



Agenda Item:

034

## COUNCIL COMMUNICATION City Manager's Office

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Agenda Date: 02/09/04

Communication

No.: 04-057

Agenda Item Type: Resolution

Roll Call No.:

Submitted by: Donald M. Tripp, Park and Recreation Director

### SUBJECT—

Iowa Department of Natural Resources Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Grant Award to Fund A Portion of an Urban Prairie Project.

### SYNOPSIS—

Approve the receipt of a REAP grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) in the amount of \$20,310 for an Urban Prairie Project, which will educate residents of Des Moines on prairie importance and create prairie areas in local schools, parks, homeless and youth shelters.

### FISCAL IMPACT—

Total project cost for the Urban Prairie application is \$199,287. A 40.3 percent cost share is proposed from the City of Des Moines including a \$255 cash outlay and \$80,064 in-kind staff and office space value for a total commitment to the project of \$80,319. \$20,310 will be funded through the REAP grant award. The original request of the IDNR was for \$38,400. The gap (\$18,090) is for seed; staff is securing donations from various community services.

A coalition comprised of the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge and Private Lands Department, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Polk County Conservation Board have participated in development of this project concept and have committed a total of \$73,568 in-kind service, equipment and materials. A \$7,000 request for Swartzell Grant matching funds was submitted and has been granted by the Fund's Public Project Grant Committee.

## **RECOMMENDATION—**

Approval

## **BACKGROUND—**

The Urban Prairie Project will educate citizens about the ecological importance and historical significance of prairie lands, and will establish prairie plantings in City parks, schools and other properties within the City of Des Moines. The project involves planting new and expanding existing prairie segments and training of City horticulture staff. A training of 30 mid-manager and field staff was conducted on December 18.

The project will provide a unique educational opportunity for diverse and under-served populations including citizens with low incomes, minorities, the homeless and at-risk youth. It will create an ongoing partnership between the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, the Polk County Conservation Board, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Des Moines Public School system, Drake University and the City of Des Moines.

Education regarding the value and beauty of prairie plantings will have a secondary cost-saving benefit to the City Parks and Recreation Department of removing additional acreage from routine mowing and maintenance expense.

The Conservation Education Program (CEP) Board was established by the REAP Act and annually awards \$350,000 in grants for conservation education. On December 8, 2003, by Roll Call No. 03-2749, the City Council approved an application to the CEP Board in the amount of \$38,400 for the Urban Prairie Project. In its award letter, IDNR has awarded the City of Des Moines \$20,310 toward the project. Additionally, a Savanna Guide application was submitted to provide funding for education of residents of Des Moines in regard to tall grass prairie and savanna land conservation in the amount of \$24,240. This grant did not receive funding by the CEP Board.

The IDNR award does not include monies requested to underwrite the cost of prairie seed for the establishment of new prairie lands connected to the project. However, Park and Recreation Community Garden staff has subsequently been in communication with Pheasants Forever, the Iowa Department of Transportation and other organizations that are committing to donation of the seed needed for the project.