



Agenda Item:

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COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

City Manager's Office

GENERAL INFORMATION

Agenda Date: 12/19/05
Agenda Item Type: Resolution

Communication No.: 05-727
Roll Call No.:

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

SUBJECT—

Approves Hiring the McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group to Conduct an Analysis for Whitewater Course and River Trail on the Des Moines River.

SYNOPSIS—

Approves the hiring of McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group, (Richard E. McLaughlin, Principal, 2300 15th Street, Suite 220, Denver, Colorado, 80202), to conduct an analysis for a whitewater course and river trail on the Des Moines River. The analysis includes 1) the development of a minimum of two alternatives for establishing a whitewater course on or adjacent to the Des Moines River in the area between I-235 and Grand Avenue; and, 2) the development of a minimum of two alternatives for establishing relatively low risk, low cost canoe/kayak routes over or around Center Street and Scott Street dams.

FISCAL IMPACT—

The total cost of the analysis study is \$49,693. The Principal Financial Group has agreed to provide 50%, or \$24,847, of the study's cost, and the City is to provide the remaining 50%, or \$24,846. The City's funds are available in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget Parks Improvements, Recreation Trails, CP040 PKS990000 PKS045. This is not a cost to the Riverwalk fund as it is a water trail project.

RECOMMENDATION—

Approval

BACKGROUND—

On August 25, 2003, by Roll Call No. 03-2011, Council approved the Des Moines Riverfront Master Plan Summary, "Rediscovering the Rivers", which recommends and refers to the inclusion of a whitewater course and a safe water trail on four separate occasions (pp. 9, 15, and 16) within the Plan document: 1)

“install portage routes, chutes and/or whitewater courses at both dams on the Des Moines River...2) “creation of whitewater play areas, (that allow) the construction of fish ladders, should also be considered...3) “provide a canoe/kayak lagoon at the east end of Gray’s Lake Park”....and, 4) “with the addition of portage routes, chutes, and/or whitewater play areas that transcend the Center Street and Scott Street Avenue dams, this scenic and urban stretch of water can now be accessed by paddle craft and provide a missing link in the Des Moines River Trail.”

Some preliminary analysis by the Army Corps of Engineers performed in the early part of the Riverwalk Phase I, the Principal Riverwalk, suggests that a whitewater course is feasible, though locating it on the river may not be the best option. Instead, a man-made side channel could be carved out and constructed on land paralleling the river. The required water volume would be achieved by temporarily diverting water from the Des Moines River, allowing it to flow through the channel over a series of man-made obstacles to create drops and standing waves, and then exiting back into the river at the bottom of the channel. Rick McLaughlin, Principal Engineer with the McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group, has briefly visited the proposed downtown river site. From his cursory look he has concluded that a regional whitewater course and safe water trail can be constructed on or next to the Des Moines River as it courses through downtown Des Moines.

On October 28, 2005, the City’s Purchasing Department issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) in an effort to hire a consultant to study the feasibility and cost for constructing a whitewater course and river trail on or adjacent to the Des Moines River in downtown Des Moines. The proposed study would focus on:

- 1) Developing alternatives that do not negatively impact the river’s ability to transport the 100-year flood;
- 2) Improving the safety of the dams,
- 3) Creating an exemplary whitewater course that would attract a wide range of recreationists;
- 4) Complementing and enhancing the on-going Principal Riverwalk project; and,
- 5) Completing a statement of probable cost.

A four-member Evaluation Team composed of Park and Recreation and Engineering Department staff, and a member of the local Iowa Whitewater Coalition independently scored the three RFPs received by the City Purchasing Department and unanimously selected the McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group to conduct the proposed study. Upon award of the project, the McLaughlin Group expects to complete all work and submit a written report of their findings within four months.

As a part of the study, there will be a series of meetings for input from stakeholders and the general public. The Park and Recreation Board will be asked to provide representatives at these meetings and to recommend the final report to the City Council.