



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Commission on Aging

Recommendation Number: (20240313-XXX): Parks & Recreation Funding

WHEREAS, persons aged 65 and older represent the fastest-growing age group in Austin, expanding from 55,695 (7.0% of 2010 population) to 91,733 (9.5% of 2020 population), and growing at a rate of 64.7%; and

WHEREAS, one main focus of the Commission on Aging is furthering Austin's Age Friendly Action Plan; and

WHEREAS, Austin's Age Friendly Action Plan includes an Outdoor Spaces component, indicating people need public places to gather — indoors and out. Green spaces, seating, and accessible buildings (elevators, zero-step entrances, and ramps) can be used and enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities. Age-friendly communities might require buildings to follow Universal Design Guidelines, a relatively new concept meaning building for people of all abilities including wheelchair users; and

WHEREAS, Austin's Age Friendly Action Plan includes a Social Participation component, indicating that Parks and Recreation Departments as well as local libraries are often the champions of social participation, recreation, and engagement for every community. These two agencies provide multi-generational programs as well as programs geared for specific ages. Their programs are critical for those who may feel the debilitating effects of isolation. Loneliness can be combated by creating opportunities to socialize and the availability of accessible, affordable, and fun social activities; and

WHEREAS, Austin's Age Friendly Action Plan includes a Work and Civic Engagement Spaces component, indicating that an age-friendly community encourages older people to be actively engaged in community life and has opportunities for residents to work for pay or volunteer their skills and that city parks are an excellent location for civic engagement and community engagement; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) has been the steward of the City of Austin's public lands since 1928. As such, PARD protects and maintains parkland, preserves trails, and offers a variety of sports, recreation, educational enrichment, arts programs, cultural opportunities, nature and aquatic activities; and

WHEREAS, only half of PARD sites have full-time administrative support, which creates inconsistency for customers and disrupts service due to high turnover however, consistent, dedicated site specialists are

crucial for building relationships and providing seamless customer experiences with PARD's complex system; and

WHEREAS, additional funding is crucial to avoid diverting resources from core programs and ensure compliance with safety regulations (NFPA 10, Texas Fire Code); and

WHEREAS, standardizing PARD's marketing processes is crucial for consistent, high-quality materials across its PARD's diverse team; and

WHEREAS, increased use of Community Recreation athletic fields, including youth sports and adult leagues, has strained their condition and increased youth sports participation (14% growth) further highlights the need; and

WHEREAS, improved field conditions (lighting, irrigation, fencing) have attracted even more demand from both adult leagues and the public; and

WHEREAS, PARD coordinates with Austin's Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) to provide cold weather shelters (CWS) and emergency shelters when temperatures drop, averaging thirteen (13) CWS days and five (5) emergency shelter days annually; and

WHEREAS, the coordination of these services with HSEM aligns with Council's top priority to address homelessness (Austin Action Plan) and audit recommendations; and

WHEREAS, these shelters require temporary staff, cleaning supplies, and food/drinks, which are currently diverting funds from PARD's community recreation programs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends the following to ensure consistent service to Austin's growing population, PARD requests, 4 new full-time administrative specialist positions (\$332,328), conversion of 6 part-time administrative assistants to full-time (\$75,878), reclassification of administrative assistants to specialists (\$158,546) for equitable standards.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends \$107,000 for Community Recreation and Centralized Programs annually to cover mandatory maintenance and inspections (HVAC, ADA, fire safety) for their 23 facilities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends the addition of four (4) Marketing Representative A positions to boost effectiveness, brand recognition, and reach marginalized communities at a cost of \$369,979. These positions will handle social media, web content, campaigns, and community engagement, ensuring a cohesive Parks and Recreation Department brand.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends funding in the amount of \$140,809 for necessary ballfield and maintenance improvement to address aeration, pesticide, herbicide, topsoil, and fertilization to maintain safe fields year-round.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends dedicated funding for CWS in the amount of \$80,454 to ensure the quality of both shelter operations and essential recreation services for Austin residents.

Date of Approval: _____

Record of the vote: ()

Attest: _____

(Staff or board member can sign)