



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Joint Inclusion Committee

Recommendation Number: (20240327-007): Parks & Recreation Funding

WHEREAS, the Joint Inclusion Committee (“JIC”) of the City of Austin (“City”) serves as an advisory body that advocates for and inspires the City Council (“Council”) and City Manager on issues pertaining to equity, diversity, and inclusion to promote close cooperation between Council, City Management, City boards, commissions, committees, and task forces, and individuals, institutions, and agencies to increase and sustain equity, diversity, and inclusion in the city; and

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, 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, additional funding is crucial to avoid diverting resources from core programs and ensure compliance with safety regulations (NFPA 10, Texas Fire Code); 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 FURTHER RESOLVED that the Joint Inclusion Committee recommends \$107,000 for Community Recreation and Centralized Programs annually to cover mandatory maintenance and inspections (HVAC, ADA, fire safety) for their 23 facilities; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Joint Inclusion Committee recommends funding in the amount of \$140,809 for necessary ball field and maintenance improvement to address aeration, pesticide, herbicide, topsoil, and fertilization to maintain safe fields year-round; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Joint Inclusion Committee recommends that PARD expenses for operating CWS are funded through City of Austin Homeland Security and Emergency Management budget, to ensure the quality of both shelter operations and essential recreation services for Austin residents.

Date of Approval: March 27, 2024

Record of the vote: Record of the vote: 8-0, Commissioners Vargas and Gordon (ECC), Commissioners Davis and Aslam (Human Rights) absent

Attest:  _____

Vice-Chair