

Memorandum

Department of Public Works



TO: Michael O. Geisel, P.E.
City Administrator

FROM: James A. Eckrich, P.E. *JAE*
Public Works Dir. / City Engineer

DATE: October 31, 2019

RE: Emerald Ash Borer Preparedness Plan
2020 Funding Authorization

As you know, on November 16, 2015 the City Council approved a Preparedness Plan and Action Strategy (EAB Plan) for the removal of Ash Trees within public rights of way due to the impacts of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). That EAB Plan included an optional reforestation component, which was subsequently funded by City Council.

As detailed in the EAB Plan, the annual tree removal and reforestation was to be funded through General Fund – Fund Reserves (above the 40% Policy). Annual costs were anticipated to be as follows:

- **\$300,000 annually for the contractual replacement of sidewalk.** As detailed in the EAB Plan, the Ash tree removals are being completed by a street maintenance crew designated for this purpose only (except snow removal). That crew previously performed a large amount of sidewalk replacement. The allocation of \$300,000 has successfully supplemented the prior funding of \$200,000, and allowed the City to continue to maintain its 252 miles of sidewalk while concentrating efforts on Ash tree removal.
- **\$75,000 annually for contractual stump grinding.** The City's Public Works maintenance personnel will be removing approximately 960 Ash trees each year. These removals necessitate the grinding of 960 stumps, which is managed contractually.
- **\$140,000 for reforestation.** The Plan estimated that residents will request a replacement tree for 700 of the 960 Ash trees removed. The City's cost for a replacement tree is approximately \$300 per tree, of which the residents fund \$100 through an application fee. The resultant cost to the City of Chesterfield is an estimated \$140,000 per year.
- **\$68,000 annually for personnel.** City Staff's initial recommendation to City Council was for the City to discontinue management of the reforestation program during the EAB crisis. Instead, residents desiring reforestation would receive a \$200 stipend to

use toward tree replacement, which would be managed by the residents. City Council did not accept this recommendation, and felt it was important that the City Staff continue to manage tree reforestation. Accordingly, City Council authorized an additional annual allocation of \$68,000. This allocation was intended to fund interns and / or a temporary, full time employee necessary to help manage the Ash tree removal and reforestation program. These positions are to be terminated once the Ash trees are removed, or sooner if the EAB Plan is not funded by City Council.

As you can see, the anticipated annual allocation from General Fund – Fund Reserves (above the 40% Policy) was \$583,000 per year, per the EAB Plan approved by City Council.

During the first four years of Ash tree Removals (January 1, 2016 – present) the Public Works Department has removed 3,709 Ash trees. This is slightly below the anticipated 960 trees per year (3,840), with two months still remaining in 2019. As there is often a lag between tree removals and a request for a replacement tree, we cannot definitively determine the number of replacement trees which will be requested in 2020. However, we do know that there were 420 requests for replacement trees in 2016, 497 in 2017, and 484 in 2018, and 501 in 2019. It appears that the initial estimate for tree replacement (700) was high, and that the number of requests for 2020 is likely to be around 500. Accordingly, the request for reforestation has been reduced from \$140,000 to \$100,000. Funding at this level (supplemented by the \$60,000 allocated annually in the General Fund) will allow for up to 520 replacement trees in 2020. If tree requests increase substantially, and supplemental funding becomes necessary, I will request such from City Council at that time.

City Staff recommends further modifying the plan in 2020 by reducing funding for contractual stump removal from \$75,000 to \$30,000. Annual stump removal costs have been slightly less than \$75,000, and the 2019 Purchase Order for stump removal will maintain a balance of approximately \$50,000 at the end of 2019. Accordingly, a 2020 stump removal allocation of \$30,000 should be sufficient to cover Ash Tree removals in 2020.

With the \$40,000 (reforestation) and \$45,000 (stump grinding) expenditure reductions, I recommend that we allocate \$85,000 for contractual Ash Tree removal. While Public Works maintenance personnel will continue to remove the vast majority of Ash Trees, this will allow us to contract for trees that are especially difficult to remove due to size, working constraints, or overhead utilities. We have encountered a number of these trees during the first four years of the Program, and we believe that a provision for referring trees to a contractor will be safer and more efficient. Further, this will help ensure that we meet our goal of Ash Tree eradication by the end of 2022.

As of October 31, 2019, approximately 3,000 Ash Trees remain. In accordance with the EAB Plan, the requested 2020 financial allocation is as follows:

- **\$300,000 for contractual sidewalk replacement.** This will allow the City to continue to maintain its 252 miles of sidewalk while one street maintenance crew is completely allocated toward Ash Tree removal
- **\$30,000 for contractual stump removal.** Will cover the costs to grind the stumps from all trees removed. This includes a one-time time funding reduction from \$75,000 described in detail above.

- **\$100,000 for reforestation.** As described above, City Staff anticipates that funding in this amount will allow for the planting of 520 trees in 2020.
- **\$85,000 for contractual tree removal.** Public Works Street Maintenance personnel will continue to remove the vast majority of all Ash Trees. However, trees that are unusually difficult to remove due to size, overhead utilities, or working space will be referred to a tree removal contractor.
- **\$45,000 for personnel.** This figure represents the actual cost for the temporary full time employee helping to manage the implementation of the EAB plan and the reforestation program.

The total allocation requested for the continuation of the EAB Plan in 2019 is \$560,000. As detailed above, that funding must come from General Fund – Fund Reserves (above the 40% Policy). The Finance Director’s most recent projections indicate a General Fund – Fund Reserve (above the 40% Policy) of \$3,380,000 on December 31, 2019.

Action Recommended

This matter should be forwarded to Planning and Public Works Committee for consideration. Should PPW concur with Staff’s recommendation, it should vote to recommend an allocation from the General Fund – Fund Reserves in the amount of \$560,000 for costs associated with the Emerald Ash Borer Preparedness Plan and Action Strategy. The matter should then be forwarded to the full City Council for approval. If approved, a transfer from the General Fund – Fund Reserves will be initiated after January 1.

Please forward to PPW for review and recommendation to the full council. Recall that this allocation was anticipated and included in the analysis of the 2020 draft budget.

 2019-10-30