



November 23, 2021

Maria Ruth, Chair
Olympia Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Dear Maria,

On behalf of the Olympia City Council, thank you to all the members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) for the time and energy spent considering the future park at Yelm Highway and the proposed Olympia School District (OSD) partnership.

Your work on this matter has been thoughtful, and we appreciate your patience as the Olympia City Council took time to absorb the information. As a City Council, we recognized early on that this decision was complex, and that any final decision would require extensive public process and would have community-wide implications for generations to come.

We appreciate PRAC's role in reviewing the initial public meeting and survey that allowed the public to ask questions and provide feedback regarding the concept. We also appreciate the work of the PRAC sub-committee that spent additional time analyzing the proposed partnership at a deeper level. We know that PRAC dedicated the majority of two meetings to this topic and facilitated a very thorough discussion, resulting in your recommendation to Council. As we reviewed your letter, we observed that several of the listed concerns highlighted a lack of information, as well as significant concern about slowing the development of the park project.

Given the significance of this decision to the community, we've asked City staff to take steps that will ensure we get the most complete information before us for a decision, while not compromising the development schedule for the future park.

To that end, the City has contracted with Berger Partnership to launch the focused planning of the Phase I Design process in parallel to the ongoing, long-range visioning work of the Yelm Highway Community Park Master Plan. This allows the consultants to simultaneously proceed with time sensitive Phase I permit issues while taking the necessary time to sort through the pros and cons of the proposed OSD partnership in developing the Master Plan. We also learned that OSD hired the Berger Partnership to perform an extensive analysis of the listed concerns identified by PRAC.

By merging the efforts of the Master Plan, Phase I Design, and analysis of the PRAC concerns, our hope is that many of the important questions raised by PRAC will be answered and that we, as a Council, can make the best, most informed decision for our community.

We understand that the Berger Partnerships analysis of PRAC's concerns has been completed, and that you will be dedicating a special meeting to this topic on December 2. We thank you for your continued engagement on these questions and look forward to your assessment of this new information and how it might shape any future recommendations.

Maria Ruth, Chair, PRAC

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As demonstrated by your thorough deliberation culminating in a 4-3 vote, identifying the path forward on this issue is difficult. Please know that we value PRAC's role, time, and energy. We appreciate your efforts and your insights as we move towards a final decision.

Our hope is that we are able to come to a decision early next year so that we can move forward with the next round of 2022 RCO grants and begin construction in 2024 as planned.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Selby
Mayor

cc: Olympia City Councilmembers
Jay Burney, City Manager
Paul Simmons, Director, Parks, Arts & Recreation