



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: September 3, 2014 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

SUBJECT: CITY OF PALM SPRINGS WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAM

FROM: David H. Ready, City Manager

BY: Chief of Staff, Office of Sustainability and Facilities Department

SUMMARY

In response to the State of California's declaration of a drought emergency, City Council had previously discussed working toward a water reduction conservation goal of 50% for municipal operations usage, and 30% for citywide usage within the next few years. Hence, City staff, working with the Joint Commission Water Task Force (JCWTF) recommends that City Council approve a comprehensive water conservation program including additional residential and commercial turf conversion program incentives, a City facility turf conversion program and water conservation education initiatives. The suggested program elements and funding options are discussed in this staff report.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Discuss staff recommendations regarding a comprehensive water conservation program, including City facilities turf reductions, residential and commercial turf reduction incentive programs, and community outreach. Direct staff as appropriate.

BACKGROUND

According to the most recent August 2014, U.S. Drought Map reports, as pictured in Figures 1A and 1B (attached) severe drought covers 99.8% of California.¹ On August 14, 2014, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) ordered the water companies under its jurisdiction to provide direct notice to their customers of mandatory water use restrictions and potential fines in response to the State Water Resources Control Board's Emergency Regulation for Statewide Water Conservation.

¹ <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-severe-drought-california-20140818-story.html>

As a result of the State's declaration of a drought emergency, the City Council directed staff to facilitate the formation of a Joint Commission Water Task Force (JCWTF). This group is made up of members of the City's Sustainability Commission, Architectural Advisory Commission, Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission and Palm Springs Neighborhood Involvement Committee. These members were appointed from their respective boards to serve on the JCWTF and have been meeting since early July, 2014. Task Force members have been engaged in several subcommittees including communications/outreach, incentives, ordinance revisions and turf conversion programs.

Overall, recommendations for the City's drought response programs include several courses of action including the following proposals to City Council:

1. Adoption of a new City Water Conservation Ordinance and modification of the existing Landscape Ordinance (introduced through a companion staff report).
2. "Phase One" of a City facility turf conversion project.
3. Expansion of the City's existing incentive programs.
4. Outreach campaign and educational program - www.watermattersPS.com.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Currently the City of Palm Springs has undertaken several projects to reduce municipal water usage. For example, the citywide "Chevron Project" includes a retrofit of parks and parkway irrigation controllers that will allow for greater control of the City's irrigation systems. The Chevron project also included retrofits of irrigation at the convention center, city hall, airport and city yard. The completion of this project will save approximately 144,604 ccf of water or 1,081,638 gallons annually. The complete analysis of water savings and areas included in the project are provided in this report as "Attachment F".

The Airport is nearing completion of the design for an approximate \$1 million turf conversion project. Also, the Tahquitz Median conversion to desert scape is now complete from Indian Avenue to Sunrise Avenue, and will continue this year, from Sunrise to El Cielo.

With regard to incentives for community water conservation measures, the City currently offers the following programs:

- Desert Landscape Incentive Program of up to \$500 for single-family residences and \$2500 for Homeowner's Associations
- In partnership with Veolia (the City's Waste Water/Sewer Treatment Plant contractor) a Low Flow Residential and Commercial Toilet Rebate Program
- Up to \$100 rebate for energy efficient Energy Star appliances including those that affect water use
- Free shower timers and low flow faucet aerators

In an effort to expand conservation efforts towards the City Council's water reduction goals – 50% municipal use and 30% citywide use – staff is recommending the following additional set of policy measures:

Ordinance Revisions

The ordinance subcommittee and staff met throughout the summer of 2014, to review the City's existing water ordinances and those from other jurisdictions. The recommended ordinance revisions created additional water conservation measures, including a definition of "water waste" for ongoing community education and enforcement. Details of the ordinances on water efficient landscaping and water conservation and water waste prevention are provided under the following sections:

- Adding Chapter 11.06, regarding water conservation and waste prevention
- Amends Chapter 8.60, amending irrigation and landscape requirements to the City's municipal code.

City Turf Conversion and City Facility Water Use

Staff has undertaken a review of City facilities to see what areas are best suited to turf reduction and or conversion to desert scape.

Several areas were selected as a "phase one" approach to be included in the desert landscape and turf conversion pilot project – and are listed below.

