



TITLE

Watson Ranch at the Square Memorandum of Understanding/Letter - Temporary Uses

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Minute Order approving a "City Letter of Understanding & Agreement" to allow temporary amphitheater uses in the Napa Valley Ruins and Gardens.

CONTACT

William D. Ross, City Attorney

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

Watson Ranch is a mixed-use development of residential units surrounding an envisioned new town center.

In March 2023, a Watson Ranch developer (AC1, LLC) applied for approval of two (2) amphitheaters; a 3,300-person venue around Quarry Lake and an 800-person venue located in the "Fig Tree" area within the Napa Valley Ruins and Gardens (NVRG). In May 2023, the Planning Commission approved a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for both amphitheaters (Resolution 2023-08).

Since May 2023, the developer has been evaluating various aspects of the amphitheater project and on December 20, 2024 they submitted preliminary grading/drainage plans for NVRG.

On January 9, 2025, the developer notified the City of a promoter's interest in hosting a series of concerts starting in Summer 2025 and lasting through 2027 (and possibly beyond). The events would occur in a portion of the Ruins commonly known as the "Square." (The Square is the location where multiple events have been held over recent years including the annual American Canyon Community and Parks Foundation annual fundraiser "Night at the Ruins".)

The Square is in a different, but nearby location than either of the approved amphitheater locations. The developer estimates the capacity of the Square to be approximately 2,000 people and proposes to use it as an interim venue while the permanent amphitheaters are constructed.

The approval of the "City Letter of Understanding & Agreement" would allow the series of concerts to occur in 2025 - 2027. This situation is different than the City's Special Event process (ACMC

Section 5.05) - although certain Special Event standards would still apply, including submission of a "fire/EMS public safety plan" to the American Canyon Fire Protection District Fire Chief for approval and a " Security and Crowd Control Plan" and a "Parking and Traffic Control Plan" to the City for review. This Agreement is separate and distinct from the Amphitheater CUP.

Using the Square as a "proof of concept" will help expose visitors to the uniqueness and appeal of NVRG and in turn accelerate its success as a local, regional, and statewide center for culture, art, recreation, and commerce, as well as the future development and operation of a permanent entertainment enterprise.

On January 24, 2025 the Council adopted a Memorandum of Understanding which has since undergone *de minimis* amendments, for City Staff seek Council ratification.

COUNCIL PRIORITY PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Economic Development and Vitality: "Attract and expand diverse business and employment opportunities."

FISCAL IMPACT

The Recommended Action will not have any impact on the City's FY 2024/25 Budget.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Recommended Action (approval of the "City Letter of Understanding & Agreement") is a contemplated "Project Approvals" analyzed under the Project FEIR and the Watson Ranch Specific Plan Development Agreement. Under CEQA, the Watson Ranch Specific Plan Project FEIR is a program EIR and is generally assumed to be used at a "development level." See, e.g., CEQA Guidelines § 15168. There is no substantial evidence of changed circumstances under CEQA Guidelines section 15162 requiring further CEQA review as the whole of the approvals sought are contemplated under the Project FEIR analysis.

ATTACHMENTS:

None