

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: JEN SANTOS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PARKS
TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
JEREMY GUNDY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, FIELD SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
JEFF TIBBETTS, INTERIM DEPUTY DIRECTOR, RECREATION
SUBJECT: PARKS MEASURE PRIORITY PLAN UPDATE

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Transportation and Public Works Department and the Planning and Economic Development Department that Council, by resolution, approve the Parks Measure Priority Plan update for Parks Measure funds received in years 3-10.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Parks Measure Priority Plan is to provide a strategy for prioritizing funding received from Sonoma County Parks for All Tax Measure M, known as the Parks Measure. The update will add a strategy to the Parks Measure Priority Plan received from recent city-wide outreach conducted for utilization of funds received in years 3-10 of the Parks Measure.

BACKGROUND

In 2018 the County of Sonoma placed "Measure M", a tax initiative, on the November 2018 voters' ballot. City Council, by Resolution #2018-177 supported Measure M on October 2, 2018.

Voters passed Measure M which went into effect on April 1, 2019 and expires from collecting funds in ten years on March 31, 2029. The City may utilize funds allocated to the City of Santa Rosa from the Fund annually at any time following receipt.

Measure M is a county-wide one-eighth of one percent sales tax measure that allocates an estimated \$1.9 million per year to the City of Santa Rosa for Recreation and Parks purposes. Specifically, the Parks Measure provides for the following allowable uses:

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- Maintain parks and recreation facilities to ensure safe, clean, accessible visitor experiences
- Improve and develop athletic fields, playgrounds, restrooms, picnic areas, and visitor amenities
- Create and expand parks, trails, bikeways, public art, and recreation and historical facilities
- Plan and develop bike paths and trails with connections to schools, community spaces, and regional trails
- Provide recreational, educational, and health programs for the community
- Decrease future fire risks, fuel loads, and invasive plants on city owned open space parks
- Improve trails along waterways and riparian areas to benefit fish, wildlife habitat, and water quality

The Parks Measure relies upon an Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee; the City of Santa Rosa Mayor appointed one citizen to this Committee. The Committee meets quarterly and reviews the previous year's expenditures to ensure fiscal accountability.

In order to ensure that the City's portion of the Sonoma County Parks Measure (M) funds are allocated according to the requirements of the Parks Measure, a Priority Plan is needed.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

City Council approved an Initial and Long-Term Priority Plan by Resolution #2019-142 at its September 10, 2019 meeting. The Plan has guided priorities over the last couple of years and anticipated a return to Council to update the Plan.

The 2019 plan identified the following priorities approved by Council:

Initial priority year 1-2:

- Fire-related parks and recreation damages such as Coffey, Rincon Ridge, Fir Ridge, Nagasawa, and Francis Nielsen Parks
- Consultant recommendations for deferred maintenance and overall recommendations
- Develop and implement city-wide community outreach plan

Long-Term priority year 2-10:

- Determined via consultant recommendation, community outreach, and recommendations from the Board of Community Services (BOCS)
- Update priority plan for years 2-10
- Updated 2-10-year plan in place to be reviewed/updated on-going from community engagement and BOCS recommendations

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Annual updates:

- Collect on-going city-wide community recommendations
- BOCS bi-annual review and recommendations
- City Council annual review and approval during the budget approval process

ANALYSIS

The priorities identified in the 2019 Priority Plan have been implemented and are on-going.

As approved by Council, the first two years of Measure M funds allocation are available for use to fund the gap in funding needed for recovery of fire-related park damages from the 2017 wildfire. Several projects are pending completion related to fire damages, and the final funding gap need is unknown until the project reimbursement requests are complete, which is estimated in Winter 2022/Spring 2023.

Council approved Callander Associates Landscape Architects to conduct a deferred maintenance study of all city parks and landscapes. The study will review the condition of all parks and landscapes in the city and develop a priority list of capital and maintenance projects. This is a critical project that will assist the city with understanding the priority needs throughout the city. The project will produce a comprehensive report of recommendations for spending Parks Measure funds in early 2022.

