



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 7/18/2023

File #: 23-1009

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Public Works

Agenda Section: Consent

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Transfer of Historical Aerial Photographs to Cal Poly Humboldt Library to Enable Free Public Access to Digital Files

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Authorize the Department of Public Works to transfer ownership of the physical copies of the historical aerial photographs within the Public Works archives to the Cal Poly Humboldt Library for digitizing of the photographs and providing free public access to this historical resource.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Road Fund (1200-331)

DISCUSSION:

The Department of Public Works has acquired an extensive collection of historical aerial photographs of areas within Humboldt County for various years from 1931 to 2002. Starting in 2005, county-wide aerial imagery became available in digital format. Aerial photographs are collected by aircraft and provide a “birds eye” view of the ground surface. These photographs are a valuable resource for documenting changes to landscapes and community development. The Public Works aerial photograph collection contains over 60,000 hard-copy photographs which are stored in approximately 35 drawers and boxes. The photographs were often used to analyze potential impacts associated with road projects and development of the collection was funded primarily through the Humboldt County Road Fund. Public Works previously facilitated access for members of the public to view and make copies of the historical aerial photographs. However, that service was discontinued in 2017 for budget savings and to focus staff time on delivering projects.

Efforts to compile Public Works’ collection of hard-copy aerial photographs and other historical materials were led by Don Tuttle, who began working for Public Works in 1972, retired in 2002, and

continued working on special projects and sharing his vast historical knowledge until his death in 2020. Don was highly regarded for being kind, good-natured, practical, and ready to help research questions about Humboldt County history. Don had a passion for searching old maps, photographs, newspapers, and documents to discover clues for determining when and where certain events happened.

Andrea Tuttle established a fund at Humboldt Area Foundation to support the archiving and digitizing of the historical materials collected by Don during his tenure with the county and making these materials available to the public at no charge (Attachment 1). While some historical aerial photographs are available online, the years are limited and some sources charge access fees. The Cal Poly Humboldt Library is prepared to take ownership of the aerial photographs in order to convert them to a digital format and make them publicly available through the library’s website (Attachment 2). To implement the digitization process, the library plans to develop a program whereby students would have the opportunity to learn skills in database management and combining aerial photographs with geographic information to make them readily accessible with mapping software.

Transferring the collection of historical aerial photographs to the Cal Poly Humboldt Library for the purpose described above would provide a public benefit by making the resource available to the public. This action would also provide benefits to Cal Poly Humboldt students by providing educational opportunities. In addition, this action would benefit Public Works by generating digital versions of the photographs that could be used by staff and by alleviating the need for allocating a significant amount of building space to house the large collection.

For these reasons, Public Works recommends that the Board of Supervisors authorize transferring ownership of the physical copies of the historical aerial photographs within the Public Works archives to the Cal Poly Humboldt Library for digitizing of the photographs and providing free public access to this historical resource.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

| Expenditures (1200331) | FY23-24 |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Budgeted Expenses | \$500 |
| Additional Appropriation Requested | \$0 |
| Total Expenditures | \$500 |
| Funding Sources (1200331) | FY23-24 Adopted |
| General Fund | \$0 |
| State/Federal Funds | \$500 |
| Fees/Other | \$0 |
| Use of Fund Balance | \$0 |
| Contingencies | \$0 |
| Total Funding Sources | \$500 |

**Projected amounts are estimates and are subject to change.*

Narrative Explanation of Financial Impact:

The proposed action will require staff time estimated to be less than \$500 to facilitate the transfer of the photograph collection. The cost of staff time has been included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-24 approved budget Roads Natural Resources budget (1200331). Cal Poly Humboldt will cover their expenses through the fund established by Andrea Tuttle.

STAFFING IMPACT:

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impact:

The proposed action will have no impact on staffing.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Framework.

Core Roles: Encourage new local enterprise

New Initiatives: Seek outside funding sources to benefit Humboldt County needs

Strategic Plan: 4.1 - Identify synergies between all county departments and cities to increase efficiency and effectiveness

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Cal Poly Humboldt Library

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board of Supervisors could choose not to approve transferring ownership of the physical copies of the historical aerial photographs within the Public Works archives to the Cal Poly Humboldt Library for digitizing of the photographs and making them publicly available. This alternative is not recommended because Public Works does not have staff available to lead the project to digitize the photographs and therefore, the public would not otherwise have access to the historical resource. In addition, Public Works believes that the Cal Poly Humboldt Library is the best long-term curator of the hardcopy photographs, and relinquishing ownership of the collection will make building space available for other uses.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1 Letter (August 26, 2020) from Andrea Tuttle to Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
- 2 Letter (July 6, 2023) from Carly Marino to Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: N/A

Meeting of: N/A

File No.: N/A