



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Date: August 2, 2023

Subject: Zilker Park Polo Field Parking

Motioned By: Richard Brimer

Seconded By:

WHEREAS, the Austin City Council, on June 28, 2018 directed the City Manager to form the Zilker Park Working Group (20180628-072) to, inter alia, **“Make recommendations to establish a plan to permanently remove parking on the Polo Fields, taking into consideration possible strategies to reduce parking demand and utilization of transportation demand management strategies.”**¹

WHEREAS, the Zilker Park Working Group, in their final report of June 2019, recommended a timeline for closing the Zilker Park Polo Field as an overflow parking area by May 1, 2022 after securing an equivalent number of viable, preferably offsite parking alternatives to the reduced parking that will accommodate the displaced parking, and that are similar to the displaced parking in affordability, convenience, and usability.²

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Department (“PARD”) prohibits parking on the Zilker Park Polo Field from September 4th until May 31st, and prohibits parking on the Polo Field during weekdays year round except for overflow parking for special events in Zilker Park, which include Zilker Holiday Tree Lighting, Trail of Lights, Zilker Kite Festival, Zilker Botanical Gardens Event, Sunshine Camps Events, Zilker Hillside Theater, and Blues on the Green.

WHEREAS, PARD is committed to eliminating parking on the Zilker Park Polo Field and is in their second year utilizing a free external shuttle to and from One Texas Center, which has 750 parking spaces, as a first step in PARD’s effort to ensure that parking alternatives (internal shuttle, public transportation, dockless mobility strategies, e-bikes, and e-scooters) are available and convenient to use.³

WHEREAS, PARD’s response to Council’s directive to end parking on the Polo Field is by phasing out parking with the intention of completion by May, 2022.

WHEREAS, PARD’s current state of phasing out overflow parking on the Polo Field during summer weekends is at 50%.

WHEREAS, the Polo Field is heavily compacted from substantial vehicle parking use and there are eaks of toxic fluids from automobiles, resulting in extensive environmental degradation.

WHEREAS, the Polo Field area is located wholly or partly within the Barton Creek, Lady Bird Lake, Eanes Watersheds, and the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone.

WHEREAS, the Butler Gravel Lot has been remediated per the approved Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) maintenance plans and has 750 available public parking spaces.

WHEREAS, the Butler Gravel Lot has more available parking spaces than are currently permitted at the Zilker Park Polo Field.

WHEREAS, the Butler Gravel Lot has an “equivalent number of viable alternatives” to parking on the Polo Field.

WHEREAS, a capacity of 750 spaces at the Butler Gravel Lot with a free shuttle bus service of at least two to four (2-4) vehicles operating continuously from the Butler Gravel Lot to a designated drop-off point near Baron Springs Pool is similar to parking on the Polo Field in affordability, convenience and usability.

WHEREAS, the Barton Springs Pool parking lot will be temporarily closed for the Bathhouse Rehabilitation project from January 2024 until March 2025.

WHEREAS, Zilker Park requires a long-term parking solution to appropriately address this issue and this Recommendation is a short-term solution.

WHEREAS, it is in the interest of all residents of Austin to create an internal transit solution for Zilker Metropolitan Park to address a growing population.

THEREFORE, the Environmental Commission Recommends the adoption of the Parks and Recreation Board Recommendations as specified in Recommendation 2023072-5 in their entirety.

Vote

For:

Against:

Abstain:

Absent:

Attest:

Kevin Ramberg, Environmental Commission Chair

¹ Resolution number 20180628-072 <https://services.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=301684> ; Zilker Park Working Group Final Report, June 2019; pg. 8 ; https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/Projects/ZPWG-Summary_and_Personal_Statements_Final_Revised.pdf

² Zilker Park Working Group Final Report, June 2019; pg. 13; https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/Projects/ZPWG-Summary_and_Personal_Statements_Final_Revised.pdf

³ Zilker Park Working Group Final Report, June 2019; pg. 5; https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/Projects/ZPWG-Summary_and_Personal_Statements_Final_Revised.pdf