

**REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION**

<b>TO:</b> Mayor via City Secretary			
<b>Subject:</b> A resolution supporting the rehabilitation of Gus Wortham Park through a golf course or a botanic garden and containing findings and other provisions relating to the foregoing subject.	<b>Category #</b>	<b>Page 1 of 1</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
<b>FROM (Department or other point of origin):</b> David M. Feldman, City Attorney Legal Department	<b>Origination Date:</b>	<b>Agenda Date</b>	
<b>DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE</b> <i>David M. Feldman By Permission Debra Perry</i>	<b>Council District(s) affected:</b> District 1		
<b>For additional information contact:</b> David M. Feldman <b>Phone:</b> 832-393-6412	<b>Date and Identification of prior authorizing Council Action:</b> N/A		

**RECOMMENDATION: (Summary)**  
Approve a resolution supporting the rehabilitation of Gus Wortham Park through a golf course or botanic garden.

**Amount of Funding:** N/A **Finance Budget:**

**SOURCE OF FUNDING:**  General Fund  Grant Fund  Enterprise Fund  Other (Specify) N/A

**SPECIFIC EXPLANATION:**

Gus Wortham Park (Gus Wortham), a municipal park, spans over 150 acres of green space along Brays Bayou. The park is also the site of the historic, Gus Wortham Golf Course, which is managed and maintained by the City. Due to the design and location, the Golf Course attracts golfers of all levels and hosts a number of golf tournaments.

However, the Golf Course is struggling financially, with the average number of rounds falling from 50,000 rounds per year in the late 1990s to 30,000 rounds per year during the past five years. Consequently, significant investment is needed to operate and rehabilitate Gus Wortham, while preserving the historic Golf Course. To support the rehabilitation and long-term sustainability of Gus Wortham, the City has considered various options and possible private fundraising sources.

For several months, the City and Houston Golf Association (HGA) have engaged in preliminary contract negotiations regarding HGA's proposal for rehabilitating the Golf Course. At a minimum, a proposed contract with HGA would involve leasing the Golf Course operations to HGA provided that HGA satisfied certain terms and conditions, including initially raising at least \$5 million and achieving performance standards regarding the golf course rehabilitation, clubhouse renovations and a first tee program with a likely total cost of \$15 million. But, according to HGA, they would also require the City to promptly commit to providing HGA the opportunity to operate other City golf courses, including the Memorial Park Golf Course.

The City has also engaged in parallel, preliminary contract negotiations with the Houston Botanic Garden (HBG). HBG's chief focus is Gus Wortham but the proposed contract identifies Glenbrook Park as the site for the Botanic Garden with an option offered for Gus Wortham if that site becomes available. Like the proposed contract with HGA, the proposed contract with HBG would require them to raise at least \$5 million for the construction of the botanic garden; but before HBG receives access to the site, they would be required to raise \$20 million.

Despite all of the parties' good faith efforts, both of the proposed contracts present several concerns for the City. Historical trends suggest that a fundraising campaign for Gus Wortham golf rehabilitation would be challenging. The fundraising capability for a Botanic Garden is unknown. Likewise, discussions with both organizations have evolved to include other City golf courses in addition to Gus Wortham, while creating uncertainty regarding the location of a possible botanic garden.

The Administration recommends that Council approve a resolution indicating its support for either a golf course or a botanic garden as a means of rehabilitating Gus Wortham.

**REQUIRED AUTHORIZATION**

<b>Finance Director:</b>	<b>Other Authorization:</b>	<b>Other Authorization:</b>
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