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4 **A RESOLUTION**

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6 Appropriating \$19 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to Capital Project
7 WP0764012 – Mitchell Domes Rehabilitation for the Department of Parks, Recreation
8 and Culture to restore the historic domes of the Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory
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11 WHEREAS, the first Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory was a Victorian-
12 style greenhouse built in 1898 and served the Milwaukee community until its closure in
13 July 1955 and demolition in December 1955 due to structural safety concerns; and
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15 WHEREAS, in March 1958, architect Donald L. Grieb proposed a domed
16 conoidal conservatory to replace the demolished structure at Mitchell Park, and
17 construction occurred for the three present Desert, Tropical, and Show Domes from
18 1960 to 1964; and
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20 WHEREAS, from December 2013 to February 2014 the Department of Parks,
21 Recreation and Culture closed the Tropical Dome for repairs for the stated reason of
22 repairing concrete whose weathering had accelerated due to the high heat and humidity
23 within that dome, and subsequent inspection of the other two domes was authorized in
24 File No. 14-89; and
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26 WHEREAS, by September 2015, the Director of the Department of Parks,
27 Recreation and Culture reported to the County Board that the domes' deterioration had
28 accelerated, moved for the installation of netting to protect patrons from falling concrete
29 debris, and also requested a \$500,000 study of how to move forward with the 1964
30 Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory (File No. 15-601); and
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32 WHEREAS, after the County Executive indefinitely closed the Domes on
33 February 22, 2016 out of safety concerns for the public due to falling concrete, File No.
34 16-200 in March 2016 declared a County policy to “pursue the repair and preservation
35 of the existing Mitchell Park Conservatory. . .”, moved toward the reopening of the
36 Domes prior to the end of 2016, and authorized the creation of the Task Force on the
37 Mitchell Park Conservatory Domes, whose proceedings from 2018 to 2019 may be
38 found in File Nos. 18-164, 19-102, & 19-677; and
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40 WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin has imposed a structural deficit on local
41 governments in Wisconsin, whereby the costs to continue the services citizens expect

42 and deserve rise higher based on inflation than do the percentage of State shared
43 revenue increases which are typically less than one percent per year (File Nos. 18-944,
44 19-161, & 22-457); and

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

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- 52 • Operations Expenditures in 2019 Dollars
 - 53 ○ 1989: ~\$75 million
 - 54 ○ 2019: >\$40 million
- 55 • Number of Full-time Equivalent Positions
 - 56 ○ 1989: 1072.7
 - 57 ○ 2019: 469
- 58 • Parks Department Revenue Mix
 - 59 ○ 1989: 74.4 percent property tax levy, 25.6 percent other revenue
 - 60 ○ 2019: 43.4 percent property tax levy, 56.7 percent other revenue

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62 (File No. 21-973); and

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

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69 WHEREAS, in light of its ongoing fiscal challenges and aside from the work
70 necessary to repair and preserve the existing Domes, Milwaukee County must find a
71 way to improve the Domes’ business and operating models to enhance community
72 impact and perhaps raise sufficient revenue to sustain operations and assist in grant
73 and donor opportunities (File Nos. 18-164, 18-627, 19-57, 19-102, 21-233, 21-772, &
74 22-697); and

75

76 WHEREAS, the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed the Domes as one
77 of “America’s Most 11 Endangered Places” in 2016, listed it as a “National Treasure” in
78 2017, and stated the Domes were eligible for listing on the National Parks Service’s
79 National Register of Historic Places (File No. 19-55); and some County Supervisors
80 have expressed interest toward applying to have the Domes listed on the National
81 Register of Historic Places, which in addition to the prestige of such a listing, may

82 enable the application and receipt of federal and state historic tax credits which may be
83 used to help fund the historic rehabilitation of the Domes (File Nos. 21-772 & 22-697);
84 and

