

PARKS AND RECREATION RECOMMENDATION 20210427-B1

Date: April 27, 2021

Subject: Parks and Recreation Department Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget

MOTION BY:

SECONDED BY:

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Board reviewed the Parks and Recreation Department Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Forecast and Department Budget Overview at its meeting on March 23, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Board did not make a recommendation on the Budget Forecast at its March 23, 2020 meeting in order to give the Financial Committee time to consider the Budget Forecast and other information requested of the Parks and Recreation Department; and

WHEREAS, the Financial Committee has now provided its recommendation to the Parks and Recreation Board; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Board recognizes that in order to achieve the PARD goal of activating and enhancing urban park spaces to provide flexible and diverse programming; and

WHEREAS the Parks and Recreation Board recognizes that in order to achieve the PARD goal to align accessible and diverse programs and services with community needs and interests; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Board recognizes that in order to achieve the PARD goal of ensuring the parks system preserves recreational and natural spaces to serve as a respite from urban life; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Board recognizes that in order to achieve the PARD goal to expand and improve access to parks and facilities for all; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Board recognizes that the loss of Parks and Recreation Department fee revenue in Fiscal Year 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic was extremely significant yet the need for PARD facilities and programming is expected to be greater than ever moving into the 2021-2022 fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, in recent months the Parks and Recreation Department has seen increased pressure on its park system through off-leash dog violations, inappropriate behavior in greenbelts, increased illegal parking, increased notifications related to encampments within parkland, increased notification of motorized vehicles on trails and increased concerns about alcohol in parks; and

THEREFORE, the Parks and Recreation Board recommends approval of the Parks and Recreation Department FY 2022 Operating Budget as presented in its Budget Forecast; and the Parks and Recreation Board recommends that City Council make the additional allocations on the attached “FISCAL YEAR 2022 UNDER RESOURCED NEEDS” to the Parks and Recreation Department as these are priority items needed to address changes in city services, for parks programming, and pressures on the parks system which are not addressed under the current definitions provided in the budget process.

VOTE:

For:

Against:

Abstain:

Absent:

Attest: *[Staff or board member can sign]*

FISCAL YEAR 2022 UNDER RESOURCED NEEDS

1. Increase summer camp attendance capacity - \$1.2M

The Parks & Recreation Department's *Out of School Time* youth programming at city recreation centers provides academic, social, and physical benefits to our city's youth in a safe and supportive environment. The *Out of School Time* program is experiencing increasing demand, particularly in areas east of IH-35, and can be expanded to serve more families with children ages 5-15 years old. PARD's focus is on the Austin areas with the greatest need and where the space currently exists to serve more children. There is space for 375 more children at Parks and Recreation Sites across the city, but there is not enough funding to meet the increasing demand.

2. Additional Park Rangers Resources - \$2.4M (12 FTEs)

Park Rangers are the frontline in addressing so many of the challenges facing our parks. Currently minimal staff exists to serve additional park acres, trail mileage, population growth. Park Ranger FTE's are needed to fill that need. In recent months, the Parks Department has seen increased pressure on its park system through off-leash dog violations, inappropriate behavior in greenbelts, increased illegal parking, increased notifications related to encampments within parkland, increased notification of motorized vehicles on trails and increased concerns about alcohol in parks. Park Rangers can work with park visitors to resolve these issues and keep our parks safe and comfortable for all. For the additional task of park monitoring during the busy months from the spring through the fall at the locations like the Barton Creek Greenbelt, and Commons Ford Park, and operations at Walsh Boat Landing, Park Ranger Cadet II positions are requested. Park Rangers work in teams and this will allow 3 teams of FTEs and another 5 teams of temporary employees during the busy months.

3. Add security services for various pool facilities - \$147K

As an example of the need for security services for various pool facilities, Stacy Pool has experienced multiple incidents of volatile conflicts and misuse of facilities. In response to these issues, the Aquatics Division has been paying an off-duty APD officer to provide security at the pool facility from opening until closing. The current expense of paying a police officer \$61 an hour, which equates to weekly cost of \$5,765, with an annual cost of approximately \$300K. Aquatics has been added to the City's Security Services contract which will greatly reduce the current expenditure by nearly half, but the division is currently unfunded for this expense. The Parks and Recreation Board recommends an off-duty police officer or a mental health officer be contracted to address these issues.

4. Enhance department-wide security support - \$245K (2 FTEs)

This total request contains 2 FTEs and related costs totaling \$245k. Currently, PARD Occupational Health and Safety team members are acting as security personnel. They have no security experience and no necessary security training to adequately support the PARD

employees and properties. This proposal includes the requests of 2 experienced security positions and associated contractual and commodity costs to address the increased number of security concerns and illegal activity occurring on PARD property. This new team will be necessary to ensure the safeguard of employees and City of Austin residents at various PARD community sites.

5. Add more staffing at Barton Springs Pool (safety related) - \$269K

This total request contains \$269k in temporary employees. In response to a 2017 City Audit, PARD is launching a new digital entry system and could expedite entry into the pool by adding additional cashiers to our entry points. Due to the increase in patrons PARD is also asking for additional lifeguards to staff the pool as there has not been an increase to the temporary staff line item since FY15. Revenue has increase from \$1.4M to \$3M since FY15. Increasing lifeguards will provide adequate lifeguard as outlined in the State Department of Health code for swimming pools and spas. Attendance has grown year over year (952,000 in FY19). Once normal operations resume post COVID, this trend is expected to continue. This impacts the pool by having more people in the water and longer lines to get into the facility. More patrons in the water and in the facility, creates more responsibility for the existing staff. The Barton Springs staff responds to alcohol, smoking and other rule violations at the park which have expanded with the attendance increase.

6. Increase Athletics Maintenance support - \$255K (3 FTEs)

This total request contains 3 FTEs and related costs totaling \$255k. More field maintenance is needed to increase the inventory of playable/rentable fields, but there is also an equity component too. Currently, various Youth Services Organization (YSO) groups assist with field maintenance projects that mostly fall on the western portion of town. An increase in funding would allow for more playable fields to be just as well maintained in the eastern portion of town.

7. Increase in department-wide training support - \$585K (5 FTEs)

PARD has seen an increase in total headcount over the past few years, but have not received the increased number in HR headcount to support the increased number of employees. PARD's Human Resources Unit is requesting 2 additional positions, Organizational Development and Training Specialist, to assist in creating a training strategy for all PARD employees. Also, a Human Resources Specialist position is being requested to assist in implementing, administering and evaluating HR Programs.

Also, funding is being requested to roll out the new LMS365 system which hosts and tracks online training. The COA Human Resources Department has recommended the following positions to manage the LMS system: Two Catalog Administrators and one Training Specialist. This staff will handle any issues with learner administration/course set-up issues, upload all content packages and create course shells, produce progress reports, and handle IT related issues. Other related costs are computers, program licenses, and office supplies.

8. Extend hours at Bartholomew pool - \$99K

This total request contains \$99k in temporary employees. A goal of the Aquatic Master plan was to begin to increase the availability and access to pool space within the community. To accommodate this goal and to expand the availability of pool space that can be used it is recommended that we expand the hours of operation at an additional year-round facility. Expanding the hours of operation at Bartholomew pool to open at 6:00 am will help to alleviate some of the overcrowding that other facilities see due to the limited number of lap swimming lanes available in the off season. To accommodate the operations of the facility, the Division would need to increase the funds available to pay for temporary staff at the facility.