

Contact:
Kate Dragoo
Public Information and Outreach Supervisor
Foothills Park & Recreation District
(303) 409-2525
kate@fhprd.org

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Failed mill levy impact on Foothills Park & Recreation District

Foothills Park & Recreation District faces a challenging decision of what to do after the proposed 3 mill levy rate increase was voted down by residents on May 6. Newly appointed Executive Director, Ronald Hopp, and the director's team have begun reviewing and updating the budget forecasting model to determine the impact. The increased revenues from a 3 mill increase would have gone toward a number of capital repairs, including replacing unsafe playground equipment and helped pay for increases in fuel and utility costs as well as other increased operation expenses. Foothills has not had a mill levy increase since 2001.

Foothills Board Treasurer, Janet Shangraw said, "Conversations between Foothills Board of Directors and staff have been ongoing for well over a year concerning the forecasted budget challenges the District will face beginning in 2009." After a failed November 2006 mill levy election, service level reductions began in mid 2007 with the elimination of a climbing wall program and a Halloween themed community event. Other budget cuts that have been implemented are District-wide staff reductions and decreased park maintenance including; reduced irrigation, fertilizer application, weed control, and mowing schedules. Foothills Board and staff will continue to review the service level reduction plans submitted to the Board in mid 2007 and determine which reductions will be implemented sometime in 2008 or 2009.

"Our community will be facing some tough financial times and we want to hear feedback regarding the proposed service level reductions from the residents of Foothills," stated Shangraw. Shangraw went on to explain, "We have done extensive work in reducing District expenses without impacting our users and their needs and we simply cannot operate without impacting our residents moving forward." The next Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 13, 2008 at 7 p.m. at the Peak Community & Wellness Center (6612 S. Ward St.).

Foothills Park & Recreation District receives about 70 percent of its current revenues from fees, admissions and rentals and about 30 percent from taxes. Tax revenues help support parks and trails, while programs such as golf, cultural arts and fitness classes and a range of services are either self-supporting or help support other program areas.

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Foothills Park & Recreation District, founded in 1959, serves a 28 square mile area of unincorporated Jefferson County generally bounded by Hampden Avenue south to C-470 from Sheridan Boulevard west to the Dakota Hogback. The District operates the Ridge Recreation Center, the Edge Ice Arena, Lilley Gulch Recreation Center, the Peak Community and Wellness Center, four outdoor swimming pools, Indoor Sports Arena, Foothills Golf Course complex, Meadows Golf Course, and 70 park sites totaling more than 2,400 acres and including four regional parks, 42 neighborhood and community parks and 24 greenbelts. In addition Foothills manages six regional trail corridors for public use, which, combined with park trails, total more than 31 miles. For more information visit www.ifoohills.org , or call (303) 409-2100.