1. City Yard at 425 Civic Drive - remove all annuals and turf (proposed as a site for a Community Outreach Education Work Day project)
2. City Hall Cogeneration area- remove turf and create a walking meditation path connected to the Dog Park
3. City Hall Dog Park - reduce perimeter turf and increase walking path
4. Fire Station #2 - convert annuals to desert landscape
5. Fire Station #5 - convert turf and annuals to desert scape
6. Police Station - remove all turf and convert to desert landscape

Aerial views of the proposed phase one projects are attached as Figures 2 through 7. In addition, the attached proposal (Attachment C) details the plans for these facilities as outlined by the City's contracted landscape design firm. Cost estimates were provided through the City's landscape maintenance company, and are as follows:

Figure #	Facility	Cost Estimates
2	Corporate Yard	\$24,700.00
3	Municipal Co-Generation Plant (includes pavers for walking path)	\$45,660.00
4	Fire Station #2	\$6,825.00

5	Fire Station #5	\$9,110.00
6	Dog Park	\$22,265.00
7	Police Department	\$125,000.00
	Total:	\$233,560.00

Additionally, staff recommends that "annual flowers" at other locations/facilities such as the Heritage Trail planters (Belardo Road), the Village Green, the Leisure Center, Pavilion, Library, Skate Park, the Mizell Senior Center and the Desert Highland Community Center be converted to desert plantings. Estimated costs for these minor conversions are not yet finalized, however, we will report back to Council with updated information.

With regard to annual turf overseeding practices at all city locations, it is presumed that practice will continue utilizing the CVAG recommended "smart scalping" method.

Parks, Parkways and Landscape Districts

City parks, parkways and landscape assessment districts are areas of opportunity for water conservation measures, however, require a significant project undertaking in terms of identifying appropriate locations for turf conversion, design and project funding. Staff, in conjunction with the JCWTF is reviewing these locations in order to make recommendations to City Council on specific future projects.

In early August, 2014, as a small pilot program, the City's current landscaping contractor removed a small area of turf adjacent to sidewalks at Ruth Hardy Park (replaced with decomposed granite) and relocated spray rotors a minimum of two to three feet away from the sidewalks. In addition to reducing the irrigation overspray onto the sidewalk, it will prevent degradation of a newly paved parking area (see attached photos, Figure 8-10). This program could be expanded to all City park areas.

Golf Course

The City's golf course, Tahquitz Creek, which consists of two courses (Resort and Legends) has an opportunity to convert certain portions of turf to desert landscape. Although the courses already use "reclaimed water," the golf course General Manager, who has attended several subcommittee meetings, feels confident the City will realize significant water savings and cost reduction with a select turf conversion project.

A possible strategy is to focus on one course for fiscal year 2014-15 and the other in the following fiscal year. With the Resort Course containing some desert landscaping already and an updated irrigation system, it could be enlarged to add additional areas of desert scape, utilize irrigation abandonment and/or possible native plant conversion. The course manager also recommends including the driving range to potentially capture 40 acres of conversion. Staff will continue working with the course management to bring forward a specific proposal for Council's consideration.

Incentives

In September, 2012, City Council approved a Lawn Buy Back Matching Grant Program to encourage property owners to replace turf with low or no water use, desert friendly and native landscaping. Approximately \$60,000 in incentives has been distributed annually since the program inception, with nearly 150 applicants having benefitted from the program.

Expanding this program is recommended by the JCWTF to further increase participation and water saving measures. Increasing the incentives, particularly for large water users (e.g. Home Owner Associations), would likely encourage wider participation.

Single Family, Multi-family/HOA and Commercial Incentive

The recommendation is to increase this area of incentives to \$200,000, allocated in the following manner:

\$100,000 single family homes
\$ 50,000 multi-family/HOA's
\$ 50,000 commercial properties

As part of an expanded grant program, is it recommended to increase the maximum single family household grant from a maximum of \$500 to \$1,000. For HOA's and commercial properties, the recommended grant maximum would increase from \$2,500 to \$5,000. This program will be offered in conjunction with the Desert Water Agency's (DWA) new turf conversion incentive program. However, the City's program allows for conversion of side and back yard areas which the DWA program does not provide. These increased grant amounts would also allow for the \$1.00 per square foot reimbursement to raise to \$2.00 per square foot. Consistent with the original program, a 50% match is required.

