




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Kimberly A. McNeeley, M.Ed., CPRP, Director 
Austin Parks and Recreation Department

THROUGH: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, LMSW, Assistant City Manager

DATE: November 17, 2022

SUBJECT: Staff Update Regarding Austin Parks and Recreation Site Rentals (Ordinance 20220817-004: CM Tovo Budget Rider 7)

This memo serves as a response to Austin City [Council Ordinance 20220817-004: CM Tovo Budget Rider 7](#) which directed staff to determine what changes and renovations would be necessary to prepare Reicher Ranch and Commons Ford Ranch for rental, and to look at the portfolio of Parks and Recreation Department (Department) and other departmental sites to determine how these facilities could be managed to be as financially profitable as possible.

This Budget Rider references two specific sites: Reicher Ranch and Commons Ford Ranch, as well as other unspecified sites that may have been available for rental in the past.

The facility at Reicher Ranch is not an asset of the Department and is currently utilized as an administrative space for the Austin Water Department.

The house at Commons Ford Ranch remains an asset under the Department's purview. However, due to non-compliance issues with ADA code, the on-site septic system, the presence of hazardous building materials, as well as insufficient plumbing, mechanical, electrical, and life-safety systems, this facility is not suited for use as a special events rental and has not been reservable to the public since early 2015.

Internal correspondence from 2019 estimated the total cost of required code-related repairs at approximately \$1.1M. Although this number did not consider comprehensive site and facility needs for use as a rental venue, code-related repair estimates are likely closer to \$1.6M. There are additional investments needed for portions of the entry road, driveway and parking areas. In consideration of the estimated costs and because there are other critical needs throughout the Parks system, rehabilitation of the Commons Ford Ranch House has not been identified as a departmental priority.

While these two sites were not specifically mentioned in the Ordinance, the Department is actively working on rehabilitations to two event rental sites utilizing Hotel Occupancy Tax funding: the Zilker

Clubhouse and the Fiesta Gardens Facility. The scopes of both projects will focus on general preservation and restoration of the building's character-defining features while keeping in mind the topmost programmatic priority will be the flexibility of the site to host many types of groups and events, from weddings and parties to corporate or non-profit group events/retreats.

Lastly, the Budget Rider suggested that the Austin Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) could be a potential partner to determine how the City programs or manages these sites as rental venues. Conversations with the AEDC has informed the Department that the AEDC is available to provide consult. The Department will engage AEDC at a future time when the Commons Ford facility emerges as a renovation priority.

Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6717.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager