



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: JULY 21, 2015

ITEM NUMBER: PH-1

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION'S ACTION ON MESA VERDE DRIVE AND CALIFORNIA STREET MEDIAN LANDSCAPE PLANT PALETTE

DATE: JULY 9, 2015

FROM: PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT / ENGINEERING DIVISION

PRESENTATION BY: ERNESTO MUNOZ, PUBLIC SERVICES DIRECTOR

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: FARIBA FAZELI, CITY ENGINEER - (714) 754-5335

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Provide direction to staff relative to the Parks and Recreation Commission action on Mesa Verde Drive and California Street Median Landscape Plant Palette.

Provide direction to staff relative to the noticing process for capital improvement projects.

BACKGROUND:

The existing medians on Mesa Verde Drive, a 1.4-mile half-circle north of Adams Avenue, and the median on California Street between Iowa Street and New Hampshire Drive over the Greenville-Banning Channel (Attachment 1) were originally planted with grass. Grass is a high water use/high maintenance ground cover, and, in response to water conservation measures, it is being replaced with various types of drought-tolerant and xeriscape landscape designs. In line with Governor Brown's Executive Order, water to these medians has been turned off.

At the June 25, 2015, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, staff presented three conceptual plant palettes for these medians (Attachment 1). After review, the Commission approved concept number 1, to replace grass with colorful drought-tolerant planting.

Council Member Genis has requested a review of the courtesy notices delivered to residents for the Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting held on June 25, 2015 as well as the Neighborhood Meeting held on May 6, 2015.

ANALYSIS:

A neighborhood meeting was held on Wednesday, May 6, 2015, in the Council Chambers, regarding the proposed landscape plant palette for the existing medians on Mesa Verde Drive and California Street. 2,569 letters, dated April 21, 2015 and postmarked on April 22, 2015 (Attachment 2) were mailed to the affected residents with a copy posted on the City's website, inviting the residents to attend the meeting and to provide input on the proposed landscape improvements. These letters were distributed to all residents north of Adams Avenue to Gisler Avenue, and west of Harbor Boulevard to the Santa Ana River (for the Mesa Verde Medians) and 500' north, south, east, and west of Iowa Street and California Street intersection (for the median on California Street). Approximately 20 residents attended the meeting and provided input. The City's consultant and staff presented the scope of the project and reviewed the alternate plant palettes appropriate for these medians. Based on the comments gathered, the

three primary concepts for the Medians that received the most comments were (listed in order of popularity):

1. Replace grass with colorful drought-tolerant plants
2. Replace grass with drought-tolerant, no-mow grass
3. Replace grass with synthetic turf

Other alternatives included a combination of 1 and 2 above, add more color and variety to concept 1, and others preferred a more simplistic plant palette with only a few plant species. Other comments received included a 50/50 split to add accent boulders in combination with drought tolerant planting, and one comment to provide walkable surfaces – It is not recommended to provide walkable surfaces along the medians as it will introduce the possibility of vehicle-pedestrian conflict in the mid-block areas while accessing the medians. Given that Mesa Verde Drive is a four-lane divided primary road, the uncontrolled mid-block pedestrian crossings between the sidewalks and the medians pose a significant safety concern for pedestrians.

All the proposed concepts will provide a significant reduction in water use and reduced maintenance once the plants are established.

All three concepts meet the requirements for the turf removal rebate program offered by the Water District and an application will be submitted once the new call for projects is open.

The Parks and Recreation Commission held a public meeting on June 25, 2015, to receive feedback from the May 6, 2015 neighborhood meeting and to approve a plant palette for the landscaped medians on Mesa Verde Drive and California Street. The agenda for this meeting was posted on June 19, 2015 (more than 72 hours prior to the meeting). The posting of the agenda meets the notification requirements for public meetings; however, in an effort to reach out to as many of the Mesa Verde residents as possible and alert them of the meeting, 2,569 courtesy notices were mailed and postmarked on June 19, 2015 (Attachment 3) to residents north of Adams Avenue to Gisler Avenue, and west of Harbor Boulevard to the Santa Ana River (for the Mesa Verde Medians) and 500' north, south, east, and west of Iowa Street and California Street intersection (for the median on California Street). The agenda for the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting was also posted on the bulletin boards and the City's website on June 19, 2015. Approximately 30 people attended the meeting and two residents spoke on the subject medians. The Parks and Recreation Commission voted to approve concept number 1 for implementation to meet the current water conservation measures along these medians.

A courtesy notification for this meeting was posted in the Daily Pilot on July 10, 2015.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No additional alternatives were considered for this item.

FISCAL REVIEW:

Funding for this project was allocated by City Council in the adopted FY 2014-2015 budget from Capital Improvement Funds.

LEGAL REVIEW:

There is no legal review required for this item.

CONCLUSION:

In Fiscal Year 2014-2015, the City Council allocated funding to replace the existing turf on the medians on the Mesa Verde Drive loop, north of Adams Avenue and the median on California Street, north of Iowa Street with drought tolerant landscaping.

2,569 notification letters for a neighborhood meeting held on May 6, 2015 were mailed to the affected neighborhoods on April 22, 2015 soliciting their input on the proposed landscape palette. Approximately 20 residents attended the meeting and voiced their opinions and comments regarding the proposed plant palette. Consequently, three alternatives were presented to the Parks and Recreation Commissions at their regular meeting of June 25, 2015. The same amount of courtesy notification cards were mailed on June 19, 2015, again to the same affected residents, advising them of the meeting.

Council Member Genis requested the item be placed on the agenda for review, indicating the notification process for both meetings was not conducted properly. Therefore, staff is seeking direction from the City Council as to how to proceed with the Parks and Recreation Commission action regarding the Mesa Verde Drive and California Street Median Landscape Plant Palette, and the noticing process for capital improvement projects.

ERNESTO MUNOZ
Public Services Director

FARIBA FAZELI
City Engineer

- Attachments:
- 1 - [Parks and Recreation Commission Agenda Report dated 6/25/15](#)
 - 2 - [Courtesy Notice to Residents – Neighborhood Meeting](#)
 - 3 - [Courtesy Notice to Residents – Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting](#)

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