

RESOLUTION NO. 20200220-046

WHEREAS, the 351-acre Zilker Metropolitan Park is considered Austin's most-beloved park and is home to a variety of recreation opportunities, facilities and special events for individuals and families; and

WHEREAS, the twelve-passenger Zilker Park Eagle miniature train made its first trip in Zilker Park on April 22, 1961, and was operated by Zilker Park Eagle, Inc., which consisted of Larry Miller, B.E. Glenn, and G.L. Folger; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin facilitated a contest to officially name the family amusement train, resulting in the renaming of the Zilker Park Eagle as the Zilker Zephyr; and

WHEREAS, in February 1997, the 72-passenger family amusement ride known as the Zilker Zephyr, operated by Texas Special Company, owned by Jason and Abel Rodriguez, began its route around a defined path within Zilker Park; and

WHEREAS, in June 2018, Resolution No. 20180628-072 created the Zilker Park Working Group (ZPWG), which recommended to City Council in June 2019 that the City begin a Master Plan process for Zilker Park to include an evaluation of visitor convenience impacts and transportation solutions that will be efficient and convenient for visitors, inferred to include but not be limited to internal park visitor circulation, which may consider the family amusement train ride path; and

WHEREAS, the Zilker Park Master Plan request for qualifications/proposal process is scheduled to be released for formal consideration in Spring 2020; and

WHEREAS, in May 2019, a rainstorm caused severe erosion to an embankment supporting part of the train's track, causing it to close temporarily; and

WHEREAS, in January 2020, the Parks and Recreation Department was not able to come to an agreement with Texas Special Company for a new professional services contract for the continued operation of the family amusement train known as the Zilker Zephyr; and

WHEREAS the family amusement train ride known as the Zilker Zephyr is a beloved part of Zilker Park, enjoyed by thousands of visitors a year; and

WHEREAS, the non-profit Austin Parks Foundation has served as a City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department partner for over 27 years, to enhance public parks, trails and green spaces through volunteerism, innovative programming, advocacy, construction management, and financial support benefiting the Austin community; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin recognizes the service of the Texas Special Company in the operation of the family amusement train known as the Zilker Zephyr, has delighted families and visitors of Austin for twenty-two years; **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**

The City Manager is encouraged to consider any and all offers of charitable assistance and work to coordinate opportunities for philanthropic giving among all interested parties in the Zilker Zephyr's continued operation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed, if possible, to negotiate and execute an agreement with the Austin Parks Foundation (APF) to allow APF to procure a new family amusement train vendor and oversee the operations of the train with all net proceeds to be distributed to non-profit organizations operating within and around Zilker Park via a transparent financial reporting process developed by APF and PARD until which time the Zilker Park Master Plan recommendation for future train operations can be implemented; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Upon implementation of the Zilker Park Master Plan elements specific to train operations, the City Manager is directed to conduct a competitive solicitation process for future train operations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed, to expeditiously identify and coordinate contracting services to make critical engineering repairs to the erosion on the tracks; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

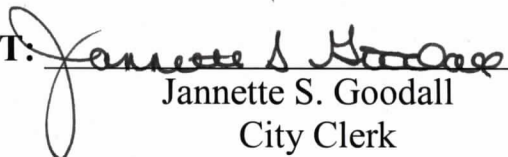
If the City Manager is unable to negotiate and execute an agreement for services and operations with the Austin Parks Foundation, the City Manager is directed to explore any and all alternatives to accept the donation of resources, including but not limited to, funds and in-kind services to expeditiously complete engineering and repairs to the defined train tracks associated with the family amusement train known as the Zilker Zephyr to allow for the safe operation of the train.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to report back to Council on or before June 31, 2020 on the City's efforts to bring the Zilker Zephyr back into safe operation.

ADOPTED: February 20, 2020

ATTEST:


Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk