



Memorandum

TO: TRANSPORTATION AND
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Ed Shikada
Jim Helmer
Joe Horwedel

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: 10-25-07

Approved

Date

10/28/07

COUNCIL DISTRICT: City-Wide

SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON TREE PRESERVATION SERVICES REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION

Provide feedback to staff on tree preservation review activities.

OUTCOME

Feedback to staff will be reflected at the upcoming community meeting and resulting December recommendations on the tree preservation review.

BACKGROUND

The City Council has directed several recent reviews and modifications related to tree regulations, largely responsive to community concerns about unpermitted or improper pruning or removal of trees. As a further response to these referrals, the City Manager's Office is working on a comprehensive review of tree-related services and regulations within the City and comparing them to those of other agencies. Representatives from departments and other key stakeholders are being utilized to conduct this review.

A tree preservation workplan was presented on May 21, 2007 and progress reports presented on June 4, 2007 and September 17, 2007 to the T&E Committee and a progress report presented on August 9, 2007 to the Neighborhood Services & Education (NS&E) Committee. A final report is expected at the December 2007 T&E Committee meeting containing proposed policy changes and other key recommendations.

ANALYSIS

Since reporting progress on the tree preservation workplan at the September 17, 2007 T&E Committee meeting, staff has proceeded with the following activities:

- Reviewed community input on the City's tree related policy and services. Five citywide, two neighborhood and one professional arborist meetings were held during September, 2007 to obtain input on the strategy for improving tree services in San Jose. A total of approximately 100 residents and key stakeholders attended these meetings. Attendees were primarily residents, but also included commercial property owners, realtors and private arborists. In addition, there have been numerous phone and electronic requests for information or providing comment on the City's tree related policies.
- Reviewed all community and staff input order to refine strategies for improving tree policy and services; and
- Refined a vision for the urban forest based on community comments as follows:
 "San Jose's residents will live within and value a thriving, sustainable urban forest that will be effectively managed to improve the quality of life and sense of community and maximize environmental, economic and aesthetic benefits."
- Categorized and developed priorities for the proposed recommendations consistent with this vision as follows:
 1. Develop an overarching Urban Forestry Policy with goals and objectives that are approved by the City Council.
 2. Increase the leadership and organizational capacity to implement new urban forest strategies and oversee citywide tree programs.
 3. Simplify access to tree-related services.
 4. Tackle the deferred maintenance and on-going funding issues
 5. Develop and implement a comprehensive Urban Forest Master Plan
 - Develop a tree inventory
 - Implement Best Management Practices (BMPs)
 - Strengthen land use development policies
 - Identify and engage stakeholders and partners
 - Update and unify municipal codes and policies
 - Establish effective enforcement policies and practices
 - Integrate and pursue the Environmental Accords and the City's Green Vision tree goals
 - Educate the public
 - Pursue and obtain grant funding
- Continued work on:
 - Coordination of the efforts of a team of San Jose State University students, who are creating a City website that will simplify access to tree services
 - An outline of proposed changes to the Municipal Code and discussions with the City Attorney's Office on the feasibility of implementing these changes
 - A street tree inventory, including a list of data to be collected and identification of the things needed for data collection by volunteers or staff;

A component of the recommendation to formalize a community based master plan is the development of goals for our urban forest. On October 5, 2007, the Mayor announced San Jose's Green Vision. One of the stated goals within this vision that is relevant to this review of tree policy is an expansion of the urban forest by planting 100,000 new trees by 2022. The strategic framework for modifying tree services also mirrors the Green Vision with its emphasis on educating the community on the benefits of sound environmental policy, on the need for participation by every member of our community and the requirement for unprecedented partnerships with residents, and businesses.

Another community meeting has been scheduled for November 8 to confirm the vision statement and review and finalize recommendations to improve the health and vitality of our urban forest. Staff is especially interested in obtaining input that can be used to refine proposals and to hear suggestions for alternatives.

Staffing and funding challenges are also being considered. Based on input and priorities determined by the community, T&E Committee and City Council, staff will begin to evolve the attached strategy by developing budget estimates and timelines for the individual actions. While priority will be placed on actions that can be taken within existing resources, it is certain that budget proposals will be necessary and forwarded to the Council for consideration in the annual budget process. To address resource challenges, the priorities for proposed recommendations notes that there is a need for a single point of contact for all (public and private) tree inquiries. This review has recognized that the City Arborist staff has the expertise to be the initial point of contact and should participate in more tree related activities if they have adequate funding and personnel.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

This report has been prepared to provide a venue for public discussion of tree preservation policy. Subject to Committee feedback, staff will refine the strategy for future community and committee presentations.

During the June 4, 2007 T&E Committee Meeting, staff was directed to expand its coordination efforts to include progress reports to the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee and to review the award of a purchase order for street tree Geographic Information System (GIS) services. A report was made to the NS&E Committee on August 9, 2007 and an information memo detailing the findings of the staff review of the street tree purchase order, dated June 20, 2007, was prepared in response to those requests.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

This review of the tree preservation policy is considered to be an item of "Significant Public Interest." In addition to several community and Council discussions of this issue, eight community meetings were held specifically to solicit additional community comments and

concerns about existing tree policy and services. A notice of the community meetings was posted on the City internet website and emailed to neighborhoods, environmental groups, realtors, arborist professionals, and recent tree removal permittees. Newspaper articles also highlighted the City's interest in obtaining community input. In addition, email and telephone contact information was provided for a staff member who collected comments from anyone unable to attend the two scheduled meetings.

During the meetings, staff described the tree framework for improving tree services and heard comments on existing policy and services and suggestions for changes to the framework. Many comments were heard on the permit process, enforcement, master planning, guidelines, maintenance, inventories, outreach, education, goals and responsibilities.

One additional community meeting has been scheduled to obtain feedback on the proposed policy and programmatic changes. Notice of this meeting has been posted on City internet websites, issued as a press release, and transmitted by email, to the groups noted above and to interested persons who participated in the initial meeting discussions.

COORDINATION

Preparation of this report and memorandum was coordinated with the assistance of the Redevelopment Agency and the following Departments: Environmental Services, Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services, Planning, Building and Code Enforcement, Public Works, Transportation, and the City Attorney's Office.

FISCAL/POLICY ALIGNMENT

The proposed work plan is consistent with the Council's direction to review and make recommendations on tree policies.

BUDGET REFERENCE

The current effort and work plan have been developed within existing operating funds. No special budget allocation has been made for tree preservation activities at this time.

11-05-07

Subject: Status Report on Tree Preservation Services Review

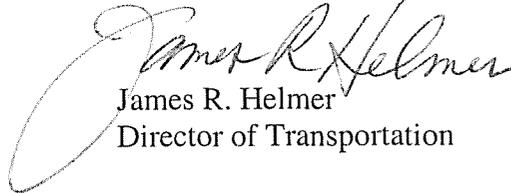
Page 5

CEQA

Not a project.



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