

Text of October 27, 2005 e-mail from Commissioner Diane Harnell-Cohen to Melissa Devereaux/Friends of Grant Park Pool:

Melissa - here are the points you asked about with regard to the 2005 Greenspace and Opportunity Bond. I have changed the language to come from me but basically this is what the Mayor is saying in her communications. Included in the list of projects are renovations to both the Grant Park Pool and the Grant Park Recreation Center.

In response to the community's interest and studies as far back as the 1960's calling for more public parks and greenspace, we are very proud that we have just introduced the 2005 Greenspace and Recreation Opportunity Bond.

We want to take this time to communicate directly with you about this exciting initiative. We are calling this the "Opportunity" bond because that indeed is what it is. Here is the background:

As you know, showing the city's commitment to the private community regarding our commitment to greenspace acquisition is paramount to jump starting their investment in millions of dollars. The Mayor made a commitment upon taking office to do everything in her power to increase greenspace, and this bond issue allows us to move forward on that pledge. We have searched and searched for ways to honor that commitment, without taxing residents.

The Charter provides for a Parks Levy on property located within the City of Atlanta. This 0.5 mil levy is included in and collected with your annual property tax bill. Bonds were issued using this revenue in 2000, and a number of capital projects were funded. Revenue from the levy has accumulated over the subsequent five-year period. A portion of this revenue has funded some limited capital improvements and a small amount of limited maintenance expenses is allowable. The remainder has accumulated in a reserve account. The Department of Finance has worked with the Department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs to assess the performance of this revenue stream and project receipts in the years to come. Performance trends and forecasts point to a significant increase in proceeds on a yearly basis. Upon review, the Mayor has approved the proposal to maximize the use of these funds and issue a bond and create a much-needed capital infusion to improve and expand the city's network of park and recreational facilities. The recommended size of the bond, \$105,000,000, was arrived at after carefully considering current interest rates, future debt service budgets, and revenue trends. There are restrictions on what we can spend the money on and it is recreation driven. We can acquire greenspace for the specific purpose of placing new recreation amenities, which are sorely needed, in the

city - additional ball fields, soccer fields, splash water features, skate parks etc. Trust for Public Land has been working with us to identify areas that will accommodate such uses that are on the Beltline. These stand-alone parks will work and add much-needed greenspace with or without the Beltline, but the parks could be a jumpstart for Beltline acquisition. Therefore, approximately 30% of the 2005 Greenspace and Recreation Bond will be used for greenspace acquisition, and 30% will be used to develop the new greenspace with recreation items.

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs strategic plan calls for a much-needed infusion of capital to renovate, replace and improve a crumbling parks system that has been deteriorating over many, many years. For several administrations, every dollar available had virtually been invested in additional facilities and no care was given to the disinvestment in the bulk of the recreation amenities that our residents use citywide. This 2005 Greenspace and Recreation Opportunity Bond will correct that by investing 40% in improvements. The department has been working with Council members, NPU Chairs, and civic association members, to determine priority projects. The CDP/CIP for the past eight years have been engaged and have actively reviewed redevelopment plans, NPU meeting minutes and LCI's.

In 2004, Councilmember Ceasar Mitchell created the Park Technical Advisory Group, which included APAB and NPU members and our parks commissioner. This group has been meeting for nearly 18 months to determine every option available for greenspace acquisition and maintenance. A full presentation of the 2005 Greenspace and Recreation Opportunity Bond has been presented to PTAG by Commissioner Dianne Harnell Cohen and received their enthusiastic endorsement and recommendation.

The project plans call for among other things, improvements in our oldest and most dilapidated recreation centers, renovation to our outdoor swimming pools, improvements to our ball fields and basketball courts, replacement or refreshing of many of our playgrounds, and improvement to our sports lightings.

Most importantly this much needed investment will not require any increase in taxes. The money could be available to us in the first quarter of 2006 and would need to be spent down within a three-year period of the issuance of the bond guaranteeing the implementation of this project. Several of these improvements can be done very quickly - ball field refreshing as an example. It would be our intention that when a recreation center is being renovated, we ask the community to convene a taskforce so we can plan the renovations around the community needs.

In an effort to improve our greenspace and recreational facilities, we are

asking for your support of this incredible opportunity when it comes to Council [on November 7, 2005].