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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**TITLE:** Debrief of Eastman Nature Center Tour in the Elm Creek Park

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** The purpose of the discussion is to review the tour of the Eastman Nature Center held on September 12 and to share thoughts or observations.

**POLICY CONSIDERATION:** What features did the City Council view at Eastman Nature Center that should or should not be incorporated in the planning for a new interpretive center at Westwood Hills Nature Center?

**SUMMARY:** In 2016 the city hired Miller Dunwidde Architecture to create a comprehensive master plan to address development and programming goals for the Westwood Hills Nature Center. The plan included the nature center facilities, outdoor programming sites, infrastructure and programming needs. The master plan serves as the vision, guiding principles, resource allocation and action plan to meet the identified needs of the community and to assist the city in planning for future building development at Westwood Hills Nature Center. Citizen input played a key role in shaping this plan.

City Council toured Eastman Nature Center to understand some of the features that could be included in the new interpretive center at Westwood Hills Nature Center. On the tour, the guide mentioned many items that they have learned since being operational for four years. Here are just a few of those items: make the main entrance inviting to all; include silencing wall panels between classrooms; ensure multiple access to storage areas; add automatic toilets and hand dryers; plan on how to move large size groups (school groups) from parking lot to inside the building and make the concession stand purposeful (if included).

**NEXT STEPS:** If the Council wanted to continue to proceed, the next step in the Westwood Hills Master Plan process is to solicit Request for Proposals for the design development phase documents. This would happen in the first quarter of 2017.

**FINANCIAL OR BUDGET CONSIDERATION:** The Capital Improvement Program has budgeted \$300,000 in 2017 and \$700,000 in 2018 for design fees for the Westwood Hills Nature Center and \$11,000,000 in 2019 for construction of a new Nature Center building.

**VISION CONSIDERATION:** St. Louis Park is committed to being a connected and engaged community. St. Louis Park is committed to being a leader in environmental stewardship.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:** None

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**Reviewed by:** Cynthia S. Walsh, Director of Operations and Recreation

**Approved by:** Tom Harmening, City Manager