

# Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE November 11, 2020

TO Honorable Members of the Quality of Life, Arts and Culture Committee

SUBJECT **Fair Park Children's Aquarium Interim Operating Funding for FY 2020-21**

On the upcoming December 9, 2020 City Council agenda, Park & Recreation will request consideration of interim funding for the Fair Park Children's Aquarium in the existing contract with the Dallas Zoo. Staff is currently working with Fair Park First and the Dallas Zoo on a plan to allow the Aquarium to continue operations for an interim period of up to six months in order to facilitate the transition of the facility to a new operator. The estimated cost of this six-month transition plan is \$300,000. However, the goal is to accelerate the timeline and bring in the new potential operator in three months.

In order to accomplish this, staff will first reprogram Council District 7 equity funds in the amount of \$300,000 so that the Dallas Zoo can continue to maintain the facility and aquatic life currently housed in the Aquarium. Next, staff will work with Fair Park First to structure an amendment to their contract to add the Aquarium Building, which will allow Fair Park First to negotiate a proposal and agreement with a new potential operator. It is anticipated that the contract amendment will come before the Park and Recreation Board and City Council in the December 2020/January 2021 timeframe. Additional background is provided below.

## Background

The Fair Park Children's Aquarium, managed by the Dallas Zoo, opened 2010 and has hosted an average of 114,000 visitors annually in recent years. The Aquarium was partially funded by the Park and Recreation Department through the Dallas Zoo contract (approximately \$300,000 per year). Due to budget reductions and ongoing losses in operations, the Aquarium was to cease operations in FY20-21.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information.

John D. Jenkins, Director  
Dallas Park and Recreation

C: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager  
Chris Caso, City Attorney  
Mark Swann, City Auditor  
Biliera Johnson, City Secretary  
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge  
Kimberly Bizzor Tolbert, Chief of Staff to the City Manager  
Majed A. Al-Ghafry, Assistant City Manager

Jon Fortune, Assistant City Manager  
Joey Zapata, Assistant City Manager  
Dr. Eric A. Johnson, Chief of Economic Development and Neighborhood Services  
M. Elizabeth Reich, Chief Financial Officer  
M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira, Chief of Equity and Inclusion  
Directors and Assistant Directors