

April 15, 2014

To: the Milwaukee County Parks Energy and Environment Committee

From: The Milwaukee County Parks Advisory Commission

In 2012 the Milwaukee County Parks Advisory Commission recommended that Milwaukee County Create a Parks Amenities Matching Fund. This fund would be matched to provide additional funds for parks projects up to \$250,000. The County Board then promoted and passed this resolution in 2013 as a way help make up for the decreasing budgets of the last 30 years. Money for the fund came from 2013 land sales.

The County Board is to be commended for your promotion of this fund. I surmised that the County Board did not include the Parks Department request for \$500,000 for an Amenities Matching Fund in the 2014 budget because they were planning to fund it with Innovation Park land sale income.

Twenty-five percent of the total \$5,680,000 in revenue from the Innovation Park landsale, or \$1,420,000 of that money will be directed to the Economic Development Fund. An Innovation Workgroup solicited applications for projects. They recommended reduction of the Amenities Matching Fund to \$250,000 to be funded as a Tier Two Project, contingent upon the sale of County Grounds land for a hotel in Innovation Park.

Please note: As of November 2013, \$240,000 of the Parks Amenities Matching fund was awarded, generating projects valued at more than \$800,000. There were more matches than could be funded.

Let's talk a little bit about economic development. When you go to sell a house, you invest money in painting it and fixing it up to make a good impression on the buyer. Now I want you to look at our parks as part of our Milwaukee County house. Every single project of the Amenities Matching fund was used to fix up deteriorated entities of our parks or for needed enhancements. All of them improve the eye appeal of our home to potential businesses.

Three examples of the nine funded projects include: restoration of two important historical statues, purchasing over 200 picnic tables to replace old ones that were rotting and falling apart, and building an accessible walkway at Boerner Botanical Gardens. These are examples of creative investment that gave our taxpayers a bigger value for their property tax contribution. They also created jobs and we had something to show for it. This was measurable economic development. We thank the County Board for promoting this Amenities Matching Fund.

The Milwaukee County Parks Advisory Commission urges you to use \$500,000 of the Innovation Fund money to invest in our Parks Amenities Matching Fund. It is an economic development investment that we know will be greater than the whole. And we know that our citizens will gladly match it with at least another \$500,000.

Respectfully,



Cheri Briscoe, Chairperson
Rafael Acevedo, Jr.
John Gurda
Henry Hamilton III
Keith Holt
James Moran
Patty Prichard Thompson