

NEW COMMISSION ON PARKS AND RECREATION

Background: On November 4, 2008, Philadelphia voters approved an amendment to the Home Rule Charter, which creates a new Commission on Parks and Recreation, replacing the existing Fairmount Park Commission.

The current Fairmount Park Commission, appointed by Court of Common Pleas Judges in June 2007, will serve until July 2009. Current Commissioners may apply to serve on the new Commission.

The new Commission will be composed of 15 members, 6 of whom will be ex-officios: the Commissioners of the Parks and Recreation, Water, Streets and Public Property departments; the City Council President; and the Executive Director of the City Planning Department.

Roles and Responsibilities: The roles and responsibilities of the new Commission on Parks and Recreation include but are not limited to:

- 1) Adopt standards and guidelines relating to City park and recreation land and facilities, including standards and guidelines relating to land use; preservation of green space; watershed management; sustainability; and the conveyance and acquisition of park and recreation land or facilities, including criteria for the assessment and evaluation of proposed conveyances or acquisitions.
- 2) Shall assist and advise the Parks and Recreation Commissioner and other organizations the Commission may choose, to promote, support and enhance the image of the Fairmount Park System, and other City parks, and City recreation facilities and to expand and diversify the funding and resources for operation and capital expenditures in and for park and recreation facilities.
- 3) Convene public meetings at least quarterly, providing an opportunity for public comment concerning any matters within the Commission's jurisdiction.

Qualifications: The amended Charter reads: "The members shall have demonstrated experience or skill relevant to the powers and duties of the Commission including, but not limited to: sports, recreation and athletic programming; natural lands management, watershed management, and environmental protection; tourism, marketing and public relations; business and finance; neighborhood revitalization; community leadership; historical and architectural preservation; landscaping and horticulture; and fundraising. The Commission shall also be reflective of the geographic, racial, ethnic and gender diversity within the City.

Candidate Selection and Appointment Process:

No later than February 1, 2009, City Council will make a public call soliciting Commissioner nominees for nine appointed positions. The application period will be open for at least 30 days, after which City Council will hold a public hearing. Each nominee will be invited to testify and present his or her qualifications in a public hearing. Within 90 days after the close of applications, City Council will forward between 18 and 25 nominations to the Mayor who will make the final appointments.

Timeline: On July 1, 2009 the new Department of Parks and Recreation and the new Commission on Parks and Recreation will assume all of their powers and duties. The merger of the staff and operations of the new merged Department of Parks and Recreation will be completed no later than July 1, 2010.

Prepared by Philadelphia Parks Alliance. December 2008.
Source: Philadelphia Home Charter as amended on November 4, 2008.