

DATE ISSUED: July 16, 2004

REPORT NO. 04-161

ATTENTION: Rules Committee
Agenda of July 21, 2004

SUBJECT: Status Report on Community Forest Initiative

SUMMARY

Issue – Shall Rules Committee accept this report on the status of the Community Forest Initiative?

Manager's Recommendation – Accept this status report.

Other Recommendations – None.

Fiscal Impact – None with this action.

BACKGROUND

Tree Tally

The Community Forest Initiative objective announced by Mayor Murphy in January 2002 was to plant 5,000 trees on public property each year for 20 years, for a total of 100,000 trees for San Diego. A total of 5,175 trees were planted in the first goal period, which ended June 30, 2003. In the year ending June 30, 2004, 3,810 trees were planted on public property in the City of San Diego, excluding trees planted as a result of a development permit requirement. *Attachment 1* is the Fiscal Year 2004 tree tally.

Tree planting has been moving forward more slowly than expected, largely due to the reluctance of some residents to agree to water a new street tree. At current water rates, deep watering a tree 15 gallons a week costs just \$2 to \$3 per *year*. A new Watering Agreement was implemented in January 2004 that better educates residents about the

minor cost and major benefits of street trees in order to help motivate them to sign Watering Agreements.

Fiscal Year 2005 Community Forest Budget Plan

Fiscal Year 2005 Budget Plan considers all known funding sources, not just City of San Diego funding sources. The FY 2005 Budget Plan is provided in *Attachment 2*. It includes planned funding to plant an estimated 7,300 trees. The Budget Plan is updated semi-annually.

The main constraint on planting this number of trees during FY 2005 will be obtaining sufficient signed watering agreements from adjacent residents in a timely manner. The effectiveness of the new Watering Agreement implemented in January 2004 has not yet been measured. However, the City's Community Forest Advisory Board is additionally working on several other methods to educate and motivate San Diegans to plant and water street trees. The Board is currently in the process of obtaining photos and illustrations for its draft public education brochures, Power Point presentations to community groups, and City of San Diego Community Forest Initiative web site. These educational materials are expected to be completed and distributed in early 2005.

Additional Tree Planting in the Region

In the Fiscal Year 2005 Budget Plan, the "Allocated in FY 2005" line-item from the City's Transportation and Drainage Design Division includes 398 trees that will be planted in the SR-56 project over-and-above the planting requirement. However, it is worthy of note that nearly 5,100 *required* trees will also be planted as part of this project.

Downtown Kiwanis' tree farm has, for many years, grown and given away trees to nonprofit organizations to plant. In April 2004, the group gave away 600 trees, nearly its entire inventory, to reforest an area of east County burned by the October 2003 wildfire. The Downtown Kiwanis is currently growing 300 oak trees to be planted in one year in the same area.

Another tree planting effort which is enhancing our community forest region-wide is the San Diego Regional Energy Office's "Cool Communities Shade Tree Program." In just the City of San Diego, the program planted 1,075 shade trees from January 1, 2003 through late June 2004, primarily on private property. From late June 2004 through February 2006, the Program anticipates planting 17,000 shade trees *region-wide* on private property and school property, of which an undetermined number of trees will be planted within the City of San Diego.

Tree Research

Planned Research

“Irrigated Acres Inventory”: The Water Department initiated a project to obtain satellite imagery with 2.5 meter pixels focused on urban, irrigated vegetation and impervious surfaces in the entire City of San Diego, and analysis of that data to determine the actual acres of irrigated trees, shrubs and grass in the City, from which they can estimate the amount of irrigation water required. The imagery was acquired in late June 2004 and the report is due in early 2005. For the Community Forest Initiative, this information will be valuable when evaluating the cost/benefit of using San Diego’s precious water resources on more urban trees.

Potential Research

“Urban Ecosystem Analysis Update”: On January 9, 2004, the Mayor sent a letter to the USDA Forest Service requesting funds to repeat the Urban Ecosystem Analysis to measure what the City of San Diego lost in the 2003 wildfires, both in terms of lost acres of tree canopy and lost air/water quality benefits, and to establish a baseline for developing our urban forest plans for the future. The project will overlay the pre-fire boundaries of chaparral onto the 2002 green data layer, and compare it to the post-fire green data layer, to determine how much of the tree canopy lost to the fire was chaparral versus other tree cover. The Mayor’s request is under active consideration by the USDA Forest Service.

“STRATUM” (Street Tree Resource Analysis Tool for Urban forest Managers): A grant will be sought to obtain STRATUM, a tool developed by the Center for Urban Forest Research at U.C. Davis, to help measure the costs, benefits and future funding needs of the City’s street tree inventory. A cost estimate and work plan have been developed to include in grant applications.

Tree and Community Forest Ordinance

In late 2004, an amended draft “Tree and Community Forest Ordinance” is expected to be scheduled at the Community Forest Advisory Board and then submitted for environmental review. After environmental review, it will be returned to the Community Forest Advisory Board for a recommendation, sent to Rules Committee for preliminary acceptance, and then sent to the Community Planners Committee and individual Community Planning Groups for 45 days for review/comment. Subsequently, it will be returned with any received comments to the Community Forest Advisory Board and Rules Committee, then docketed at City Council for adoption in 2005.

City Organizational Structure and Budgetary Elements for Trees

In FY 2005, the Program Manager position that supported the Community Forest Advisory Board and Community Forest Initiative for the last two years was eliminated as a part of the Citywide position restructuring. The duties of this position were absorbed by the Water Department's Water Resources Management section, led by Luis Generoso. This section already works extensively with planting issues, and has a landscape architect on staff.

Regarding issues previously raised by the Rules Committee about the appropriate City department to be in charge of trees, and future budget plans for street/park/open space tree watering, pruning, tracking and replacement planting, the City Manager will next consider these needs during preparation of the Proposed FY 2006 Budget.

ALTERNATIVE

Do not accept this status report.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri Williams
Manager's Liaison to Community Forest
Advisory Board

Richard Mendes
Deputy City Manager

Attachments: [1. Tree Tally for Fiscal Year 2004, dated June 30, 2004](#)
[2. Fiscal Year 2005 Community Forest Budget Plan, dated June 30, 2004](#)