4-30-1954

Special Five-Year Modern Zoo Levy

City Club of Portland (Portland, Or.)
REPORT

on

SPECIAL FIVE-YEAR MODERN ZOO LEVY

AN ACT amending the City charter to provide for acquisition, development, construction, improvements, exhibits, and facilities of a modern city zoo; creating special fund; providing for continuing five-year levy of 1.2 mills or $771,800 annually, whichever is less, outside constitutional limitation, commencing fiscal year 1954-55.

SHALL THE CHARTER BE SO AMENDED?

Vote 51 Yes ☐ No ☐

TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS,
CITY CLUB OF PORTLAND:

The undersigned committee has examined the City Council Resolution No. 26063 to submit to the voters at the primary election of May 21, 1954, an act to amend the charter of the City of Portland by providing for a special five-year tax levy. This levy would start with the fiscal year 1954-55 and would not exceed 1.2 mills or $771,800 per annum, whichever is the lesser, for each of five years for the development, construction and improvement of a new zoo for the City of Portland.

SCOPE OF COMMITTEE'S WORK

The City Club has previously gone on record, in March, 1951, in favor of a new zoo to be built on a new site by the City of Portland; therefore, investigation by this committee was limited to the present proposal submitted by the City Council. Although the measure is merely one to raise revenue for the "development, construction, improvement, and equipment for a City of Portland Zoo, with no location specifically named, it has been considered by your committee as part of the announced plan to construct a new zoo on the site of the West Hills golf course.

Furthermore, your committee has not entered into a consideration of this act in relation to current needs for any other tax levy measures which will be forthcoming, i.e.: whether the zoo is to be preferred over Docks Improvements, a new Morrison bridge, etc.

INVESTIGATION

In order to study properly and report on all problems relevant to the construction, development and installation of the proposed Zoological Gardens, the following people were interviewed by members of the committee, or were heard at committee meetings: Harry Buckley, superintendent of the Park Bureau; Dr. Frank Queen and Eddie Miller of the Zoological Society; R. I. Perkins, superintendent of schedules, Portland Traction Co.; Alexander G. Brown, city attorney; Sherwood G. Felker, chief deputy auditor, City of Portland, members of the firm of Lawrence, Tucker & Wallman, architects for the Zoo Commission, various youth agency administrators, and sports writers and broadcasters.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE ACT

1. The present tax proposal is a pay-as-you-go measure and would save considerable money, compared to the Bond Issue defeated in 1952. Savings, based on past experience of the City of Portland, would amount to approximately $5,000 in expenses of the Bond sale plus from $450,000 to $700,000 in interest, depending on such variables as the interest rate and redemption period of the bonds as would have been determined by the Council under the 1952 measure. These savings, plus an increase in the tax base permit a 1.2 mill levy for five years in the proposed measure, as compared to a 1.4 mill levy for six years under the 1952 proposal.

2. The proposed site is close to the downtown area and provides a space for development five times larger than the present Washington Park location. Displays, paddocks and range areas would be more closely allied to the natural habitat of the animals to be displayed than any other available location. The area is largely protected from East winds, has excellent air, good water drainage and a minimum of fog. The extent of the
project planning fully indicates that the type of facilities proposed have been carefully studied as to the ultimate requirements, as well as to the over all established cost. Due consideration of the topography of the site in relation to projected facilities establishes that there is sufficient bench land for development to accommodate the concentration of the buildings necessary for display purposes. It is felt the location of the buildings within the area contemplated would not necessitate excessive costs for adequate foundations and/or rough grading.

3. The development provides for a "buffer strip" of approximately ¼ mile between adjoining residential property and the developed portion of the Zoo proper. The area affords ample space for picnic grounds and recreational areas and its development, as proposed in the preliminary planning stage, will bring Washington Park, the Arboretum and Hoyt Park into one solid area devoted to park and recreational facilities.

4. Adequate and safe access to the site is planned from Canyon Road, Fairview Blvd. and Barnes Road. It is further possible to provide access from Washington Park should that be deemed advisable at a later date. Provisions for adequate parking facilities are to be provided within the area. It is indicated further that public transportation could be made available if patronage were adequate.

5. The proposed site is presently in City ownership, thus making the acquisition of new real estate by the city unnecessary.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE ACT

1. The City would lose the only public golf course on the west side of town, where last year 21,520 nine-hole golfing tickets were sold. Without this course, west side golfers who rely on public courses will be forced to play either on the east side's already overcrowded fairways or journey out beyond Hillsboro for a public course.

2. During the present fiscal year maintenance costs to the city for the present zoo will be approximately $65,000 of which $10,000 will be offset by income from concessions. It is expected, based on studies by the Zoo Commission, that the cost of operating and maintaining the proposed new zoo will be about $160,000, of which approximately one-half ($80,000) will be made up from concessions. Thus, assuming estimates of revenues from concessions to be reasonably correct, the City would have an additional $25,000 annual expense in supporting its new and enlarged zoo.

CONCLUSION

The additional operating expense for the new zoo is not provided for, nor could it properly be, in the original measure. However, it is realistic to assume that the additional funds would be properly budgeted by the City Council.

It should be noted that in answer to one argument against the act, the West Hills Golf Course has consistently operated at a loss. In the last fiscal year the West Hills course showed an operating deficit of $960.43 as contrasted with an operating surplus of $11,453.91 for Rose City and $4,304.41 for Eastmoreland golf courses.

It is the conclusion of this committee that arguments in favor of the proposed tax levy to provide a new zoo are sound and worthy of presentation to the City Club and to the community.

RECOMMENDATION

Your committee recommends that the City Club go on record as favoring the approval of the five year tax levy to provide the City of Portland with the new Zoological Gardens.

Respectfully submitted,
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Approved April 23, 1954 by the Research Board for transmittal to the Board of Governors. Received by the Board of Governors April 26, 1954, and ordered printed and submitted to the membership for discussion and action.