



## City Council Staff Report

DATE: May 6, 2009 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

SUBJECT: A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING A TREE TRIMMING POLICY, AND SUPERSEDING ALL PREVIOUS PALM TREE TRIMMING PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

FROM: David H. Ready, City Manager

BY: Parks and Recreation Department

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### SUMMARY

The City annually trims seed pods and fronds from City-owned palm trees based on Minute Order No. 3116 (Attachment "A"). This resolution replaces Minute Order No. 3116 with regard to fan palms in the City right of way, and requires the removal of the seed pods, and that the fronds on California Fan Palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) be sheared to a minimum of 12' clearance from ground level, but retain skirts and leave the trunks unskinned; the Mexican Fan Palms (*Washingtonia robusta*) shall have the trunks skinned and the old fronds removed. Implementation shall be phased based on budget allocations determined at the award of bid.

### RECOMMENDATION:

1. Adopt Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_, A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING A TREE TRIMMING POLICY, AND SUPERSEDING ALL PREVIOUS PALM TREE TRIMMING PROCEDURES AND POLICIES; and
2. Direct staff to solicit bids based on new trimming practice and return for direction on phasing and award of contract.

### STAFF ANALYSIS:

The subject of palm tree trimming has been discussed on several occasions as documented in the attached legislative history (Attachment "B"). The Current City Council policy is Minute Order 3116 which was adopted in 1982. As part of the General Plan Amendment process conducted in 2007, two goals were established in the Community Design Element as shown below:

ITEM NO. 4.A.

*CD7.3 Amend the City's Palm Tree Trimming policy to require skinning of trunks of Washingtonia robustas (Mexican fan palms) in the public right of way to create a more maintained appearance.*

*CD7.4 Phase out the use of Washingtonia robustas (Mexican fan palms) in the public right of way. As robustas die or are replaced, use Washingtonia filifera for their replacement and in new landscape designs in the public right of way.*

General Plan goal number CD7.3 is incorporated into the proposed resolution.

Each June through July, the City conducts a formal bid process for palm tree trimming and pod removal. Last year staff requested bids that provided cost options for the removal of the palm skirts, and/or skinning the trunks for Council consideration. At the July 30, 2008 City Council meeting, the Council awarded the contract for annual palm tree trimming with no additional funding or change to the existing palm tree trimming policy (Minute Order No. 944). The cost for trimming based on Minute Order 3116 was \$57,417 in FY 2008-09. The City Council requested that additional information be presented for their further consideration on the existing palm tree trimming practices.

On September 3, 2008 staff presented photos and information regarding the existing trimming practices and photos of both the California Fan Palm (*Washingtonia filifera*) and the Mexican Fan Palm (*Washingtonia robusta*) with various trimming and skinning options (Attachment "C"). At that time, Council requested staff bring back a resolution amending Minute Order No. 316 to provide that, in addition to the removal of the fruit pods, the California Fan Palms be maintained with the skirts intact, and the trunks remain unskinned, but that the skirts be trimmed to a 12' minimum clearance above ground, and that the Mexican Fan Palms have the old fronds removed and the trunks skinned. Council also directed staff to return with a phased implementation plan. Staff originally scheduled this information to be provided for consideration with the FY2009-10 bid for trimming so that the costs of the various options could be considered.

However, since the bidding will not take place until June/July, in order to gain the best pricing, and Council wishes to consider this item at this time, staff has used the past year bid amounts as well as estimates of probable costs for shearing to assist in the review of phasing.

#### Phasing and Implementation:

Currently, the City does not have an existing inventory of the palm trees noting the overall health of the existing palms. We do have a listing of 2,939 palms within the City that are maintained yearly, and their locations. It is estimated that these types of palms live from 80 to 250 years in their natural habitats. Data regarding the life span of a palm

in urban conditions is not readily known, and it is estimated that Palm Springs may have one of the oldest streetscapes of Fan Palms. Therefore, ours may be a case study for the life span of a palm planted in a streetscape. Considering that these palms may have been planted approximately seventy years ago, and it is unknown how old the trees were when they were planted, many of these trees may be reaching the limit of their lives.

Since skinning the trunks does expose the tree to potential stress and infections due to the cuts, staff recommends that, prior to implementing the skinning of any trees, an assessment by a certified arborist who specializes in fan palms be conducted so that we do not risk loss of any palms. Council may also wish to consider initiating a palm tree replacement fund to replace palms that are dying out naturally and those that are lost to storms or traffic collisions in an effort to maintain our existing palm lined streetscapes.

