

To the Mayor and Members of the City Council**October 18, 2016****Page 1 of 2****SUBJECT: MOWING**

This Informal Report is being provided in response to a question raised regarding mowing and how the City inspects the work performed by contractors.

OVERVIEW:

The Park and Recreation Department (PARC) manages contract mowing for 1,524 locations, which include: 1,391 acres of parks, 162 miles of traffic dividers (medians), 362 miles of right-of-ways, 222 corner clips, and 369 acres of miscellaneous grounds for multiple locations of other departments including the Police, Transportation & Public Works and Information Technology.

The annual contract mowing budget for PARC is \$1,552,807. This budget was reduced in FY10 by 32.6%, which included a reduction of \$283,000 for the right-of-way maintenance, \$168,000 for mowing of the I-35/I-30 corridor and \$122,099 for a reduction of median mowing from 14-day cycles to 21-day cycles. As the quantity of landscaped areas requiring maintenance has increased, appropriations for maintenance services have been added to the operating budget. However, the impact on the contractors available in the market and the level of contract management staff has not been adjusted.

The contract mowing structure and budget for parks is currently set on a 14/21-day schedule, from March through November. Contractors mow every 14 days, from March through May, and every 21 days, from June through November (14 cycles annually). Traffic dividers are set up on a 21-day schedule, from March through November (12 cycles annually). Right-of-ways are set up on a 30-day schedule, from April through November (8 cycles annually).

MOWING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES:

The increased amount of precipitation during summer 2016 (year-to-date rainfall of 29.15 inches, which is 3.26 inches above the average year-to-date rainfall, with rainfall of 2.25 inches above normal in August) resulted in accelerated growth of grass and weeds during what is traditionally a minimal growth period. As a result of the unseasonable wet weather, the PARC received an increase in complaints. In each instance staff addresses the complaints and educates the public on the mowing structure and frequency.

The contract mowing program is currently managed by one full-time Contract Compliance Specialist and a part-time (20 hours per week) field inspector. During the late summer accelerated growing period the department added a part-time administrative position to support immediate needs for managing contract services and contractor compliance. The current staffing level allows the inspection and management of complaints, and the formal inspection and documentation of approximately 20% of all locations serviced in a typical mowing season.

MOWING INSPECTIONS/QUALITY:

Contractors are required to submit and follow a mowing schedule for each mowing cycle, submitting updated completion sheets as work is completed. Compliance staff reviews the mowing schedules and completion sheets, and then schedules inspections. Mowing inspections include documentation of complaints and an evaluation of contractor performance. As needed staff notifies the contractor of performance deficiencies (contract specifications allow for a 14-day cure period to resolve any issues). This cure period is too long and will be modified in future contracts. However, when appropriate, the City has denied payment for mowing cycles that were documented as failing to meet quality standards.



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NEXT STEPS:

The PARD is in the process of assessing mowing services and developing a plan to improve service quality and management of contractor performance. Specifically, the department is evaluating key areas including mowing frequency, level of contract compliance resources, systems to manage work orders and complaints, modification of contract processes and terms and management of completions and inspections.

If additional information or clarification is needed, please contact Richard Zavala, Park and Recreation Department Director at (817) 392-5704 or Susan Alanis, Assistant City Manager at (817) 392-6116.

**David Cooke
City Manager**