

 <p style="text-align: center;">Council Communication Office of the City Manager</p>	Date: June 23, 2014
	Agenda Item No. 34 Roll Call No. <u>14-0962</u> Communication No. <u>14-298</u> Submitted by: Benjamin R. Page, Park and Recreation Director

AGENDA HEADING:

Authorizing a contribution of \$15,000 to Polk County Conservation (PCC) for use on development of the Jester Park Conservation Center.

SYNOPSIS:

Recommend approval of authorizing a contribution of \$15,000 to Polk County Conservation for use on development of the Jester Park Conservation Center.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: \$15,000

Funding Source: FY 2014-15 Operating Budget, Park and Recreation Department, Management Services, G001 PK001200, page 155

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

PCC is a frequent partner with Des Moines Parks and Recreation on both programming and capital improvement projects. PCC is raising funds to develop the \$6.95 million Jester Park Conservation Center and has requested financial support from the City of Des Moines along with other metro-area communities. PCC has agreed to allow the Parks and Recreation Department to use the Center 10 days per year for five (5) years once it is complete for environmental education programming at no charge. PCC plans to break ground this September and complete the project in the fall of 2015.

The PCC environmental education program serves 11 central Iowa school districts, with the greatest participation being the Des Moines Independent Community School District. Of the largest 10 metro areas in Iowa, the Des Moines area is the only one without a nature/conservation center. With the new Center, PCC is projecting to triple the number of participants in environmental education programs. There will be three (3) classrooms, which will allow three (3) classes to be hosted simultaneously.

The Center will consist of both indoor and outdoor interpretive areas focused on environmental education and outdoor recreation. The Center will focus on themes of water, natural systems, sustainability, and outdoor recreation and health. The indoor areas include: environmental education classrooms, board room, discovery kid zone, inspiration viewing area, discovery tree, art alcove, outdoor adventure gateway, exploration hall, and live animal display. The outdoor interpretive areas include: an environmental education plaza, streamscape, and prairie art walk.

The 24,000-square-foot building will be a model for sustainability through features including: a geothermal heat pump, structurally insulated panels, LED lighting, natural daylight, water conservation and storm water management, low VOC materials, site placement, locally manufactured materials, native plantings, and night sky conservation.

Funding sources include \$4 million in bonds with the remainder from grants and contributions. PCC has submitted a request to the Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) Program through Vision Iowa for \$1.1 million in financial assistance. Following the initial presentation, the Vision Iowa Board specifically requested participation from the nearby cities and the Polk County Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors subsequently committed \$200,000 toward the project.

Other cities have made the following financial commitments:

- West Des Moines - \$15,000
- Johnston - \$10,000
- Ankeny - \$10,000, contingent upon PCC successfully raising additional funds from local governments and securing the Vision Iowa CAT grant.
- Grimes - \$5,000
- Granger - \$2,500
- Polk City - \$2,500

Corporate and other private sponsorships for the facility include:

- Principal Financial - \$250,000
- Scheels - \$50,000
- Casey's - \$50,000
- Blank Foundation - \$10,000
- The Graham Group - \$10,000

The Greater Des Moines Foundation has awarded a \$100,000 grant toward the project. PCC continues to pursue additional private, corporate, foundation, and grant funding.

City support of the Jester Park Conservation Center is beneficial to the City in that it reinforces an ongoing partnership and is an excellent opportunity to be part of a significant tourist attraction and environmental education center that will help promote our departmental mission to Central Iowa. The \$15,000 contribution from the City will be made contingent upon Polk County Conservation securing full funding for the project and approving the construction agreement.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S): NONE

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS: NONE

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