November 7, 2022

MEMO TO: J. Carter Napier, City Manager 77 for JCN

FROM: Zulima Lopez, Parks, Recreation, & Public Facilities Director

SUBJECT: Submission of a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant in an amount up to $1,000,000 for the Washington Park Revival Project.

Meeting Type & Date
Regular Council Meeting
November 15, 2022

Action Type
Resolution

Recommendation
That Council authorize, by resolution, the submission of a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant in an amount up to One Million Dollars ($1,000,000) for the Washington Park Revival Project.

Summary
The Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources has nearly $2.3M available in fiscal year 2023 for the acquisition, development, and renovation of public parks and outdoor recreation lands and facilities. These dollars are being distributed as competitive Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants for municipalities, counties, school districts, and recreation districts. LWCF grants are paid out on a reimbursement basis and have a 50% match requirement that can be cash or in-kind services. However, applicants must demonstrate they have dedicated 100% of the funding of the grant request by providing an approved resolution by the applicant's governing body and must commit the property with a 6(f) Land and Water Conservation Fund designation, which makes the park available only for outdoor recreation into perpetuity.

Staff requests City Council authorization to apply for a LWCF grant for necessary improvements at Washington Park. Washington Park is not only the City's most central park, it is also one of the most beloved. However, much of the existing infrastructure needs major renovation or replacement, and expanded and/or new amenities should be added to improve the current recreation experience for park goers, to attract new users, and to expand recreation-oriented economic development opportunities.

As a part of the grant application process, and in following council goals regarding public engagement, a public survey was deployed and two public meetings were held to discuss the proposed improvements at Washington Park. In general, participants expressed overwhelming support for enhancements at the park, and there was not strong opposition to any of the recommended improvements. Among the highest ranked priorities identified by the public in both meetings and the survey were:

- Adding permanent restrooms
- Adding pickle ball courts
- Reconstructing tennis courts
- Renovating the bandshell
- Improving the pool/aquatics offerings
- Improving parking

Given the public feedback, on-hand or committed funding, and the anticipated construction timeline, staff recommends that the Washington Park Revival Project be phased as follows:

- Phase I – Baseball lighting replacements, tennis court reconstruction/expansion, pickleball court construction, parking improvements, ADA restrooms
- Phase II – Pool/aquatics improvements, bandshell renovation, pathway/trail improvements, park lighting
- Phase III – Inclusive playgrounds, fully inclusive restrooms (if not achieved in Phase I), remaining baseball field enhancements, and other miscellaneous improvements supported by Casper citizens

The LWCF grant request for fiscal year 2023, which is due November 30, 2022, will be written for Phase I of the Washington Park Improvement Project as described above. It is the hope that a successful application for a phased project will yield future LWCF funding support for subsequent phases.

Financial Considerations

Up to $1,000,000 will be requested from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Since the grant is a reimbursement grant and 100% of funding is required to be in place, Council will need to approve a budget of up to $2,000,000 for the project. The City of Casper currently has $498,410 budgeted and available in the FY23 budget to spend on projects in Washington Park for baseball lighting replacements, restrooms, and tennis court resurfacing. At a minimum, we plan to leverage these funds to double the capital investment at the park. Additional contributions to the project may come from in-kind work performed by City staff and/or partner agencies, as well as from in-kind work or cash donations from local user organizations including the Casper Community Tennis Association (in concert with the United States Tennis Association), local members of USA Pickleball, the Casper Rotary Club, and other public grant programs identified by staff. Preliminary discussions with those funders have been encouraging.

Should the City be unsuccessful in securing the LWCF grant, the project as proposed to the LWCF will not be built. Only the elements of the Washington Park Improvements that are budgeted will be built. Additional renovations and enhancements will occur as funding becomes available.

Oversight/Project Responsibility

Zulima Lopez, Parks, Recreation, & Public Facilities Director
Jolene Martinez, Assistant to the City Manager

Attachments

Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 22-209

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION TO THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND GRANT PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the City of Casper has established a project called the Washington Park Revival Project to complete various capital improvements at Washington Park that will help to ensure the park remains a community hub for recreation and gathering, as well as expand recreation-oriented economic development opportunities and has; and,

WHEREAS, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) administered by the Wyoming Division of State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails is a federal grant program designed to assist in development and/or acquisition of public outdoor recreation lands and facilities; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Casper will set aside the property, as a condition of grant award, with a 6(f) Land and Water Conservation designation such that the property will only be used for outdoor recreation into perpetuity; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Casper will also dedicate 100% of the Washington Park Revival Project costs, with anticipation that the LWCF grant will pay 50% of qualified project expenses to the City on a reimbursement basis; and,

WHEREAS, the 50% grant match requirement can be met with budgeted funds, in-kind work performed by City staff and/or partner agencies, as well as from in-kind work or cash donations from local user and service organizations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF CASPER, WYOMING: That the Mayor is hereby authorized and directed to execute and the City Clerk to attest, a grant application to the Land and Water Conservation Fund administered by the Wyoming Division of State Parks, Historic Sites and in the amount of up to $2,000,000 for the Washington Park Revival Project.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 2022.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Walter Trenk II

CITY OF CASPER, WYOMING
A Municipal Corporation

ATTEST:

Fleur D. Tremel
City Clerk

Ray Pacheco
Mayor