CITY OF NORMAN, OK
STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 03/14/2023

REQUESTER: James Briggs, Park Development Manager

PRESENTER: Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF ACCEPTANCE, APPROVAL, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF AN OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF $10,000 FROM THE OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY TO BE USED TO FUND ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS OF THE NORMAN URBAN TREE INVENTORY, CONTRACT K-2223-133, AND BUDGET APPROPRIATION AS OUTLINED IN THE STAFF REPORT.

BACKGROUND:

In the spring of 2022, a presentation was made to the Norman Tree Board and a Study Session of the Norman City Council. The presentation highlighted the benefits of implementing an Urban Forestry Master Plan (UFMP) for the City. In order for the City to accurately assess the current urban forest, it was recommended to conduct a tree inventory for the major urban areas of Norman. In addition to the UFMP, the City must update our current Tree Ordinance. Although only a few years old, our Legal Department has found some issues with the language in the ordinance; and it needs to be updated before it is enforceable. Funding for this professional services project was approved in the FYE 2023 budget. Recently, the City of Norman issued a 'Request For Qualifications' (RFQ), which we will utilize to select a company to conduct the inventory, review our ordinance, and write the new UFMP. The company awarded the contract will spend the spring and summer months on the project, including administrating public meetings, conducting the tree inventory, and compiling the data, before issuing the finished product.

DISCUSSION:

Each year, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODAFF) offers several grant assistance programs, including an Urban and Community Forestry Assistance (UCFA) grant of up to $10,000, to help promote healthy and sustainable urban forests. The Parks Department applied for this grant in December 2022 now that funding is in place for professional services for the work described earlier. The application indicated that the additional funding from the grant would allow the City to maximize the effectiveness of the inventory and help to show residents how their neighborhoods are benefiting. Parks would use the funds to purchase additional data packages to allow the software to overlay socio-economic and demographic

information to the tree inventory map. Additionally, it will enable analysis comparing canopy cover to local data (e.g., median household income, ethnicity, age groups, poverty rates, etc.), drawing attention to current deficiencies and prioritizing future project locations. We would also like to include creating an interactive map that residents could use to see the features and benefits of the City's urban forest. Including these features as part of the UFMP would increase the public's awareness of the social benefits of local trees and demonstrate Norman's focus on equitable access to trees throughout the City.

Parks was notified in January that Norman's application was selected to receive a UCFA grant in the full amount of $10,000. The grant does not require matching funds and will be reimbursed as expenses are incurred. Like other grants, the City of Norman must establish a special fund and track all expenditures and reimbursements through this account. The funds will be appropriated to the annual Tree Program account identified in this year's budget for a one-time increase to pay for the professional forestry services described herein. The grant funds will be used to purchase the data and end-user enhancements as part of the tree inventory and UFMP once a firm is selected for the project.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City of Norman accept a grant in the amount of $10,000 from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry; approve contract K-2223-133 between the CON and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry to approve the requirements for the grant award; and approve the appropriation of $10,000 into a Special Grant Account for additional services as described above for the Tree Program Urban Forestry Services project.

Appropriation of $10,000 from the Special Grant Fund Balance (22-29000) to the Tree Program Matching Funds Project (Account 50799966-46301; Project PR0212), to be used to purchase enhancements to the Tree Inventory and UFMP, once a contract for those services is awarded.