

 <p style="text-align: center;">Council Communication Office of the City Manager</p>	Date: August 23, 2010
	Agenda Item No. 28 Roll Call No. <u>10-1384</u> Communication No. <u>10-517</u> Submitted by: Donald M. Tripp, Parks and Recreation Director Jeb E. Brewer, P.E. City Engineer

AGENDA HEADING:

Authorization to apply for a Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) grant to fund a portion of the expenses relating to development of the Blank Park Zoo Entrance Improvement.

SYNOPSIS:

Authorize the City Manger to submit a RISE grant application to provide for a portion of the funding for expenses relating to the development of a new entrance road to the Blank Park Zoo. Although no City funds will be used for the project, the RISE program requirements state that only City or County governments may apply for funds.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: \$900,000 RISE Grant application (overall project cost estimated \$2,650,000)

Funding Source: No City funds will be used. Funds are provided by the State of Iowa RISE grant, Rebuilding Iowa Infrastructure Fund and Blank Park Zoo Foundation. (see chart on page 2)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) fund was created by the Iowa legislature in 1985 to assist in promoting economic development in Iowa through the establishment, construction, improvement, and maintenance of roads and streets. The RISE program, which is funded by a percentage of the motor fuel tax, is designed to maximize economic impact, emphasize local involvement and initiative, and provide for situations requiring an immediate response and commitment of funds. Only City or County governments may apply for RISE funding. The Blank Park Zoo Entrance Improvement qualifies as an eligible project for RISE funding.

Named "Iowa Attraction of the Year" in 2006, the Blank Park Zoo is consistently ranked as one of the top three cultural attractions in the state of Iowa with 400,000 visitors annually. That number is expected to increase to 500,000 once the planned African Exhibit is completed. The current Zoo entrance and main parking lot, completed as part of the Zoo Restoration in 1986, was planned to accommodate only 100,000 annual visitors, making it inadequate to meet the Zoo's current and projected needs. In addition its tight turning radius from SW 9th makes it impossible for busses and difficult for other vehicles to enter

the Zoo from the south. Since that is the most direct route from Iowa Highway 5 and is the route used by the majority of regional visitors, a better entrance to the Zoo is needed.

The Blank Park Zoo Entrance Improvement project meets the Zoo’s current and projected visitor needs by increasing the capacity and safety of the entrance. In addition, a new Hoofstock Exhibit, which will be free to the public, will be created featuring hoofstock from around the world. To promote a sustainable approach to stormwater management, a new pond is proposed which will not only serve to detain stormwater, but also will provide habitat for water fowl. To provide recreational opportunities, a new park area is planned. It will feature an energy efficient shelter with a green roof along with restrooms and a playground. Security will be enhanced between the existing Fifth Judicial District Community Based Corrections facility and the Blank Park Zoo with an extensive landscaped screen utilizing native plant material. Future improvements to the parking lot which will increase the amount of parking are planned and will be implemented as funds become available. A proposed site plan for the Blank Park Zoo Entrance Improvement is attached.

As the first of the proposed Zoo expansion projects, the Blank Park Zoo Entrance Improvement project also helps to meet the Zoo’s mission to inspire an appreciation of the natural world through conservation, education and recreation.

The total cost of the Blank Park Zoo Entrance Improvement project is estimated to be \$2,650,000. Based on the program requirements, a RISE grant for \$900,000 is being requested. A \$1,000,000 grant from the Revenue Bonds Capitals (RBC) which is part of the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund (RIIF) program has already been awarded for the project. A portion of the RIIF grant will be used to provide the required matching funds for the requested RISE grant. The remainder of the project’s cost will be funded by the Blank Park Zoo Foundation. No City funds will be used. All design and project development is being done by a consultant funded by the Zoo Foundation. The City will bid and administer the construction contract if the grant is approved.

PROJECT COMPONENT	ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COST	FUNDING SOURCE
Entrance road and street improvements	\$900,000	RISE
Enhanced security barrier	\$750,000	RIIF
Hoofstock exhibit, park area with shelter and playground	\$1,000,000	Blank Park Zoo Foundation
TOTAL	\$2,650,000	

An agreement with the Fifth Judicial District outlining the use of the RIIF funds will precede the acceptance of this grant if approved.

This project advances the following City goals:

- *Entertainment Destinations:* Des Moines will be an entertainment hub for all ages and will attract visitors from the metro region and beyond.
- *Pride in Community Assets:* The City will set the standard for constructing and maintaining attractive buildings, parks, and infrastructure that represent our world-class city and generate civic pride.

- *Public Safety:* Residents and visitors will experience a sense of safety in all neighborhoods and in all activities.
- *World-Class, Lifelong Learning Opportunities:* The City will work with public and private schools, higher education institutions, and others to offer exceptional learning opportunities for all ages.

Because the Blank Park Zoo Entrance Improvement project solves the problems with the current entry and meets the Zoo's current and projected needs, staff recommends authorizing the City Manager to submit a RISE grant application to provide for a portion of the funding for the new entrance. The A.H. Blank family has reviewed this redesign proposal and is supportive.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S): NONE

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:

Acceptance of the RISE grant, RIIF agreement, Zoo agreement and normal actions for construction

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