



Community Development Committee

Meeting date: December 19, 2011

Business Item
Item: 2011-366

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date:	December 13, 2011
Subject:	Reimbursement Consideration Request for Completing Nature Play Area at Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park, Ramsey County
District(s), Member(s):	Metropolitan Council District 11, Sandy Rummel
Policy/Legal Reference:	Updated 2030 Parks Policy Plan Finance Strategy 6
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks (651-602-1360)
Division/Department:	Community Development Division, Parks

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council authorize Ramsey County to expend up to \$150,000 of its own funds for the construction of the remaining Tamarack Nature Center Play Area elements consisting of the gathering shade arbor, tunnel/climbing features and interpretive signage at Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park. This project is proposed to be funded from the County's share of the SFY 2013 Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriation. The County will not be reimbursed for its expenses from the SFY 2013 Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriation until the appropriation is available and after execution of a grant agreement for this project.

Background

Ramsey County wants to initiate work to complete the Nature Play Area at Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park now instead of waiting for a \$150,000 grant from the County's share of the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2013 Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriation. That appropriation is not available until July 1, 2012. The premise for the earlier start date is to align the work on this project with the County's calendar fiscal year.

Rationale

Ramsey County's request to begin work now on the Nature Play Area and be reimbursed for that work with a portion of its SFY 2013 Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriation when it becomes available in July 2012 is consistent with applicable portions of Finance Strategy 6 in the Updated 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan.

Funding

The funding for the Nature Play Area project is part of Ramsey County's share of the SFY 2013 Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriation.

Known Support / Opposition

The Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission considered this matter at its December 6th meeting and unanimously approved the recommendation.

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
390 North Robert Street, St. Paul, MN 55101
Phone (651) 602-1000 TDD (651) 291-0904

DATE: November 22, 2011

TO: Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

FROM: Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks (651) 602-1360

SUBJECT: (2011-366) Reimbursement Consideration Request for Completing Nature Play Area at Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park, Ramsey County

Introduction

Ramsey County wants to initiate work to complete the Nature Play Area at Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park now instead of waiting for a \$150,000 grant from the County's share of the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2013 Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriation. That appropriation is not available until July 1, 2012. The premise for the earlier start date is to align the work on this project with the County's calendar fiscal year. (See **Attachment 1**, letter from Scott Yonke, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation). The Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission toured this play area prior to its September 13, 2011 business meeting. The facility was funded in part with \$1,095,000 from the SFY 2010-11 Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriation.

This memorandum contains a review of the County's request under applicable terms from Finance Strategy 6 of the *Updated 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. Staff recommends authorization to expend funds for this project prior to July 1, 2012 with the stipulation that no grant funds to reimburse Ramsey County for this project will be disbursed to the County until the FY 2013 Parks and Trails Fund appropriation is available and a grant agreement is executed for this project.

Authority to review

Minnesota Statute Section 473.315 authorizes the "Metropolitan Council with the advice of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to make grants from any funds available to it for recreation open space purposes to any municipality, park district or county located wholly or partially within the metropolitan area to cover the cost, or any portion of the cost, of acquiring or developing regional recreation open space in accordance with the [*Regional Recreation Open Space*] *Policy Plan*".

Background

The 2011 Legislature appropriated \$16,141,000 for SFY 2013 from the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund to the Metropolitan Council for grants to support the Metropolitan Regional Park System. The appropriation is distributed among the 10 regional park implementing agencies using a formula found in MN Statute 85.53, Subd. 3. Under that formula, Ramsey County's share of the SFY 2013 appropriation is about \$1.2 million. The \$150,000 grant for the Nature Play Area project at Bald Eagle Otter Lake Regional Park is one of several projects Ramsey County has identified for financing from that appropriation. As noted in the introduction, the SFY 2013 appropriation is not available until July 1, 2012.

Reimbursement request analysis

Ramsey County would like to expend up to \$150,000 of its own funds to complete the Nature Play Area. Specifically the project includes constructing a gathering shade arbor, tunnel/climbing features and interpretive signage. [Schematic drawings of this project will be provided at the December 6 MPOSC meeting]. As noted in Ramsey County's letter, the County will finance the project prior to execution of the SFY 2013 grant agreement under the assurance that those costs will be eligible for reimbursement from the SFY 2013 appropriation.

Finance Strategy 6 of the *Updated 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* states:

Reimbursement will be considered for development provided the project in question is consistent in timing, scale, type and cost with an approved master plan, that all information required for a development grant is submitted to the Council prior to the regional park implementing agency undertaking the project and that the Council approves the project.

The project is consistent with the terms of Finance Strategy 6 for the following reasons:

1. The timing, scale and cost of the project are consistent with the Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park master plan approved in August 1987.
2. Enough information has been submitted in this request regarding what would be financed with a Council grant to meet the requirements of Finance Strategy 6. In this case, that information is contained in **Attachment 1**.
3. Ramsey County is requesting Metropolitan Council approval for this project prior to undertaking it.

Conclusion

This review concludes that Ramsey County's request to expend up to \$150,000 of its own funds to complete the Nature Play Area at Bald Eagle Otter Lake Regional Park is consistent with the terms of Finance Strategy 6. The timing of when Ramsey County is reimbursed for its expenditures on this project is dependent on the execution of the grant agreement for the project in the summer of 2012 when the SFY 2013 Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriation is available.

Recommendation

That the Metropolitan Council authorize Ramsey County to expend up to \$150,000 of its own funds for the construction of the remaining Tamarack Nature Center Play Area elements consisting of the gathering shade arbor, tunnel/climbing features and interpretive signage at Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park. This project is proposed to be funded from the County's share of the SFY 2013 Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriation. The County will not be reimbursed for its expenses from the SFY 2013 Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriation until the appropriation is available and after execution of a grant agreement for this project.

Attachment 1: Letter from Scott Yonke, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation



Parks and Recreation Department

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November 1, 2011

Metropolitan Council
Attn: Arne Stefferud
390 North Robert Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: FY 2012 – 2013 Appropriation from the Parks and Trails Fund

Dear Mr. Stefferud:

During the FY 2012-2013 appropriation of Parks and Trails Funds, Ramsey County submitted a grant amount request in the amount of \$150,000 to complete the remaining Nature Play Elements originally planned in phase 1 construction such as, the gathering shade arbor, tunnel/climbing features, and interpretive signs. These items were delayed due to overall Phase 1 construction costs. In review of the first season of use for the Nature Play Area, it is apparent that the delayed natural play elements are an integral component to the overall use of the Nature Play Area. Ramsey County requests the Metropolitan Council's authorization to expend funds for this project prior to execution of the FY 2013 grant contracts.

- **Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park – FY 2013 grant request of \$150,000 for the construction of the remaining Nature Play Elements consisting of gathering shade arbor, tunnel/climbing features and interpretive signage at Tamarack Nature Center Nature Play Area.**

Ramsey County is prepared to advance funding in the amount of \$150,000 prior to execution of the FY 2013 grant contract with the assurance that expenditures and contract commitments will be eligible for reimbursement under the anticipated FY 2013 contract.

Thank you for consideration of this request. If you have any questions or require additional information please do not hesitate to call me at 651-748-2500, extension 330.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Scott A. Yonke'.

Scott Yonke, RLA
Director of Planning and Development

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