

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: 2/15/2022

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director

Subject: From the Executive Zoo Director Requesting Approval to Accept the State of Wisconsin Tourism Capital Grant

File Type: Action Item

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**REQUEST**

The Milwaukee County Zoo (MCZ) requests approval to accept the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration Tourism Capital Grant in the amount of \$3.5 million to renovate the Humboldt Penguin Exhibit.

**POLICY**

Wis. Stats 56.06(1) requires County Board approval to accept federal or state grants.

Wisconsin State Statutes:	
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	56.06(1)
Specific Adopted Budget:	
Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:	
Specific Adopted Capital Project:	

**BACKGROUND**

On October 7, 2021 the Wisconsin State Department of Administration (WSDOA) announced funds available from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to provide grants to local governments and tourism-entity nonprofits for tourism-related investment projects that help promote, maintain, or bolster Wisconsin's tourism industry and that have a substantial capital component. Eligible entities were able to submit requests of up to \$3.5 million through a competitive application process for eligible infrastructure projects.

In a typical non-COVID year, the MCZ is visited by over 1.2 million people and it is one of the area's most popular attractions for families and animal lovers of all ages for the surrounding communities and out-of-state visitors. According to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums demographic study, over 183 million people in the United States and over 200 million world-wide visit accredited zoo facilities annually, more than the National Football League, National Basketball Association, National Hockey League and Major League Baseball annual attendance combined.

Since the MCZ is a leading Milwaukee and Wisconsin Tourism destination, an application was submitted on November 19, 2021 to renovate the Humboldt Penguin Exhibit. On February 2, 2021, notification was received that the MCZ's application was selected at the maximum funding level of \$3.5 million.

The focus of the State grant will accommodate an expansion of the pool to create an engaging, nose-to-nose interaction for visitors as well as some upgrades to the life support systems. The MCZ submitted a Milwaukee County ARPA application for the February 4 deadline requesting \$3,760,828 to supplement the State grant to accommodate the full scope reconstruction of the Humboldt Penguin exhibit as estimated by the Department of Administrative Services Facilities Management Architecture & Engineering Section.

The State Tourism Capital Grant and any additional County ARPA funds will help the MCZ meet its mission to continue to inspire public understanding, support, and participation in global conservation of animal species and their environment by creating a unifying bond between visitors and the living earth and will provide an environment for personal renewal and enjoyment for guests.

#### **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

#### **FISCAL EFFECT**

The Tourism Capital Grant does not require a local match; however, MCZ did request County ARPA funds to complete the full reconstruction of the exhibit.

It is recommended that the MCZ be authorized to accept the Wisconsin Tourism Capital Grant. In addition, the Comptroller's Office in conjunction with the Director of the Office of Strategy, Budget and Performance and the MCZ are directed to process an appropriation transfer to recognize the revenue and align expenditure authority per the grant rules for the renovation of the Humboldt Penguin Exhibit in addition to any County ARPA funds that may be awarded.

#### **TERMS**

The Grant Agreement shall be effective on the execution date and shall be in force until all eligible activities are completed and all required documents are submitted to WSDOA. Funds must be encumbered by December 31, 2022 and must be obligated by December 31, 2024.

MCZ will submit annual reports and a final report to WSDOA summarizing the use of the funds and describing the impact on the MCZ.

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

Amos Morris will present but please include Vera Westphal and Gary Lunsford in the virtual meeting invite. Email addresses as follows:

[Amos.Morris@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Amos.Morris@milwaukeecountywi.gov), [Vera.Westphal@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Vera.Westphal@milwaukeecountywi.gov),  
[Gary.Lunsford@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Gary.Lunsford@milwaukeecountywi.gov)

**PREPARED BY:**

Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director, Zoological Department

**APPROVED BY:**

Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director, Zoological Department

*Amos D. Morris, Jr*

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Fiscal Note, Resolution, Notice of Award

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk  
David Crowley, County Executive  
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive  
Scott Manske, Comptroller  
Aaron Hertzberg, Director, Department of Administrative Services  
Joseph Lamers, Director of Performance, Strategy & Budget  
Michelle Nate, Deputy Comptroller  
Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director, Comptroller's Office  
Ciara Miller, Research Analyst, Comptroller's Office  
Anthony Rux, Budget and Management Analyst, PSB  
Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director  
Gary Lunsford, Director of Animal Management and Health