



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 12/9/2025

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Economic Development Collaborative

Staff Name and Phone Number: Ethan Brown; and Tara Thompson, 565-6120

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Sonoma County Fire Memorial Site Use and Artist Agreements

Recommended Action:

Delegate authority to the County Executive Officer, or designee, to execute the proposed agreements, as follows:

- A. A Revocable License Agreement with the City of Santa Rosa, for County use of Nagasawa Community Park for the placement of the Sonoma County Fire Memorial Public Art Project, including any amendments related thereto to extend term contingent on availability of adequate funding therefor and approval as to form by County Counsel.
- B. An Agreement for Artist Services with Cliff Garten & Associates, Inc., for the design, fabrication, and installation of the Fire Memorial Public Art Project at Nagasawa Community Park, in an amount not to exceed \$320,000, including any amendments related thereto to extend the agreement term and/or complete the Project contingent on availability of adequate funding therefore and approval as to form by County Counsel.

Executive Summary:

Creative Sonoma, a division of the Economic Development Collaborative, seeks Board approval for two agreements that advance the Fire Memorial Public Art Project. The first is an agreement with the City of Santa Rosa, granting the County of Sonoma a revocable license to use an area of Nagasawa Community Park for the purpose of installing and maintaining the Sonoma County Fire Memorial Public Art Project by the County or designated contractor(s). The second is an agreement for artist services with Cliff Garten, the artist selected after a competitive process, to design, fabricate, and install the Project.

Discussion:

Background

The Fire Memorial Public Art Project (Project) is a unique opportunity to honor those who lost their lives in the 2017 wildfire complex, remind us of our community's resilience, and serve as a sanctuary for reflection,

remembrance, and healing. The project began when the Board of Supervisors allocated funds during fiscal year 22-23 budget hearings and directed Creative Sonoma to manage the Project.

On December 6, 2022, the Board approved the creation of the Fire Memorial Task Force to which seven members of the community were appointed on July 7, 2023. Through the Task Force, Creative Sonoma facilitated a selection and approval process for a project site and began site use negotiations. Additionally, the Fire Memorial Task Force drafted a community engagement framework.

Revocable License Agreement

The Agreement grants the County of Sonoma a revocable license to use up to an acre of Nagasawa Community Park, located at 1313 Fountaingrove Parkway in Santa Rosa, for the purpose of installing and maintaining the Project by the County or designated contractor(s). The term of the license provides a five-year window from the date of agreement execution for the installation for the Project. Once installed, the license will continue until terminated upon one of the following occurrences, whichever is earliest: 1) discontinuance of use; 2) default; 3) destruction or Force Majeure; or 4) City may terminate after 10 years for convenience providing a minimum of 6 months written notice. The agreement establishes responsibilities related to project design and maintenance, including the following:

- County will be fully responsible for design, technical specs, and all maintenance and improvements, following building codes and permitting processes.
- County and the public may access the facility year-round from dawn to dusk.
- County is responsible for providing all staffing, volunteers, equipment, and materials needed for the project.
- County must during the term of the agreement inspect, maintain and repair the facility areas it uses, ensure orderly conduct by its personnel, and avoid disrupting utilities or public access.
- County will install a permanent plaque with stand indicating the project artist, name and other related information.
- County to indemnify the City with regard to County operations, use, or activities at the site.

The Santa Rosa City Council approved the License Agreement at its public meeting on November 18, 2025. The Agreement was included under Consent Items and passed unanimously with no discussion.

Artistic Selection Process and Artist Services Agreement

Creative Sonoma has now completed the artistic selection process through a competitive, international Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process. The RFQ was open between June 6 and August 9, 2024, receiving a total of 83 submissions. The Fire Memorial Task Force reviewed all submissions and identified six finalists based on the established selection criteria. In December 2024, the finalists attended a site orientation meeting at Nagasawa Park, as well as in-person interviews with the Task Force. After thoughtful deliberation, the Task

Force selected [Cliff Garten <https://www.cliffgartenstudio.com/>](https://www.cliffgartenstudio.com/) (<https://www.cliffgartenstudio.com/>) as the artist for the Project. Mr. Garten is based in Venice, CA, and is an accomplished sculptor and landscape architect. His experience with memorial projects such as the Walnut Creek and Las Vegas Veterans Memorials and “[I AM A MAN PLAZA](https://www.cliffgartenstudio.com/projects/i-am-a-man-plaza)” (<https://www.cliffgartenstudio.com/projects/i-am-a-man-plaza>)” in Memphis, his ability to incorporate landscape elements into his installations, and his approach to community engagement were especially impressive to the Task Force.

