



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, Deputy City Manager *YPR*

DATE: June 9, 2020

SUBJECT: Update on Resolution No. 20200507-061 Austin Civilian Conservation Corps

On May 7, 2020, City Council approved Resolution No. 20200507-061 directing the City Manager to provide Council with a recommendation on the creation of a new Austin Civilian Conservation Corps (ACCC). The new program is intended to be a workforce initiative aimed at “employ[ing] 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.” While staff needs more time to fully complete its analysis and program structure analysis, including financial sources and project criteria, the following is an update on current efforts and next steps being worked on in furtherance of this Resolution.

A core workgroup has been formed to think about this initiative, currently led by the City Manager’s Office in partnership with Watershed Protection Department (WPD), the Office of Sustainability, the Innovation Office, and Parks and Recreation Department (PARC). The core workgroup inventoried both existing and potential new projects that would fall under the rubric of this civilian conservation corps initiative. The enthusiastic interest across the enterprise has yielded an initial list of almost 40 projects that have either started and could be expanded, have not yet commenced or present possible new projects that could be accelerated for the purposes of this new program. Examples of these programs and projects may include:

- Fuels mitigation and brush removal on Austin Water (AW) Wildlands
- Invasive plant removal on lands monitored by WPD and AW Wildlands
- Reforestation on the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve
- Expansion of beautification projects under Economic Development Department’s (EDD) TEMPO temporary public art program
- Amplification of food distribution projects in partnership with Austin Public Health (APH) and Travis County
- Expansion of wildfire mitigation projects under the Wildfire division of the Austin Fire Department (AFD)
- Placemaking, tree planting and other site enhancements on projects worked on by the Corridor Program Office (CPO)
- Arborist/forestry projects under Parks and Recreation Department

- Expansion and maintenance of new and existing trails - a collaboration with PARD and other community partners
- Expansion of various forestry and tree expansion/maintenance programs under the purview of the Development Services Department (DSD)
- Expansion WPD's Water Quality Monitoring and Training of At-Risk Youth program
- Expansion of contracts for homelessness encampment cleanup efforts held by WPD, Austin Resource and Recovery (ARR), the Public Works Department (PWD), and PARD
- Enhanced support for green stormwater infrastructure
- Expansion of Community PARKnership Program Nature Play

Finance staff provided the core working group with a draft compilation of existing and potential funding sources that could be used depending on the type and scope of the project as well as the project's location, *i.e.*, whether the project is on public or private land given the current understanding that CARES funding cannot be used to supplant work that would generally fall within a city's operational purview.

In addition to the widespread interest across the City enterprise, staff also heard from various community partners interested in collaborating on this initiative. To date, we've received interest and support from organizations such as American Youthworks, Workforce Solutions Capital Area (WFS), Austin Firewise Alliance, the Trellis Foundation and the Souch Foundation, and we have no doubt additional partners in the community that are open to exploring both near- and longer-term opportunities.

Given the speed at which the work is progressing, particularly considering the City's desire to both assist those immediately impacted by the pandemic as well as the need to leverage where possible the federal CARES funds that have been approved for the City of Austin, we have organized our work into three tiers. Our first tier would leverage existing contracts to identify pilot projects that could move forward immediately with minimized need for materials procurement or lengthy onboarding. Our Tier 1 phase will include a Tier 1 Strike Team comprised of WPD, Sustainability, AFD, AW, APH, EDD, and PARD along with targeted community partners that is already being assembled to quickly identify viable projects ready for launch within the next 2 months.

Our second tier would look to bring forward more community partners and staff to expand and prioritize projects that could commence within the current calendar year and that could be prioritized based on a variety of factors such as:

- The project addresses an urgent need, equity concern, or time constraint
- The project aligns with an existing initiative or City Council resolution
- Staff and community partner capacity to commence, hire, onboard and/or oversee the project within the next 3-6 months
- Availability and type of funding resources

Our final third tier would look to this program's long-term sustainability. The goal would be to work with our Tier 1 and Tier 2 members and community partners to learn from our previous initiatives and establish a program that is rooted in equity, and prioritizes projects based on a set of economic, social, and risk reduction criteria.

We also envision the potential for expanding this program to include a potential pathway to employment with either the City or our community partners. We would like to work with our internal and external partners develop training and job opportunities that provide a ladder of opportunities into a skilled workforce pipeline.

Finally, as part of this long-term effort, staff will be planning on a community engagement mechanism to more broadly discuss this initiative and create a larger forum for our community partners. We hope to explore the creation of a city-community advisory panel that could help review and recommend potential projects in the future and assist in identifying potential funding opportunities and partners.

While still in the early stages, the excitement expressed by both staff and our community partners has been energizing. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any immediate questions but know we will be providing you with periodic updates as the work progresses.