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5 **AN AMENDED AND ENGROSSED RESOLUTION**
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7 Rescinding the policy position adopted in File No.16-200 and recognizing a new County
8 policy to expand the scope of strategic planning associated with the Mitchell Park
9 Horticultural Conservatory (the Domes) to enable the Milwaukee County Board of
10 Supervisors to consider all options for the future of the Domes
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13 WHEREAS, the original Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory, a Victorian-era
14 greenhouse built in 1898 and demolished in 1955 due to structural safety concerns, was
15 replaced by a new horticultural conservatory colloquially known as “the Domes”, which
16 opened in 1964 with First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson in attendance; and
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18 WHEREAS, from December 2013 to February 2014 the Department of Parks,
19 Recreation and Culture closed the Tropical Dome to repair concrete whose weathering
20 had accelerated due to the high heat and humidity within that dome, and subsequent
21 inspection of the other two domes was authorized in File No. 14-89; and
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23 WHEREAS, by September 2015, the Director of the Department of Parks,
24 Recreation and Culture reported to the County Board that the domes’ deterioration had
25 accelerated, moved for the installation of netting to protect patrons from falling concrete
26 debris, and also requested a \$500,000 study of how to move forward with the 1964
27 Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory (File No. 15-601); and
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29 WHEREAS, after the Administration indefinitely closed all three domes on
30 February 5, 2016 due to concrete debris falling from the structure, the Milwaukee
31 County Board of Supervisors adopted File No. 16-200 which requested the Domes
32 reopen to the public by the end of 2016, established the Domes Task Force to develop
33 a comprehensive long-term plan for the facility, and officially set the County policy to
34 “pursue the repair and preservation of the existing Mitchell Park Horticultural
35 Conservatory”; and
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37 WHEREAS, in 2018 the Domes Task Force and their consulting team comprised
38 of HGA and ConsultEcon, Inc. released the “Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory
39 Future Path and Feasibility Study” (Phase I and Phase II) which evaluated eight
40 potential options for the future of the Domes ranging from demolition to expansive re-
41 envisioning of the facility, and documented an extensive community outreach process
42 (File No.18-164); and

43 **WHEREAS, inaction by Milwaukee County, or the “do nothing” option,**
44 **when considering paths forward for the Domes, is tantamount to demolition by**
45 **neglect as the facility continues to deteriorate; and**

46 WHEREAS, while the Phase I and Phase II studies may have explored the costs
47 and impacts of demolition or reconstruction of the Domes, these options were not
48 consistent with the County Board’s stated policy to repair, preserve, and prolong the
49 existing Domes; therefore the Task Force is limited to only recommending an option that
50 is consistent with the current policy; and

51 WHEREAS in September 2019, the Domes Task Force’s Phase III report by
52 ArtsMarket, LLC presented a Business Plan and Conceptual Design which
53 recommended preservation of the Domes and redevelopment of Mitchell Park with a
54 proposed funding model utilizing various tax credits, grants, private fundraising, and
55 County financing (File No. 19-677); and

56 WHEREAS, Milwaukee County contracted with Husch Blackwell and Baker Tilly
57 to evaluate the Business Plan presented in File No. 19-677, and their report released in
58 File No. 22-697 revealed that due to the complexity and laws relating to tax credits, the
59 proposed “capital stack” presented by ArtsMarket, LLC was found to not be a viable
60 financial mechanism to move forward with financing the Domes’ rehabilitation and re-
61 investment without significant County investment and/or private fundraising; and

62 WHEREAS, considering its ongoing fiscal challenges, if the Domes are going to
63 continue operating, Milwaukee County must find a way to improve the Domes’ business
64 and operating models to enhance community impact and perhaps raise sufficient
65 revenue to sustain operations and assist in grant and donor opportunities (File Nos. 18-
66 164, 18-627, 19-57, 19-102, 21-233, 21-772, & 22-697); and

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68 WHEREAS, the County Board passed File No. 22-980 to have the Administration
69 obtain the Domes’ listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, but was
70 vetoed by the County Executive due to concerns that historic designation is not
71 appropriate at present; and

72
73 WHEREAS, despite significant resources in both time and money spent on
74 planning for the future of the Domes, the County has not yet been able to take a
75 definitive step towards a chosen outcome; and

76 WHEREAS, as the policymakers for the County, the Milwaukee County Board of
77 Supervisors should have the opportunity to weigh all relevant strategies and their
78 respective fiscal impacts and constraints, economic impacts, and alignment with the
79 County’s strategic plan regarding the future of Mitchell Park Horticultural Center (the
80 Domes); and

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82 WHEREAS, the Committee on Parks and Culture, at its meeting of December 6,
83 2022, recommended adoption of File No. 22-1184 as amended (vote 4-0); now,
84 therefore,

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86 BE IT RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby **rescinds**
87 **expands** the policy position adopted in File No. 16-200 committing the County to the
88 pursuit of the repair and preservation of the Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory
89 (Domes) and officially recognizes a new County policy to expand the scope of strategic
90 planning associated with the Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory (Domes) to enable
91 the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors to consider all options for the future of the
92 Domes and their respective fiscal and economic impacts to make the best, informed
93 decision on future action; and

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95 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture,
96 coordinating with the Office of Strategy, Budget and Performance, Office of Corporation
97 Counsel, and Office of the Comptroller if necessary, shall present a report to the County
98 Board at the July 2023 cycle which shall evaluate options including:

- 99 (1) Demolition, which should include an estimate for recommended site
100 improvements for Mitchell Park if the Domes are demolished
- 101 (2) Limited scope repairs to address deferred maintenance and code compliance
102 concerns
- 103 (3) Full building renovation including the building envelope (glass, seals, concrete
104 coating)
- 105 (4) Phase III ArtsMarket, LLC proposal for a New Urban Botanical Park and
106 Conservatory

107
108 and provide the following information:

- 109 • How long can the Domes remain open in their current state?
110 • Updated cost estimates for all options listed above with a description of the
111 project scope
112 • In what ways could status on the State and/or National Registers of Historic
113 Places impact each option?
114 • What is the lifetime on the improvements?
115 • Provide any known funding sources, whether the project would be eligible for
116 bonding, and an estimate of General Obligation Bonding that would be
117 necessary to complete the project

118 ; and

119 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture,
120 coordinating with the Office of Strategy, Budget and Performance, and Office of
121 Corporation Counsel shall present the Board of Supervisors with options of business
122 plans and governance structure changes to effectuate the enhancement of the Mitchell
123 Park Horticultural Conservatory as a destination for residents and tourists, and bring the
124 Conservatory to perform in line with peer conservatories across the country; and

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126 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in addition to reporting on the future Dome
127 options above, the Parks Department shall present long-term options for Mitchell Park,

128 independent of plans for the Domes, with the goal of greater revitalization of the park
129 space and further activation of the surrounding neighborhoods.; **and**

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131 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, while this resolution would expand the policy**
132 **position adopted in File No. 16-200, this resolution does not advocate for,**
133 **suggest, or show preference for one potential option over another and any**
134 **decision regarding final action on the Domes will be made by the County Board of**
135 **Supervisors at a future meeting.**

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