**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**Department of Parks and Recreation**



Department of Parks and Recreation

Budget Oversight Hearing on Fiscal Year 2018

Testimony of

Keith A. Anderson

Director

The Honorable Councilmember Mary M. Cheh

Committee on Transportation and the Environment

Council of the District of Columbia

Wednesday, April 26, 2017

10:00 a.m. Room 412

John A. Wilson Building

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, D.C. 20004

**Introduction**

Good morning Chairperson Cheh, members of the Committee, and members of the public. I am Keith A. Anderson, Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR).

I am pleased to provide testimony on Mayor Bowser’s Fiscal Year 2018 budget entitled, “DC Values in Action, a Roadmap to Inclusive Prosperity.”  Earlier this week, Mayor Bowser presented the District’s 22nd consecutive balanced budget. It reflects the ideas and priorities of District residents and fulfills our commitment to deliver for District residents each and every day.  Mayor Bowser’s FY 2018 budget makes strategic investments in education, affordable housing, transportation, infrastructure, public safety, job training, and employment services that keep residents on the pathway to the middle class. These investments reflect the key priorities identified by District residents at Budget Engagement Forums held during the budget formulation process.

I would like to thank Mayor Muriel Bowser, City Administrator Rashad Young, and Deputy Mayor Jennifer Niles for their continued support and leadership. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to all of the DPR employees who serve the District’s residents on a daily basis.

**Investments in Parks and Recreation**

 DPR’s mission is to promote health and wellness; conserve the natural environment; and provide universal access to parks and recreation services. Through our parks, recreation facilities, and programmatic offerings, DPR encourages residents to **Move**, **Grow**, and **Be Green**. This is the Department’s mission, vision, and philosophy. It frames agency decisions and underpins the agency’s vision for the future.

* To **Move**, DPR provides all residents affordable, enjoyable opportunities for physical fitness and recreation;
* To **Grow**, DPR supports personal development among residents through self-enrichment activities – like classes, clubs, tours, and lessons; and
* To **Be Green**, DPR promotes practices that connect residents to their local environment.

The Mayor’s Fiscal Year 2018 Budget allocates $52.9 million to support DPR in its work, an increase of $1.9 million or 3.8%.

Specifically, Mayor Bowser is demonstrating *DC Values in Action* through new investments, including:

* $500,000 through an MOU with DCPS to support staffing at school-based pools;
* $250,000 to support *FitDC*, an initiative to encourage physical fitness and overall health in the District;
* $150,000 to support the agency’s extensive Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Security System at 33 facilities.
* $90,000 to support DPR’s expansion of youth trips to provide new opportunities for teens to visit national parks and monuments; and
* An overall increase in personnel funding to accommodate needs associated with summer programs and activities; projected salary step increases, Fringe Benefits; and Overtime costs.

 Each of these enhancements is critical to ensuring efficient and effective agency operations and will enable DPR to continue to provide excellent service to District residents and visitors.

 In the Capital Budget, Mayor Bowser has allocated $276.1 million for investment in DPR’s facilities over the next six (6) years. Spanning across the city, the Mayor is funding facility improvements to ensure all District residents have access to world-class recreation and aquatics facilities. For example, in:

* **Ward 8** – $17.1 million is allocated for a brand new Congress Heights Recreation Center; $13 million is allocated to expand the Southeast Tennis and Learning Center; and $800,000 is allocated for Malcom X Recreation Center field and court improvements; in
* **Ward 7** – $37 million is allocated for a full renovation of the city’s sole Therapeutic Recreation Center; and $10 million is allocated for a two phase modernization of Benning Park Recreation Center; in
* **Ward 6** – $48.7 million is allocated to assist in land acquisition for parks and recreation spaces; $12.6 million is allocated for improvements to Yards Park and Canal Park; and $900,000 is allocated for improvements to Lansburgh Park; in
* **Ward 5** – $15 million is allocated to renovate the Theodore Hagans Cultural Center; $7.2 million is allocated to modernize the Arboretum Community Center; and $5 million is allocated to modernize Fort Lincoln Park; in
* **Ward 4** – $12 million is allocated to renovate the Upshur Recreation Center; $10 million is allocated to build a new Shepard Park Community Center; $5 million is allocated to build a new pool at Walter Reed; and $2 million is allocated for improvements to the Petworth Recreation Center playground; in
* **Ward 3** – $8 million is allocated to renovate the Chevy Chase Community Center; $6 million is allocated for a new Hearst Park pool; and $5.8 million is allocated for improvements to Hardy Recreation Center; in
* **Ward 2** – $15.1 million is allocated for improvements to Franklin Park; $12 million is allocated to renovate East Potomac pool; $11 million is allocated to modernize the Stead Park Recreation Center; and $2 million is allocated to renovate Jelleff Recreation Center; and in
* **Ward 1** – $2.3 million is allocated to build a new Parkview Recreation Center; and $750,000 is allocated for LeDroit Park field improvements.

