

Application of James F. Thorne

Your name: James F. Thorne

Section 3. Questions for you to complete. (If you need more space, you may attach additional pages.)

A. Please review the following requirements from the Home Rule Charter for serving on the Commission on Parks and Recreation. How do you meet those qualifications?

“Qualifications. The members shall have demonstrated experience or skills relevant to the powers and duties of the Commission including, but not limited to: sports, recreation and athletic programming; natural lands; architectural preservation; landscaping and horticulture; and fundraising. The Commission shall also be reflective of the geographic, racial, ethnic, and gender diversity within the City.”

My primary qualifications are in the areas of natural lands management, watershed management and environmental protection. My academic qualifications include a Ph.D. in Forest Ecology and Forest Soils from Yale University, where I did research on comparing ecological processes and water chemistry in two very different watersheds. At the same time, I gained a great deal of experience in forested watershed management as part of the Hubbard Brook Ecosystem study, a groundbreaking effort to understand how applied disturbances influenced watershed health. These studies set the stage for US Forest Service urban research stations, the most recent of which is the Philadelphia station. As the Senior Director of Science at Natural Lands Trust, I am coordinating a large research study on three of our preserves to study Multiflora rose invasion. I have also applied my scientific experience to work in Philadelphia’s Manayunk and Shawmont neighborhoods in work directed by the Manayunk Development Corporation.

Probably the next most important area of expertise is in fundraising. Since 1996, I have been a regular recipient of grant funding from the William Penn Foundation and PA DCNR. In the context of the Commission, I could apply this background to building non-profit capacity in support of the park system.

Currently, I serve as President of two small nonprofit boards in my primary work environment, conserving the Hopewell Big Woods. This leadership experience has caused me to spend more time raising funds for these two organizations and otherwise increasing their capacity. In fact, the management of a 47-partner public-private partnership over the last 10 years is the model capacity-building project that has engaged me during this period.

My experience with sports and recreation is mostly personal. I have been a baseball and soccer player myself. I have also run three marathons, including the Philadelphia

Marathon shortly after my wife and I moved to Philadelphia in 1983. My sons are still active lacrosse players. Currently, I am an avid bike rider on the Schuylkill River Trail and annual participant in the Schuylkill River Sojourn.

My experience in architectural preservation is limited to work now in progress to define and prioritize the historic and cultural resources of the Berks County portion of the Hopewell Big Woods. My consultants are experts in architectural preservation and I expect that my knowledge in this area will be greatly enhanced.

My experience in Landscape Architecture has been working as a Lecturer and Assistant Professor in Ian McHarg's Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning Department from 1983 to 1993. During that time I was exposed to design principles and served on juries to give students an ecological perspective on design. I also developed a multicultural approach to ecological design by taking our international students and some American students to south central Mexico to teach principles of ecology and ecological design in the tropics.

Working in the academic and nonprofit sectors, I have been a fundraiser my whole professional career. While at Penn, I obtained funding from the National Science Foundation and the Beneficia Foundation to support my research. When I moved from working at Penn to The Nature Conservancy, I established a relationship with the William Penn Foundation which supported my conservation work with TNC. With my shift to Natural Lands Trust, I continued my fundraising success with the William Penn Foundation and my current company has enjoyed considerable funding from the William Penn foundation since. Although I cannot attribute Natural Lands Trust's recent success solely to my coming on board, I think it helped that I was just starting my landscape-scale initiative, the Hopewell Big Woods, as I made that transition. While at Natural Lands Trust, I have enjoyed good fundraising success not only with the William Penn Foundation, but with the Community Conservation Partnership Program of PA DCNR.

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B. In these difficult economic times, what do you think the Commission on Parks and Recreation should do to support, promote, and invest in the City's park and recreation system? As a member of the Commission, what would you do to assist the Commission in achieving these goals?

I think that I would actually be doing many of the things you are already doing—please excuse any repetitiveness.

First, I would do more to promote volunteerism in local neighborhoods of interest to the Commission. Leaders are rare, so my first step would be to understand enough about local leaders to make a proper approach to engage them. Small amounts of funding in these situations can lead to a great deal of engagement.

