

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report

Meeting: April 23, 2026

From: City Manager Department

Subject: Park at Rispin Mansion Fundraising Partnership



Recommended Action: 1) Authorize the City Manager to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with Capitola Cares for a fundraising campaign for additional elements at the Park at Rispin Mansion; and 2) Approve an administrative policy regarding Donor Recognition at the Park at Rispin Mansion

Background: The City of Capitola initiated plans for a park at the Rispin Mansion site in 2014. Significant community outreach and collaboration helped shape the project vision, which included an extensive landscape design and planting plan prepared by Michael Arnone and Associates. The Park at Rispin Mansion Project (Park) is a multi-year effort to create a new public park and event space on the historic Rispin Mansion property, providing community gathering areas, open space, and access to the Soquel Creek corridor. The project includes an amphitheater, walking loop, fountain plaza, sundial installation, and multiple landscaped and undeveloped areas, with design elements intended to reflect the site's historic character.

On July 28, 2022, the City Council approved the plans, specifications, and construction budget for the Project. On February 3, 2023, staff published an advertisement inviting construction bids; however, no bids were received at the public bid opening held on February 22, 2023. Subsequent outreach to potential bidders indicated the project budget was insufficient for the full scope of work. Consistent with provisions of the Public Contract Code, staff worked with a local contractor, Betz Works, to develop a feasible scope of work within the approved budget.

On March 28, 2024, Council approved a professional services agreement with Betz Works in the amount of \$949,000 to complete the amended scope of work. Construction began in spring 2024. As part of the revised scope, the extensive planting plan was removed from the construction project, with the understanding that additional landscape improvements would be completed later as funding and resources allowed. The current project includes City-installed landscaping adjacent to the grand staircase and along the wall fronting Wharf Road. Remaining non-landscaped areas were finished with topsoil, landscape wood chips, and stubbed-out water service to support future planting and irrigation.

On August 28, 2025, staff provided an update to Council on the Park at Rispin Mansion Project and requested Council direction regarding a landscaping approach. Council directed staff to seek a volunteer community partner for the installation and maintenance of landscaping at the Park. The selected partner could offer labor and financial support for improved landscaping at the new park.

At the September 25, 2025, Council meeting, staff proposed executing a professional services agreement with Michael Arnone and Associates to modify the original landscape design and planting plan, and Council directed staff to return with an updated landscaping plan that reflects community expectations while remaining feasible for long-term maintenance. At that time, the possibility of a community partner performing the planting and maintenance at the Park at Rispin Mansion was explored. No organizations identified themselves as interested in providing such services.

On February 26, 2026, Council approved a revised landscaping plan prepared by Michael Arnone and Associates. The plan can feasibly be installed and maintained by existing Public Works staff using current operational resources; however, specific plant purchases are not currently budgeted. City Council may allocate the required funding for plant materials and installation supplies during the preparation and approval process for the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget.

Discussion: In late fall 2025, Capitola Cares, a new local nonprofit organization, expressed interest in raising funds to support additional enhancements at the Park. The nonprofit expressed interest in raising and directing funds for three potential City Public Works projects:

1. Fund a contract to construct the previously designed eight-pillar arbor at the north of the central terrace area.
2. Fund costs associated with making the existing fountain functional (activating the emitter feature only, not the reflecting pool).
3. Purchase and install artificial turf in the three upper terrace areas.

On February 26, 2026, Council supported Capitola Cares' intention to fundraise for the cost of both the eight-pillar arbor and rehabilitation of the fountain, and directed staff to seek input from the Santa Cruz Public Library System (SCPL) and the Museum of Discovery regarding the proposal to install artificial turf in the three upper terrace areas of the Park at Rispin Mansion. SCPL staff had mixed responses to the artificial turf proposal; the overall preference is for a waterwise solution, not including artificial turf. The Museum of Discovery did not have a strong position against artificial turf and recently used some in a museum exhibit with no negative feedback.

To formalize a fundraising partnership, City Council directed staff to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and the nonprofit organization. Capitola Cares decided to focus raising funds for two Park elements: the arbor and fountain. So, the proposed MOU, attached for reference, clarifies that the fundraising goal is the costs of the arbor and fountain emitter, plus a donor recognition element, with a ten-percent contingency.

