Background: This ordinance authorizes the Director of the Recreation and Parks Department to enter into a grant agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) to support the Big Walnut Trail - Helsel Park to Nafzger Park Project. This ordinance will also authorize the appropriation of the grant funds. The grant amount available for this project being authorized by this ordinance is $98,000.00. The grant funds will be used towards construction of a 1.25 mile segment of the Big Walnut Trail, from Helsel Park to Nafzger Park, in the City's Mid East and South East Communities.

This project is in the final design stage and has been awarded this State of Ohio grant from ODNR, as well as LinkUS funding through the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), for the future construction of the trail segment. Construction is set to begin in early 2026.

The southern reach of the Big Walnut Trail is developing into one of the region's most scenic and accessible greenways. This segment of the trail will put thousands of residents of the Mid East and South East Communities within a few minutes of access to the regional trail network. This project will be coupled with a Phase 2 segment beginning construction in 2027, from Helsel Park to Winchester Pike, with connectivity to South Hamilton and Refugee Roads via pathways. Neighborhood connections are planned to the Blacklick Estates, Eastland, Cross Creek Village, and Walnut Heights.

Principal Parties:
Ohio Department of Natural Resources
2045 Morse Road, Building E-2
Columbus, Ohio 43229
Teresa Goodridge, (614) 265-6396, teresa.goodridge@dnr.ohio.gov

Emergency Justification: Emergency action is requested so the grant agreement can be executed by the Recreation and Parks Department and ODNR by a November 2025 deadline.

Benefits to the Public: This project provides connectivity to park spaces and active transportation opportunities.

Community Input/Issues: Leaders from the Mid East Community, South East Community, nearby schools, and employers have expressed a strong interest in the project.

Area(s) Affected: Mid East (57), South East (65)

Master Plan Relation: This project will support the Recreation and Parks' Master Plan by providing quality recreational parks and trails. It will also provide neighborhood connectivity for Columbus residents.

Fiscal Impact: This ordinance will authorize the appropriation of $98,000.00 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 Recreation and Parks to enter into a grant agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) to support the Big Walnut Trail - Helsel Park to Nafzger Park Project and accept a grant in the amount of $98,000.00; to authorize the appropriation of $98,000.00 in the Recreation and Parks Grant Fund; and to

declare an emergency. ($98,000.00)

WHEREAS, it is necessary to authorize and direct the Director of Recreation and Parks to accept a grant in the amount of $98,000.00 and enter into an agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) to support the Big Walnut Trail - Helsel Park to Nafzger Park Project; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to authorize the appropriation of $98,000.00 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 accept the grant funds so the grant agreement can be executed by the Recreation and Parks Department and ODNR by a November 2025 deadline, all 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 the Director of Recreation and Parks is authorized and directed to enter into a grant agreement with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) to support the Big Walnut Trail - Helsel Park to Nafzger Park Project and accept a grant in the amount of $98,000.00. Future legislation will be prepared to expend these funds once the project is ready to move forward.

SECTION 2. 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, 2025, the sum of $98,000.00 is appropriated to the Recreation and Parks Grant Fund 2283 per the account codes in the attachment to this ordinance. Appropriation effective upon receipt of executed grant agreement.

SECTION 3. 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 4. 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 5. 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 6. 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 7. 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.

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