17, 2012

Good morning, Council President Clarke and members of Council. I am Michael DiBerardinis, Deputy Mayor and Commissioner of the Department of Parks and Recreation for the City of Philadelphia. With me are Susan Slawson, First Deputy Commissioner for Recreation and Programs, and Mark Focht, First Deputy Commissioner for Parks and Facilities. It's a pleasure being here today.

I would like to thank the Commission on Parks and Recreation, many of whom are here with us today, for their continued support, work, and leadership. Much appreciation should also be directed towards our dedicated and committed department staff. Our Parks and Recreation staff continues to provide great work in the form of high-quality programming and care of our natural assets and hundreds of facilities. Just last month, the international travel guide/website Frommer's named the Fairmount Park system one of the ten best public parks system in the world.

I appear before you today to present our proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2013 which includes a general fund obligation of \$47,781,231 and grants revenue of \$9,330,082 and New Program and Facility Fund of \$688,000. The Class 100 request of \$36,239,900 sustains the merged department's authorized level of 609 general fund/full-time positions, \$5,776,525 is proposed for Class 200, \$2,293,806 in Class 300/400 and \$3,471,000 in Class 500.

Our proposed general fund Operating Budget for FY13 represents an increase of slightly over 4% from the FY12 estimated obligations. This increase is not new funding, it is due to a transfer of existing funds for tree maintenance from the Managing Director's Office as well as an accounting change bringing certain permit fee revenues into the general fund and adding equal appropriations to Parks and Recreation's budget. Our proposed FY13 Operation Budget also reflects an additional fund for concession revenue as authorized by City Council Bill # 110425.

The dedicated men and woman serving in the Department of Parks and Recreation represent various backgrounds and diversities. We will continue to foster opportunities for staff throughout the department through recruiting, trainings, and career development. Currently the breakdown of staffing for the department is 24% female, 76% male, 39% African American/black, 2% Latino, and 58% Caucasian/white. The Parks and Recreation's Executive Staff is 53% women, 46% men, 33% African American/black, and 66% Caucasian/white. The Department of Parks and Recreation is committed to supporting the Administration's goal of minority, woman, and disabled-owned business participation in City contracting. Based on the available contracting opportunities, the Department of Parks and Recreation FY13 participation goal as established with OEO is 25% and we are pleased to report that our current participation is 26.79% for the 2nd quarter.

With its hundreds of recreation facilities and over 10,000 acres of park land woven throughout the City of Philadelphia, the Department of Parks and Recreation is deeply connected to citizens and communities serving pre-school aged to senior citizens in each and every neighborhood in our city. Well over 5.7 million visits for programmed activities occurred at department facilities or parks over the course of last year.

Even as we advance the work of our merger, we have continued focusing on our day-to-day responsibilities. This includes maintaining parks and recreation facilities which are safe, clean, attractive, fully functional and accessible while caring for the environment and promoting programs for all Philadelphians.

Working together with numerous partners, the Department of Parks and Recreation continues to build collaborations across sectors, advance efficiencies, and leverage resources to help ensure our children are successful, promote equitability and sustainability in all neighborhoods, while fostering a deep connection with citizens and communities. This work clearly shows the increased value of the Department of Parks and Recreation for our citizens.

Over the past three years, the Mayor's "Splash and Summer Fund," with the support of numerous community and business partners raised approximately \$1.7 million to help keep all operational pools open during the summer. In addition to providing outdoor recreation for children, youth, teens, and families, the Department also employed approximately 800 seasonal staff during the last summer's pool season. There were well over 1 million visits to our pools last summer and 2,744 swim lessons provided, representing a 53% increase. Our FY13 proposed Operating Budget restores funding for our pools and all operational pools will be open this summer season.

The Department has partnered internally and externally to make significant investments in department facilities, such as City ice rinks and athletic fields. At each City ice rink the Department's lead partner is the Ed Snyder Youth Hockey Foundation who made a four-year capital and programmatic commitment to each City ice rink facility. The Department has committed to adding an additional full-day of public and community skating at all City ice rinks. This past season, 84,256 people utilized our City ice rinks representing an increase in public skating of over 54,000 people compared to the previous season. The Department of Parks and Recreation has also partnered with the Philadelphia Phillies and Major League Baseball to create the Philadelphia Urban Youth Academy, which will start programming the summer of 2012. This partnership will utilize renovated fields and facilities at both Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) Park and Marian Anderson Recreation Center to help inner-city youth reach their fullest potential on and off the field by providing quality instruction and training and educational assistance through a variety of year-round programs.

The Department of Parks and Recreation continues to support a wide variety of programming and initiatives, including outdoor recreational activities, for children, youth, teens, and families. This year, for the first-time, the department hosted three youth triathlons and duathlons. These events were held in different sections of Fairmount Park and include swimming, biking,

and running. Also kicking off this summer, the department will launch a new multi-dimensional seven week program for teens. The Summer Outdoor Adventure Club will engage youth around various forms of outdoor recreation activities. The club will also have sessions on career and personal development and participate in community service projects. Club speakers will discuss careers in outdoor recreation, entrepreneurship, financial management, and personal responsibility.

Through 2012, the Department of Parks and Recreation, in collaboration with the Philadelphia Water Department, will partner with the national non-profit The Trust for Public Land to undertake a greening pilot initiative, informed by the department's Green2015 planning effort, at selected parks and recreation facilities in neighborhoods across the City lacking green space. In addition, as part of the School District's facilities master plan, schoolyards will also be considered and will be linked programmatically and through green streets to nearby parks and recreation facilities. With this pilot, parks and recreation facilities and schoolyards which are heavily underutilized and/or paved will receive high-impact greening treatments to transform them into viable public green spaces while helping to treat neighborhood stormwater run-off.

The Wallace Foundation is helping the department, in coordination with the Deputy Mayor for Health and Opportunity, build an "out of school time" system. Their support will build a coordinated information system to unite existing DHS systems, create common outcome measures, and provide high quality and up-to-date information to families, providers, and other stakeholders about the system as a whole. With such a system in place, Parks and Recreation will work to increase the amount of programs on the ground and improve their quality while working in collaboration with public and non-profit providers and community leadership.

To support the Mayor's tree planting target outlined in the Greenworks plan, the Department of Parks and Recreation recently launched a neighborhood-based tree campaign called TreePhilly to engage citizens, businesses, and communities in tree plantings around the city. A yard tree giveaway, funded by Wells Fargo, will provide 4,000 free yard trees this spring and fall tree planting seasons to Philadelphia property owners. Due to overwhelming public support, I am proud to say that we have surpassed our spring goals and look forward to another yard tree giveaway this fall. The department is also planting more trees on public spaces such as Recreation Centers and neighborhood parks to help make them more inviting and viable public green spaces.

The state budget presents another potential fiscal challenge. Based on a preliminary review of Governor Corbett's budget FY12 - FY13, the Human Services Development Fund (HSDF) has been moved into a single block grant with a variety of other human service programs, with funding proposed to be cut 20% overall. The department traditionally received state HSDF funding to support a variety of programming for young children, teens, and families in our neighborhoods of most need. This unfortunately marks the second year of such uncertainty with regards to needed state funding.

In closing, we have made tremendous gains to date but the work is not over. Each of these examples demonstrate how the Department of Parks and Recreation continues to build collaborations, connect citizens and communities, leverages resources, and engages internal and external partners, our staff, and City Council to deliver a high-quality product each and every day.

Should any Councilmember wish to engage in further discussion on any of these matters, my staff and I are happy to meet with Council members at their convenience. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss these important matters with you today and I look forward to your questions.