



AGENDA MEMORANDUM

First Reading Ordinance for the City Council Meeting of July 14, 2020
Second Reading Ordinance for the City Council Meeting of July 21, 2020

DATE: June 11, 2020
TO: Peter Zanoni, City Manager
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\$89,000 Type B Economic Development Grant for The Botanical and Nature Institute of South Texas, Inc.

CAPTION:

Ordinance approving a three year Business Incentive Agreement between the Type B Corporation and The Botanical and Nature Institute of South Texas, Inc. dba South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center in the amount of \$89,000 for the resurfacing of the nature trail at 8545 South Staples Street effective upon signature of the City Manager or designee; appropriating funds in the amount of \$89,000 from the Type B Economic Development Fund; and amending the budget.

SUMMARY:

This ordinance authorizes a contract with The Botanical and Nature Institute of South Texas, Inc. dba South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center to improve their nature trail and help improve attractions within the City.

BACKGROUND AND FINDINGS:

The South Texas Botanical Gardens and Nature Center is requesting \$89,000 for the installation of 3,000 feet of new A.D.A. accessible trails (Confirmed by Gignac Landscape Architects) to increase resident and visitor access to more remote natural areas adjacent to Oso Creek referred to as Oso Creek Ridge. The proposed caliche/granite trail will replace existing grass/mulch trails in this area which are not accessible after rain. The new 10-foot wide trail will be constructed with a 4-inch caliche base and 1-inch decomposed granite top, an affordable, commonly used trail option that provides a natural look and eliminates the potential introduction of oils and chemicals associated with asphalt to sensitive native upland and wetland habitats.

The Corpus Christi Regional Economic Development Corporation (CCREDC) received an application from the Botanical Gardens and the application was vetted and presented to CCREDC Board on January 9, 2020. A motion was passed forwarding the application to the Type B Board recommending approval of the grant. The Type B Board unanimously passed a motion to grant the Botanical Gardens \$89,000 on January 27, 2020.

Currently this 21-acre section of Oso Ridge is only accessible during dry periods by those with good walking mobility with trail consisting of primitive mulch and mowed grass pathway.

Establishing caliche/granite pathways on the Oso Creek Ridge provides stability for wheelchair and mobility scooter access to explore natural areas, increasing access to brushland regions at our site by over 400 percent. Our existing Mary Hope Brennecke Nature Trail provides native habitat access to about 4.5 acres. The proposed paving of Oso Creek Ridge Trail would make an additional 21 acres of brushland/grassland accessible plus visibility of adjacent our large 52-acre open shallow wetland and Oso Creek, all of which provides great birding opportunities for ecotourism.

The proposed 10-foot wide pathway also will allow emergency vehicle access to this 21-acres which has direct access to S. Staples Street near the Oso Creek Bridge in the event of problem that requires first responders or other support vehicle access. See the attached flyer.

Expanding the trail also provides structured direction for residents and visitors interested in exploring our unique South Texas ecosystem in a safe, controlled space and reducing unknowingly wandering off the established pathways which can be more dangerous with uneven ground and potential dangerous camouflaged wildlife encounters. Defined pathways also encourage additional exploration of youth groups which visit, providing easier access to more pristine section of the property. Solidifying pathways also provide opportunities to attract fitness tourists to runs and walks in natural areas as opposed to the regular events along roadways and developed urban areas.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council may choose to fund a lesser amount or none at all. This trail will improve an attraction within the City. These types of improvements make the City more attractive to citizens and is part of the quality of life issues that all cities face.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item will expend a one-time amount of \$89,000 of the Type B Incentive Economic Development funds. There are no funds budgeted for Small Business Incentives in FY2020, which is why this item also requests a budget amendment. As of December 31, 2019, there is an FY2020 Economic Development fund balance of \$459,443. This item will encumber \$89,000 and bring the available balance to \$370,443.

Funding Detail:

Fund: 1145- Type B Fund
Organization/Activity: NA
Mission Element: NA
Project # (CIP Only): NA
Account: 251850

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of a grant of \$89,000 to The Botanical and Nature Institute of South Texas, Inc. to improve their nature trail. These types of improvements make the City more attractive to citizens and is part of the quality of life issues that the all cities face.

LIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Botanical Gardens Flyer
Ordinance
Agreement
Letter from Architect confirming ADA compliance