



Staff Report

City Council

Item No. 5.A

Meeting Date: February 12, 2025

From: Anne V. Ambrose, Assistant City Manager

Title: Agreement Between City of Cathedral City and Desert Recreation District for Recreation Programs and Park Maintenance Services

RECOMMENDATION:

To approve a services agreement between the City of Cathedral City and the Desert Recreation District for recreation programs and park maintenance services.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Cathedral City has made significant investment in developing and maintaining a variety of city parks to provide places for community recreation. The park inventory includes Century Park, Panorama Park, Ocotillo Park, Dennis Keat Soccer Park, Town Square Park, the Cathedral City Amphitheater, Memorial Park, Patriot Park, the Downtown Dog Park, and Esperanza Park, which is currently under construction and slated to be completed around March of this year.

While there are facilities for outdoor recreation, the City does not have a recreation department and has not had the ability to provide a robust program of diverse recreation opportunities for city residents. The City's Parks and Community Events (PACE) commission provides some programming, namely Yoga in the Park, and some special events such as the Howloween Dog Costume Contest. The Communications and Special Events division coordinates the City's signature events (LBGTQ+ Days, Cathedral City International Hot Air Balloon Festival, Taste of Jalisco, Snowfest), along with other smaller partner events in the Amphitheater and Town Square. For the past three years, the City has partnered with the Desert Recreation District and Palm Springs Unified School District to provide a summer swim program to city residents.

For at least a decade, the City Council has considered joining the Desert Recreation District (DRD) to provide a full spectrum of recreation programs in Cathedral City. The DRD is the largest park and recreation district in California, covering 1,865 square miles and serving over 380,000 residents across the greater Coachella Valley. Their mission is to work closely with municipalities to ensure that every community, regardless of economic status, has access to quality recreation services. DRD manages and maintains more than 43 parks and recreation facilities, offering a wide range of programs, services, and classes designed to enrich the lives of the residents it serves. Additionally, there has been a strong desire in the

community for the creation of a recreation center locally. In addition to providing recreation services, staff have also sought to improve the maintenance of the city's park facilities. Currently, very limited staff is allocated to service city parks, which does not include additional staffing that will be necessary to maintain the city's newest park Esperanza Park, when it opens later this year.

To generate the necessary funds to support a recreation and parks maintenance program, in July 2022, the City initiated Measure K, a property tax measure which proposed an assessment of 15-cents per building square foot annually on single-family residential units. While a majority of voters approved the measure, it did not receive the super-majority of votes needed to pass.

In July 2024, the City Council approved a measure to be added to the November 2024 ballot seeking approval of the voters for a ½ cent increase to the City's transactions and use tax. Measure W will provide funding for the City to join the recreation district, fund a fourth ambulance, increase funding for neighborhood streets, operations of a community center, and set aside funds for future debt service for a community recreation center. The measure passed with an overwhelming 73.54% of the votes in favor.

DISCUSSION:

The first steps necessary for the City to join the Desert Recreation District is for both the City Council and DRD Board of Directors to approve two agreements: a Services Agreement outlining the services to be performed by the DRD and costs and a Tax Exchange Agreement for funding the DRD's activities in the city. The DRD Board of Directors will also be considering these two items this evening. Following these approvals, the DRD will initiate the annexation process with the Riverside County Local Agency formation Commission (LAFCO) to annex Cathedral City into the recreation district.

The Services Agreement outlines maintenance services to be provided at city parks. While the entire City will be annexed into the district, the DRD will maintain six facilities: Dennis Keat Soccer Park, Panorama Park, Ocotillo Park, Century Park, Esperanza Park, and Patriot Park. Maintenance services at Patriot Park only include emptying trash, cleaning the barbecues, and cleaning tables; Big League Dreams is under contract with the city to maintain the lawn and trim trees. The City will continue to maintain Memorial Park, Town Square Park and the Community Amphitheater. Exhibit B describes the staffing levels to be provided, maintenance service standards, and frequency of tasks (daily, weekly, annually, or as needed).

The Services Agreement also discusses community-based programming to be provided by the DRD. Since the city does not have a recreation center yet, programs will be provided at the city's parks or at other available facilities such as the library. Some of the types of classes and programs that can be offered include movies in the park, art classes, soccer leagues, t-ball and baseball, gymnastics, seasonal themed events etc. The agreement also includes the continuation of the summer swim program at Cathedral City High School. Another additional benefit of joining the DRD is that Cathedral City residents can register for any program in any city served by the DRD and receive the in-district discounted rates. DRD will also provide a staff person in the city to be able to take registrations and meet with residents with questions about recreation programs.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The costs for parks maintenance and recreation services for FY 2025/26 is \$1,798,585.88. Funding for DRD services will be paid through a tax transfer agreement in which 15% of the City's 1% property tax allocation will be directed to the District to pay for recreation services. This is anticipated to be approximately \$1 million in year one. The additional costs will be budgeted and paid directly to the district in quarterly installments. These costs will be offset by what the City had previously budgeted to maintain the city's parks. For FY 2024/2025, approximately \$967K was budgeted in the General Fund Parks division budget for parks maintenance.

City Park Forecasted Budget Savings and Reallocations	
FY 2024/2025 Budget	Savings/Reallocation
Parks Maintenance 100-500-500-511-XXXX-XXXX	\$967,237
- This only includes operations costs and does not include personnel costs.	
Streets Maintenance Personnel Reallocation (241/243)	\$341,339
- This includes streets personnel utilized in grounds/parks reassigned to streets.	

Starting July 1, 2025, DRD will be providing both Parks maintenance and Recreation programs. These funds will be reallocated towards DRD services. The amounts listed below will be included in the upcoming biennial budget for FY 2025/2026.

	DESCRIPTION	GENERAL LEDGER ACCOUNT CODES	PROJECT CODE	AMOUNT	ONE TIME or ONGOING
2025-26	Parks Maintenance	151-500-510-511-8XXX-8XXX	N/A	\$1,452,592.42	On-going
2025-26	Recreation Programs	151-500-510-512-8XXX-8XXX	N/A	\$ 345,993.48	On-going
2024-2025	Total			\$1,798,585.88	

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:

Goal B: Community Investment

B-10 City Council to support a measure to provide funding for parks and recreation services through the DRD and other resident priorities including streets and enhanced Fire Department services.

Goal F: Embracing, Inclusive Community

F-3 Promote additional community events and celebrations.

Goal E: Safety

Establish regular inspections of park equipment and playing fields to ensure they are well maintained and functional.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Services Agreement