



# ***Reforms Bring New Opportunities and New Leadership for Parks and Recreation***

## ***What We Need to Do Now to Protect and Revitalize Our Parks and Recreation for the Next 100 Years***

What we do in the next two years will define and shape Philadelphia's parks and recreation system for the next 100 years. Having spearheaded the successful campaigns that have created this defining moment, the Philadelphia Parks Alliance now seeks to help shape these reforms to ensure the success of leadership, investment, and revitalization of one of the greatest urban parks in the nation.

This historic opportunity to truly improve the leadership, vision and management of the park was ushered in this past November when citizens overwhelmingly voted in favor of amending the City Charter. This Charter referendum – sponsored by Councilmembers Clarke and Reynolds Brown, and supported by Mayor Nutter, the majority of City Council and scores of park, community and business organizations and their leadership, is paving the way:

- **For the Mayor to appoint a top-talent Commissioner to lead the new Department of Parks and Recreation.**

**AND HE DID! On March 5<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Nutter appointed Michael DiBerardinis to be Commissioner of the new department of Parks and Recreation.**

DiBerardinis brings exactly the kind of experience, skill and vision that the city needs to have a park and recreation system that is central to the health, economic vitality and environmental sustainability of Philadelphia and the entire region. The Parks Alliance looks forward to partnering with Commissioner DiBerardinis in this next chapter of park improvement.

- **To create a transparent and open public process for the Mayor to appoint the new Commission on Parks and Recreation.**

**IT'S HAPPENING! The reform and opening of the Commissioner application process, created a new environment in which over 200 people from all walks of life stepped up to apply to serve on the new Commission.**

**City Councilman Clarke, Councilwoman Reynolds Brown and the Committee on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs that she chairs held 4 public hearings at which applicants presented their qualifications.**

It will be for City Council - no later than 90 days from March 9<sup>th</sup> - to nominate 25 excellent candidates with the demonstrated ability to shepherd our parks and recreation through the critical next phase, and for Mayor Nutter to appoint 9 exemplary people to serve on the new Commission by July 1st.

Most applicants will not be appointed. The Parks Alliance looks forward to reaching out to these talented and passionate advocates for our parks and recreation and to harnessing their energy and ideas as we move forward. We also look forward to working with the new Commission.

- **To establish for the *first time ever*, guidelines for the use and protection of parkland.**

**One of the main responsibilities of the new Commission on Parks and Recreation, as mandated by the Charter referendum, will be to adopt standards and guidelines relating to the conveyance and acquisition of park and recreation land and facilities.**

**In July the Parks Alliance in partnership with the Pa. Horticultural Society and the Urban Sustainability Forum will convene an assembly to advance the discussion and thinking about land use.**

We will bring together leaders from other cities to inform our local leaders – elected officials, park advocates, citizens, key stakeholders – on best practices and tools for land protection and use; to explore what is working and not working; and how their lessons, together with Philadelphia's history and present situation can inform our future guidelines and possibilities.

- **To make the Mayor directly accountable for the management and revitalization of the City's parks and recreation system.**

**As the lead independent watchdog organization, the Parks Alliance and its supporters will work to ensure that parks and recreation remain at the top of the mayor's agenda, that land use guidelines are adhered to, that new revenue sources are developed, and that parks in every neighborhood improve and thrive.**

- **To diversify and expand park and recreation funding.**

**The new leadership, new Department, supportive City Council and a Mayor who is a champion of parks, combined with our growing and well organized base of park and recreation advocates, sets up the best shot we've had in a long time to finally break the chronic cycle of underfunding that has plagued our treasured parks and recreation for decades.**

Even in these hard economic times, the Mayor's current budget proposal recommends no further significant cuts to parks and recreation. While the Parks Alliance is relieved, the work of exploring new sources of funding must be at full throttle. The Parks Alliance believes and will advocate for, investment in our parks and recreation, especially in these tough economic times. Our parks - with their historic treasures and trails, recreation facilities and picnic areas, neighborhood parks, natural lands, playgrounds and ball fields - are essential to a thriving, healthy, beautiful, safe, and sustainable city.

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