

STAFF REPORT



Meeting Date:

To: Board of Directors

From: Michael J. Aho, District Administrator

Subject: Board Approval for Staff Application to Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Monies

Prepared By: Sean Ventura, Parks & Facilities Manager

I. Recommendation

It is staff's recommendation that the Board approve an application for grant funds through the California Department of Parks and Recreation's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for use on Phoenix Park, primarily in the large, undeveloped section of land in the center of the park.

II. Background

The California Department of Parks and Recreation website notes that, "LWCF grants provide funding for the acquisition or development of land to create new outdoor recreation opportunities for the health and wellness of Californians. Since 1965, over one thousand parks throughout California have been created or improved with LWCF assistance."

There is an estimated amount of \$30 million available for eligible agencies in California; each agency may apply for up to \$6 million. The LWCF provides grant funds at a reimbursement rate of 50%. For example, if the District applied for a project with a total cost of \$100,000, the LWCF can potentially reimburse up to \$50,000 of that overall project cost.

In 2004/05, the District was awarded funding through the LWCF for Phoenix Park (Project Number 06-01544) for the purposes of developing soccer fields, nature area pathways, and related support facilities.

On June 1st, 2023, the application deadline to apply for the current round of LWCF arrives. Before that time, staff will need to perform outreach requirements of the grant, work with architects to produce plans for any

proposed development associated with grant funding, and perform California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) reviews of any potential projects. In addition, the application for any grant funding involves a lengthy process which will take significant staff time to prepare. The deadline will approach rather quickly; staff seeks to be prepared for that deadline by beginning the necessary pre-application requirements well ahead of time.

III. Problem /Situation/ Request

Staff seeks approval to apply for LWCF funding at Phoenix Park for two key reasons:

First are the requirements and restrictions for a site funded by a LWCF grant. LWCF funding places several restrictions on a site in order "to verify that LWCF parks remain open, accessible, and maintained" for public, outdoor use. These restrictions are summarized from the California Department of Parks and Recreation website as follows:

- Changes to the boundaries of a funded site (such as roadways being expanded into park land, new buildings being constructed on park land, or any other changes that impact the amount of land available for outdoor public recreation use).
- Changes to the use of any portion of the park site to private, commercial, or non-public outdoor recreation use.
- Construction of new utilities (both above and underground), rights of ways and easements.
- Construct or install any kind of indoor facility, other than restrooms, within the park, including structures such as community centers, schools and pre-schools, gymnasiums, housing, police substations, and libraries.
- Close (permanently or temporarily) any portion of the park.
- Remove or replace a facility, obsolete or otherwise, developed with LWCF funds, from the park.

While these types of changes are restricted, they are not completely disallowed. The District would have to report any proposed changes such as these to a Grant Administration Project Officer who would then have final authority over whether the changes could be made.

The District has already received LWCF funding for Phoenix Park in the past and the site is therefor already under the above restrictions; staff do not desire to place another park under such restrictions. Staff believe that placing restrictions on other proposed sites (such as Fair Oaks Park) would not be in the best interest of the District considering any future plans the District may have to construct facilities such as a community center or similar structure.

Staff's second reason is that a site such as La Vista School would not be viable for these grant funds, as the District would be required to own the property on which funding would be used, and the District is merely leasing La Vista's ballfields at this time.

With the above considerations in mind, staff feel that Phoenix Park is the ideal site for applying for further grant funds through the LWCF.

Staff believe a grant program such as LWCF would be an ideal way to leverage Measure J funds to greater effect in an effort to provide additional amenities to the patrons of Phoenix Park while also answering some of the District's major concerns at that site such as parking impaction during spring and summer months.

IV. Financial Analysis


One major requirement that is of utmost concern to the District is that funding through LWCF is that of reimbursement. The District would have to be able to provide all funding to be able to complete, without any assistance, any project which could potentially be funded by the LWCF. After project completion, funding from the LWCF would be sent to the District as reimbursement.

Staff does not have an accurate proposal for the final costs of a LWCF funded project at Phoenix Park. Those totals would only be reached once outreach and design were completed and the District received a cost estimate from the architect in contract with the District; however, 100% of the overall project cost must be covered by the District, and the project must be completed, prior to receiving reimbursement from the LWCF program.

It should also be noted that reimbursement rates will not go up if the project is finalized over-budget. The grant funding would only be paid out at the amount approved during the initial application. If the project were to be finalized under-budget, then grant funding would only be supplied to cover 50% of the total project cost.

Staff proposes that the District use a combination of the \$1,554,381 in Measure J funds previously allocated to projects at Phoenix Park, impact and in-lieu fees, and potentially a loan from the California Special District Association in an amount to bring the District up to an approximate \$4 million overall project cost, 50% of which would ultimately be reimbursed through the LWCF grant.

Respectfully Submitted,


Michael J Aho (Feb 15, 2023 17:22 PST)

Michael J. Aho
District Administrator







8.5 Approval of Application for Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Monies.

Final Audit Report

2023-02-16

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