**Citywide**, the Mayor has allocated:

* $40 million for general infrastructure improvements;
* $20 million for athletic field and park improvements;
* $20 million to renovate existing pools;
* $12 million for security infrastructure;
* $10 million for ADA compliance;
* $7.5 million to renovate and build new playgrounds;
* $2 million for IT infrastructure;
* $2 million for park improvement project management; and
* $100,000 for new trucks, buses, and other vehicles.

With this magnificent investment in DPR’s infrastructure, I am confident that DPR will continue to expand its state-of-the-art facilities for the enjoyment of all residents across the city.

**Notable Accomplishments**

I would also like to take a moment to mention several notable accomplishments related to the Fiscal Year 2018 budget. Over the past year, DPR has made great progress on several fronts, including but not limited to: (i) growing the agency’s *Community Composting Cooperative*; (ii) improving youth and teen engagement; (iii) offering youth trips to expose DC teens to recreational and park opportunities outside of the District; and (iv) continuing to improve the accuracy and transparency of the agency’s budget.

 DPR has expanded its *Community Composting Cooperative* to 40 (soon to be 52) locations, across all 8 Wards. Our composting containers are critter and smell proof. Currently, there are 1,000 participants composting an estimated 10 to 15 tons of material per month. These sites are 100% self-sustaining, and in total, have the capacity for 50 tons of compost per month.

In previous hearings, the Committee has given suggestions on how to enhance teen programs. Therefore, my team has hosted *Teen Sports Nights*—and will continue to do so through the end of the year. As opposed to a traditional meeting to learn what programs and services youth desire, these events include eight (8) sessions of interactive games, activities, and workshops on topics like health and safety, as well as, on what types of programming teens desire. To help market and attract teens to attend, DPR is partnering with local artists to provide music and other cultural activities. Also, DPR’s Young Ladies on the Rise program hosted a *Girls Teen Summit* where more than 115 girls participated in workshops on health, wellness, and entrepreneurship.

In addition, Mayor Muriel Bower is supporting and funding youth trips to expose District teens to recreational and park opportunities outside of the District. For example, DPR is exploring organizing outings college tours and fishing trips, and other travel to national and state parks, such as Luray Caverns, Virginia. While spaces will be limited by necessity, these opportunities will be equally available to youth in all 8 Wards.

As the Committee is well aware, DPR has been working to improve the accuracy and transparency of the agency’s budget. This hard work is reflected in the Mayor’s FY18 budget submission. Positions have been moved to the correct funding sources. In addition, the agency made several technical adjustments to correct the type of funding being used for different purchases. As a result, although the agency’s budget has several moving pieces on paper, I am pleased to report that no programs or activities have been adversely affected by this administrative clean up. In fact, the Mayor’s FY18 budget not only retains current staffing and budget levels, but also includes several enhancements, which were highlighted earlier in my remarks.

**Conclusion**

I am pleased to report that the Mayor’s budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation demonstrates her leadership and commitment to our shared DC Values and ensures that all District residents have an opportunity to benefit as we work to attain inclusive prosperity. With the continued financial support and leadership support from Mayor Bowser, DPR will remain a world-class leader in urban parks and recreation. We will continue to improve service delivery and ensure that all residents of the District of Columbia have access to outstanding facilities and programs, and a safe place to have fun and play. That concludes my testimony today. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify and I look forward to answering any questions you or members of the committee may have.