



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Department Source: Parks and Recreation

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: May 5, 2025

Re: Waters-Moss Memorial Wildlife Area: Waters House Improvements

Executive Summary

Public hearing to authorize an ordinance for improvements to the Waters House at Waters-Moss Memorial Wildlife Area. The proposed improvements include interior and exterior renovations to the house at the park. The Waters House was originally renovated by Parks and Recreation staff in 2017 to create spaces for public rentals, recreational programming and the park ranger program. With the relocation of the park ranger program to the Columbia Police Department headquarters in 2024, Parks and Recreation staff is proposing to complete additional improvements to utilize the former park ranger space for art programming, additional storage and expanded meeting space in the house. The project has a total budget of \$250,000 and is funded by the 2021 Park Sales Tax. The improvements to the house will be completed using a combination of contract labor and parks and recreation construction staff. The proposed improvements at the park are scheduled to begin late fall 2025 and completed by spring 2026.

Discussion

Located at 1907 Hillcrest Drive, the Henry Jackson Waters & C.B. Moss Memorial Wildlife Area is a 110-acre park that includes the Hillcrest Community Center, Moss Building and Waters House. In January 2009, the City of Columbia and Missouri Department of Conservation entered into a land swap agreement which traded the Waters-Moss Memorial Wildlife Area property for 18.5 acres on the northeast corner of Gans Creek Recreational Area. As part of the agreement, the Waters-Moss property has a designated city use zone with the remainder of the property remaining as wooded natural space. The park also includes a portion of the Grindstone Creek Trail, a medium shelter, playground, restroom facility and numerous parking lots.

Following the public hearing, the Parks and Recreation Department is requesting approval of an ordinance authorizing improvements to the Waters House in Waters-Moss Memorial Wildlife Area. The proposed improvements include interior and exterior renovations to expand spaces for recreational programming and facility rentals.

As part of the 2021 Park Sales Tax renewal, \$250,000 was allocated for improvements at Waters-Moss Memorial Wildlife Area. In late fall 2023, staff started to evaluate the needs at the park based on previous park improvements, current recreational programming at the park and citizen use of the indoor rental facilities. During this timeframe, two additional changes were being discussed that impacted the planning process about the proposed park improvement project.



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1. The Waters House included offices and storage space for the Park Ranger program from fall 2017 to spring 2024 when the Park Rangers were relocated to the Columbia Police Department downtown headquarters. The move created vacant space at the Waters House that staff took into consideration during the planning process.
2. For over 20 years, the Parks and Recreation Department hosted art programming at Paquin Tower in cooperation with the Columbia Housing Authority (CHA). The Columbia Housing Authority has seen a significant expansion of facilities over the past 5 years and is in need of space within the building. CHA staff and Parks and Recreation staff met to discuss potential plans related to the building. CHA would like to utilize ground floor space for their Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri program and has a desire to provide office space within Paquin Tower for Burrell Behavioral Health. These changes require recreation programming to relocate to a different facility so this was taken into consideration during the planning process.

After reviewing all plans and discussing potential impacts of the facility changes, park staff held a public input meeting at the Waters House on Oct. 23, 2024 to discuss the improvements with the public. Staff met with approximately 25 citizens to discuss the proposed plans and gain feedback about the proposed improvement project. Citizens had an additional opportunity to provide comments about the project on beheard.como.gov. All feedback from the public input meetings and beheard.como.gov are included with this Council memo.

Park staff introduced the proposed Waters House improvement project to the Parks and Recreation Commission on Jan. 16, 2025. After discussion of the project, the commissioners voted to endorse the proposed improvements to the Waters House and recommended that Council approve the plans as presented. After considering all citizen comments and the P&R Commission recommendation, staff believes the proposed improvements to the Waters House represents a consensus of park users and staff.

The proposed improvements to the Waters House, funded by the 2021 Park Sales Tax, will include the following:

1. A Combination of contract and force account labor will be used to complete renovations within the existing house to support the department's life enrichment programs and expand the facility rental space.

The areas that had been previously utilized for the park ranger offices will be converted into space for art programming. This will include a 420-square foot room for art classes, a 408-square foot room for ceramics with kilns, art supply storage space and a restroom with supply cleaning station. A new entrance will be constructed on the west side of the building to provide access to the art rooms and space for outdoor instruction on the deck.



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The meeting room spaces within the house will be expanded by eliminating an old fireplace and existing wall to create one large open space within the house. The house currently has three separate spaces and the renovations will create one 1,040 square foot usable space for the department and the public. The space will be used for life enrichment programs, such as daily Mah Jongg play, Camp Slime summer camp, public facility rentals and group meetings. The improvements to this section of the building will also include improved storage for tables and chairs.

Once the improvements are completed, recreation staff also has a desire to create a plan to host summer art camps at the facility each year. Staff anticipates holding two weeks of camp each year to help meet the growing needs for summer camps in our community.

The project has a total budget of \$250,000 and is funded by the 2021 Park Sales Tax. Portions of the project will be bid through the City's Purchasing Department and the proposed improvements will be completed using a combination of contract labor and parks and recreation construction staff. The proposed improvements at the park are scheduled to begin late fall 2025 and completed by spring 2026.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: The total project cost is \$250,000 and is funded by the 2021 Park Sales Tax. Long-Term Impact: The improvements to the Waters House will result in an improved space for recreational programming and public rentals. This will have a positive impact on revenue generated at the facility. The improvements to the Waters House are not anticipated to create a noticeable increase in expenses at the facility.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Reliable and Sustainable Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Organizational Excellence, Tertiary Impact: Inclusive and Equitable Community

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
12/5/16	REP91-16: Administrative Public Improvement Project: Waters-Moss Memorial Wildlife Area - Waters House Renovations. REP91-16

Suggested Council Action

Following the public hearing, approve the ordinance authorizing improvements to the Waters House at Waters-Moss Memorial Wildlife Area.