



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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April 7, 2021

TO: Members  
Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Bob Lang, Director

SUBJECT: Natural Resources: Stewardship Grant for Hartford Centennial Park -- Agenda Item II

### REQUEST

On February 27, 2020, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requested approval under s. 23.0917(6m) of the statutes to provide a local assistance grant for \$488,025 from the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program to the City of Hartford, Washington County, using fiscal year 2019-20 funds. An objection to the request was made on March 18, 2020.

### BACKGROUND

#### Local Assistance Grants

Under the property development and local assistance subprogram, DNR may award stewardship grants to local units of government for acquisition and nature-based recreational development of local conservation land. DNR may award up to \$6 million in local assistance grants each fiscal year through 2021-22. Funding obligated for local assistance may be used for: (a) grants for acquisition of urban green space; (b) grants for acquisition and development of local parks; (c) grants for acquisition of property development rights; and (d) grants for acquisition and development of sites along urban rivers. Stewardship funds may generally be provided for up to 50% of eligible project costs.

Chapter NR 51 of the administrative code (stewardship grant administration) includes the following costs are among those eligible for grants for development of local parks: (a) fishing and hunting facilities; (b) facilities for boating or swimming in natural water bodies; (c) observation and sightseeing facilities; (d) picnic and camping facilities, including tables and fireplaces; (d) trails; (e) shelters that support nature-based outdoor recreation; (f) burial of overhead wires; and (g) support facilities, including such uses as sanitation, restrooms, parking, erosion control, or nature education.

## Hartford Centennial Park

Centennial Park, in the City of Hartford, Washington County, is a 6.8-acre community park along a millpond on the Rubicon River. Centennial Park was developed over several phases beginning in 1976, when Hartford acquired two parcels adjacent to the Rubicon River Millpond. The park provides canoe and kayak access to the river, picnic areas, a public open-air shelter, and connection to the Rubicon River Trail. The City of Hartford requested a stewardship grant to support the redevelopment of the park. Renovation plans are discussed in greater detail in the following section.

## ANALYSIS

### Project Description

Hartford's comprehensive outdoor recreation plan indicates that many park amenities were installed before 1990 and are aged and deteriorating or are not fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Additionally, the park has no restrooms, and community groups report that a shelter is inadequately sized for community events. The table below shows the estimated cost of each element of the project. Each element listed is described further in later paragraphs. It should be noted that all costs are estimated. The final grant award will equal no more than half the total of accepted, eligible project elements, with a maximum reimbursement of \$488,025 funded by the stewardship program. The maximum stewardship grant award would fund about 16% of the project's estimated cost.

### Centennial Park Estimated Costs

<u>Project Element</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Bulkhead, Bridge and Dam Reconstruction	\$1,145,700
Facility Construction and Renovation	710,100
Landscaping and Amenities	266,400
Utilities	230,000
Trail Development and Sidewalks	127,700
Parking	45,000
Engineering, Insurance and Contractor Management	<u>590,000</u>
Total	\$3,114,900

*Bulkhead and Bridge Reconstruction.* Centennial Park surrounds a millpond formed by a dam along the Rubicon River. According to Hartford officials, the bulkhead wall along the river's banks is deteriorating. The project would remove and reconstruct the bulkhead wall, as well as replace a bridge spanning the dam. The total estimated cost of the components is \$1,145,700, including \$1,065,700 for the bulkhead and \$80,000 for the bridge.

*Facility Construction and Renovation.* The city intends to improve or add park features

including a shelter, a multi-purpose pavilion, canoe and kayak launch, and fishing pier. The park currently has an open-air shelter thought to be inadequately sized for community events. Hartford plans \$10,000 in improvements to the shelter. In addition to the open-air shelter, the grant would support the construction of a multi-purpose pavilion that includes restrooms, a stage, and shelter. The city estimates the 1,500-square-foot multi-purpose pavilion will cost \$450,000. Further, the city intends to redevelop its canoe and kayak launch. The park currently has a canoe launch built in 1981 that is not ADA-compliant. The city estimates the new launch will cost \$20,000. Additionally, a fishing pier is estimated to cost \$55,000.

