

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council



STAFF

Rupa Venkatesh, Assistant City Manager
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SUBJECT

Second Reading of Ordinance No. 106, 2024, Appropriating Prior Year Reserves in the General Fund for a Civic Assembly Process in Relation to the Hughes Stadium Site.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Ordinance, adopted on First Reading by a vote of 4-2 (Nays: Ohlson, Gutowsky; Absent: Pignataro) appropriates one-time dollars in the amount of \$150,000 to be used for a Civic Assembly engagement process in relation to the Hughes Site Plan work. Staff is also requesting that City Council approve a sole source exception for Healthy Democracy Fund to provide services related to the design, coordination and implementation of a civic assembly should grant revenue bring the project above \$200,000.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends adoption of the Ordinance on Second Reading.

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

City Council has expressed a desire to engage the public in a manner that ensures all voices are heard. Civic Assemblies are a method that utilizes both random selection, demographic representation, and compensation to engage diverse residents in learning about a topic, hearing ideas from a variety of interest groups, and ultimately producing well-informed recommendations to City Council on the topic through deliberations. In considering this method, City staff have proposed the Council priority of developing a use plan for the Hughes site as a topic. This also relates to the Council priority to make government more accessible, approachable and fun.

Staff have started collaborating with the American Public Trust (APT), CSU's Center for Public Deliberation, the Strayer Center, Healthy Democracy Fund, and the Local Policy Lab regarding this idea. If funded, 2024 money would be used, through a contract with Healthy Democracy Fund, to raise awareness in the community, send random mailings to seek participants and develop logistical materials and secure meeting locations. 2025 would likely be when the event would actually occur and those dollars would be used for participant compensation, matching grant commitments, and consultant help.

Parallel to a civic assembly, the broader public will still be offered the traditional methods of engagement. The civic assembly tool is being proposed as an addition because of the variety of interest groups, complexity of the project, and potential for polarization in the community. This will also be a learning

opportunity to see how the community responds to this new model of local democracy.

In addition to the \$150,000 appropriation, APT is working on securing funding sources from philanthropic organizations to support even more robust public engagement, outreach efforts, and inclusion support for assembly members. In accordance with Code Section 8-161(d)(3), City Council approval is required for exceptions to the procurement process for anything \$200,000 or more.

Healthy Democracy Fund is a unique nonpartisan, nonprofit organization in the United States that works with local governments to design, coordinate and implement civic assemblies through a lottery selected panel. Their processes are topic-agnostic and moderators only ask non-content questions to help guide the process not the outcome. Healthy Democracy Fund has worked in California on land-use projects, specifically in Petaluma, CA related to a 55-acre City owned property that was formerly a fairground and in Santa Monica related to an anticipated closure of their airport.

Engagement with Native Community

Council requested for information regarding discussions between the Native community and the Equity & Inclusion Office pertaining to the Hughes site. Below is a short summary as well as potential future engagement,

- **Feb 2023-** During a Native Community meeting, the Hughes site was discussed, and information provided was provided about the ballot language. Discussion occurred around what this could mean for the native community and tribal interests.
- **May 2023-** City staff hosted a Zoom call with the Native Community to inform them about the Hughes site and create space for the community to voice their interests. Prior to the City officially purchasing the land in June 2023, a small group of Native community members had organized to produce Land Back project proposal for native use on the property.
- **Proposed for Fall 2024- Informal Consultation:** This would include Local Native community members and Tribal Representatives that have indicated a connection to the area / Hughes site. This would be a step to prepare the community to work with Healthy Democracy Fund and American Public Trust. This informal consultation would create space for the Native community and Tribal representatives to speak freely and gather their thoughts and ideas working towards consensus on potential Native uses of the land in preparation to work alongside a civic assembly.

During this item discussion, American Public Trust and Healthy Democracy Fund will be joining remotely to present to Council more information about the process of selecting a civic assembly and answer any questions.

CITY FINANCIAL IMPACTS

One-time dollars of \$150,000 would come from the General Fund. Any supplemental revenue received in the form of grants would be brought to Council for appropriation at that time.

BOARD / COMMISSION / COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

None.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

None.

ATTACHMENTS

First Reading attachments not included.

1. Ordinance for Consideration