



Legislation Text

File #: 3185-2023, **Version:** 1

Background: This ordinance authorizes the Director of the Recreation and Parks Department to enter into a grant agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resource (ODNR) for the H2Ohio Grant Acceptance Project. This ordinance will also authorize the appropriation of the grant. The grant amount is \$850,000.00.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) accepted the Recreation and Parks application in August for the H2Ohio grant program. The H2Ohio grant is a reimbursable grant that supports projects for natural-infrastructure that focus on nutrient reduction and water quality within the Ohio River Basin.

This grant application is to develop a wetland at Three Creeks Park. In July 2023, the Recreation and Parks Commission reviewed and approved the request to apply for the H2Ohio grant. Three Creeks Park is a 1,097 acre park in the Far South Community and is joint-managed by the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department and Franklin County Metro Parks. This project will create a 12-acre wetland and 20-acres of restored project area. On October 26, 2023, the grant application was awarded.

Three Creeks Park was historically farmed but wetlands have been developing over the past decade as the land has naturally converted from agricultural use. It is important to restore the wetlands at Three Creeks Park, as 90 percent of all wetlands in Ohio have been lost. Wetlands improve water quality and provide flood control. Wetlands serve as critical habitat for a variety of wildlife and capture carbon dioxide. Additionally, this grant allows for the planting of additional trees to help support the Urban Forestry Master Plan (UFMP) and the low canopy within the far south of the City.

ODNR awarded the wetland project for \$850,000.00, included in the application is the commitment to use \$200,000.00 of Capital Improvement Project funds to improve recreational amenities and \$125,000.00 donation for tree plantings within the project area, for a project total of \$1,175,000.00. This project will also provide a protection plan outline for the next 20 years. Future legislation will be prepared to expend these funds once construction is ready to move forward.

Principal Parties:

Ohio Department of Natural Resources
2045 Morse Road, Building B
Columbus, Ohio 43229
Rachel DeNoewer, (614) 705-9978
Contract Compliance Number: 005089
Contract Compliance Expiration Date: N/A (State of Ohio Agency)

Emergency Justification: Emergency action is being requested so that the Director of Recreation and Parks can immediately sign the grant agreement and accept the funding to meet the deadline of December 31, 2023.

Benefits to the Public: Protection of the city's high quality waterways and wetlands is of great benefit to current and future generations. Wetlands improve water quality, improve flood control, reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the air, and serve as a critical habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. The restoration of wetlands at Three Creeks Park will also support the Urban Forestry Master Plan with additional tree plantings.

Community Input/Issues: The Far South Area Community Commission and the William Creek Community have been in support of the preparation of the grant and will continue to be engaged during the planning, design, and construction phases of the project.

Area(s) Affected:

Far South (64)

Master Plan Relation: This project will support the Recreation and Parks Master Plan by conserving, protecting, and enhancing the City's natural resources and overall environmental health for current and future generations. It will also provide sustainable practices regarding water quality and quantity.

Fiscal Impact: This ordinance will authorize the appropriation of \$850,000.00 in grant funds in the Recreation and Parks Grant Fund 2283. Future legislation will be prepared to expend these funds once the project is ready to move forward.

To authorize the Director of the Recreation and Parks Department to enter into a grant agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) H2Ohio Program and to accept a grant in the amount of \$850,000.00, which will be used to restore wetlands at Three Creeks Park; to authorize the appropriation of \$850,000.00 in the Recreation and Parks Grant Fund; and to declare an emergency. (\$850,000.00)

WHEREAS, Ordinance No. 2096-2023 authorized the Director of the Recreation and Parks Department to apply for funding through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) H2Ohio Program and the ODNR has awarded the City of Columbus a grant for the Three Creeks Park Project; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to authorize and direct the Director of the Recreation and Parks Department to accept a grant in the amount of \$850,000.00 and enter into an agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for the Three Creeks Park Project; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to authorize the appropriation of \$850,000.00 to the Recreation and Parks Grant Fund; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in the usual daily operations of the Recreation and Parks Department in that it is immediately necessary to authorize the Director to immediately sign the grant agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to meet the grant acceptance deadline of December 31, 2023, all for the immediate preservation of the public health, peace, property, and safety; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That Ordinance No. 2096-2023 authorized the Director of the Recreation and Parks Department to apply for funding through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) H2Ohio Grant Program which will be used to preserve and restore the City's wetlands.

SECTION 2. That the Director of the Recreation and Parks Department is authorized and directed to accept a grant and enter into a contract with the with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) H2Ohio Program, for a grant award amount of \$850,000.00.

SECTION 3. That from the unappropriated monies and from all monies estimated to come into said fund from any and all sources and unappropriated for any other purpose during the fiscal year ending December 31, 2023, the sum of \$850,000.00 is appropriated to the Recreation and Parks Grant Fund 2283 per the account codes in the attachment to this ordinance. Appropriation is effective upon receipt of an executed grant agreement.

SECTION 4. That at the end of the grant period, any repayment of unencumbered balances required by the grantor is hereby authorized and any unused City match monies may be transferred back to the City fund from which they

originated in accordance with all applicable grant agreements.

SECTION 5. That the funds necessary to carry out the purpose of this ordinance are hereby deemed appropriated, and the City Auditor shall establish such accounting codes as necessary.

SECTION 6. That the City Auditor is authorized to make any accounting changes to revise the funding source for all contracts or contract modifications associated with this ordinance.

SECTION 7. That the City Auditor is hereby authorized to transfer the unencumbered balance in a project account to the unallocated balance account within the same fund upon receipt of certification by the Director of the Department administering said project that the project has been completed and the monies are no longer required for said project.

SECTION 8. That for the reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and approval by the Mayor, or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.