COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 22, 2026

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

From: Guy Smith, Executive Director, Milwaukee County Parks
Celia Benton, Economic Development Director, Department of Administrative Services

Subject: Authorization to enter into a lease with Two Weathervanes, LLC for the operation of Trimborn Farms.

File Type: Action Report

REQUEST

The Milwaukee County Parks Department, in coordination with the Department of Administrative Services – Economic Development and Real Estate Services Division, is requesting approval of the attached resolution authorizing Milwaukee County to enter into a long-term lease agreement with Two Weathervanes, LLC for the lease of Trimborn Farm, located at 8881 W. Grange Avenue, Greendale, Wisconsin.

POLICY

Trimborn Farm is zoned Parks District; therefore, Wisconsin Statute § 59.17(2)(b)3 applies, which provides that the County Board may continue to exercise authority over land zoned as a park. In the law of property, authority over land includes authority over all rights appurtenant to the land.

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances § 56.10 requires County Board approval for Parks leases exceeding one year.

Wisconsin Statute § 66.1111 governs a political subdivision's ownership, use, and disposition of property. If historic property is conveyed, the statute requires the County to obtain a conservation easement pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 700.40 to protect the historic character of the property.

Wisconsin State Statutes:	Wis. Stat. § 59.17(2)(b)3, Wis. Stat. § 66.1111, Wis. Stat. § 700.40
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	§ 56.10
Specific Adopted Budget:	
Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:	
Specific Adopted Capital Project:	

BACKGROUND

Trimborn Farm is located at 8881 West Grange Avenue in the Village of Greendale, Wisconsin. The site originated in the mid-19th century as a lime-burning and agricultural operation established by Prussian immigrant Werner Trimborn and includes historically significant structures such as a Cream City brick farmhouse, a large stone barn, lime kilns, and associated agricultural buildings preserved for public education and community use.

Following the decline of lime production in the early 20th century, the property transitioned to dairy farming and other agricultural uses, later came under federal ownership during World War II, and was ultimately acquired by Milwaukee County for preservation and public benefit.

Over time, and due to limited resources and the increasing cost of maintaining historic structures, Milwaukee County has not been able to adequately fund the ongoing care, restoration, and activation of Trimborn Farm. In an effort to preserve public access and maintain basic stewardship of the site despite these fiscal constraints, the County has historically outsourced management and programming responsibilities to The Park People and from 2004 to present, the Milwaukee County Historical Society.

Like many historic properties owned by Milwaukee County, Trimborn Farm has experienced significant deferred maintenance. The County continues to face competing priorities and mandated service obligations, limiting its ability to make the substantial capital investments required to stabilize and maintain the property over the long term. Without alternative stewardship, continued County responsibility will result in further deterioration of the historic structures and increased long-term financial liability to taxpayers.

In response, Milwaukee County issued a competitive Request for Proposals seeking a qualified partner to rehabilitate, maintain, and activate Trimborn Farm while preserving its historic character and ensuring continued public access.

This action is consistent with prior direction provided to the Department of Administrative Services – Economic Development Division. In April 2025, the Director of Economic Development provided an informational report to the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors outlining the future of Trimborn Farm and identifying the issuance of a Request for Proposals as the appropriate next step to address the County's inability to continue funding the long-term care of the property (File No. 25-335).

Following a competitive evaluation process, Two Weathervanes, LLC was selected as the most responsive and responsible proposer, with a proven track record of successfully managing and revitalizing similar historic properties. Milwaukee County Parks, in coordination with the Department of Administrative Services – Economic Development and Real Estate Services Division, negotiated a long-term lease for Trimborn Farm that provides for an initial term of five (5) years.

Under the lease, the lessee will assume responsibility for the operation of the site,

including all capital improvements and building maintenance from the outset, while ensuring continued public access. Milwaukee County Parks will provide mowing and snow removal services during the first year solely to support the tenant's establishment; however, these services do not extend to building maintenance or capital improvements, which remain the responsibility of the Tenant. Following this initial one (1) year period, the Tenant will assume responsibility for all ongoing maintenance, including mowing and snow removal, resulting in cost savings to the County.

At the conclusion of the initial five (5) year term, the parties will renegotiate the terms of the lease to ensure they remain favorable to Milwaukee County and provide continued benefit to the community.

RECOMMENDATION

Approval of this file will shift the financial responsibility for rehabilitation and maintenance away from Milwaukee County while preserving Trimborn Farm as a publicly accessible historic asset. As noted in previous reports this aligns with the County's strategy of reducing operating and capital expenses, while allowing adequate transition time for our cultural partners to become independent of the County. A benefit of independence from the County that has been noted by multiple cultural partners is the increased ability of these institutions to qualify for grants that may not be available to government entities as well as an increased fundraising opportunities.

Related File No's:	25-335
Associated File No's (Including Transfer Packets):	
Previous Action Date(s):	

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the strategic plan:
3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability

FISCAL EFFECT

Eliminate Parks operational costs after the first year: $15,000 annually
Eliminate future capital costs
1$ in annual Rent

TERMS

- Initial lease term of five (5) years, with the parties to renegotiate terms at the conclusion of the initial term to ensure they remain favorable to Milwaukee County and the community.
- Tenant shall pay Milwaukee County $1.00 annually and remit fifteen percent (15%) of net revenue, with 7.5% allocated to a maintenance reserve account for Trimborn Farm and 7.5% paid to the County.
- The lessee will assume responsibility for all capital improvements, building

maintenance, and operational costs from the outset, and for all site maintenance—including mowing and snow removal—after the initial one (1) year support period provided by Milwaukee County Parks.

- Public access to Trimborn Farm will be preserved.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Virginia Emmons, Two Weathervanes, LLC, rootriverbarn@gmail.com

PREPARED BY:

Erica Goblet, Economic Development Project Manager, Dept. of Admin. Services
Robert Senglaub, Contracts Manager, Milwaukee County Parks

APPROVED BY:

Guy Smith, Executive Director, Milwaukee County Parks guy smith
Celia Benton, Economic Development Director, Department of Administrative Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution
Fiscal Note
Draft Lease
Power Point

CC: David Crowley, County Executive
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Mgr, Office of the County Clerk
Nicholas Sinram, Executive Director, Department of Administrative Services
Vince Masterson, Fiscal & Strategic Asset Coordinator, DAS
Pamela Bryant, Capital Finance Manager, Comptroller's Office
Justin Rodriguez, Capital Finance Analyst, Comptroller's Office
Kelsey Nyen, Committee Coordinator, Office of the County Clerk
Anthony Rux, Budget & Management Analyst, DAS-PSB
Sandy Saltzstein, Research and Policy Analyst
Sheldon Wasserman, Committee on Parks & Culture Chairperson