

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: JEN SANTOS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR – PARKS
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TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
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DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE
OPTIONS FOR CITYWIDE PARKS, CIVIC SITES AND ROADWAY
LANDSCAPES

AGENDA ACTION: NO ACTION REQUIRED

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Transportation and Public Works and Finance Departments that the Council hold a Study Session to provide an opportunity for Council to review proposed options for continuation of citywide contracted landscape services, including weed control methods for parks, civic sites, and roadway landscapes. This item is provided for Council's information only.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Contracted landscape maintenance services are required at various locations throughout the City of Santa Rosa. There are three primary types of landscape maintenance sites in the city where contracted services are provided; park sites, civic sites such as City Hall and other city buildings, and roadway adjacent landscapes throughout the city. It is necessary for the city to provide for landscape maintenance at these sites to keep the sites safe for the public and usable for recreation. This study session is to provide Council with an opportunity to review and discuss landscape maintenance options that will be used to develop a new landscape maintenance contract.

DISCUSSION

The most significant emerging issue relating to landscape maintenance is the use of glyphosates, other synthetics and organic chemicals to control weed growth. At the August 21, 2018 meeting, Council directed staff to prohibit the use of glyphosate and neonicotinoids.

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Definitions

Glyphosate - Glyphosate is a synthetic herbicide. It is applied to the leaves of plants to kill both broadleaf plants and grasses. The sodium salt form of glyphosate is used to regulate plant growth and ripen specific crops.

Synthetic Herbicide – Inorganic herbicide chemically created to mimic natural plant hormones which interfere with growth of the target plants.

Organic Herbicide - A natural pre-emergence weed control made completely from naturally-occurring chemicals.

Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM) - An approach to solving pest problems by applying our knowledge about pests (animal, insect and plant) to prevent them from damaging facilities, harming animals, infesting buildings or otherwise interfering with our livelihood or enjoyment of life. IPM means responding to pest problems with the most effective, least-risk option. For the purposes of this study session, IPM is only in reference to control of soil-based vegetation.

Neonicotinoids - Any of a class of systemic water-soluble insecticides chemically related to nicotine that are used especially in agriculture to control destructive pests (such as aphids and mites) and that selectively bind to the postsynaptic nicotinic receptors of insects to produce paralysis and death

Current Landscape Contract

The current contract allows the use of synthetic chemical weed control methods only once or twice per year; however, the use of glyphosates and neonicotinoids is prohibited. This has led to increased city staff time to compensate for the limitations within the contract service. For over ten years the city has contracted landscape maintenance services for parks, civic sites and roadway landscaping to supplement its own small crew of park maintenance staff. In addition to the contractor, City park maintenance staff have also only used organic methods of weed during this last year.

Application Sites

Future contracted landscape maintenance services are being considered for use at three types of city landscapes, which include parks, civic building sites and roadway landscaping. Based on significant feedback from field users, we are very aware of the requirements for turf management and have developed performance measurements for maintenance personnel to follow. Communities and businesses around northern California have implemented IPM strategies that incorporate either synthetic or organic herbicides or both to manage weed growth. Many IPM strategies have been designed to allow staff or contractors to safely and surgically address areas that are extremely difficult to manage by hand or to reduce safety risks to maintenance personnel. Staff is not aware of any Council or public discussion that describes the level of weed

management that is either required or deemed acceptable. In that regard, it is extremely difficult to develop a landscape and weed management program without identifying a performance measure for weed control. The City's IPM strategy for landscape maintenance may be directly related to the performance level or safety consideration at a particular application site.

Some examples of how IPM strategies may differ by application site depending on the weed control performance and applicator safety are as follows:

Parks & Civic Sites

- Synthetic Herbicide: It is feasible to maintain a 70% weed control level of service.
- Organic Herbicide: It is feasible to maintain a 50% weed control level of service.
- Combined Product Use: It is feasible to maintain a 50% weed control level of service where organic herbicides and hand removal are the primary weed control methodologies and synthetic chemicals are used solely for poison oak, ivy and on baseball warning tracks.

Roadway Landscapes

- Synthetic Herbicide: It is feasible to maintain a 70% weed control level of service
- Organic Herbicide: It is feasible to maintain a 50% weed control level of service
- Combined Product Use: It is feasible to maintain a 50% weed control level of service where organic herbicides and hand removal are the primary weed control methodologies and synthetic chemicals are used solely for areas immediately adjacent to live traffic areas on medians or narrow roadside landscape areas requiring traffic control on the adjacent street.

These sites are roadway adjacent resulting in additional safety concerns for the staff or contract applicators as well as traffic control which may impact traffic flow. Organic herbicides require more staff time to manage, which places staff within the roadway more frequently and for longer periods of time. Manual weed control would also be required to ensure that any remaining weeds would be no more than one foot in height and not impact either vehicular, bicycle or pedestrian safety.

The most commonly used weed control performance levels used throughout the industry are defined as follows:

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90% weed control example



70% weed control example



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50% weed control examples



25% weed control example



PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

August 21, 2018; Council approved the tenth renewal of the Golden Gate Landscape contract for one year and directed contract and city staff to discontinue the use of glyphosates.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact from the review and discussion of landscape maintenance methods during the study session. The adopted FY 2019-20 budget included \$550,000 for contract landscape maintenance.

Staff anticipates the overall landscape maintenance contract costs to increase due to two primary reasons: the current contract was based on an unsustainable delivery estimate with no performance controls and the shift toward more organic weed control methods comes with a significantly higher manual labor requirement.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Not applicable. Information only.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not Applicable

NOTIFICATION

Not Applicable

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 - Integrative Pest Management
- Attachment 2 - Organic and Synthetic Herbicides
- Attachment 3 - Regulations/Training

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