

Local Government Committee

BILL ANALYSIS ESSB 5268

TITLE OF THE BILL: Modifying provisions concerning metropolitan park districts.

WHAT THIS BILL DOES: *Creates an alternative organizational structure for metropolitan park districts and changes numerous park district management provisions.*

SPONSORS: Senate State and Local Government Committee (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, Long, Jacobsen, Hale, Gardner, Rossi, Thibaudeau, Prentice, Kline, Deccio, Costa, Patterson and B. Sheldon).

HEARING DATE: Thursday, April 1, 1999

FISCAL NOTE: Not requested.

ANALYSIS PREPARED BY: Caroleen Dineen (786-7156)

BACKGROUND:

A metropolitan park district is authorized to manage parks, parkways and boulevards. One metropolitan park district, the Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma, currently exists in the state.

District Creation and Boundaries

Metropolitan park districts may be created in cities with a population of at least 5,000. One election is held to determine whether a park district should be created and to elect a board of park district commissioners if the district is in fact created. Five separately elected park district commissioners serve six-year staggered terms.

The initial boundaries of a metropolitan park district are the city limits. The park district may later seek to annex adjacent territory.

District Management and Employees

The county treasurer serves as the ex-officio metropolitan park district treasurer without additional compensation. With the approval of the county treasurer, the metropolitan park district board may designate someone other than the county treasurer to act as the district treasurer. The district must obtain a bond if a treasurer other than the county treasurer is designated.

Property Tax Levies

A metropolitan park district may impose two separate regular property tax levies on all property located in the district: (1) a levy not to exceed 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation; and (2) a levy not to exceed 25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. As are other taxing district levies, the metropolitan park district levies are subject to the constitutional 1 percent limitation on property taxes.

Most of the 1 percent limit (i.e., \$9.50 of the \$10 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation) is segregated into two components: the state levy equal to \$3.60 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation; and local senior and junior levies to a combined total of \$5.90 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. The metropolitan park district's two levies fall within the \$5.90 component. A few other levies may be imposed above the \$9.50 component but within the 1 percent property tax limitation (e.g., emergency medical services).

General tax levies within the \$5.90 component and the remainder component are to be proportionately reduced if the combined rate of regular property tax levies exceeds 1 percent of the true and fair value of the property. A metropolitan park district with a population of at least 150,000 is authorized to submit a ballot proposition seeking voter protection of all or part of the 25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation levy from proration in the \$5.90 component. The ballot must be approved by majority vote and can be effective for six years following voter approval. Even though protected from proration under this component, this levy is still subject to proration under the 1 percent limitation.

SUMMARY:

An alternative organizational structure for a metropolitan park district is established.

District Creation and Boundaries

In a city with a population of at least 500,000, the city legislative authority may be designated as the governing body for the metropolitan park district when the creation of the metropolitan park district is considered by the voters. The park district commissioners are to be selected either by direct election or by designation of the city council or commission members. The selection method for the park district commissioners must be made at the time of the election concerning park district creation. The composition of the board of commissioners created before January 1, 1999, may not be changed once the district has been created. Provision is made for alteration of the composition of a park board for those metropolitan parks districts consisting of a city with a population of 500,000 or more.

The boundaries for a metropolitan park district governed by the city legislative authority are coterminous with the city limits, including any later annexed property. A metropolitan park district with separately elected commissioners may annex property according to statutory procedures. City or county police regulations apply to park district premises outside the jurisdictional limits.

District Management and Employees

A metropolitan park district board governed by a city legislative authority may contract with any public or nonprofit entity (including the city creating the district) for all of its operations and services. No private entity may have a contract for the overall management and operation of any park and recreation facility. The managing organization may appoint the chief executive officer with the park district's approval.

Employees of a metropolitan park district governed by the city legislative authority may be included in a city's personnel system and civil service and retirement plans if they were previously employed by the city and were members of its retirement plan.

For a metropolitan park district governed by a city legislative authority, the city treasurer serves as the ex-officio metropolitan park district treasurer without additional compensation. For a metropolitan park district with elected commissioners, the treasurer of the district is the city treasurer of the most populated city of the district and the city treasurer may not charge a greater amount for treasury services than permitted the county treasurer for similar services.

The board of a metropolitan park district may no longer provide for park police.

A metropolitan park district with an ex officio board of commissioners is: (1) prohibited from owning any present city parks; (2) authorized, with permission of the city, to convey any or all of its real or personal property to that city; and (3) prohibited from declaring surplus its real property without first having offered to donate that property to the city. The voters of such metropolitan park district are given the powers of initiative and referendum both as to the disposition of real property by the district and as to any other matters within the scope and function of the district to the same extent as is allowed within the city.

Property Tax Levies

The levy reduction provisions that keep the combined rate of regular property taxes from exceeding 1 percent of the true and fair value of any property are altered to insure that a levy imposed by a metropolitan park district governed by a city legislative authority may not cause the emergency medical services levy, county conservation futures levy, or low income housing levy to be reduced.