



AGENDA MEMORANDUM

First Reading Ordinance for the City Council Meeting of November 14, 2023
Second Reading Ordinance for City Council Meeting November 28, 2023

DATE: October 17, 2023

TO: Peter Zaroni, City Manager

FROM: Robert Dodd, Director of Parks and Recreation Department
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**Acceptance of a Grant from the Coastal Bends Bays & Estuaries Program for
Improvements to the Hans & Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge**

CAPTION:

Ordinance accepting a grant in the amount of \$346,991 from the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program Human Uses Team for improvements to the Hans & Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge; appropriating funds in the amount of \$346,991 Grants Fund; and amending the operating budget.

SUMMARY:

The City of Corpus Christi's Parks & Recreation Department, in conjunction with the city's Grants Program Manager, proactively submitted a proposal to the Coastal Bends Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) Human Uses Team for necessary improvements to the Hans & Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge. CBBEP confirmed that the proposed submittal was approved by the CBBEP Board of Directors as part of CBBEP's FY24 workplan.

BACKGROUND AND FINDINGS:

The Hans & Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge, located at 6001 Ennis Joslin Road, is a well-known park for observing and exploring the diverse, coastal ecosystem of the Oso Bay. The Refuge serves as an important resource for tourism, education, and recreation. The Refuge has a 1.3-mile nature trail and an 800-foot boardwalk which allows for remarkable views of the bay, grassy marshes, woodlands, and mudflats. The Refuge highlights how migratory birds/waterfowl can thrive in an urban development. The Refuge is a highly visited park and is popular among birdwatchers and local conservation groups.

A strategy of the 10-year Parks & Recreation Master Plan is to utilize partnerships with birding businesses to promote/advertise birding activities and tours. The Refuge provides a unique opportunity to use the area's natural resources and variety of flora/fauna for a successful, nature-based recreation and tourism program. Nature-based recreation/tourism strategies can increase revenues and strengthen economic development by creating/supporting local nature businesses and hospitality industries.

The proposed improvements include shoreline management to address erosion (southside of the

site) and substantial repairs to the current asphalt trail. The last significant improvements to the Park took place in 2010. The current trail is in much need of repair, and it is proposed to resurface/convert the trail to an 8-foot-wide, concrete trail (ADA accessible). The new trail will improve safety and resiliency to sustain inclement weather; improve accessible tourism and recreation.

Initiatives have been proposed for shoreline management to stabilize/reduce further erosion. Erosion has also become a hazard along the trail at the water's edge where a portion of the trail has collapsed or washed away. Improving shoreline protection with well managed access areas helps reduce natural resource damage and maintains wildlife habitats; ensures that visitors continue to benefit from a safe, coastal ecosystem.

CBBEF estimates the funds will be made available by December 2023. Staff have determined that a two-year timeline to complete the project is achievable with construction bids for the erosion improvements to take place first. Construction bids for the trail improvements will follow to avoid damage to the trail that can be caused by the heavy equipment that is used for erosion improvements.

ALTERNATIVES:

The alternative would be to not accept the grant. However, not accepting the grant will cause further damage to the Refuge if not addressed.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact as the City will not be responsible for providing an in-kind match/funding for this grant.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommend approval to accept the grant from CBBEP for improvements to the Hans & Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge.

LIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Presentation
Ordinance