DATE: September 9, 2019

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Ingrid Alverde, Economic Development Manager
Peggy Flynn, City Manager

SUBJECT: Temporary Advisory Committee to Discuss Fairgrounds Community Outreach

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council appoint two Councilmembers to a temporary advisory committee that will interact with a similar subcommittee of the Sonoma Marin Fair Board, to achieve consensus on the overarching objectives and community engagement approach for a public launch for the planning of the City-owned property, most commonly known as the Fairgrounds. The outreach plan, and subsequent outreach, will help to inform future development and use of the city-owned property currently leased to the 4th Agricultural District for agricultural programs.

BACKGROUND

In March 1973, the City leased the property located at 175 Fairgrounds Dr., comprised of 55 acres to the 4th Agricultural District (District). The City wanted to support the District’s agricultural and educational events such as the annual fair and Agriculture Day for school children. The City entered into a 25-year lease with the District, which included one, 25-year option to extend the lease under its original terms. Subsequent to the first 25-year term, the District extended the lease for an additional 25 years, through January 2023. The District wants to further extend the lease.

DISCUSSION

Over the last five years, the City has met several times with District to discuss their request to extend the lease. Both the City and the District want to improve the property by replacing buildings which have exceeded their useful life and to also support the District’s programs. Staff recommends a temporary advisory committee of City Council to meet with members of the District to discuss shared goals and objectives for community outreach.

The reason for this subcommittee’s formation is to discuss an outreach plan with the District so that a robust and fruitful community conversation can identify community perspectives, priorities
and concerns about the property. This is the first step in determining the guiding principles, base assumptions, and outreach approaches for the master-planning process for the property.

This preliminary work by the subcommittee would include a day-and-a-half workshop that includes a listening session with each of the ad hoc committees, followed by a joint meeting of both committees, to develop a plan for a community outreach that will inform future plans for the property. The shared plan, developed jointly by both subcommittees, will be the platform for the future planning process.

For this initial phase of committee discussion, staff is recommending that these meetings be internal to allow for ideation and relationship building. Subsequent meetings can be open to the public, and the planning process will rely heavily upon the engagement of our community.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This subcommittee, in discussion with the District, will identify the goals and objectives of a future community outreach campaign. The input from the community outreach will guide a masterplan for the City property.

**FINANCIAL IMPACTS**

The first phase of the subcommittee’s discussions will be facilitated by an experienced consultant. The meetings and related staff and consultant work will take place over three days and primarily involve working with the subcommittees to articulate goals and with the District to better understand their goals. The work will cost approximately $12,000. There are enough funds in the FY 2019/20 Economic Development Program budget to cover the cost.