Second, I would work on nonprofit capacity building to address resource issues in a prioritized fashion. Other than Friends of the Wissahickon and Friends of Shawmont, I don't know the players yet. So, my first step would be to get to know these leaders and their most motivated members. What I can bring to the table is my own experience in building such groups. Telling stories of success can be great motivation.

C. Please review the role and responsibilities of the Commission, which are set forth in Part I of this application. Then, please attach a statement of no more than 500 words explaining why you want to serve on the Commission Parks and Recreation and why you believe you should be nominated to do so.

Section 4. Resume: Please attach to this application an up-to-date resume. Include your name, but do not include any personal contact information (street address, phone number, e-mail address) that you do not wish to be publicly available. On the resume, please provide the following information:

STATEMENT OF INTEREST

James F. Thorne

Our major American cities are greatly challenged today by difficult budgeting realities, deferred maintenance, safety issues and loss of open space. Philadelphia's Parks and Recreation system is no exception. I would like to be considered for a position on the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Commission because I am a citizen of the region, because I think I can make a unique contribution, and because I now have the time to give back. I believe that I can offer fundraising, park design, monitoring and evaluation and nonprofit governance expertise.

My professional career has involved setting environmental standards and making recommendations to achieve and maintain those standards. My background in ecological restoration informs me about actions that can be taken to restore forests and watersheds in particular. More recently, I have expanded into development and implementation of single track trail sustainability. Green space planning and protection, be it forested or grassy, has been a recent set of experiences of mine, working with Kay Sykora (Manayunk Development Corporation) to re-imagine green space along the Schuylkill River Trail and in forested areas in the Shawmont neighborhood.

My interest in watersheds dates back to early work I did on an urbanizing watershed in Rochester, NY; issuing NPDES discharge permits for wastewater, and then subsequently working on the drivers of water quality in forested ecosystems in the Hubbard Brook ecosystem project. Today I also serve as the President of the Hay Creek Watershed Association in the Hopewell Big Woods (in southern Berks County).

My work at Natural Lands Trust has also given me experience in land acquisition issues. My most notable project there was the protection of the 1,800-acre Birdsboro Waters tract by placing a Forest Legacy easement (cost--\$2.2 million). I have also worked on at least ten other real estate acquisitions in the Hopewell Big Woods.

In the past six months, I have been working with Drs. Vincent D'Amico and Gregory Schriver to develop a large scale research project on ecological impacts of an invasive plant, Multiflora rose on native ecosystems. This work is part of the research of the new Philadelphia Research Station of the US Forest Service. Such stations already established in Baltimore and New York are now yielding new ways of restoring abandoned and degraded lands in urban ecosystems. Philadelphia's park lands stand to benefit greatly from this project because it generates prospective new technologies for restoring urban parks.

Finally, my current schedule will provide me with sufficient time to attend meetings and perform Commission member duties in between the quarterly meetings. I hope that you can look on this application favorably.

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Section 5. Optional supporting materials. You are invited to submit up to three letters of recommendation. You may submit them along with your application or separately. If you have not submitted them by the time that Council holds its public hearing for applicants, please bring the letters with F

Section 6. Signature. Please sign on the line immediately below. If you are submitting your application by e-mail directly from your computer, type your name instead.

James F. Thorne

Section 7. Date. Indicate the date that you are submitting this application:

May 5, 2012

If you are selected to serve on the Commission on Parks and Recreation, you will be required to file the City's annual financial disclosure form. You will also be subject to ethics laws applicable to City boards and commissions (and to the jurisdiction of the Philadelphia Board of Ethics). In addition, the Mayor's Executive Order No. 3-10 requires that appointees to City boards and commissions be in compliance with tax laws and all City fines and fees; in that connection, you will be required to complete a "Tax Clearance Application," which will authorize the City's Department of Revenue to confirm that you are in compliance (or have entered into a voluntary payment agreement).

If you have questions about the application process, please contact
Theresa Brunson at 215-686-3424 or
Hal Fichandler at 215-686-7667.

This is the last page of the application.