



## **Staff Report**

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### ANNUAL TREE REPORT

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

#### **Summary**

The City of Belmont's Municipal Code Chapter 25, outlines the parameters of the city's tree policy. Section 25-3 recognizes the Parks and Recreation Commission as the established "Tree Board" for the City of Belmont. The "Tree Board" has requested quarterly reports from city staff for review and discussion. Included in the report shall be any completed projects, future project opportunities, current fund balances, and any tree related issues. The "Tree Board" held their first meeting in that capacity on February 6, 2008.

The Parks and Recreation Department manages the Tree Fund (special revenue fund 208), which has a current fund balance of \$47,000. The City of Belmont's current Master Fee Schedule and supporting tree ordinance indicates that the fund balance will continue to grow. The revenue deposited into the fund is generated through development projects or general property maintenance. The purpose of the fund is to appropriate money to mitigate the aging tree population and target future tree planting opportunities on city owned property or public Right-of-Ways.

#### **Background**

In 2003, the City of Belmont received the prestigious recognition of being named to the "Tree City USA" list. There are four standards established by the National Arbor Day Foundation to qualify for Tree City USA.

- Tree Board or Department
- A Tree Care Ordinance
- Annual Budget of \$2 per Capita
- Arbor Day Observation and Proclamation

The City of Belmont has an established Tree Board, a tree care ordinance and a proclamation was made declaring March 8, 2008 as National Arbor Day in Belmont. Based on Belmont's population of 26,000 people, the city must budget \$52,000 annually for the care of trees to be recognized as a Tree City USA. During the budget reduction process the Parks Department's tree care budget was reduced to \$38,000.

On March 8, 2008, Arbor Day was celebrated with the planting of twenty trees at the Cipriani Dog Park by a group of volunteers from the Interact Club (Junior Rotary Club) which is compiled of Carlmont High School students sponsored by local businessmen Ralph Kirberg. Also participating in the event were “Tree Board” members Rich Bortoli, Margo Cheechov, Judy King and Planning Commissioner Rick Frautschi. The Salvation Army Service Extension provided lunch and refreshments for the volunteers.

The Parks and Recreation Department held its annual “tree giveaway” program in November of 2007. The event is listed in the department’s fall activity guide, which is mailed out to every household in Belmont. This year, 25 residents received a tree along with planting and care instructions. The trees are paid for through the department’s operations budget.

Sudden Oak Death is a disease that is of great concern to many of us and its potential devastating impact on our landscape is something to be taken very seriously. Currently, there are no laboratory confirmed cases of SOD in Belmont. There have been several oak trees that were suspected to have been infected by the disease but the County of San Mateo Agriculture Department has not documented any outbreaks in Belmont.

The authority in the research of the disease is the State of California working through the University of California Cooperative Extension. Laboratory culture is needed to confirm the diagnosis of Sudden Oak Death since many other agents can cause similar symptoms. There have been repeated reports of several methods to combat the disease but they have not been scientifically proven and therefore remain theory. Currently, there is only one proven method of control for SOD and it is the application of a fungicide with an efficacy rate of approximately 85% if treated before or at the outbreak of SOD.

Staff recently contacted the San Mateo County Agriculture Department and samples were taken from three oak trees on the south side of Water Dog Lake. Results from the laboratory are expected in about six weeks and staff will inform you of the results or action plan. As devastating as this disease can be, wild lands throughout the state have experienced the most number of cases and large outbreaks within urban environments has not occurred on a large scale.

Staff has made contact with the University of California Center of Forestry who provides education on the disease. Staff is pursuing an evening education course on the topic and is targeting scheduling for late spring or early summer. An event like this can be held in the Council Chambers and broadcast over the local cable channel for those unable to attend.

City staff is continuing to monitor any new developments or new management practices and will report any new developments to the respective authorities. The majority of resources for this disease remain at the county, state and federal level.

### **Discussion**

The “Tree Board” asked staff to compile a list of tree planting opportunities or projects that would be appropriate use of tree fund money. The established criteria for use of tree fund money are tree planting opportunities on city owned property or within the public Right-of-Way.

Future Tree Planting Opportunities:

#### **Project 1: Ralston Ave. Median Landscaping (Cipriani Blvd. to Lyall Way)**

The Department of Public Works is managing this capital improvement project. The street improvement project includes the installation of an irrigation system to the median. The adopted budget does not currently have funding for the installation of trees, shrubs and ground cover which would be part of the second phase. The opportunity to plant trees during the irrigation installation would accelerate their impact on the Ralston Avenue corridor. This project has the potential of including approximately 50 trees to the median landscaping project. Estimated cost and installation of trees is \$18,000.

#### **Project 2: Street Tree Planting Program**

Certain neighborhoods have the potential of planting trees in the public Right-of-Way. Sterling Downs neighborhood was part of a program several years ago. The program can be re-instituted and/or other neighborhoods may be targeted. A program and plan would need to be established to better assess its fiscal impact.

### **General Plan/Vision Statement**

We choose to make our home among these beautiful hills, trees, parks, views, and open spaces. Our wooded residential areas are diverse, peaceful and well maintained. Our actions today preserve and enhance Belmont’s beauty to make it even lovelier for our grandchildren.

### **Fiscal Impact**

Tree Fund 208 has a current fund balance of \$47,000. Revenues are collected through Master Fee Schedule during land development projects.

### **Public Contact**

Posting of City Council agenda

### **Recommendation**

The “Tree Board” unanimously supported the Ralston Avenue median project and the inclusion of trees to the project. City Council will review this option when the street improvement project is presented. The “Tree Board” has referred back to staff to come up with guidelines for a Tree

Planting Program in Belmont No action is necessary from City Council in this report.

**Alternatives**

1. Take No Action
2. Make other recommendations
3. Refer to staff for more information

Respectfully submitted,

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