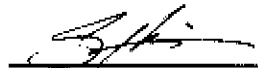
Ultimate phasing of this project will most likely be based on funding availability and prices received in bidding. However, the following phasing is submitted for Council consideration based on last year's bid costs of \$90 per tree for skinning and frond removal for the Mexican Fan Palms and an estimate of \$50 per tree for shearing the fronds to 12' height on the California Fan Palms (Note that these costs are particularly low and, in past years, costs of \$130 to \$500 per tree have been bid):

Phase	Areas	Type of Palms	No. of Palms	Estimated probable costs based on last year's bid numbers
One	Palm Canyon (central business district, Alejo - Ramon)	California	256	\$ 12,800
	Palm Canyon (central business district, Alejo - Ramon)	Mexican	2	\$ 180
	Indian Canyon (central business district Alejo - Ramon)	California	108	\$ 5,400
	Indian Canyon (central business district Alejo - Ramon)	Mexican	51	\$ 4,590
	Tahquitz (Indian canyon to Airport)	Mexican	87	\$ 7,830
	City Hall	California	39	\$ 1,950
	City Hall	Mexican	14	\$ 1,260
	Airport	Mexican	433	\$ 38,970
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>988</b>
Two	North and South Palm Canyon Dr.	California	530	\$ 26,500
	North and South Palm Canyon Dr.	Mexican	39	\$ 3,510
	City Parks and Facilities	California	283	\$ 14,150
	City Parks and Facilities	Mexican	343	\$ 30,870
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,195</b>	<b>\$ 75,030</b>
Three	Remainder of City	California	302	\$ 15,100
		Mexican	454	\$ 40,860
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>756</b>	<b>\$ 55,960</b>


The above phasing is an attempt to spread the costs over several years, while capturing the highest use areas first. However, given the current budget conditions, Council may also wish to defer additional trimming to future years, and/or forgo any trimming this year. Should Council wish to consider different phasing scenarios, staff can craft the bid documents to provide a per tree cost so that Council can provide direction at the award of contract.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Dependant upon Council direction.



Sharon Heider, Director  
Department of Parks and Recreation

  
Thomas Wilson, Assistant City Manager  
David H. Ready, City Manager

Attachments:

- A) Minute Order No. 3116
- B) Legislative history
- C) September 3, 2008 Minutes Excerpts
- D) Resolution

C OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA PROCEDURES AND POLICIES			DIVISION J	SECTION 5	SUBJECT 1
REFERENCE	EFFECTIVE DATE	SUBJECT	PAGE		
	7-28-82	PROPERTY MANAGEMENT: TRIMMING OF PALM TREES WITHIN THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS	1 OF 3		

0.0 DEPARTMENTS AFFECTED

- 0.1 Community Development
- 0.2 Community Services
- 0.3 Planning Commission
- 0.4 Architectural Advisory Committee
- 0.5 General Public

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 It is the purpose of this policy to establish the criteria for palm tree trimming within the City of Palm Springs. This policy shall apply to palm trees located within the following areas:
- a. Public right-of-way.
  - b. Parks.
  - c. Landscape easements.
- 1.2 This policy will assign the authority to review palm trees and/or determine the need for trimming trees.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The City of Palm Springs desires its palm trees to have a consistent aesthetically-appealing appearance. This general appearance of palm trees is enhanced by the natural "skirt" which is formed by the dried fronds of the palm tree.

In the past there has been a lack of clarity about the City of Palm Springs' policies and procedures pertaining to the trimming of palm tree fronds ("skirts").

This policy is designed to clarify the procedures for palm tree trimming and establish a consistent policy as to exceptions and how they will be dealt with.

3.0 POLICY

3.1 All palm trees located within the areas defined in Section 1.1 of this policy shall be trimmed by the Parks Division as often as deemed necessary until such time as the lower edge of the fronds "skirts" are twelve (12) feet from the ground.

PREPARED BY: *[Signature]*

APPROVED BY: CITY COUNCIL MO 3116, 7-28-82 65

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3.2 No exception shall be made to this policy without approval of the Planning Commission upon recommendation of the Architectural Advisory Committee, according to procedures hereinafter provided.

3.3 Seed pod trimming is not a part of this procedure and policy statement and will be trimmed at the discretion of city staff.

#### 4.0 DEFINITIONS

4.1 Hazard - An identifiable potential for injury to any person or damage to public, real, or personal property.

#### 5.0 PROCEDURE

5.1 The Architectural Advisory Committee will review at its regularly scheduled meetings, all requests for palm tree trimming which are exceptions to the twelve (12) foot rule, as stated in Section 3.1.

5.2 The Architectural Advisory Committee shall base its recommendations supporting palm tree trimming in excess of the twelve (12) foot rule, utilizing (but not limited to) the following guidelines:

- a. Street Lighting - Palm trees adversely affecting the lighting of any public street and/or intersection.
- b. Power Lines - Palm trees determined to be potentially hazardous.
- c. Traffic Signals & Warning Signs - Palm trees determined to be obstructing vision.
- d. Bus Stops - Palm trees which may obstruct the passage of buses on public streets.
- e. Proximity to Structures - Palm trees close to or adjacent to buildings or other structures which may constitute a hazard.
- f. Aesthetic Consideration - Palm trees in groups of various sizes and shapes where aesthetic disparity exists, which includes but is not limited to consideration of skirt height and shape and consistency of bark trimming, shall be reviewed at the discretion of the Architectural Advisory Committee.
- g. Damaged Trees - Trees that are damaged, by way of storm or other causes, shall be trimmed by city staff without Architectural Advisory Committee review, but only to the point necessary to remove damaged bark or fronds.

