



**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

**Item 3
October 6, 2022
Regular Business**

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION

TITLE:	Park Improvement, Gift Acceptance and Donor Recognition Policy (Draft)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Provide input and consensus on policy elements.	

STAFF:	Eleanor Knight- Recreation Coordinator
COUNCIL LIAISON:	Craig Reynolds
EXHIBITS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (Current) Park Improvement, Gift Acceptance and Donor Recognition Policy 2. (Draft) Park Improvement, Gift Acceptance and Donor Recognition Policy

SUMMARY

The City’s *Strategy for the Mercer Island Community and Event Center and Recreation Programs and Services* (also known as the Reset Strategy) calls for updating existing or developing new policies to ensure that Parks and Recreation Department actions are consistent with the Reset Strategy.

The purpose of this staff report is to introduce the current *Park Improvement, Gift Acceptance and Donor Recognition Policy* (Exhibit 1) and a revised version (Exhibit 2), which builds on the foundation of the current policy by clarifying language and purpose, while removing procedural elements. A revised *Park Improvement, Gift Acceptance and Donor Recognition Policy* will provide guidance, criteria, and clarity for the solicitation and acceptance of donations, recognitions, and memorials in Mercer Island parks and facilities. Tonight, staff will seek consensus from the Parks and Recreation Commission on elements for a revised policy.

Background

The City of Mercer Island Parks and Recreation Department has traditionally welcomed and encouraged support from private individuals and entities to support the programs and services the Department provides to the public. Examples of recent and significant contributions from the community have included park item donations (such as benches and works of art), batting cages at South Mercer Playfields and Island Crest Park, synthetic turf projects at Island Crest Park, the original and newly opened Mercerdale Playground and Luther Burbank Playground, as well as countless donations to various programs and special events including Summer Celebration and Illuminate MI.

Currently the Department has a *Park Improvement, Gift Acceptance and Donor Recognition Policy*, however the current version is out of date, includes intermixed and dated procedures, and has been inconsistently implemented with the boards, community, and staff.

During the establishment of the Reset Strategy, the revision of a number of policies was identified as a priority. A revision to the *Park Improvement, Gift Acceptance and Donor Recognition Policy* is a priority for the

Department, as the recent year has seen numerous requests to donate park assets and projects for community and individual benefit. A revision to this policy will establish criteria and guidelines for receiving proposals, gifts, donor recognition projects and other items that modify park property and appearances. This criterion will assist donors and staff alike in the review of proposals and requests.

Discussion

Tonight, staff requests input on policy elements from the Parks and Recreation Commission as staff seeks to update the policy. The draft and current policies have been provided for comparison. Some key suggested elements contained within the draft revised policy include:

1. The City encourages gifts and donations which enhance our park spaces.
2. Prohibits memorial donations in the parks and clarifies how and where donors may be recognized.
3. Informs that no contingencies may be required by a donor other than for a specific activity or programing area.
4. To limit improvements to items that complement the designated location.
5. To limit donor recognitions or improvements which alter the character of a space or detract from the characteristics of our parks.
6. Removal of procedural elements from the policy.
7. Updating language to meet the standards of the Department and to be inclusive of Staff and Commission roles.

To assist in discussion, please consider the following questions:

1. Should the Department accept donations- including monetary, project based, artistic, and/or equipment?
2. Are there donations, gifts, or projects that should be more strongly clarified for rejection within the policy?
3. Do you agree that memorials should be prohibited in parks?
4. Do you agree that corporate donors who have a corporate sponsorship requirement should fall under a separate policy?
5. Does the Commission agree with the policy elements?

Next Steps

1. Staff will consider Commission input tonight and refine an updated draft policy.
2. Staff will present a revised policy at the November 3 meeting for Commission review and endorsement.
3. Once endorsed, Staff will begin development on procedures to accompany the policy.
4. Staff will implement the policy and communicate opportunities for donations and gifts.
5. Staff anticipates developing (in collaboration with the Commission) additional supporting policies such as:
 - a. Facility Dedications and Naming Rights
 - b. Corporate Sponsorships and Recognition

RECOMMENDATION

Provide input and consensus on policy elements.