After the dedication of the first two years of Parks Measure funds toward the parks fire recovery projects and the deferred maintenance project, a robust marketing and outreach strategy was utilized to collect feedback citywide regarding community priorities for spending Measure M funds from years 3-10.

Starting in 2019, the city held thirteen meetings, which included three Board of Community Services (BOCS) meetings to solicit feedback regarding community priorities as follows:

- July 24, 2019 – BOCS public meeting
- September 25, 2019 - Community Advisory Board (CAB) public meeting
- September 25, 2019 – Violence Prevention Partnership Operations
- October 3, 2019 – Santa Rosa Together
- February 27, 2020 – Northwest Community Quadrant public meeting hosted by West End Neighborhood
- December 3, 2020 – Sports and Athletics virtual public meeting hosted by Athletico sports club
- March 10, 2021 – Northeast Community Quadrant virtual public meeting hosted by Santa Rosa Visitors Center
- March 18, 2021 – Southwest Community Quadrant virtual public meeting hosted by LandPaths

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- March 25, 2021 – Southeast Community Quadrant virtual public meeting hosted by SouthPark CBI
- April 22, 2021 – Citywide virtual public meeting hosted by Coffey Strong
- April 28, 2021 – BOCS public meeting
- July 7, 2021 – Citywide, Spanish language virtual public meeting hosted by LandPaths
- September 22, 2021 – BOCS virtual public meeting

The goal was to receive a wide variety of feedback in each park quadrant and meet with interested stakeholders. The City's park quadrants are formed by the intersection of Highways 101 and 12, which forms four park quadrants. The percentage of participants in each quadrant is proportionally equal to the percentage of residents and property owners shown in the 2010 census within each quadrant.

The Pandemic in Sonoma County in Spring 2020 significantly reduced the amount of community outreach efforts planned, and all meetings were canceled. The following year, staff conducted the remainder of the planned community outreach virtually and collected feedback from well over 1600 individual participants.

In addition to the virtual meetings, an on-line survey was available on the website after the first quadrant meeting in February 2020. The on-line survey was available again continuously from the first virtual meeting in December 2020 through the final virtual meeting in July 2021.

The data collected from the community outreach showed the community priorities in order are as follows:

Priority 1: Improve Park Amenities (28.4%) *Improve and develop athletic fields, playgrounds, restrooms, picnic areas, and visitor amenities*

Priority 2: Maintain Parks (21.0%) *Maintain parks and recreation facilities to ensure safe, clean, accessible visitor experiences*

Priority 3: Create and Expand (13.3%) *Create and expand parks, trails, bikeways, public art, and recreation and historical facilities*

Priority 4: Develop Trails (10.4%) *Plan and develop bike paths and trails with connections to schools, community spaces, and regional trails*

Priority 5: Decrease Fire (10.2%) *Decrease future fire risks, fuel loads, and invasive plants on city owned open space parks*

Priority 6: Waterways (9.3%) *Improve trails along waterways and riparian areas to benefit fish, wildlife habitat, and water quality*

Priority 7: Programs (7.2%) *Provide recreational, educational, and health programs for the community*

The on-line survey allowed participants to provide written feedback in addition to selecting their preferences. Most of the written comments were requests for improved and enhanced maintenance and for specific capital projects.