The agreement for artist services with Cliff Garten & Associates, Inc. is for the design, fabrication and installation of public art for an amount not to exceed \$320,000. The Scope of Work includes:

- Phase 1: Proposal Development to include community engagement and research
- Phase 2: Fabrication
- Phase 3: Installation
- Phase 4: Completion and submission of maintenance report

Community engagement is the foundation of the Fire Memorial Project and the heart of how this memorial will authentically reflect our community's experiences with the 2017 wildfires. The artist's role is to absorb and reflect the full spectrum of our community's stories, emotions, and hopes into a memorial that serves as a place for acknowledgment, remembrance, gathering, and reflection.

The Fire Memorial Task Force has developed an engagement framework because they believe the memorial's power will come from the artist's deep understanding of how these fires impacted our community-the individual and collective grief, the resilience that emerged, and the ongoing process of healing. The framework includes the following and will be provided to the artist as a starting point for development of a community engagement plan:

- Guiding Principles
- Engagement Goals
- Core Engagement Strategies
- Outreach Framework
- Implementation Guide
- Resource Support & Coordination

Execution of these two agreements constitutes a major advancement in the completion of the Sonoma County Fire Memorial Project. Upon approval, the first phase of the artist’s work can begin: design and implementation of a community engagement process to gather stories and input from a wide range of community members for incorporation into the design of an appropriate artwork.

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Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

N/A

Prior Board Actions:

March 26, 2024: Approved Nagasawa Community Park as the primary selection and Maddux Ranch Regional Park as the alternative site for contingency planning (<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6583911&GUID=ABAB72FE-D6EB-415E-887C-35615CBD561C&Options=ID|Text|&Search=>)

October 17, 2023: Approved budget resolution adjusting the revised FY 23-24 budget to reflect revenues and expenditures related to a grant received from Community Foundation Sonoma County for supplemental funding of the Fire Memorial project in the amount of \$100,000 (<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6379284&GUID=BF9211AE-07E2-42E3-9B3C-D0693D1939CA&Options=&Search=>)

July 11, 2023: Approved appointments to Fire Memorial Task Force (<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6277659&GUID=BE768CAE-3E37-4A23-97EB-9B435FCE908E&Options=ID|Text|&Search=>)

June 6, 2023: Approved a budget resolution to increase the Fire Memorial budget by \$186,000 (<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6231219&GUID=AD506918-6F62-46ED-ABB7-E4D41C546227&Options=ID|Text|&Search=>)

December 6, 2022: Approved Fire Memorial Work Plan, authorized establishment of a Fire Memorial Task Force (<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5948414&GUID=B4D7D117-71CA-4019-8B5B-129F4B5125C0&Options=ID|Text|&Search=>)

June 17, 2022: Allocated \$250,000 for Fire Memorial during FY 22-23 budget hearings, to be managed by Creative Sonoma in consultation with the Public Infrastructure Department (<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5679627&GUID=DE64364A-0AF8-4930-ADC4-FDFEB75F985B&Options=ID|Text|&Search=>)

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY23-24 Adopted	FY24-25 Projected	FY25-26 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$536,000		
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$536,000		

Funding Sources	FY23-24 Adopted	FY24-25 Projected	FY25-26 Projected
General Fund/WA GF	\$436,000		
State/Federal			
Fees/Other (Grant from Community Foundation Sonoma County)	\$100,000		
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$536,000		

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Total project costs are estimated to be \$536,000. This includes \$250,000 allocated during FY 22-23 Budget Hearings and additional funding allocated in the amount of \$186,000 in June 2023. In FY 23-24, the Community Foundation of Sonoma County provided an additional \$100,000 to support the Project.

The Project budget includes \$320,000 for the artist commission, as well as allocations for artist selection costs, technical advisor stipends, contract staff, site work, signage, community engagement, contingency and a maintenance reserve.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Revocable License Agreement
Agreement for Artist Services

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A