INITIATED BY:

APPROVED BY:

CITY COUNCIL MO 3916, 7-28-82

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA PROCEDURES AND POLICIES			DIVISION	SECTION	SUBJECT
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5.3 Hazards created by palm trees shall be determined and confirmed by the Architectural Advisory Committee. The Architectural Advisory Committee may review and recommend alternative methods for dealing with hazardous trees, e.g. removal and relocation.

5.4 Any interested person may request the Architectural Advisory Committee to review a case for trimming palm trees in excess of twelve (12) feet.

6.0 EXCEPTIONS

6.1 None.

DATED BY:

*[Handwritten Signature]*

APPROVED BY

CITY COUNCIL, MO 3116, 7-28-82



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS  
MEMORANDUM

CITY CLERKS DEPARTMENT

TO: David H. Ready, City Manager  
FROM: James Thompson, City Clerk  
DATE: May 22, 2007  
SUBJECT: Palm Tree Trimming Policy

Based on recent discussion of the City Council, you requested information or any legislative history for a policy of trimming palm trees.

LEGISLATIVE SEARCH

1962-09-24	Council Minutes	Palm Trees be trimmed only sufficiently enough not to conflict with lighting fixtures and to alleviate any hazard, thereby leaving the fronds with a "skirt." [Attachment 1]
1982-07-28	Council Minutes	Adoption of a Palm Tree Trimming Policy. [Attachment 2]
1996-11-06	Council Minutes	Direct Planning Commission to review and make recommendations to City Council i.e. Palm Tree Trimming. [Attachment 3]
1996-12-05	MainStreet	MainStreet unanimous support for keeping the existing Palm Tree Policy for Downtown. [Attachment 4]
1997-02-26	Planning Commission	Recommending to the City Council revisions to the current palm tree trimming policy. [Attachment 5]
1997-02-26	Tribe	Tribal Planning Commission request that predominant palms be maintained in as natural state as possible. [Attachment 6]
2000-02-23	Planning Commission	Re-recommend that the City Council revise palm tree trimming policy as reviewed and recommended in 1997. [Attachment 7]
2000-03-08	Council Minutes Study Session	City Council discussion on Palm Tree Trimming Policy. [Attachment 8]

It appears that the Policy adopted in 1982 as contained in attachment 2 is the current City Council Policy with respect to palm tree trimming.



**CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA**



**MINUTES EXCERPTS  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2008  
City Hall Council Chamber**

**4.B. CONSIDERATION OF CHANGES TO PALM TREE TRIMMING POLICY:**

Sharon Heider, Director of Parks and Recreation, provided background information as outlined in the staff report dated September 3, 2008.

The City Council discussed and/or commented on the following with respect to the Palm Tree trimming policy: leaving the Filifera in their natural state, skinning and the removal of skirts for Robusta, the removal of seed pods, and ensuring any skirts are trimmed to a level of 12 feet from the ground.

**ACTION:** 1) Direct staff to prepare a Resolution to approve a Palm Tree Trimming Policy that provides for unskinned trunks and skirts for Filifera Palm Trees, skinned trunks and the removal of skirts for Robusta Palm Trees; and 2) Direct staff to develop an implementation and phase-in policy for Council consideration. **Motion Councilmember Weigel, seconded by Councilmember Mills and unanimously carried on a roll call vote.**

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE  
CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA,  
APPROVING A TREE TRIMMING POLICY, AND  
SUPERSEDING ALL PREVIOUS PALM TREE  
TRIMMING PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

WHEREAS, The City of Palm Springs is world renowned for its distinctive palm lined streets, and parkways, and these palms create the unique character that make Palm Springs a destination city; and

WHEREAS, The City of Palm Springs is home to one of the largest compositions of heritage quality California Fan Palms in their natural state, and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to sustain and maintain these palm trees as a signature element of the City of Palm Springs, and therefore establishes this practice for the uniform trimming of City owned Fan Palms.

THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS DOES HEREBY RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. All City owned California Fan Palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) and Mexican Fan Palms (*Washingtonia robusta*) shall have the fruit pods removed.

SECTION 2. California Fan Palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) shall not have their fronds removed and shall retain their, "skirts", and their trunks shall not be skinned, but remain in their natural condition. Fronds shall be sheared to provide 12' minimum clearance from ground level.

SECTION 3. Mexican Fan Palms (*Washingtonia robusta*) shall have their dry fronds removed and their trunks shall be skinned.

SECTION 4. Any previous resolutions and/or minute orders adopting or amending a palm tree trimming ordinance are hereby superseded.

ADOPTED this 6th day of May, 2009.

\_\_\_\_\_  
David H. Ready, City Manager

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
James Thompson, City Clerk

CERTIFICATION

STATE OF CALIFORNIA )  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE ) ss.  
CITY OF PALM SPRINGS )

I, JAMES THOMPSON, City Clerk of the City of Palm Springs, hereby certify that Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_ is a full, true and correct copy, and was duly adopted at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Palm Springs on \_\_\_\_\_, by the following vote:

AYES:  
NOES:  
ABSENT:  
ABSTAIN:

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James Thompson, City Clerk  
City of Palm Springs, California