



## HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS

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Subject: Testimony and Fiscal Note  
Testimony Appropriation Ordinance # 2 – 2009  
Robinson Property Nature Center N-3960

To: Lonnie Robins, Chief Administration Officer

From: Gary J. Arthur, Director,  
Department of Recreation and Parks

Date: January 28, 2009

The Department of Recreation and Parks is requesting the County Council to authorize the transfer of \$3,262,000 to Capital Project N-3960 (Robinson Property Nature Center) from the following Capital Projects: \$1,010,000 from N-3105 (Meadowbrook Park), \$250,000 from N-3107 (Rockburn Branch Park), \$600,000 from N-3932 (Western Regional Park), \$300,000 from N-3959 (Patapsco Female Institute Site Work), \$600,000 from N-3966 (Cedar Lane School), \$320,000 from N-3968 (Cedar Lane Athletic Field Improvements), and \$182,000 from N-3970 (Park Headquarters Expansion). This TAO will transfer funds as follows:

- (1.) \$1,010,000 from N-3105 (Meadowbrook Park) for the construction of an Indoor Recreation Facility. After bids for the construction of the Indoor Recreation Facility were received, the bids were substantially lower than what was estimated and budgeted. Therefore, this created a surplus of funds in this project. After this deduction, there will be \$200,406.75 remaining in this project. These remaining funds will be used to purchase equipment for the indoor facility.
- (2.) \$250,000 from N-3107 (Rockburn Branch Park) for the design and construction of additional field & court lighting and replace existing lighting. Our intention for the these funds was to add new ball field lighting and replace existing lights with the latest, up-to-date, energy efficient lighting system with less spill, glare, and energy consumption. After this deduction, there will be \$901,319.20 remaining in this project. This will allow us to move forward with Phase I which consists of new lights to 2 existing baseball fields, 4 existing tennis courts and 2 basket ball courts. We will pursue future funding for the remaining phases.
- (3.) \$600,000 from N-3932 (Western Regional Park) for the design and construction of Phase V. Phase V has not yet been designed; however, the remaining budget will permit the planning to proceed. Phase V will consist of additional parking, restroom/concession building, pavilion utilities, necessary site work and amenities, and is currently included in the 5-year Capital Improvement Program for construction costs of \$2,200,000. The \$600,000 transferred in this TAO will be replaced in future construction funding. This TAO will have no effect on the construction of Phase IV, which is scheduled to take place this spring to early summer.
- (4.) \$300,000 from N-3959 (Patapsco Female Institute Site Work) for the additional renovations to the Patapsco Female Institute (PFI). Construction for the renovations has been delayed because of funding limitations and the design has not been completed. Therefore the money has been untouched for 2 years. After this deduction, there will be \$200,406.75 remaining in this project. These remaining funds will be used to complete the planning and design for the PFI, installing water fountains and repairing existing stone retaining walls.

- (5.) \$600,000 from N-3966 (Cedar Lane School) for the design of a Community Center in the existing Cedar Lane School. Due to budget constraints, the Board of Education has not moved forward beyond the preliminary planning of this project. Therefore, the funding for this project has been idle for the past three years. Based on the fact this project has not moved forward, we feel that the funds could be better utilized for the Robinson Nature Center which is currently scheduled for construction and will serve the citizens of Howard County sooner than later. When the Board of Education is able to proceed beyond the preliminary planning phase, the County will then pursue funding.
- (6.) \$320,000 from N-3968 (Cedar Lane Athletic Field Improvements) for the installation of irrigation systems on the natural turf fields and replacement of field lights. With the County moving towards the protection of natural resources and installing synthetic turf multi-purpose fields, we are now developing additional turf management practices that allow us not to waste water resources for irrigation. We are not replacing the existing irrigation for this project. We are still in the preliminary planning phase of planning for the replacement of the existing field lights. Once the preliminary planning is complete for the replacement of existing field lights, we will again pursue funding for this project. Therefore, the funds intended for this purpose are not needed at this time.
- (7.) \$182,000 from N-3970 (Recreation and Parks Headquarters Expansion) for the planning of office and conference room expansion. With the help of DPW's Facilities and Engineering Division, we will be able to convert the existing garage bay into conference rooms and change the existing conference rooms into office space. Therefore the planning money is no longer needed at this time and can be transferred.

Please note that in the fiscal year 2009 budget for the Robinson Property Nature Center, there was \$2,300,000 allocated in fiscal 2010 to complete this project. This funding was for exhibits, furniture, grading for future out-buildings, landscaping and construction contingency. The County was not successful in obtaining the necessary right-of-way for the construction of the northern entrance; therefore the entrance had to be relocated to the southern portion of the site causing an increase in the project's cost estimate and budget in the amount of \$1,212,000. The southern entrance adds additional grading and additional retaining wall construction to avoid existing archeological sites. With anticipated savings from a lower bid price and projected state funding, the additional net funds being requested is \$962,000. The \$3,262,000 in this TAO will cover the \$2,300,000 originally budgeted for FY 2010 and the additional \$962,000 needed for road construction.

Our intent is to begin construction prior to July 2009 in order to take advantage of the current economic situation, which has shown a trend of decreased construction costs. This trend is evident by recent bids received for the construction phases of Meadowbrook Park Indoor Facility, Western Regional Park and Rockburn Branch Park Maintenance Facilities in comparison to the estimated budget for those projects. This TAO will allow us to bid the construction phase of the Robinson Property Nature Center in April 2009, allowing us the opportunity to receive reduced construction costs.

To successfully fulfill the "No Child Left Inside" program, we anticipate that the Robinson Property Nature Center will be heavily used by the students of Howard County. The Department of Recreation and Parks respectfully requests that Council give full consideration to this transfer to help keep this project fully funded, on schedule, and to begin construction this fiscal year without requesting any additional major Capital Budget funding.