



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:
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Agenda Item Number: 3

Agenda Date: April 25, 2024

In Control: Community Health Committee

DEPARTMENT: Parks & Recreation Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Homer Garcia III

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: District 2

SUBJECT:

Briefing on a City Council Consideration Request to engage in a master planning effort for the City's Historic Cemeteries, to include eligible funding sources to support execution.

SUMMARY:

The Parks and Recreation Department will present a briefing on a City Council Consideration Request submitted by District 2 Councilmember Jalen McKee-Rodriguez requesting City staff engage in a master planning effort for the City's Historic Cemeteries, to include eligible funding sources to support execution. This briefing will allow an opportunity for input from Committee members.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The City of San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department serves as a steward to nine Historic Cemeteries on the City's eastside. This includes maintenance and general upkeep of the cemetery

grounds and monuments or headstones. The cemeteries were initiated in the 1850's and the City of San Antonio assumed responsibility in 1901. The existing master plan was completed in 1990. The plan reviewed historical information and current usage and provided recommendations related to land use, plan design and maintenance; establishment of a Visitor's Center and Chapel; capital improvements such as fencing, lighting and trees; cost estimates and funding requirements including legal analysis of options. Cemetery operations are currently supported by an expendable trust fund.

The Parks and Recreation Park Stewardship Division oversees the maintenance of cemeteries such as mowing, tree care, litter pickup, monitoring for vandalism, and the Cemetery Stewardship Program. The Cemetery Stewardship Program, a partnership between the Parks and Recreation Department and the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), is a hands-on program that allows citizens to take an active role in the preservation and beautification of the Historic Eastside City Cemeteries. Volunteers are trained in proper documentation and cleaning techniques and assist with other tasks such as litter pick up, gardening, and research efforts. Volunteers also receive training on how to navigate the historic cemetery records held in the San Antonio Public Library by the Texana/Genealogy research librarians. This program is open to volunteers ages 15 and up, with volunteers meeting every 2nd Saturday. A total of 260 hours were dedicated to cemetery conservation and improvement efforts in FY 2023. Additionally, there are Cemetery Clean Up events with volunteers that are scheduled as needed for trash collection and invasive species removal. Finally, Parks partners with OHP for community programming such as tours.

In accordance with the City Council Consideration Request memo dated November 1, 2023, the proposed master plan will uplift and beautify the historic cemeteries as a valuable community asset, pay respect to their rich history, increase connection to surrounding communities, and prepare for their future success. The plan should examine the evolution of the historic cemeteries over time, in addition to their condition and resources, natural and built; identify strengths and weaknesses, challenges and needs; and present an implementation plan, to include potential local, state and federal funding sources.

ISSUE:

This item went to Governance Committee on March 20, 2024, and was referred to the Community Health Committee.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Parks and Recreation Department recommends utilizing a consultant to review the current Master Plan, study current maintenance practices and programs, engage stakeholders and update appropriate recommendations, pending the identification of funds.