85

86 WHEREAS, a study authorized under 2016 Capital Project WP490 – Mitchell
87 Park Horticultural Conservatory Future Path & Feasibility Study, contracted to
88 ConsultEcon, Inc. and HGA, considered different alternatives for the future of the
89 Domes in July 2018 with the advice that “offering a compelling array of physical spaces
90 and programs that attract a variety of audiences throughout the year has been central to
91 the operating success of botanical gardens and conservatories nationally. It is
92 recommended that if reinvestment in the Domes complex is made, that complimentary
93 investment in the types of leading edge ancillary facilities and programs be made as
94 well.”; (File Nos. 17-446, 17-554, 18-164, 18-627):

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1. No action – Demolition by neglect

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2. Raze the Domes

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3. Address Deferred Maintenance:

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a. Repair the Domes and bring the Conservatory into ADA and Code
100 compliance

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b. *Status quo* operations continue

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4. Targeted Investment:

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a. Address deferred maintenance and bring facility into ADA and Code
105 compliance

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b. Make physical and operational modifications to enhance revenue-
107 generating capacity and improve facility attractiveness as a destination

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5. EcoDome Destination Attraction + Targeted Investments (Options A/B)

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a. Change Show Dome into immersive Ecological Habitat Zone

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i. Possible additions of conservation-themed canopy walks,
112 aquariums, live animals, a changing exhibit area, butterfly
113 exhibit

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ii. New facility for themed flower shows and public events

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iii. Outdoor Children’s Garden

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iv. Expanded outdoor gardens

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v. Community gardens

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vi. Operating enhancements for better programming and revenue
119 generation

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b. Hybrid Redevelopment EcoDome Destination

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i. 5a + Raze the Show Dome and rebuild to have a new dome
122 built for EcoDome purpose which will last at least 50 years

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6. Adventure Dome Destination Attraction + Targeted Investments (Options A/B)

- a. Change Show Dome into Adventure Dome
 - i. Possible experiential additions of canopy walks, zip lines, climbing structures, water play features playground with botanical setting
 - ii. New facility for themed flower shows and public events
 - iii. Changing exhibit area
- b. Hybrid Redevelopment Adventure Dome
 - i. 6a + Raze the Show Dome and rebuild to have a new dome built for Adventure Dome purpose which will last at least 50 years

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WHEREAS, as noted in File No. 22-697, the Task Force on the Mitchell Park Conservatory Domes only assumed moving forward with the “Targeted Investments” or “EcoDome Destination Attraction” alternatives from the ConsultEcon, Inc./HGA study in File Nos. 18-164 and 18-627; and

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WHEREAS, policymakers beginning in 2019 considered a business plan prepared by ArtsMarket, Inc. outlining the combined use of Historic, New Market, and Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Tax Credits in addition to federal Opportunity Zone investments, private donations, start-up grants, and Milwaukee County financing (File Nos. 19-102 & 19-533); however, due to the complexity and laws relating to tax credits, the “capital stack” and legal structure was found to not be a viable financial mechanism to move forward with financing the Domes’ rehabilitation and re-investment (File Nos. 21-772 & 22-697); and

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WHEREAS, the structure of each dome consists of a concrete frame with a glazing system, both of which require renovation and/or rehabilitation (File No. 22-697), and various capital projects since 2015 have sought to first stabilize the structures with temporary repairs and examine engineering alternatives to renovate or rehabilitate the domes for a prolonged period of at least 50 years, including:

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- WP490 Mitchell Domes Mesh Installation/Short Term Planning/Installation (File Nos. 15-601, 16-200, 15-626, 17-126, 17-554, 17-784, 19-492, 19-533)
- WP553 – Mitchell Park Conservatory Planning (2018 Adopted Capital Budget & File No. 19-237)
- WP684 – Mitchell
- Domes Material Testing (File Nos. 17-784, 19-623, 21-1054)

- 164 • WP### – Mitchell Domes Renovation (Placeholder on 5-Year Capital
165 Improvement Plan, pending Board approval and appropriation)
166 • WP718 – Mitchell Domes Safety Mesh Inspection and Repairs (2021
167 Adopted Capital Budget & File No. 21-1054)

