

Tree Subcommittee Report

For Sep 11, 2018 LAHCFD Board Meeting

Prepared by George Tyson (chair), Duffy Price, with help from Stu Farwell

The regular operations update on the current tree program will be covered by Stu in his Consultant Report.

This update covers two topics related to the regular operations that merit more in-depth discussion:

1. Detailed review of McClenahan invoice 83582, dated August 27, 2018 – performed by G Tyson

Invoice (Progress Billing #2) was submitted on the above date; the billing of \$243,425 reflected a credit of \$15,000 from Matrix pricing, offered by Josh McClenahan.

This invoice included information on 90 trees, 4 of which were cancelled, and 86 of which were removed. Each of these trees was compared to the Matrix pricing upon which the current contract was based (including species, size, and location on property). All of the pricing matched the Matrix pricing (for both removal and disposal), with the following exceptions:

- Two birch trees on Alejandro Dr. were removed at a price of \$650 each. According to McClenahan's bid, birch trees are costed as if they are oak, so the correct price should have been \$750 (he priced them as if they were pine).
- A total of 9 trees included multiple trees, which McClenahan billed as if it were only the larger tree. For example, a property on Fremont Pines Ln had a 42.4" and 17.5" blue gum removed for the same prices as a single 36-48" eucalyptus.
- One multiple tree on La Loma Dr was billed as oak, 24-36", adjacent to road (\$3120), but the trees listed were 18.2", 18.1", and 14.1", described as "field below house". Pricing for each larger tree should have been \$1800 if adjacent to road – we will follow-up.
- Matrix pricing reflects a steep jump from 12-24" to 24-36" trees. There were four Monterey pine trees that were between 24" and 25" – all were billed as if they were 12-24".
- Matrix pricing only goes up to a maximum of 48". Three eucalyptus trees larger than this (53.7", 61.1", 54.7", all on Fremont Pines Ln) were removed for 36-48" pricing.

In short, all of the discrepancies described above (with the possible exception of one) were in favor of LAHCFD. Pricing analysis indicates that LAHCFD is being treated very fairly, without even considering the \$15,000 credit that McClenahan's offered spontaneously.

2. Discussion of Michelle Wu's proposal to improve proactive dead tree removal

The Tree Subcommittee met on Aug 29 to discuss Michelle's email proposal (Duffy was unable to attend in person, but she provided comments ahead of time and was able to review this summary ahead of its distribution).

We are open to discussing this proposal with the entire Commission, and wish to offer the following comments and points:

- We acknowledge that the changes in the tree program have led to long delays in taking care of trees that have been identified by their owners – our current actions have been to address the large backlog of trees, with the added feature that we now include fire risk as part of our triage process, and we also already have photo records of all proposed trees.
- We see the benefit of improving our means of dead tree reporting, making it easier for residents to submit proposed trees. Developing new tools (e.g. online reporting) is on the list of projects for our new General Manager.
- We find that resident reporting and neighbor pressure is already largely effective in this community. Some absentee owners slow the process down, but we find that eventually, most problem trees get taken care of.
- LAHCFD lacks enforcement powers if a resident declines to have a tree removed. We think that either County Fire (brush removal) or the Town of Los Altos Hills (code enforcement) could have a role in this and are open to ideas for a mechanism to accomplish it.
- We are uneasy about putting McClenahan's (or any other tree service provider) in the position of driving around the town to identify dead trees for our program. Granted that they are already familiar with the area (and already know the dead trees), this feels like a conflicted role if they were to identify their workload. We are open to discussion.
- In short, we would like to press to reduce our backlog of known dead trees, then expand our public awareness of this program – prior to beginning any new steps that include potentially reluctant residents and homeowners.