

APPROVED
SEP 23 2010

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

NO. 10-247

DATE September 23, 2010

BOARD OF RECREATION
and PARK COMMISSIONERS

C.D. 4

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: GRIFFITH PARK - REFURBISHMENT OF THE GRIFFITH PARK COMMONWEALTH NURSERY CENTER AND DEVELOPMENT OF RELATED PROGRAMS - DONATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS AND THE LOS ANGELES PARKS FOUNDATION - PROPOSITION 84 NATURE EDUCATION FACILITIES GRANT PROGRAM

R. Adams	_____	F. Mok	_____
V. Israel	_____	K. Regan	_____
H. Fujita	_____	*M. Shull	<u><i>M. Shull</i></u>
S. Huntley	_____		

[Signature]
General Manager

Approved *[Signature]*

Disapproved _____

Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Board:

1. Approve a proposed Donation Agreement ("Agreement"), substantially in the form on file in the Board Office, between the Department of Recreation and Parks ("RAP") and the Los Angeles Parks Foundation ("LAPF") for the refurbishment of the existing Griffith Park Commonwealth Nursery and development of related programs, subject to the approval of the Mayor, City Council and the City Attorney as to form;
2. Direct the Board Secretary to transmit the proposed Agreement concurrently to the Mayor in accordance with Executive Directive No. 3, and to the City Attorney for review and approval as to form; and,
3. Authorize the Board President and Secretary to execute the Agreement upon receipt of the necessary approvals.

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

PG. 2

NO. 10-247

SUMMARY:

In March 2010, the State of California released a Request for Proposals for the Proposition 84 Nature Education Facilities Grant Program. The Proposition 84 Nature Education Facilities Grant Program will award a total of \$93 million in competitive grant funding for nature education and interpretative exhibits, research facilities, and equipment to non-profit organizations and public institutions including natural history museums, aquariums, research facilities and botanical gardens. The goal of the Proposition 84 Nature Education Facilities Grant Program is to support institutions that enable focused learning about the natural environment and increase public understanding and recognition of the need to sustain the environment for future generations.

The Department of Recreation and Parks ("RAP") and the Los Angeles Parks Foundation (LAPF), a non-profit organization, have partnered to identify eligible and competitive projects for the Proposition 84 Nature Education Facilities Grant Program. The purpose of this partnership is to provide additional resources to develop and prepare a grant application for the Proposition 84 Nature Education Facilities Grant Program, and, if the Griffith Park Commonwealth Nursery ("Nursery") application is successfully awarded funding, to refurbish the dilapidated Nursery so that related future programming may be developed.

In Board Report No. 10-145, approved on June 2, 2010, the Board supported the submittal of a Proposition 84 Nature Education Facilities Grant Program application by LAPF, on behalf of RAP, for the refurbishment of the Nursery, resulting in the development of a new "Griffith Park Horticulture Learning Center" ("HLC"), and, acknowledged RAP's intent to accept the transfer of grant responsibilities, including operations and maintenance for the HLC, subject to the award of grant funds and successful project completion. The HLC's grant application identified in said Report has been prepared and submitted by the LAPF. The grant application submitted by the LAPF on behalf of the Department, proposes to refurbish the existing Nursery property into a state-of-the-art horticultural learning center with a working nursery to train future generations of RAP gardeners, including City park staff, and to provide on-site educational opportunities for the general public, with a focus on populations who lack access to nature education. As with the Commonwealth Nursery, the plants, trees, and other vegetation shall be used primarily in park and City facility landscaping.

The existing Nursery at Griffith Park was a fully operational nursery from the 1920's through the 1970's, when budget cuts led to the facility's decline. Until then, the Nursery served as a vital propagation center for both native and non-native trees and plants, with over twenty-five gardeners working in six greenhouses on seventeen acres of land. The Nursery also functioned as a training site for the Department's grounds maintenance staff, as well as an educational facility at which school children learned about horticulture and native flora. The facility began to steadily deteriorate after the passage of Proposition 13 in the late 1970's, when staffing levels

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

PG. 3 NO. 10-247

and resources dwindled. The facility has not been operational since that time and only three partial greenhouses and dilapidated buildings remain.

Pursuant to the grant application and the terms and conditions of the proposed Agreement, the LAPF will construct and renovate the Nursery to its former stature as the HLC, to serve the community at large as a vital propagation center for native and ornamental trees and plants, a training center for Department staff and a working facility to increase horticulture awareness among children, community groups, and other agencies. Constructing a HLC within a restored nursery site will allow the Department to realize its commitment to green practices and environmental sustainability, and to address some of the most important conservation challenges of the 21st century by combining correct horticultural practices with current technologies.

The proposed HLC will be located on a 4.59 acre portion of Griffith Park, the site of the existing Nursery, located in a south-facing canyon at the top of Commonwealth Avenue in the Los Feliz community of Council District 4. Some of the features of the HLC will include, but not be limited to, three new greenhouses, a new building with meeting rooms and offices, a new exhibit space, the creation of demonstration areas for specific plant types with best practices and water conservation techniques, and the restoration of a native forest including graded and shaded plant areas. The major support amenities will include two buildings for storage space, a watershed element, the renovation of existing walking paths and creation of new ones, a public parking area, and restrooms.

As described above and in the proposed Agreement, LAPF has prepared, in coordination with RAP, a conceptual plan for the proposed project which is attached as Exhibit-A. Should the grant application be successfully awarded funds, LAPF will coordinate the refurbishment of certain existing facilities within the Nursery and the construction of new improvements for the overall development of the HLC. Upon completion of the HLC, RAP will discuss with LAPF the establishment of certain partnerships with other non-profit organizations and agencies, for the operation and maintenance of the new HLC through the Department's partnership agreement process, subject to approval by the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners.

As part of the preparation and submittal of the Proposition 84 grant application, a concept-level Initial Study was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §21000 et seq.), the State CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, California Code of Regulations, §15000 et seq.), and the City of Los Angeles CEQA Guidelines (1981, amended July 31, 2002). Based on the Initial Study, Staff has determined that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because of mitigation measures that can be added to the project. Therefore, a Mitigated Negative Declaration will be prepared when the complete project scope has been defined and sufficient funds have been identified and secured to begin the project. This action does not constitute project approval by the Board. The plans will be brought back to the Board with the

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

PG. 4 NO. 10-247

appropriate environmental documents for approval, and at that time the Board shall be free to exercise its independent judgment to approve, disapprove or modify the project after due consideration of the environmental documents.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

The approval and execution of the proposed Agreement will not have any impact on the General Fund.

This report was prepared by Joel Alvarez, Senior Management Analyst, Real Estate and Asset Management Section.

Exhibit-A

Site Plan

Griffith Park Horticulture Center

