



MEMORANDUM REPORT

Meeting Date: March 19, 2019

TO: Board of Commissioners of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

FROM: Fuel Reduction Subcommittee: George Tyson (chair), Duffy Price, with help from Stu Farwell and J. Logan

SUBJECT: Fuel Reduction Programs: New Tree Removal and Brush Chipping Programs

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Approve concept of the new Tree Removal Program; initiate Arborist tree evaluations on existing waiting list and prepare Request for Proposals (RFP) for FY2019/2020 Tree Removal Program
2. Seek consensus on proceeding with an RFP process for Brush Chipping for 2019-2020

BACKGROUND

The tree (Fuel Reduction) subcommittee met on 07Mar2019, with attendance by Tyson, Price, Farwell, and Logan, with two major topics: Tree Removal and Brush Chipping. The regular operations update on the current tree program will be covered by Stu in his Consultant Report.

Tree Removal Program

- We have been awaiting the results of the County Management Audit for over six months and have held off on major contracts/initiatives during this time. We have now reached the point where if we do not act now, we will have a gap in tree removal, with many residents having been on our waiting list for a year or more.
- We have questioned whether the current approach of tree removal is the best use of our fuel reduction funds and acknowledge that our long-term planning should be in the context of CWPP (Community Wildfire Protection Plan) approval with greater fire impact reduction in mind.
- Our current contract will expend the \$2MM budgeted for 2018-2019 and the work will be completed by the end of June 2019. The current contract does not appear to be as cost-effective as previous contracts (using \$/tree metric), and actual invoices show that many trees removed are oaks (presenting limited fire supporting risk) and some homeowners have had >12 trees removed.

DISCUSSION and RECOMMENDATION: Tree Removal Program

- Effectively immediately, we propose a more limited Tree Removal program that: 1. takes the pressure off of our waiting list; 2. puts a hold on additions to the waiting list, and 3. gives us time to incorporate longer-term strategic approaches to fuel reduction (e.g. Audit and CWPP feedback), while still leaving funds available for those approaches.
- Major elements of that new program are:
 - Process similar to the previous zone-oriented program, where an arborist evaluates each tree proposed by residents, then these specific trees are bundled into an RFP process featuring competitive bidding.
 - Arborist evaluations to begin immediately, under the existing contract with Kevin Kielty and projected to run through June 2019. Future contracts for arborist support will be submitted to an RFP process.
 - New limits on tree removal:

- Removal of dead/dying conifers and any eucalyptus only
 - No more than 3 trees removed per address/property
 - No more than \$8000 estimated cost per property, using costing matrix from current contract
- Improvements to the tree tracking process (including designation of selected trees, confirmation of tree removal, and visibility to residents of their status on-line) will be made.
- Target of initiating new contract in July. Depending on numbers of trees included, this may be broken into two phases with separate contracts to improve timeliness and competitiveness.
- Any new tree requests after 19March will be responded with the message that the program's future structure is being studied and that there is no waiting list per se.
- J. has prepared and we have reviewed the attached Tree Removal FAQ, which can be used by any Commissioner to explain the purpose and process of this program. FAQ is dynamic and will be updated accordingly

Proposed Action by Commission:

- Approve the concept of the new tree program, initiate Arborist tree evaluations on existing waiting list. The Commission will approve selection of a Contractor after the RFP process has been completed.

Brush Chipping Program

Background

- This program of on-site brush chipping has been heavily used by our residents and is quite popular and visible. We believe that it helps encourage residents to reduce brush on their properties and thus reduces fire danger.
- The current program has been running for many years, and the service has been anecdotally described as excellent. Expenditures for 2019-2020 are budgeted at \$350,000, an increase from the previous year.
- The current contract with S.P. McClenahan expires at the end of FY2018-2019. The contract was not competitively bid, but an analysis on costing of chipping service providers was provided to the Commission in April 2017.

Discussion and Recommendation:

- We proposed continuing the program. We also propose continuing the existing postcard notification process, with a plan of supplementing the postcard request with online requests form via the Fire District website.
- We propose a formal RFP process in selecting the contractor. We anticipate that initial contract would be for one year, but that extensions would be possible based on performance.

Proposed Action by Commission:

- We seek general agreement (consensus) on proceeding with an RFP process for Brush Chipping for 2019-2020

Attachment:

1. Tree Removal FAQ