

**CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

Meeting Date July 13, 2020

**REPORT TO:** Melinda Coleman, City Manager

**REPORT FROM:** Michael Sable, Assistant City Manager / HR Director

**PRESENTER:** Melinda Coleman, City Manager  
Michael Sable, Assistant City Manager / HR Director

**AGENDA ITEM:** Resolution Approving Formation of Parks & Recreation Programming Task Force and Nature Center Task Force

**Action Requested:**  Motion  Discussion  Public Hearing

**Form of Action:**  Resolution  Ordinance  Contract/Agreement  Proclamation

**Policy Issue:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant shifts in the city's service model for Parks and Recreation and Nature Center programming and their financial sustainability moving forward. Task Forces comprised of residents, stakeholders, public agencies, partners and staff will engage in a comprehensive review of the future of Parks and Recreation and Nature Center programs and services in the City of Maplewood.

**Recommended Action:**

Motion to approve the resolution for Formation of the Parks and Recreation Programming Task Force and Nature Center Task Force.

**Fiscal Impact:**

Is There a Fiscal Impact?  No  Yes, the true or estimated cost is \$0.00

Financing source(s):  Adopted Budget  Budget Modification  New Revenue Source  
 Use of Reserves  Other: N/A

**Strategic Plan Relevance:**

Financial Sustainability  Integrated Communication  Targeted Redevelopment  
 Operational Effectiveness  Community Inclusiveness  Infrastructure & Asset Mgmt.

Staff was directed to develop two Task Forces of residents, stakeholders, and other parties to help develop a new model of service for both the Nature Center and for Parks and Recreation in the City of Maplewood.

**Background**

Beginning March 13, 2020, all in-person programs and services offered by Parks and Recreation and the Nature Center were closed due to COVID-19 concerns. Since that time, the City continued

to evaluate its COVID-19 response and forecast possible budgetary impacts in 2020 and 2021. As the pandemic continued, the City saw significant revenue loss in direct programming fees in these areas. In early June 2020, the decision was made to close the Nature Center and Parks and Recreation programs, which resulted in lay-offs of staff in those areas. With increasing uncertainty about impacts of COVID-19 and a return to “normal” conditions, the future of these services is unknown.

At the June 22, 2020 City Council Meeting, direction was given to staff to develop two Task Forces of residents, stakeholders, and other parties to help develop a new model of service for both the Nature Center and for Parks and Recreation in the City of Maplewood.

Among the goals of the task forces will be to review existing programming, services, and operating budgets, review possible programming alternatives, and identify possible funding partners to help pay for amenities with a regional focus and/or draw. In addition, the Council identified the inclusion of communities of color and other historically underrepresented population for the task forces. Lastly, the Council identified the goal for broad public input, including the use of surveys or other feedback tools.

Staff met to develop a high-level summary of the proposed membership of the Task Forces and a timeline for developing recommendations.

### **NATURE CENTER TASK FORCE:**

How to reopen the Nature Center to serve the region that is financially sustainable without reliance on Maplewood property tax support?

#### **Members:**

City Council (1 member)  
 Friends of Nature Center (2 members)  
 Volunteers of Nature Center (1-2 members)  
 Environment & Natural Resources Commission (1 member)  
 Local Government or Non-profit Partners (2 members)  
 Schools – Elementary and/or Higher Education (1-2 members)  
 Residents (2-3 members)  
 Staff (2 members - Melinda Coleman, Audra Robbins)

#### **Timeline:**

6 Meetings (approximately 2.5 hours, every 3 weeks)  
 Begin in mid-August – TBD  
 Community survey with summary findings, resident input and preliminary recommendations in October  
 Final report in early-December - TBD

### **PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMMING TASK FORCE:**

What Parks and Recreation model best serves our community now and into the future?

#### **Members:**

City Council (1 member)  
 Parks and Recreation Commission (1 member)

Athletic Associations (1-2 members)  
Cities, Counties, or Non-profit Partners (3 members)  
School Districts – (2 members)  
Residents (3-4 members)  
Staff (4 members - Melinda Coleman, Audra Robbins, Neil Breneman and Scott Nadeau)

**Timeline**

6 Meetings (approximately 2.5 hours, every 3 weeks)  
Begin in mid-August – TBD  
Community survey with summary findings and preliminary recommendations in October  
Final report in early-December - TBD

**Member Recruitment**

City staff will conduct outreach efforts designed to fill-out the Task Forces consistent with best practices, including the “Use of Force” Workgroup as a model.

**Attachments**

1. Resolution

**CITY OF MAPLEWOOD  
RESOLUTION FOR THE FORMATION OF TASK FORCES TO REVIEW & MAKE  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES TO NATURE CENTER AND PARKS AND RECREATION  
PROGRAMMING**

Whereas, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant shifts in the City's service model for Parks and Recreation and Nature Center programming and their financial sustainability moving forward.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that to provide effective recreation and nature center programs and services in a financially sustainable way, the City of Maplewood shall establish two Task Forces made up of a diverse group of eight to fourteen Maplewood residents and key stakeholders to engage in a systematic review of the current operations, evaluate future programming possibilities, and establish key partnerships:

- The City Manager shall solicit applications from interested Maplewood residents willing and able to serve as a member of the Task Force(s), as soon as practicable;
- Following a reasonable application period, the City Manager shall present the Council copies of the applications from all qualified applicants for review and final selection;
- That the City Council select a Councilmember to serve as the Council Liaison to the Task Force(s);
- The City Manager shall make available members of the City considered subject matter experts or other resources, as may be needed;
- The Task Force(s) will establish meeting agendas in cooperation with the membership to provide substantive background information, a review of current practice, and other service models
- Upon completion its work, the Task Force(s) shall make recommendations to the City Manager for changes to existing practices. The Task Force(s) will also prioritize recommended partnership agreements, if appropriate;
- When practical, the City Manager will present the report to the City Council.

ADOPTED THIS 13TH DAY OF JULY, 2020.

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MARYLEE ABRAMS, MAYOR

ATTEST:

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ANDREA SINDT, CITY CLERK