



TOWN OF APPLE VALLEY TOWN COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

To: Honorable Mayor and Town Council **Date:** July 11, 2017
From: Lori Lamson, Assistant Town Manager **Item No:** 11
Subject: UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE HILLTOP HOUSE
T.M. Approval: _____ **Budgeted Item:** Yes No N/A

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Authorize staff to develop an Outdoor Environmental Education Facilities Grant Application and resolution to be adopted at a future Town Council Meeting; and, provide direction to staff on the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee for the Hilltop House.

SUMMARY:

On May, 19, 2016, the Town closed escrow on the purchase of the 20.75-acre Hilltop House property. Since this date, the property has been secured with chain link fencing to deter trespassers and vandals. In addition, video surveillance cameras have been installed and required signage has been put in place that identifies it as a Town property that is closed for improvements. Town staff has been in contact with the Town's Joint Powers Insurance agency to determine the improvements necessary to open the driveway/trail for public use. There are issues related to the American's Disability Act for access to the Hilltop House that will impose some necessary improvements before the property can be open to the public.

On May 30, 2017 the property was placed into the Town's park system allowing the use of Quimby funds (collected through Development Impact Fees) to conduct a necessary, biological survey, structural analysis and a cultural report for the Hilltop house property. These reports are necessary in order to complete the environmental review of the property, in preparation of applying for the Outdoor Environmental Education Facilities Grant administered by State Parks. This grant application is due September 1, 2017 and can award up to \$500,000 for planning and construction/demolition. As part of this agenda, there is a resolution that recommends Council support the Town submitting an application for this grant. The award of this grant would allow the Town to have a Master Plan for the property developed as well as set the stage for the phasing of necessary improvements to get the property open for public use.

Several years prior to the Town's acquisition of the property, the Apple Valley Legacy Trail (AVLT) Committee, an affiliate group of the High Desert Community Foundation (a registered 501c3 non-profit), has worked as part of a large grassroots effort to develop a natural heritage trail system plan for the historic ruins. The goal of the AVLT effort was to reclaim the blighted and vandalized property that was once the pride of Apple Valley and revitalize it into a spectacular multi-use destination, bringing the community together at the location of the Town's most recognizable and celebrated landmark.

Some of the proposed AVLT project elements include a master plan to include; natural trails; an observation deck with a 360° panoramic view; picnic and contemplative areas; hiking trails; pavilions, memorials, monuments, plaques & bricks to celebrating the community and region; a Legacy Center where historic items and memorabilia will be showcased.

Recently, students from Cal Poly Pomona, Urban and Regional Planning program completed a study on the Hilltop House that used some of the AVLT design ideas in their recommendation to prepare a public/private master plan for future development of the Town's property and the Champion property, east of the AV Inn. The report came up with some suggested concepts both old and new that could be utilized in a Master Plan concept. This report is available on the Town's website.

With the known requirements of the insurance company and the details of the structural engineer's report, we have come to a point where the Town needs to determine the best design and use for the property. Additionally, a formalized fundraising effort needs to commence so that the funds are available for the phasing of future improvements. Town staff will continue to look for additional public funds/grants or private funding opportunities that would benefit the project.

Now that we have reached this stage in the progress of securing the ownership, securing the property and determining the first steps in improving the property, additional planning is necessary to define the progression of future development. Mayor Nassif and Council Member Stanton serve as the appointed Council Members to the Hilltop House Ad Hoc committee. It would be appropriate for the Council to provide some direction as to what other organizations should provide representation on the Ad Hoc Committee. Staff would suggest that the Committee include members of the Apple Valley Unified School District and the High Desert Community Foundation. Additional members of the public can be considered by the Council in the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee. It may also be appropriate to include appropriate Town staff to this Ad Hoc Committee for technical support.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Unrelated to the update or the formation of the Ad Hoc Committee, the use of Quimby fees is necessary for the improvement of the property. However, the amount of Quimby funds to be used are not part of this action.