Proposed Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board 2022 tax levy to serve youth in crisis and build safer communities

At its July 21 meeting, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) Commissioners voted unanimously to support a tax levy increase request to the Board of Estimate and Taxation (BET) of 7.75 percent to maintain current park service levels and invest $2.638 million in youth in Minneapolis. If passed, the levy increase for the MPRB will result in a 1.4 percent increase in city property taxes overall, which amounts to an approximate $21 annual increase in property taxes - less than $2 per month - for owners of a median priced home.

“Improving public safety in Minneapolis starts with investing in young people,” explained Jono Cowgill, MPRB President. “In many parts of our city, our youth are in crisis. We need to support our most vulnerable young people, and the parks best suited to provide those community-based supports. We need to provide safe spaces and activities for them, provide meaningful jobs and mentors, and build stronger and safer communities.”

The additional $2.6 million investment in youth will be used for several key initiatives, including:

- hiring dedicated professionals to develop programs and engage young people including youth ages 17-22 who have low-level offenses on their records
- building Creation Spaces to allow young people to experience the kind of self-expression, learning and exposure to careers and industry professionals to fully understand the business and careers behind the art, technology, music, science, and innovation
- expanding hiring for the Teen Teamworks program and green jobs to develop a diverse group of community leaders through deliberate offerings that provide career exploration and pathways to full-time employment
- enhancing intergenerational and nature-based community programs.

“We have a responsibility to invest in, and serve, young people in ways that make a substantial difference today and for generations to come. We have the places and solutions to enrich the lives of Minneapolis youth, particularly our at-risk youth,” said Al Bangoura, Superintendent for the MPRB.

Currently, of every dollar homeowner’s pay for property taxes, 7.5 cents go to the MPRB.

In response to the financial challenges facing the city, the MPRB’s 2021 adopted budget was set at the same level as 2020, effectively a 0% increase to MPRB operations. The MPRB proposed and received a 1.18% property tax increase for its 2021 budget. That increase was for operations of The Commons and the final year of an eight-year plan to address emerald ash borer. Funds to operate The Commons had been transferred to the MPRB by the City of Minneapolis in 2020 but that transfer ceased in 2021, making the 1.18% property tax increase effectively a 0% increase to MPRB operations in 2021.

As required by State Law, the BET sets the maximum tax levy for the City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Municipal Building Commission and the Public Housing Authority on an annual basis. The BET is scheduled to set these maximum property tax levies on Sept. 29, 2021.

If approved by the BET, the Superintendent will present a balanced 2022 recommended based on a 7.75 percent property levy increase on Oct. 20, 2021. The Board will consider the Superintendent’s budget and adopt the 2022 tax levy and 2022 budget on Dec. 8, 2021.