



Agenda Report

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, May 9, 2023

TO: City Council

FROM: INTERIM PUBLIC WORKS & UTILITIES DIRECTOR VIDES
ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS MANAGER CASSEL

THROUGH: CITY MANAGER MENDEZ

SUBJECT: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CITY OF
WATSONVILLE AND WATSONVILLE WETLANDS WATCH FOR
THE SHARED USE OF THE NEW NATURE CENTER

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Adopt a resolution approving the MOU between the City and Watsonville Wetlands Watch that outlines mutual understanding of how each will work cooperatively with the other and with third parties to plan, develop, construct, fundraise, and offer programs out of the new nature center facility in order to provide quality environmental education and sustainability learning opportunities for local students and the Watsonville community at large.

BACKGROUND:

The City is entering into a MOU with Watsonville Wetlands Watch (WWW) to memorialize their intended collaboration regarding use of the new Nature Center, consistent with the 2019 MOU and with the requirements of the California Museum Grant Program, which WWW and the City have jointly applied for, and for additional grant funded programs to be applied for at a future date. The 2019 MOU is an agreement to jointly support efforts to develop the new Nature Center to clarify the roles and responsibilities relative to ongoing operations of the proposed new nature center and to provide the space for WWW to offer educational, stewardship, and volunteer programming and events.

DISCUSSION:

As part of her legacy, Nancy Lockwood, a long-term City employee who helped establish the former Nature Center, left behind funds to support the creation of a new Watsonville Nature Center facility. The funds are held in The Nancy Lockwood Fund (EIN 94-2808039), at the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County under the oversight of Watsonville Wetlands Watch. Funds originated from a bequest from Nancy Lockwood to the Community Foundation for this purpose and for others to donate. On December 13, 2019, Watsonville Wetlands Watch and the City of Watsonville entered into a Memorandum of Intent to jointly acknowledge that the purpose of the Nancy Lockwood Fund is to support the creation of a new Nature Center facility within the City of Watsonville. The new facility will provide shared

office and program space for the City's long-time partner, Watsonville Wetlands Watch, to conduct ongoing programs for wetland preservation, environmental education, restoration and stewardship efforts for the City.

With the development and construction of a new nature center underway, the City will enter into a new MOU with WWW to outline a mutual agreement of how each will work cooperatively to plan, develop, construct, and offer programs out of the new nature center facility; as well as to raise additional funds to support the design and construction of the exhibits and educational features of the new center and the programs to be run out of the center. This includes a recent \$500,000 grant awarded to WWW by the California Natural Resources Agency's California Museum Grant Program to develop and construct bilingual and culturally relevant educational exhibits for the new Nature Center to facilitate and conduct educational programs to Title 1 students and the community at large. The California Museum Grant Program, and additional funding sources, requires to have in place a formal agreement between the owner of the Nature Center, the City, and WWW, that states the mutual understanding to provide such educational programming in the Center and provide for the required maintenance and operations of the grant funded facility.

The MOU states that upon completion of the Nature Center's construction, the City will provide at least two (2) desks spaces within the Nature Center for WWW use and will provide facility access during the agreed programming schedule determined in coordination with the City's Nature Center coordinator for WWW to implement education programs, workshops, trainings, and events. And WWW will use the new Nature Center in a way that is consistent with the City's maintenance and facility use requirements.

Utilizing allocated funds from the City's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), this project will greatly increase the ability of the Nature Center to meet community needs, including environmental conservation and climate resilience outreach. The proposed new facility will provide significantly more space for exhibits, a multi-purpose room, storage for educational materials, and office space for staff. It is anticipated that the new Nature Center will be completed and open to the public during winter or early spring of 2025. Construction is anticipated to start in fall of 2023 and to conclude by fall of 2024.

The City's new Nature Center will continue to serve as an accessible space to interpret and educate on a wide range of conservation topics to meet State mandates, including watershed protection, waste reduction, water conservation, emergency preparedness, pollution prevention, and climate action.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This project supports Strategic Plan Goal:

3-Infrastructure & Environment

5-Community Engagement & Well-Being

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

None.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION:

None proposed.

ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (If any):

None