



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: September 27, 2012

TO: Honorable Council President Tony Young and Councilmembers

FROM: Jay M. Goldstone, Chief Operating Officer 

SUBJECT: Tree Maintenance

During City Council Discussions of Item -151: Approval of the Fiscal Year 2013 Budget on June 11, 2012, Councilmembers discussed the potential establishment of an Urban Forestry Program and expressed the need to restore some level of funding for tree trimming within the public right-of-way, specifically palm tree trimming. Council voted to budget \$257,000 for tree services in the appropriate reserve and requested the Mayor to provide his recommendation for the best use of this funding.

Pursuant to the Council discussions, and in consultation with the appropriate department heads, we determined that, although there may be merit to considering a centralized program of urban forestry in the future, the most prudent use of limited one-time resources is to take care of our existing urban forest, which is in need of maintenance. Our recommendation that the best use of the \$257,000 budgeted for tree services in Fiscal Year 2013 is for palm tree trimming contracts. This will allow for the planned trimming of approximately 7,500 palm trees citywide, nearly 25% of the total palm trees planted within the public right-of-way. Based on information provided by the Transportation & Storm Water Department, most of the requests concerning tree trimming are related to palm trees, specifically Queen Palms and Date Palms. Therefore, planned palm tree trimming priority will be given to these species. Staff will determine the appropriate schedule and route for the trimming.

In Fiscal Year 2013, the Transportation & Storm Water Department, Street Division budgeted \$300,000 for various tree services including; root pruning, removal of unstable or fallen trees and/or branches, stump grinding, and urgent trimming as needed. In addition, the department, as in previous years, has budgeted \$100,000 for tree planting and watering. Staff coordinates tree planting efforts with Urban Corp and provides free trees to property owners who agree to maintain and water the trees until established. On a daily basis, City crews continue to address urgent tree trimming issues, picking up fallen palm fronds, and evaluating and removing unstable

trees to ensure public safety. Crews also address non urgent and other high priority tree trimming requests when not performing emergency work.

The additional \$257,000 palm tree trimming funding and the \$400,000 budgeted in Street Division for tree services, in addition to the services provided by City crews, should provide improved tree trimming services, reduce potential liability to the City, and enhance public safety. Once the City is on a sufficiently sound financial ground to properly maintain its existing urban forest, staff stands ready and willing to engage in further discussions and identify recommendations for more centralized and enhanced urban forestry efforts. The Community Forest Advisory Board provides an ideal venue from which to solicit those types of recommendations at the appropriate time and staff appreciates this board's ongoing efforts to focus the public's attention on an often overlooked citywide concern.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please call me at 619-236-7080.

Jay M. Goldstone
Chief Operating Officer

cc: Almis Udrys, Interim Director of Council Affairs
Garth K. Sturdevan, Director, Transportation & Storm Water Department
Stacey LoMedico, Director Park & Recreation Department
Mark Leonard, Director, Financial Management Department
Hasan Yousef, Deputy Director, Street Division