

TO: James L. App, City Manager
FROM: Joseph M. Deakin, Public Works Director
SUBJECT: Barney Schwartz Park & Public Works General Fund Budget
DATE: October 7, 2003

NEEDS: For the City Council to receive and file a report on parks maintenance costs.

FACTS:

1. At a recent City Council meeting the Barney Schwartz Park budget was discussed. The City Council voiced concern regarding the high annual maintenance cost (\$500,000).
2. The FY03 budget for all parks, including Barney Schwartz Park, was \$1,178,600. The total parks year-end expenditures were \$1,141,500 for a net surplus in all the parks of \$37,100.
3. The FY03 Barney Schwartz Park annual budget, alone, was \$340,000 and the year-end expenditures were \$515,600 for a net shortfall of \$175,600. This shortfall was supplemented by savings in the other parks maintenance budgets (total budget all other parks – \$838,600, expenses - \$625,900) to arrive at an overall balance of \$37,100 in all parks.

**ANALYSIS
AND**

CONCLUSION: In order to most effectively serve the park maintenance needs of the City and make best use of allocated resources the budget is expended using a priority system.

Barney Schwartz Park is currently the highest priority park largely because it hosts over 40 sports tournaments per year, all of the City's softball leagues, multiple soccer leagues and special events. It is by far the City's largest and most heavily used sports venue. Because sport turf maintenance is much more labor intensive than passive turf, Barney Schwartz Park is more expensive to maintain than other parks. Approximately 44% of the total park maintenance budgets were expended to maintain Barney Schwartz Park (i.e., \$515,600 out of \$1,178,600). However, using the priority system alone did not enable staff to balance the budget. Service reductions, such as less-than scheduled mowings, in other parks were necessary to keep the collective budgets balanced.

Many innovative plans have been developed and initiated to save money while maintaining a high standard of care in the City's parks. Some of those new ideas include:

- The "Free-Flo" device to deal with soil compaction problems Result: a labor and chemical free method of fighting soil compaction at Barney Schwartz Park.
- The "Fertigation System" to apply fertilizers. Result: Fertilizer is applied in the irrigation water in constant small amounts resulting in uniform growth of the turf and a substantial savings in labor costs formerly used to apply granular fertilizers.
- Flexible work schedules and volunteer labor (Barney Schwartz Park VTF, community service workers & CYA). Result: Better control of overtime and effective crew sizing for peak/off- peak staffing needs.

The second component of keeping the budget balance was, and continues to be, reprioritization of maintenance frequencies at city parks. Generally the parks are prioritized as follows:

1. Barney Schwartz Park
2. Other active sports venues (Robbins Field, Pioneer, Sherwood)
3. Downtown parks and landscape areas
4. Neighborhood Parks
5. Parkways, medians and parking lots
6. Wildland areas/trails

With the present level of funding, priority areas 1 thru 3 receive the most attention. Priority areas 4 thru 6 are a constant challenge to maintain, particularly with the current fiscal constraints. For example all areas use a routine maintenance schedule but schedule delays and interruptions frequently defer services to lower priority areas to attend to the needs of the top priority areas.

In summary, the needs of the parks are being met with the existing budget by redistributing resources from the lower priority areas and using them at the higher priority areas. To bring all parks up to the maintenance level of Barney Schwartz Park will take more resources, however, Public Works staff will continue to seek out ways to increase the City's maintenance standard while keeping costs to a minimum.

POLICY

REFERENCE: Adopted budget for FY03

FISCAL

IMPACT: N/A

OPTIONS:

- a. Receive and File
- b. Amend, modify or reject options above.