Based on community priorities and comments received, a strategy was developed that grouped the priorities related to capital projects into one group:

- Improve park amenities - *Improve and develop athletic fields, playgrounds, restrooms, picnic areas, and visitor amenities*
- Create and expand - *Create and expand parks, trails, bikeways, public art, and recreation and historical facilities*
- Develop trails - *Plan and develop bike paths and trails with connections to schools, community spaces, and regional trails*
- Waterways - *Improve trails along waterways and riparian areas to benefit fish, wildlife habitat, and water quality*

Next, the strategy grouped the priorities related to enhanced maintenance and maintenance for fuel reduction (vegetation management):

- Maintain Parks - *Maintain parks and recreation facilities to ensure safe, clean, accessible visitor experiences*
- Decrease Fire - *Decrease future fire risks, fuel loads, and invasive plants on city-owned open space parks*

Finally, the strategy showed recreational programming in one category:

- Programming - *Provide recreational, educational, and health programs for the community*

Essentially, this is a strategy that proposes approximately 50% of the Parks Measure funds projected to be received from years 3-10 are utilized towards capital improvements, approximately 40% of the funds are utilized towards enhanced maintenance and fuel reduction, and approximately 10% of the remaining funds are utilized toward enhanced recreation programming.

Projections for the remaining funds anticipated from Measure M to the city, less the funds already allocated to date, are projected to be approximately \$14 million. From the estimated total remaining funds from years 3-10, the following one-time funds are projected available per category:

- Capital projects: approximately \$7 million
- Enhanced maintenance and fuel reduction: approximately \$5.5 million

- Enhanced Recreational programming: approximately \$1.4 million

Actual amounts available from the fund will vary depending upon the tax measure funds collected annually. The amounts shown are provided as a reference should the tax measure perform financially as anticipated.

Pending Council approval of the Measure Updated M Priority Plan attached as Exhibit A, staff will embark on the next steps to develop a specific list of capital projects, a specific plan for enhanced maintenance and fuel reduction, and a specific plan for recreational program enhancement to present to the community.

The Parks Condition Assessment Report is anticipated to be complete in early 2022. Once received, the next steps are to present specific projects based on the condition assessment and the 2021 Measure M Updated Priority Plan to the community in early Spring 2022.

Re-engaging with the community in early 2022 is necessary to collect the community's specific priority projects to implement specific priority capital projects, maintenance and fuel reduction enhancements, and recreational programming for Measure M spending allocations, years 3-10.

Upon completion of community engagement, staff will return to Council for approval of specific capital projects, maintenance enhancements, and recreational programming for years 3-10 of the Parks Measure. On an on-going basis, annual Parks Measure updates will be provided at the Board of Community Services and the Parks Measure Citizens Oversight Committee and regularly via community outreach methods.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this action does not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund. All funds are derived from the Sonoma County Parks Measure M tax collection annually. Measure M is estimated to provide \$1.9 million annually to the City of Santa Rosa.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is not subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project with potential for resulting in either a direct, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378. Pursuant to Section 15378(b)(4) CEQA does not apply to creation of government funding mechanisms or other government fiscal activities that do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment. In addition, or in the alternative, this action is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment in that this action relates to funding for specified projects which

have been previously subject to CEQA review or will be subject to CEQA review prior to project commencement.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On April 28, 2021, the BOCS received a thorough review of all the data collected to date from the community outreach efforts. There were approximately 900 participant surveys collected and analyzed. Patterns of interest were emerging from the information collected that indicated a strong community preference for a spending strategy that focused on enhanced maintenance and capital projects and minor consideration for enhanced recreational programming. The BOCS received several strategies for consideration towards an updated priority plan and provided staff with feedback.

On September 22, 2021, the BOCS received an updated and thorough review of all the data from community outreach complete to date. There were well over 1600 participant surveys collected and analyzed. Again, patterns of interest emerged that indicated a strong community preference for a spending strategy that focused on capital projects, enhanced maintenance, and minor consideration for enhanced recreational programming. The BOCS was presented with several strategies for a priority plan update that utilizes the funds received in years 3-10 of the Parks Measure and ultimately recommended a strategy that utilizes approximately 50% of funds be utilized towards capital projects, approximately 40% of the funds be utilized towards enhancing maintenance/fuel reduction, and approximately 10% of the funds towards enhanced recreational programming.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Resolution/Exhibit A – Parks Measure Priority Plan Update

CONTACT

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