

Council Agenda Item 26-0133R



MEETING DATE: 02/23/2026

SUBJECT/TITLE: Resolution authorizing application to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for a Federal Recreational Trail Program equipment grant of up to \$75,000 to purchase a new pump for the river station to support snowmaking at the Spirit Mountain Nordic Center

SUBMITTED BY: Allison Brooks – Project Coordinator

RECOMMENDATION: Approve

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: N/A

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION: Resolution 15-0358R approved the Grand Avenue Nordic Center Mini-Master Plan, in partnership with the Duluth Cross Country Ski Club and the Spirit Mountain Recreation Authority. The Nordic Center is envisioned as a 5 km cross country ski trail system with snowmaking and lighting to provide a dependable, season-long venue for recreational skiing, youth activities, and regional events.

Resolution 23-0095R expressed support for the Minnesota State Legislature to authorize the extension of 0.5 percent increment in the City of Duluth food and beverage tax and the lodging tax (the “half-and-half” tax) for the purpose of funding up to \$36 million in capital improvements to parks-based public athletic facilities in support of tourism and quality of life in northeast Minnesota. Then, resolution 23-0745R accepted the special law extending the half-and-half tax and authorized the revenues to be spent on capital improvements to parks-based public athletic facilities.

Resolution 23-0748R expressed support for moving forward with a preliminary slate of projects and funding levels for an array of capital improvement projects funded through the half-and-half tax extension. One of the projects identified in the preliminary project list was the Spirit Mountain Nordic Center, with an anticipated contribution of \$1.2 million from the half-and-half tax.

BACKGROUND: Development of the Nordic Center has been possible through collaboration between the City of Duluth, Spirit Mountain Recreation Authority, and the Duluth Cross Country Ski Club (DXC) over the past 10 years, with all three entities providing project funds towards realizing the vision for the Nordic Center. When complete, the Nordic Center will provide a dependable, season-long venue for recreational skiing, youth activities, and regional events. This includes opportunities for sports-based tourism.

This resolution authorizes an application to the Federal Recreational Trail Program for an equipment grant of up to \$75,000 to purchase a new pump serving the river station at the Spirit Mountain Recreation Area. The additional pump would increase the snowmaking capacity at the Area, including the Spirit Mountain Nordic Center to extend the useable season and increase recreation opportunities.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT: Of the \$1,200,000 project funding approved for use in the development of the Spirit Mountain Nordic Center, \$350,000 project funds are remaining. This resolution would authorize an application to the Federal Recreational Trail Program for an equipment grant of up to \$75,000 with the 25% required local match being sourced from the remaining project fund. The total cost of the river pump purchase is anticipated to cost \$178,000, which would require up to \$103,000 in funding after the \$75,000 grant. Previous work completed with the allocated project funding has included installation of necessary infrastructure and trail construction, but insufficient funds remain to realize the vision for the Nordic Center. Without these grant funds, the project will continue to be incomplete without alternative funding allocations, which limits opportunities to host regional events and the realization of profits as a premier destination cross country ski facility.

OPTIONS: Approve the grant application which would support increased snowmaking capacity at the Spirit Mountain Nordic Center and reduce remaining project funds needed to complete the vision for the Nordic Center or decline the application.

NECESSARY ACTION: Approve

ATTACHMENTS: None