



Agenda Item Report

Meeting Type: Committee of the Whole / Common Council

Meeting Date: June 3, 2025

Item Title: Dissolution of Mae Ward Beautification Endowment Fund

Submitted By: Krystal Larson, Treasurer

Detailed Description of Subject Matter: The Mae Ward Beautification Endowment Fund ("Mae Ward Fund") was established from the receipt of a donation from Mae Ward sometime prior to 1998. The primary function of the fund has been to provide for flowers around the City of Columbus ("City"). We were unable to find or identify the original receipt or documentation behind establishing the Mae Ward Fund. A history of transactions that were identified as relating to the Mae Ward Fund indicates the current balance of the original donation is minimal or can be viewed as spent in its entirety by using a basic first in/first out rule of accounting, see attached balance history. It is in the best interest of the City moving forward to consider the Mae Ward Beautification Endowment as spent and discontinue using the name and terminology as "Funds Held in Trust". The remaining balance in the fund is made up of donations that are classified as "Designated" and should continue to be treated the same as other donations to the City.

Chronological notes concerning the Mae Ward Fund from a financial perspective:

- The balance on the City's books at the end of 1998 was \$8,446.99.
- From 1998 through 2010 there was no account/financial activity identified other than a few interest earnings entries.
- For the years 2011 through 2016 there were awards approved and expended and interest earnings entries. Also of note was the use of a request form to City of Columbus Common Council ("Council") for approval of awards, including the Cemetery and Library.
- In 2016 the Council approved a \$3,000 contribution/donation (unused room tax dollars) to the Mae Ward Fund for beautification purposes.
- From 2016 through 2019, other than the deposit of \$3,000 from the City, there was interest earnings entries, but no awards distributed.
- In July of 2019, the "Downtown Beautification Task Force" submitted a memo to the Council requesting the task force transition to a City Committee (Beautification Committee). No action was taken. Following this request and during the 2019 budget season, a memo to the Council from City staff identified that the Mae Ward original receipt documentation or endowment history could not be found by City staff and later in November 2019, City staff drafted and submitted to council for review "Mae Ward Fund Guidelines" which included an official application process for the use of funds. These guidelines were approved by the Council on 3/3/2020, see copy of memo to Council attached.
- From 2020 through 2022 there was minimal activity in the fund other than a few small awards, interest earnings, and City budgeted donations recorded.

- Beginning January 2023, the Beautification Advisory Board was organized and commenced fundraising campaigns to provide for beautification projects around the City.
- From 2023 through present, the Beautification Advisory Board's activity (expenditures) are the only disbursement transactions that were made from the fund. Deposits to the fund included interest earnings and fundraising donations, along with the City's annual \$1,500 donations.
- As of 3/18/2025, the functions of the Beautification Advisory Board are administered by the Public Spaces Committee which includes beautification projects within the City.

Based on our analysis, the Council may claim that the Mae Ward Beautification Endowment Fund monies have been spent and exhausted on City beautification as required. By adopting the attached resolution, moving forward the process for monitoring donated funds and the approval of expenditures for beautification will be simplified and follow the same procedures as other monies obtained from donations or fundraising for a specific purpose. These funds will continue to be included in the Designated Fund, which is a separately held savings account of the City and reported as such on the Treasurer's monthly financial reports.

List all Supporting Documentation Attached:

Council meeting minutes for meeting held 3/3/2020

Memo to Council for meeting held 3/3/2020

Mae Ward Financial History prepared by Krystal Larson, Treasurer

Draft Resolution 6-25

Action Requested of Council: Consider and take action on Resolution No. 6-25 to dissolve the Mae Ward Beautification Endowment Fund.