Three Acre or Greater Area HOA Incentive

An additional \$100,000 is being recommended to fund projects for those areas converting large scale areas of turf to desert landscape. This additional incentive is intended for some of the HOA water users with large turf areas (e.g. areas on East Palm Canyon Drive, etc.) from Gene Autry to Escoba Drive. This incentive, with a \$20,000 cap, would be offered to properties which convert more than 3 acres of turf to desert landscape.

Public Outreach

The City's Office of Sustainability has created a new informational website dedicated to water conservation issues. The Outreach and Education Subcommittee has provided guidance for several initiatives, including:

- New Outreach URL/Website: www.watermattersps.com
- Logo and Slogan (see attached)
- Vehicle Magnets for the City motor vehicle fleet
- Advertising and banner campaign
- Social media campaign

A proposed budget of \$25,000 will be used to create a social media campaign, enhance the [watermattersps.com](http://www.watermattersps.com) website, and enhance educational tools for seminars and training for landscapers, residents and staff. Additionally, the city will be recognizing all participants in the desert landscape conversion program.

FISCAL IMPACT

Each component of the proposed water conservation program requires different levels of funding, and some areas can be handled within current staffing levels. Specific areas of estimated costs are as follows:

- Ordinance enforcement - utilization of existing Code Enforcement staff
- City facility turf conversion, "phase one" - \$234,000
- Parks/parkways/landscape districts – TBD, based on project scope and design
- Golf Course - \$100,000 over two years
- Residential/Commercial incentive programs - \$300,000
- Public Outreach and Education - \$25,000

Funds may be available later this year through State Proposition 84 funding that the Desert Water Agency (DWA) has applied for on behalf of the City. This funding was opened to local agencies such as DWA due to reclassification of certain state funds since the drought was proclaimed. In March, Governor Brown signed legislation to assist drought-affected communities and provided funding to better use local water supplies. The Department of Water Resources has since been directed to expedite the solicitation and award of \$200 million (of the \$472.5 million) in the available Integrated Regional Water Management Funding.² This money is to support projects and programs that provide immediate regional drought preparedness, increase local water supply reliability and the delivery of safe drinking water, assist water suppliers and regions to implement conservation programs and measures that are not locally cost-effective, and/or reduce water quality conflicts or ecosystem conflicts created by the drought.

If DWA is successful in obtaining Prop 84 funds, the City will request this funding for programs such as the desert landscape grant, facility turf conversion, education programs, and possibly increase access to reclaimed water by adding infrastructure and

² http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/prop84/

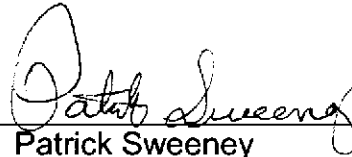
creek restoration. The City may also apply for reimbursement for projects completed prior to the funding award.

Pending any possible award of Prop 84 funding requests, these recommended capital projects and incentive programs could be funded through a combination of funds comprised of Sustainability, Measure J, General Fund, and other possible grant opportunities. Measure J funding would be submitted to the Measure J Commission for consideration, and Sustainability funding would require the Sustainability Commission to reprioritize its existing budget appropriations toward additional water conservation measures.

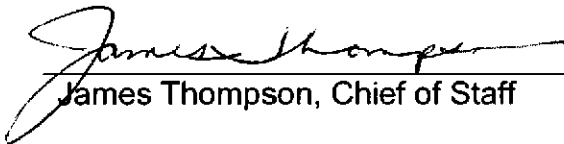
Pursuant to City Council direction, staff will provide formal costs on specific projects and programs for final design approval and of funding sources.



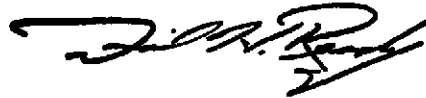
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Attachments:

1. Attachment A - Figures 1A – 1B, Drought Maps
2. Attachment B - Figures 2 – 10
3. Attachment C - Landscape design package with irrigation specifications
4. Attachment D - Public Outreach Campaign Examples
5. Attachment E - New Incentive Program Application Packet
6. Attachment F – Breakout of Water Measures Chevron