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4 **A RESOLUTION**

5
6 Requesting a feasibility study for creating a Milwaukee County Parks Youth Corps
7 program
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10 WHEREAS, in the 2017 study produced by the Wisconsin Policy Forum (WPF),
11 then known as the Public Policy Forum, titled “Joining Forces: Exploring Service
12 Sharing Opportunities for Milwaukee Public Schools”, the Wisconsin Policy Forum
13 suggested potential opportunities for the Milwaukee Public School District to collaborate
14 in the realm of parks and recreation with the City of Milwaukee relating to master
15 planning, with the City and County relating to sharing data, and with the County relating
16 to mowing and snow removal, forestry, sharing equipment, playground inspection and
17 repair, and other specialized services; and
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19 WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin has imposed a structural deficit on local
20 governments in Wisconsin, whereby the costs to continue the services citizens expect
21 and deserve rise higher based on inflation than do the percentage of State shared
22 revenue increases which are typically less than one percent per year (File Nos. 18-944,
23 19-161, & 22-457); and
24

25 WHEREAS, in the October 2021 WPF study, “Sinking Treasure: A look at the
26 Milwaukee County Parks’ troubled finances and potential solutions,” the WPF noted
27 how in inflation-adjusted terms, the County’s parks have experienced significant cuts
28 financially and staff-wise while becoming further dependent on earned revenue rather
29 than property tax levy:
30

- 31 • Operations Expenditures in 2019 Dollars
 - 32 ○ 1989: ~\$75 million
 - 33 ○ 2019: >\$40 million
- 34 • Number of Full-time Equivalent Positions
 - 35 ○ 1989: 1072.7
 - 36 ○ 2019: 469
- 37 • Parks Department Revenue Mix
 - 38 ○ 1989: 74.4 percent property tax levy, 25.6 percent other revenue
 - 39 ○ 2019: 43.4 percent property tax levy, 56.7 percent other revenue

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41 (File No. 21-973); and

42 WHEREAS, in File No. 20-639, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture
43 noted, “Milwaukee County Parks is at cross-roads and the funding mechanisms to
44 sustain our parks are broken. This time of global pandemic has magnified and
45 accelerated the reality that the fiscal model that has funded Parks for years is failing,
46 that it is not sustainable, and that new, long-term funding solutions are needed.”; and
47

48 WHEREAS, in “Sinking Treasure” the WPF repeated its suggestion to collaborate
49 with the Milwaukee Public School and suburban school districts “to enhance
50 programming and support maintenance of recreational facilities”; and
51

52 WHEREAS, in February 2022, Milwaukee County adopted File No. 22-132, an
53 updated Milwaukee County Park and Open Space Plan, which is a long-range planning
54 document prepared by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture and the
55 Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) to guide decision
56 making and fulfill the County’s State and Federal grant eligibility; and
57

58 WHEREAS, as part of the adopted Milwaukee County Park and Open Space
59 Plan, it is recommended that “the County should consider additional opportunities to
60 partner with nonprofit organizations as well as municipal government agencies when
61 possible to implement improvement projects” and there exists a “shared responsibility
62 between the County and municipal governments for providing needed neighborhood
63 parks”; and
64

65 WHEREAS, in File No. 20-137, Milwaukee County co-created the ONE
66 Milwaukee Taskforce with the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee Public School District
67 “for the purpose of making practical recommendations to share costs and resources,
68 collaborate, and coordinate on potential capital infrastructure and operational needs to
69 better serve the people of Milwaukee”; and
70

71 WHEREAS, in File No. 22-485, Milwaukee County formally requested the ONE
72 Milwaukee Taskforce “spearhead the beginning of collaboration efforts between
73 Milwaukee County, the City of Milwaukee, and Milwaukee Public Schools relating to
74 sharing resources for parks and recreation maintenance and operations”; and
75

76 WHEREAS, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture discussed its
77 staffing recruitment and retention challenges for seasonal workers and otherwise in File
78 No. 22-541; and
79

80 WHEREAS, a Parks Youth Corps could provide work and service-learning
81 experience to Milwaukee County youth of high school age, provide positive experiences

82 for disadvantaged youth, and create a possible pipeline to future employment with the
83 Milwaukee County Parks while supplementing the fulltime and seasonal workforce; and
84

85 WHEREAS, Milwaukee County reestablished the Commission on Youth in File
86 No. 22-662 to engage youth in local government and “align its priorities with Milwaukee
87 County’s mission and vision to achieve racial equity. . .” and a Parks Youth Corps could
88 be complementary to the Commission; and
89

90 WHEREAS, existing programs could serve as a model for a Parks Youth Corps,
91 including the Fresh Coast, Fresh Start, and Fresh Coast Ambassadors programs which
92 the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture partners with the Milwaukee
93 Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) to train underrepresented individuals in green
94 infrastructure management who the Department later hires for relevant Parks positions;
95 and
96

97 WHEREAS, a Parks Youth Corps could simultaneously engage Milwaukee
98 County youth in learning via public service, which could enhance racial equity and serve
99 as the foundation to a fulfilling career while simultaneously supporting Parks staffing
100 needs; and
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102 WHEREAS, the Committee on Parks and Culture, at its meeting of July 19, 2022,
103 recommended adoption of File No. 22-870 (vote 5-0); now, therefore,
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105 BE IT RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby requests
106 the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture study the feasibility of creating a
107 County Parks Youth Corps to engage high school-aged students in park worker roles
108 and assist with maintenance of Milwaukee County Parks; and
109

110 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the aforementioned study shall be reported by the
111 December 2022 committee cycle and shall include the following:
112

- 113 • Paying the students a stipend, including the per capita stipend, overall cost, and
114 how it could be funded
- 115 • How Milwaukee County could engage with Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee
116 Parks & Recreation, and other Milwaukee County school districts for students to
117 potentially receive school credits for participation
- 118 • How to establish a pipeline for the Youth Corps participants having the
119 opportunity to become park workers
- 120 • The possibility of collaboration with the Department of Health and Human
121 Services Division of Youth and Family Services, the Commission on Youth, and
122 ONE Milwaukee Taskforce

- 123 • Inclusion of a financial literacy component in the program
- 124 • How the program may be modeled after the Fresh Coast, Fresh Start, and Fresh
- 125 Coast Ambassadors programs
- 126 • Community partners who could participate in the program.
- 127

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