
**INFORMAL STAFF REPORT
TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

SUBJECT:

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) update

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On January 9, 2018, the Council received a recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) to update the IPM program and gave direction to proceed. Council received additional information on the process to review and update the program on February 13, 2018 that included the creation of a focus group comprised of a diverse representation of park users and community partners. The group was formed in April with representatives from the University of North Texas, Texas Women's University, Denton County Master Gardner's, Master Naturalist, the Denton County Beekeepers Association, the Denton Youth Sports Association, and community residents. The focus group has held six meetings over the last four months and has provided considerable feedback that will be incorporated into a draft IPM update. The draft will be reviewed during the next scheduled meeting on September 19, 2018. An updated IPM program is expected to go back to Council for consideration before the end of the year.

BACKGROUND:

The current IPM program was implemented in 2001. A community focus group analyzed concerns, practices, and expectations with the goal of developing community consensus for a maintenance standard. The result was a combination of cultural and organic measures such as mowing heights, natural nutrients, plus over-seeding and the use of pesticide products. The IPM program provided guidelines for the selection of products, identifies the products in use, and specifies a spraying schedule based on season and location classification. It defined requirements and procedures for spraying applications designed to minimize exposure to park visitors and provides for public notification. Design and maintenance standards are also included in support of the IPM objectives along with a detailed maintenance schedule for each classification type. Pilot sites at five park locations were established to evaluate different pest management methods and applications. The results were documented and considered in on-going maintenance practices.

Exponential growth, changes in property use, and developments in conservation since the 2001 implementation of the IPM program necessitate a review. On January 9, 2018, the Council received a recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) to update the IPM program and gave direction to proceed. Council received additional information on the process to review and update the program on February 13, 2018. The process included the formation of a focus group, analyzing the current IPM program, establishing pilot sites to test new cultural / organic methods, research and benchmarking, and returning to Council with a proposed update. The estimated timeline for the project was 12 – 18 months. The review and potential adoption of an updated program would be completed by the end of the year. Evaluation of the pilot sites would continue to capture all seasons before reporting any findings.

DISCUSSION:

In performing a comprehensive review of the program, PARD is using a similar process of forming a community focus group and exploring and testing new maintenance techniques. The group was formed in April with representatives from the University of North Texas, Texas Woman's University, Denton County Master Gardner's, Master Naturalist, the Denton County Beekeepers Association, the Denton Youth Sports Association, and community residents. Staff members from PARD and Environmental Services serve as facilitators. The

objective is to perform a comprehensive and balanced approach to the review with consideration to the following factors:

- Level of service
 - Classifications
 - Designated areas – natural preserves and community gardens
 - Concerns
 - Needs
 - Expectations
- New methods / technology
 - Best practices
 - Scientific based / peer reviewed information
 - Site tests
- Impact of change
 - Environmental
 - Park conditions
 - Experience
 - Staffing / Budget

The focus group has met six times over the last 4 months and has reviewed the current IPM program, the park maintenance classifications, and the park maintenance schedule. It has also received information on the acreage maintained by PARD, a list of products used by Park Maintenance, safety data sheets for all products, and the quantity and usage of each product. Several examples of other IPM programs were also provided. The group collectively agreed to use the City of Austin's IPM program as a template. A review of the program was completed on August 22, 2018. Components include actual strategies with outlined procedures for addressing pest control for the various park property types (playgrounds, athletic fields, preservation areas, community gardens), the approach and method for treatment, and the forms used for required documentation. This includes a list of approved products for use, a method for determining the use, documentation of use, and continued evaluation of each product. PARD is aware of the recent developments regarding products containing glyphosate, commonly known as Roundup. Staff is researching the legal implications and scientific data on its use as well as the operational impacts that could result from a change in our current practices. Staff will draft a preliminary document incorporating all feedback and discussions for the groups review at the next scheduled meeting on September 19, 2018.

During this process, the identification of pilot sites and new cultural / organic methods for testing were also evaluated. At the suggestion of a focus group member, Dr. Howard Garrett was contacted for information regarding organic property maintenance. Staff met with Dr. Garrett and his associate to discuss the current IPM review process. To appropriately administer, monitor, and evaluate cultural and organic methods, the recommendation was made to select an entire park rather than multiple small sites to introduce a new maintenance protocol. Denia Park has been chosen due to its diverse features that include an open park area, a playground, athletic courts / fields, a recreation center, and its proximity to an elementary school. Staff will continue to work with Dr. Garrett moving forward on implementing an organic plan for the location. The plan will be developed to capture all seasons. Findings and results will be documented, reported, and used to revise the IPM program as needed.

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