

PPR'S FOURTH QUARTER STRATEGY

PLANNING FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS OF THE NUTTER ADMINISTRATION

On November 4, a cross-divisional group of PPR senior and mid-level leaders met at Gustine Recreation Center to evaluate the state of the department and plan for the last two years of the mayoral administration. The 23 participants broke into two groups and engaged in five rounds of "speed dating" style, one-on-one interviews, focused on the following questions:

1. What external challenges do you anticipate for Philadelphia Parks & Recreation over the next several years?
2. What successes has PPR experienced since the merger?
3. What opportunities do you see that PPR should consider/take advantage of?
4. What internal problems need attention or resolution?
5. What advice would you like to give the senior leadership team or to Deputy Mayor DiBerardinis?

Major themes that emerged throughout the responses to these questions included concern about future funding; a desire for succession planning and knowledge transfer; a need to integrate job titles and recruit new staff to fill available positions; and dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of departmental communications, both internal and external.

The core Executive Team¹ reviewed this feedback and met on November 7 at the Horticulture Center to discuss recurring topics from the interviews.

RESPONSES TO MAJOR THEMES

CONCERN ABOUT FUTURE FUNDING

As a complement to last year's budget increase for maintenance, PPR leadership has been building support within the Mayor's Office and City Council for a similar budget increase this year to support Department programming efforts.

Additionally, the Executive Team remains focused on its positive working relationships with City Council members and continues to seek opportunities to partner with Council Members to fund improvements in neighborhood parks and recreation centers.

DESIRE FOR ADDITIONAL STAFFING, SUCCESSION PLANNING AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The core Executive Team recognizes these issues and is taking steps to fill existing vacancies and minimize the impact of upcoming retirements on the department. Attention is being currently being focused on the areas of Skilled Trades, Administration and Grounds Maintenance since they have the greatest number of unfilled positions that are impacting the department's day to day operations. In some cases, civil service protocols (such as test type) need to be altered to open pathways for emerging leaders, and unions must be engaged in the process of

¹ Michael DiBerardinis, Mark Focht, Susan Slawson, Ed Fagan, Marissa Washington, Leo Dignam, Christopher Palmer and Patrick Morgan

combining overlapping positions. Leadership will focus on developing existing talents and matching soon-to-retire staff members with next generation leaders for shadowing opportunities and skill development.

NEED TO INTEGRATE JOB TITLES AND RECRUIT NEW STAFF TO FILL AVAILABLE POSITIONS

The Executive Team and our HR unit are working with the Managing Director's Office to implement recommendations contained in a September 2013 report provided by the [Center of Excellence](#). This report was produced after a series of interviews with department representatives concerning current and future staffing needs. Recommendations include combining similar positions, making promotional career paths clearer more accessible to staff as well as creating new jobs that support departmental opportunities created by the merger (e.g., Outdoor Recreation Programs).

In addition, PPR Human Resources has launched a campaign to create public awareness of available Skilled Trades positions within the department. This public Outreach Campaign includes radio advertisements recorded by Mayor Nutter, posters, flyers, social media promotions and newsletter announcements.

DISSATISFACTION WITH THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Executive Team acknowledges that though it has done well speaking with staff and soliciting advice, it hasn't done an equally good job of communicating back the actions taken as a result of staff input. The team is interested in developing more channels for both receiving feedback on a continual and consistent basis and responding to the feedback.

There are also general concerns that information is being made available but it is not effectively reaching the department's front-line staff. On the other hand, concern exists that sharing more information with more people, more frequently, will result in "information graffiti" which will also lessen the effectiveness of communication efforts.

Improvements in this area could come from two recent developments:

- The creation of a cross-divisional Communications Working Team: Twelve individuals who serve as a point of contact in their work units for communications matters. They will be gathering information to share department-wide as well as sharing departmental developments with their unit colleagues.
- An internal communications audit has been conducted. Next steps in this effort will be to identify gaps in information flow and staff input will be solicited as to "What do you want to know, and how do you want to know it?"

Other important areas of focus identified by leadership to drive the department forward within the next two years include higher quality and quantity of programming, increased opportunities for outdoor recreation for children, deepening our civic engagement and delivering the highest care of the land and facilities.