



General Government Committee

Briefing and Discussion about Urban Forestry

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Agenda Item:

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Issue:

Briefing and Discussion

City Manager's Recommendation:

Not applicable; briefing only.

Staff Contact:

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Steven Friddle, Community Services Manager, 360.753.8591

Presenter(s):

Steven Friddle
Michelle Bentley

Background and Analysis:

Staff will provide an oral report and answer questions regarding the Urban Forestry program that is accomplished by many departments, staff and volunteers:

- Community Planning and Development Department is the lead on permit review (ordinances related to trees have not changed - OMC 16.54, 16.56, 16.58, 16.60 & 18.36), hazard tree assessments, Legion Way Trees, Arbor Day, "Neighborhoods" and other initiatives since 1991;
- Parks Department is responsible for the maintenance of street trees on major arterials, the downtown, and management of trees growing within City-owned properties;
- Public Works Transportation frequently clears branches that obstruct signs and intersection visibility and help clear roadways;
- Water Resources does a significant amount of tree planting and maintenance within City-owned storm ponds and retention areas; and
- Neighborhoods, property owners and volunteers also initiate tree planting and tree maintenance.

The CP&D's Forestry Program staff has been reduced from a high of three (with interns) in 2008 to a half-time position that has other additional environmental responsibilities. Even with reduced levels of service, urban forestry continues to meet the program requirements of reviewing all new development for adherence to the tree ordinance, and the goals of providing limited urban forestry education to the public, assisting in coordination of removing hazardous trees in City right-of-ways and maintaining Olympia's status as a "Tree City USA."

Several years ago, in partnership with Olympia's GIS Business Manager, David Kuhn, the Urban Forestry Program completed the first stage of a land cover analysis project that was funded through a WADNR Urban & Community Forestry grant. Results from the analysis show that Olympia's current canopy coverage is 30%. The data gathered has been used and incorporated into the Citywide Comprehensive Plan update.

In 2010, the City Council approved implementation of a Long-Term Management Plan for the Legion Way Trees. The intent was to implement a variety of measures including tree evaluation, pruning, removal, and replanting to prolong the life of the trees and manage the streetscape for safety. Funds from the Hazard Tree Mitigation are used to continue to identify and remove high risk trees.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The Urban Forestry Program receives numerous requests and inquiries from businesses and residents about a wide range of forestry issues.

Options:

None; briefing only.

Financial Impact:

None; briefing only.