168 ; and

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170 WHEREAS, Phase 1 of WP684 – Mitchell Domes Material Testing was
171 completed in 2020 with the ZS, LLC Architectural Engineering firm noted on December
172 6, 2019 in its “Mitchell Park Conservatory Domes Glazing System Investigation Task 1
173 Report” of certain design and material deficiencies which do not properly protect the
174 dome structures from water infiltration, leading to concrete and glass degradation (File
175 No. 22-697); and

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177 WHEREAS, also part of Phase 1 of Capital Project WP684 – Mitchell Domes
178 Material Testing, on December 6, 2019, ZS, LLC Architectural Engineering offered three
179 engineering alternatives to repair the glazing system, the third of which, at an estimated
180 cost of \$19.5 million in 2019, would provide the structural enhancement benefits of
181 alternative one but provide an aesthetic appropriate to match the historic appearance of
182 Donald L. Grieb’s original design for the Domes, and would be necessary for receipt of
183 any historic tax credits; and “provide a life span far in excess of the 20-year warranty on
184 the system” but may require major maintenance at or after 25 years (File Nos. 19-623,
185 21-1054, & 22-697); and

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187 WHEREAS, Phase 2 of Capital Project WP684 became substantially complete
188 on June 1, 2022 and its final report, relating to the results of testing a mock-up of a six-
189 panel piece of the glazing system based on ZS, LLC Architectural Engineering’s third
190 alternative, the Department of Administrative Services, Division of Architecture,
191 Engineering and Environmental Services, expects will be presented to the Board of
192 Supervisors in December 2022; and

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194 WHEREAS, coinciding with the Phase 2 Report of the glazing system, WP718 –
195 Mitchell Domes Safety Mesh Inspection and Repairs, the Department of Administrative
196 Services, Division of Architecture, Engineering and Environmental Services, expects a
197 report relating to the status of the protective mesh and the concrete frame is anticipated
198 to be presented to the Board of Supervisors in December 2022 (File Nos. 21-1054 & 22-
199 697); and

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201 WHEREAS, the anticipated December 2022 report will provide a revised
202 estimated cost for the glass and glazing system which was estimated at \$19.5 million in
203 2019, an estimated cost to repair the concrete frame, and the estimated cost to replace

204 the Conservatory’s boilers and bring the structure into ADA and Building Code
205 compliance (File No. 22-697); and

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207 WHEREAS, repairing the glass and glazing system and the concrete frame are
208 only the beginning, as Milwaukee County policymakers must soon determine:

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- 210 • Which policies to enact and how to finance targeted investments to the
- 211 Horticultural Conservatory and Mitchell Park more broadly to enhance the
- 212 location’s attractiveness as a destination
- 213 • Implement a business plan which enhances the facility’s operating revenue
- 214 • Determine if a different governance structure akin to the Milwaukee Public
- 215 Museum or Milwaukee County Zoo is more appropriate for the Horticultural
- 216 Conservatory Domes to facilitate private donations and grant acquisition

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218 (File No. 22-697); and

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220 WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors created the American Rescue Plan Act
221 Task Force “to review funding recommendations for the use of ARPA monies and to
222 utilize a process that engages broad and diverse input from the community to develop
223 non-binding recommendations to the County Board” after the United States Congress
224 passed the Federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (File No. 21-555); and

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226 WHEREAS, preservation and continuity of the Domes has already involved
227 extensive public engagement with broad input and support (File Nos. 16-424, 18-627),
228 and there is no better utility for one-time use ARPA dollars than to make a
229 transformational investment toward ensuring the survival of an iconic and historic
230 community asset such as the Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory Domes; now,
231 therefore,

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233 BE IT RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby
234 appropriates \$19 million of Milwaukee County’s apportionment of federal American
235 Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to Capital Project WP0764012 – Mitchell Domes
236 Rehabilitation which the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture shall use toward
237 capital projects restoring the Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory Domes pursuant
238 to County policy established in File No. 16-200.

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