File #: 2009-2025, **Version:** 1

1. BACKGROUND

This ordinance authorizes the Director of Public Utilities to enter into a Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP) Agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, for their Lake Katharine - Salt Lick Creek Expansion Project, and to execute those documents necessary to enter into this sponsorship agreement.

The State of Ohio created the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) to provide financial assistance for water resource protection and improvement actions. This program is jointly administered by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) and the Ohio Water Development Authority (OWDA). The Department of Public Utilities (DPU), with City Council approval, uses the WPCLF to fund many of its sanitary and storm water projects. The OEPA created the Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program ("WRRSP") within the WPCLF for the effective perpetual protection and maintenance of Ohio's high-quality aquatic ecosystem resources. An applicant applying to the WPCLF for financing of a water quality improvement project may also sponsor a qualifying WRRSP project to be undertaken by itself or by an entity with the ability to implement the WRRSP project. The WRRSP program works by providing funds, through WPCLF loans, to finance the implementation of projects that protect or restore water resources. As loans are repaid to the WPCLF, the repayment goes primarily towards outstanding debt service and other bond obligations as well as returning money to the fund for future loan awards. A very small portion of this loan repayment is designated for use on WRRSP projects. There is no cost to a sponsoring organization such as DPU to sponsor a WRRSP project, and the sponsoring organization receives a reduction in the interest rate charged on their sponsoring WPCLF loan.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the OEPA contacted DPU about sponsoring the Lake Katharine - Salt Lick Creek Expansion Project. This project will protect 193 acres adjacent to the 2,018 acre Lake Katharine State Nature Preserve in Jackson County, Ohio. This area is a rich Appalachian forest in which are found magnolias, eastern hemlock, sweet gum, birch and beech. The preserve has many native orchards as well as diverse spring flora. Lake Katharine harbors the state's largest and finest populations of both bigleaf and umbrella magnolia trees, both of which are state-listed species. This project will expand on an existing protected area while preserving and maintaining valuable water resources. The project cost is paid by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources with WRRSP funds. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources will also be administering the project.

The WPCLF financed project DPU proposes to use for this sponsorship is the Barnett Road Storm Sewer Improvements Project, CIP #611040-100000. Bids for this project open 7/9/25. An ordinance requesting City Council's approval to award the contract and expend funds for construction is expected to be on City Council's 9/8/25 and 9/15/25 agendas. The loan for the Barnett Road Storm Sewer Improvements Project is expected to be approved at the OWDA August Board meeting. DPU will need to provide OEPA a letter of intent to sponsor the Lake Katharine - Salt Lick Creek Expansion Project and execute a sponsorship agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for the project. DPU staff will review invoices the Ohio Department of Natural Resources submits for payment on this project to ensure they are for project qualifying expenses, and these invoices are then sent to OEPA for review before being submitted to OWDA for payment.

2. FISCAL IMPACT

There is no cost to the City or to the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to sponsor the Lake Katharine - Salt Lick Creek Expansion Project. DPU expects to receive a 0.10 interest rate discount on the 20-year loan that will fund the construction cost of the Barnett Road Storm Sewer Improvements Project, CIP #611040-100000.

3. EMERGENCY DESIGNATION

Emergency designation is requested as this ordinance must be effective the week of 7/21/25 so the sponsorship documents can be executed in time to allow processing prior to the Ohio Water Development Authority's August Board meeting, which is when the loan for the Barnett Road Storm Sewer Improvements Project is expected to be approved, so the Department of Public Utilities will receive the interest rate discount for the 20-year loan for this project.

To authorize the Director of the Department of Public Utilities to enter into a Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for their Lake Katharine - Salt Lick Creek Expansion Project and to execute those documents necessary to enter into this sponsorship agreement; and to declare an emergency. ($0.00)

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Utilities seeks to construct the Barnett Road Storm Sewer Improvements Project, CIP #611040-100000; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Utilities intends to apply for Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) funding for the construction of the Barnett Road Storm Sewer Improvements Project, CIP #611040-100000; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Utilities and the City of Columbus Council recognizes the importance of and supports the conservation and enhancement of natural resources such as the Appalachian forest, native orchards, diverse spring flora, and wetlands the Lake Katharine - Salt Lick Creek Expansion Project will protect through the Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP) Project; and

WHEREAS, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources has proposed acquiring and protecting valuable water resources through the Lake Katharine - Salt Lick Creek Expansion WRRSP Project; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Utilities intends to participate in the WRRSP in association with the WPCLF to assist the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in the acquisition and protection of the Lake Katharine - Salt Lick Creek Expansion Project; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in the usual daily operation of the Department of Public Utilities in that this ordinance must be effective no later than the week of 7/21/25 so the sponsorship documents can be executed in time to allow processing prior to the Ohio Water Development Authority's August Board meeting, which is when the loan for the Barnett Road Storm Sewer Improvements Project is expected to be approved, so the Department of Public Utilities will receive the interest rate discount for that 20-year loan, for the immediate preservation of the public health, peace, property, safety, and welfare; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

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

SECTION 1. That City Council authorizes the Director of the Department of Public Utilities to participate in the Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program in association with the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund for the Lake Katharine - Salt Lick Creek Expansion and to execute those documents needed to participate in the sponsorship program for the Lake Katharine - Salt Lick Creek Expansion Project.

SECTION 2. This City of Columbus Council hereby finds and determines that all formal actions relative to the passage of this resolution were taken in an open meeting of this Council, and that all deliberations of this Council and of its committees, if any, which resulted in formal action, were taken in meetings open to the public, in full compliance with applicable legal requirements, including Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code.

SECTION 3. That for the reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is made a part hereof, this Ordinance is 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 (10) days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes this Ordinance.

powered by Legistar™