The project would include the construction of a playground of approximately 4,000 square feet. Typically, playgrounds are ineligible uses of stewardship grants. However, DNR administrative rules specify "playgrounds that supplement the appreciation of nature, occupy a minor portion of the grant property, and do not distract from the primary purpose of the grant project may be considered an eligible support facility." The playground would occupy approximately 1.4% of the area in the 6.8-acre park. The city estimates the playground will cost \$175,100 to build.

*Landscaping and Amenities.* The city plans site restoration, excavation, landscaping, and tree-planting at an estimated cost of \$195,000. Additionally, the project will include the installation of benches, exercise equipment, and signage at a cost of \$71,400.

*Utilities.* The city plans to bury utilities underground at an estimated cost of \$200,000. Additional storm water management practices would cost an estimated \$30,000.

*Trail Development.* The Rubicon River Trail is a planned bicycle and walking trail that would run through the City of Hartford to the Pike Lake unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest. The project would repave the trail through Centennial Park. According to the trail master plan, pedestrian and cycling trails will be separated and run on either side of the mill pond. Trail paving is estimated to cost \$30,000. Trail amenities, including lighting and a trail map are estimated to cost \$22,700. Additionally, the city intends to lay sidewalks at an estimated cost of \$75,000.

*Parking.* Local assistance grants are intended to expand outdoor recreation opportunities. Grants may be used to construct and develop support facilities, including parking lots and restrooms, provided that they are reasonably sized for the facility and support outdoor recreation. Hartford intends to pave a 15,000-square-foot parking lot at an estimated cost of \$45,000.

*Engineering, Insurance and Contractor Management.* Hartford indicates engineering, design and general observation and management of contractors would cost \$460,000. The city estimates other insurance and initial contractor costs of \$130,000.

### **Additional Considerations and Alternatives**

The City of Hartford is continuing to plan for the design and construction of the Centennial Park upgrades. On March 9, 2021, the Hartford Common Council considered a contract for the design and engineering of the bulkhead, as well as the design of the fishing pier and canoe launch. It was indicated the city anticipates beginning construction in 2021, and the city indicated at the time

of grant application that it would seek to complete the project by 2023.

Further, meeting minutes of the Hartford Parks and Recreation Commission indicate city staff have continued to pursue fundraising and other grant opportunities. As of January 1, 2021, city staff indicated total fundraising was approximately \$150,000. At the time of Hartford's grant application, it was estimated the Centennial Park project would be funded by the stewardship grant of \$488,025, previously pledged donations of \$30,000, and approximately \$2.6 million in funding from the City of Hartford. Additional fundraising would go to offset the city's contribution. The city also indicated it would consider applying for additional stewardship local assistance grants. Any additional requests for stewardship funding would be subject to review by the Joint Committee on Finance.

The Committee could consider approving the project [Alternative 1]. Stewardship local assistance grants are awarded on a prospective basis, in that grant awards are based on estimated eligible costs. After a project is completed, a grantee must submit detailed expense statements to DNR. DNR reimburses communities for up to half the actual cost of stewardship-eligible items, but no more than the preliminary grant award. As noted above, certain project elements, such as the construction of a playground, may be ineligible for stewardship funding. However, if any elements were to be excluded from the stewardship-eligible project costs, grants could be awarded for up to half a project's estimated costs, not to exceed \$488,025. While the Centennial Park grant was requested in fiscal year 2019-20, the fiscal year has ended and funding would be awarded in fiscal year 2020-21. The Committee could also consider denying the request [Alternative 2].

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Approve the request to provide a grant of up to \$488,100 to the City of Hartford for the redevelopment of Centennial Park. Funds would be provided from the fiscal year 2020-21 allotment for the property development and local assistance subprogram.
2. Deny the request.

Prepared by: Eric Hepler