

Council begins trimming budget

The Minneapolis Park Board's proposal for a bigger Phillips community center will have to be phased in.

By [Steve Brandt](#), Star Tribune

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The Minneapolis Park Board won't be getting the money it hoped for in 2008 to build a bigger community center in east Phillips.

The City Council's budget committee stuck with Mayor R.T. Rybak's recommendation as it put final nips and tucks in Rybak's proposed 2008 city budget Monday.

That means that the Park Board will go ahead only with a \$3.69 million first phase of the \$11 million community center it hopes to construct, according to Superintendent Jon Gurban. That will be financed entirely with a state grant obtained last year.

The committee approved \$1.61 million in funding for park projects as recommended by the city's citizen advisory committee. But Gurban said money will be used for repairs on existing park facilities across the city. The Park Board had asked for an additional \$3.5 million in city money to augment state money for the Phillips center.

"We'll have to phase it," Gurban said. The area now is served by a former junior high school building, which park and youth programs share.

Area Council Member Gary Schiff said he'd prepared a sheaf of budget amendments intended to shift money from elsewhere to the Phillips project. He shelved them after his first effort -- dipping into tree money for downtown street renovations -- was defeated.

The \$1.4 billion budget, up 2 percent from last year, includes an 8 percent increase in the property tax, which has been council policy since cuts in state aid began in 2003.

In other budget discussion, the committee withheld final approval of two spending proposals by Rybak that some members believed haven't been fully thought out.

One would spend \$250,000 from water bills on pedestrian drinking fountains that Rybak proposes to combine with a marketing effort to draw in new suburban customers for Minneapolis water. The council wants more details early next year before it votes on releasing the money.

The other would spend \$200,000 from taxes for the convention center to promote Minneapolis as a convention destination during the 2008 Republican convention. The committee wants more details by next week.

The panel also accepted a budget compromise between Schiff and Council Member Elizabeth Glidden. It would cut Rybak's proposed \$150,000 for youth shuttle buses to \$75,000, using the other \$75,000 to replenish youth violence prevention grants. More private money would be raised for the buses, which first ran last summer.

The council is scheduled to adopt the budget on Dec. 12.

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