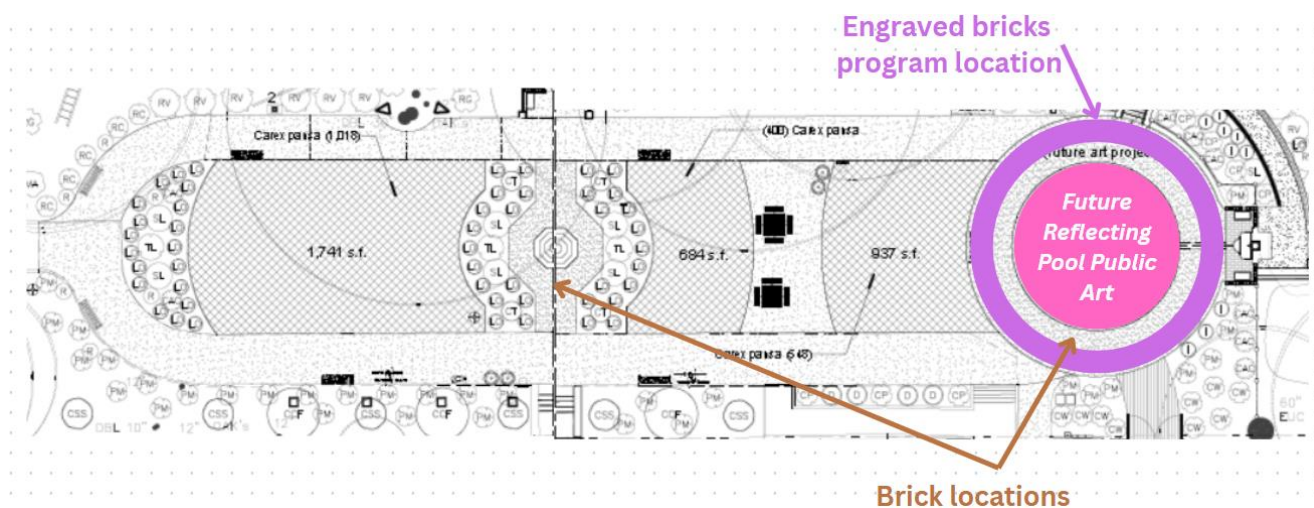
Only excess funds raised by Capitola Cares will be put towards an artificial turf project.

The agreement establishes roles and responsibilities in this fundraising effort, outlines both City and Capitola Cares' responsibilities, and provides other details of the proposed fundraising campaign. To ensure transparency and consistency, staff has also prepared a Donor Recognition Administrative Policy (Attachment 3). This policy lists donor recognition opportunities and ensures that all contributors will be publicly recognized on a donor recognition feature, such as a wall or other design element, consistent with the park's historic character.

Community Paver Program

On February 26, Council also directed staff to plan and prepare for a community paver program.

The program will raise funds to install historically appropriate 4"x8" bricks in two Park areas. The diagram below indicates the two brick locations: the walkways around the reflecting pool and sundial, which are currently filled in with decomposed granite. The diagram also highlights the specific area for about 400 engraved bricks. Staff estimates the cost of procuring and installing the full brick project would be \$80,000, including brick engraving. Selling ~400 engraved bricks for \$200 each would cover this cost.



Staff is evaluating brick fundraiser vendors and anticipates announcing the program to the community in spring or early summer. The earliest anticipated installation for the full brick project is spring 2027. The program will include bricks available for purchase in one size, with the option to engrave up to three lines of no more than 20 characters in total. The City will determine a uniform style, such as “all caps” or “cap sensitive” with the brick provider, based on the type of engraving technique. Brick material and color will be chosen to match, as closely as possible, the historic appearance of the two walkways.

Fiscal Impact: None. The partnership is intended to raise funds for two Park elements that otherwise would remain unfunded by the City.

Attachments:

1. Proposed MOU and exhibits, including donor recognition policy

Alignment with 2025-2029 Strategic Plan Priority: Healthy Families, Community, and Environment

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