

# Capitola City Council

## Agenda Report



**Meeting:** February 26, 2026

**From:** City Manager Department

**Subject:** Landscape Plans for the Park at Rispin Mansion

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**Recommended Action:** 1) Approve the updated landscape plan for the Park at Rispin Mansion; 2) provide direction regarding a commemorative paver project at the Park; and 3) authorize staff to negotiate a memorandum of understanding with Capitola Cares to coordinate fundraising efforts for additional elements at the Park.

**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 have currently identified themselves as interested in providing such services.

The updated landscaping plan (Attachment 1) was developed to maintain the original feel and style as much as possible, while reducing cost and ongoing maintenance demands. As proposed, all improvements identified in the plan can feasibly be purchased, installed, and maintained by existing Public Works staff using current operational resources. While these improvements are feasible within existing staffing capacity, specific plant purchases are not currently budgeted. Plant materials and

installation supplies are estimated at \$50,000 for most of the proposed landscaping. Additionally, to irrigate, test, and plant groundcover in the three upper terrace areas, \$60,000 more would be required.

Discussion: The proposed plan identifies plant materials and landscape areas that are consistent with current City maintenance practices, emphasizing drought-tolerant species, durability, and long-term sustainability. Improvements may be implemented in phases as staff capacity allows while maintaining routine park operations.

Approval of the revised landscaping plan will allow staff to proceed with purchasing materials and completing installation as part of ongoing park maintenance activities. It should be noted the final landscaping plan for portions of the park may be revised based on the existing conservation easement on the property.

### **Community Paver Program**

During the August 28, 2025, Council meeting, Council expressed interest in a fundraising project using commemorative pavers for select areas within the Park that are currently finished with decomposed granite, rather than hardscape due to budget constraints. A paver program would allow members of the public, families, and local organizations to purchase engravable pavers, creating an opportunity for the community to become a lasting part of the Park while contributing to park enhancements.

Staff has identified the reflecting pool plaza area at the south side of the center terrace, surrounding the pool area, as conducive for engraved commemorative pavers. A paver program would raise funds to install historically complementary paver stones in both the sundial and reflecting pool areas of the Park. The identified area around the reflecting pool would contain approximately 5,000 pavers, comfortably featuring about 400 engraved pavers, each four inches by eight inches in size.

Staff estimates the cost of procuring and installing the full paver stone project in both the sundial and reflecting pool areas would be \$80,000. Selling ~400 paver stones at \$200 each would cover this cost.

If directed by Council, staff will prepare a more detailed paver program for consideration at a future Council meeting. The item would include more detailed cost estimates, recommended paver types, and identify the public process for ordering personalized pavers.

### **Potential Fundraising Partnership**

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 is interested in raising and directing funds for the following 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. Purchase and install artificial turf in the three upper terrace areas.
3. Fund costs associated with making existing fountain functional (activating the emitter feature only, not the reflecting pool).

Should Council wish to pursue this opportunity, staff recommends a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and the nonprofit organization. The MOU would establish fundraising parameters, clarify roles and responsibilities, and address ownership, construction standards, and long-term maintenance obligations associated with any improvements.

If directed by Council, staff would prepare a draft MOU for consideration at a future Council meeting.

Fiscal Impact: The costs to purchase, install, and maintain the proposed landscaping plan (Attachment 1) is estimated at no more than \$110,000 (\$50,000, excluding the three upper terrace areas). If directed staff would include options to fund this work for Council consideration during the upcoming budget adoption cycle.

Attachments:

1. Proposed Landscape Plan for the Park at Rispin Mansion
2. Arbor Plan

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

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