

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has impacted Austin's economy in an unprecedented manner, leading to the closure of businesses and economic uncertainty; and

WHEREAS, Austin residents have lost jobs and income on an unprecedented scale as a result of the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Austin has received \$170 million in federal aid as a result of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and associated stimulus packages; and

WHEREAS, such funds must be used in direct response to the impact of the pandemic and for costs that were not previously budgeted by the City and that were incurred during the period that begins on March 1, 2020, and ends on December 30, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the federal Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was a work relief program created in 1933, employing Americans on conservation projects to alleviate economic distress and support the protection and development of natural resources; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Conservation Corps and American Youthworks are descendants of the original federal program, still in operation today; and

WHEREAS, in May of 2019, City Council unanimously supported the basic tenets of the Green New Deal, which includes the promotion and development of “green collar” jobs; and

WHEREAS, unemployed Austinites can be hired to complete conservation projects, providing them immediate economic relief, work experience, and job skill training; and

WHEREAS, such work can largely be done without extensive preparation, while observing social distancing and wearing personal protective equipment; and

WHEREAS, contract authorities exist to enable quick implementation of a program to hire Austinites to work on a variety of conservation projects, and other funding sources exist to build and expand such a program; and

WHEREAS, the creation of an Austin Civilian Conservation Corps work relief program would provide jobs to Austinites who have been economically impacted by compliance with COVID-related public health measures, inspire hope, build community, and support the overall goals of the City by completing necessary and beneficial projects; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to **explore the creation of** ~~create~~ an Austin Civilian Conservation Corps **or the expansion of similar existing community programs**, to

employ Austinites who have been economically impacted by compliance with COVID-related public health measures to complete conservation and other beneficial projects.

Program Structure

The City Manager is directed to identify and outline the basic components of the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps (ACCC) and provide to Council a recommendation on program structure as soon as possible, but no later than June 8, 2020. The recommendation should:

- allow for immediate deployment of some ACCC participants;
- take advantage of existing local organizations capacity to administer workforce programs and/or deploy Austinites in conservation projects;
- where appropriate to the scope of services consider utilizing existing contracts;
- position ACCC to leverage federal, state, and local funding

create reporting structures to provide accountability and transparency;

- be informed by the institutional knowledge of relevant City departments and external partners;
- include mechanisms for city departments to help define / steer projects on city and, as appropriate, on non-city lands / spaces;
- incentivize collaboration between City departments and between and with external organizations for project selection and design;

- create a structure flexible enough to accommodate involvement financial or otherwise by other public entities;
- allow for the development of an identity for the Corps; and
- offer a path for ACCC sustainability beyond December 30, 2020.

Eligibility

The Austin Civilian Conservation Corps should employ Austinites who have lost jobs and/or faced a significant economic impact as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, or persons who need to leave their current job for health reasons.

Workforce Development

The Austin Civilian Conservation Corps should pay a living wage to all participants, excepting those who are currently participating in existing City contracts or a federally-funded workforce development program. To ensure participants in the program are better positioned to secure employment on the completion of their service, the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps should incorporate trainings, certifications, and professional development opportunities wherever possible.

Project Selection

Projects shall take place on private or public space according to their funding source and following all associated guidelines. The City Manager is directed to prioritize projects that:

- can be done safely while observing social distancing;
- can be done without the need for extensive preparation of corps participants but performed in accordance with City-adopted best practices;
- do not require hiring additional City employees;
- can be done without hindering the regular operations and responsibilities of existing city staff and programs;
- will have a lasting positive impact; and
- will inspire hope and build community.

Projects can, but are not required to, leverage other funding such as a fee for service so more Austinites can be employed by the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps.

Possible project candidates include, but are not limited to:

- Fuels mitigation and brush pickup
- Planting and watering trees and greenery
- Trails creation and maintenance
- Beautification and art
- Urban farm development and maintenance
- Designing and laying out irrigation systems in support of planting efforts

- Watershed protection and erosion mitigation
- Invasive species management and removal, including but not limited to *ligustrum*, zebra mussels and blue-green algae
- Restoration of native habitats

Project candidates for city-funded projects include, but are not limited to:

- Any of the above project types on public land
- Park maintenance
- Urban orchard planning and planting on public lands, such as in parks or at Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) developments

Funding

The City Manager is directed to identify available funding for the creation and implementation of the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps program, to include:

- identifying aspects of the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps eligible for federal stimulus funding under current guidelines, and reevaluating if more funding and flexibility becomes available;
- fully activating and utilizing existing contract authorities to quickly staff the Austin Civilian Conservation Corp for projects and to begin project work without delay;

- creating new emergency contracts using funding allocated by City Council in the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 budget, including fuels mitigation contracts on public lands, to be used for projects as part of the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps.
- identifying other City funding sources, such as parkland dedication funding and the tree mitigation fund;
- exploring the availability of federal and state funding, especially from entities dealing with workforce development, agriculture, and parks.

The City Manager is authorized to use previously unbudgeted funds from the CARES Act to fund the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps to serve as a workforce development program for projects on private property.

For City-owned or other public lands, the City Manager is authorized to negotiate and execute new emergency contracts, to be executed pursuant to City's emergency contracting procedures, or negotiate and execute amendments to existing workforce development contracts in order to put Austinites to work quickly through the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps. The City Manager is further authorized to negotiate and execute contracts through standard procurement practices to provide ACCC opportunities for more Austinites as funding and demand allow.

The City Manager is directed to return to City Council at the next Council meeting, or the soonest possible Council meeting, with a recommendation for an initial appropriation funding amount for the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps.

The City Manager is directed to identify and pursue other funding sources for the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps, including grants and public-private partnerships, to enhance the Corps and to potentially continue the Corps beyond the initial funding period.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Intergovernmental Coordination and Advocacy

The City Manager is directed to coordinate with the county and other regional partners to maximize the benefits and impact of the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps.

The City Manager is further directed to advocate on the state and federal level for additional resources for programs like the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps, and to support the creation and resurgence of similar programs on a national scale.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to update the City's telecommuting policies and goals and to identify other actions that ensure the City incorporates lessons learned during the pandemic that might help achieve our climate goals as we recover.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager will provide Council an update on the implementation of the ACCC as soon as possible, but no later than June 8, 2020. The City Manager shall return to Council regularly with recommendations for improving or expanding the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps.

ADOPTED: _____, 2020

ATTEST: _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk

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