

The Friends of Marymoor Park  
C/O King County Parks  
Luther Burbank Park  
2040 84<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE  
Mercer Island, Washington 98040

November 15, 2002

Mr. Ron Sims  
King County Executive  
King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue, Room 400  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Executive Sims:

The Friends of Marymoor Park (FOMP) appreciates the opportunity to participate in shaping the future of Marymoor park, and would like to thank you for asking us to participate in the "Marymoor Vision" presentation on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. As stated at the press conference, the FOMP generally supports the direction of the Marymoor Vision, especially with regard to maintaining the park's character.

In the months before the October announcement, FOMP discussed in varying degrees of detail the components of the vision. The proposals were presented to FOMP by Parks staff and discussed by the FOMP membership. Additional discussions occurred after the Marymoor Vision was announced at the October 23<sup>rd</sup> presentation.

Below is provided a summary of our thoughts and concerns with respect to the various components of the vision. During the budget deliberations, FOMP requests consideration of the items presented below. Consistent with our statement at the press conference, our primary consideration is maintaining the park's character.

### **Commercial Operations in the Park**

The golf driving range, and to a lesser extent the proposed new sports complex and the concert facility, represent leasing park property for commercial use. Regular park users are displaced by the commercial operations. FOMP believes this establishes a troubling precedent. It is inconsistent with the intent of the park to displace the users for commercial operations.

It is understood that these operations will generate revenue to support the park operations. However, there does not appear to be a plan that provides guidelines or establishes limits on the amount and type of commercial operations that may be considered and eventually allowed. FOMP is concerned that success with the currently proposed operations could stimulate additional commercial operations in the park. A potential worst case involves much of the park leased for commercial operations. At this point the park is no longer a park, but just another piece of commercial real estate.

### **Displacement of Park Users**

There are two primary issues under this topic. First, expansion of the space under the lease agreement for the Clise Mansion, and the resulting displacement of the Museum, is troubling. Again, it is understood that this agreement is intended to increase revenue generated by the park. The museum, however, is a fixture at the park, and considered by many to be one of the unique characteristics of the park. The fact that the museum does

not pay rent is apparently the ultimate reason for displacement of the museum. This again sets a troubling precedent. It suggests that regardless of the benefit to the park and the users from a particular entity or use, and regardless of the contribution to the park from the entity or use, the entity or use can be summarily displaced if a rent-paying opportunity is presented. FOMP believes this is inconsistent with the intent of the park. We encourage exploring options that would allow the museum to remain in the park.

Second, the addition of the various commercial activities is expected to increase the number of visitors to the park. Yet additional parking is not provided for the commercial activities. Parking is problematic at the park today, particularly on busy weekends. The golf driving range and the sports complex alone will seriously tax the parking capacity within the park. The result is that other users of the park are effectively displaced because of a real or perceived lack of access to the park.

Currently, excess parking capacity is realized by parking cars on the grass. Typically this is in open, flat, grassy areas that would be otherwise used for drop-in sports or casual play. Using these areas for parking results in damage to the grass areas and precludes using these areas for casual recreation. The result once again is that users of the park are displaced. While this is acceptable on a short-term basis, FOMP is concerned that the parking requirements associated with the proposed commercial activities will become a long-term issue.

### **Casual Park Use**

Marymoor has been used to generate revenue for several years, and each year the Parks staff have been pressured to increase the amount of revenue. During this time, park users have expressed concerns to FOMP about the increasing restrictions on casual park use.

When large events occur at the park there is a perceived and often real limit on access to the park. Individuals and groups who want to picnic, play Frisbee, etc. are often limited in their ability to enter the park, find a place to park, and find space in the park for their activity.

FOMP has asked Parks staff to stagger the scheduling of large events. The intent is to provide "open" weekends between the events during the summer season. While Parks staff has certainly acknowledged the importance of scheduling in this manner, and have attempted to schedule accordingly, pressure to increase the revenue generated by the park has forced the Parks staff to schedule events on consecutive weekends. This was particularly apparent during this past summer, when large events were scheduled each weekend in August, effectively limiting access to those who were not attending the events.

FOMP is concerned that the proposed components of the vision will continue and possibly exacerbate this issue. While the individual components would probably not occupy the majority of the available activity and parking space, collectively these components may have the same affect. The resulting scenario has a family of King County residents arriving at the park, unable to find space for their activity or a place to park, and leaving. FOMP believes this scenario is inconsistent with the intent of Marymoor Park.

A related impact to casual users is the availability of space for "pick-up" sports. With the available fields either scheduled to capacity or closed for maintenance and rehabilitation, groups of individuals needing a field for a "pick-up" game of soccer, softball, etc. are effectively precluded from using space at Marymoor. Since the proposed sports complex

will require fees for use, and will presumably be scheduled for maximum utilization, the new facility does not alleviate the problem. As a solution, FOMP proposes that other fields at the park, either existing or new, be provided and maintained solely for open use. In our opinion, having space available for drop-in users is consistent with the intent of the park.

### Closing

FOMP understands the financial difficulties that face King County in general and the Parks Division in particular. As discussed above, the issue has directly affected Marymoor Park for several years, well before the financial challenges facing the County were public information.

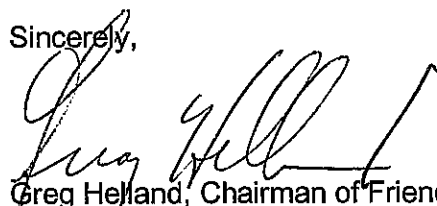
FOMP is dedicated to continuing to work with the Parks staff to address the financial difficulties. A balance between revenue generation and the park's character and use can be realized.

We are concerned, however, that the single-minded emphasis on generating revenue is inconsistent with the intent of Marymoor Park. The Marymoor Vision, while reasonable given the fiscal realities, may set precedent that does not serve the users of the park and the citizens of King County. Casual use of the park and long-time users of the park have already been displaced, and the components of the vision suggest that this trend will continue.

There is support within FOMP for revenue generation to address the financial challenges facing King County. However, there is concern over impacts to the park's character from the extent and flavor of commercialization within the Marymoor Vision. Revenue generation needs to be conducted within the framework of guidelines which will protect the park from being consumed by the process. We are concerned because these guidelines do not appear to have been formulated.

We ask for consideration of our comments during the budget deliberations.

Sincerely,



Greg Helland, Chairman of Friends of Marymoor Park

[www.sch.org/fomp](http://www.sch.org/fomp)

cc: Kathy Lambert, King County Council  
Carolyn Edmonds, King County Council  
Bob Burns, King County Parks Division  
Bobbi Wallace, King County Parks Division