

Minutes
Contra Costa County IPM Advisory Committee
Subcommittee on IPM Cost Accounting
April 15, 2014

Members present: Matt Slattengren, Michael Kent, Marj Leeds, Cece Sellgren, Joe Yee

Members absent: Susan Heckly

Staff present: [Tanya Drlik, IPM Coordinator](#); Kevin Lachapelle, Grounds Division; Gayle Israel, Supervisor Andersen's Office

Members of the public present: Shirley Shelangoski, Parents for a Safer Environment

1. Introductions

2. Public comment on items not on the agenda

There was none.

3. Approval of minutes from March 18

It was moved and seconded that the minutes be approved as written (MK/MS)

The motion passed unanimously

AYES: Kent, Leeds, Sellgren, Slattengren

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: Yee

4. Discuss site or sites to study with Grounds Division Manager

Points made during the discussion included the following:

- The Grounds Division has quite a varied portfolio of landscaping around buildings as well as other kinds of sites to maintain.
- A health clinic might be a good site to study—the Pittsburg Health Clinic has a lot of turf and large areas of ornamentals; there is a good possibility of taking out the turf
- When Kevin took the position as Grounds Manager, he decided they would not spray insecticides, miticides, or fungicides. They only use herbicides and not a large quantity of them. They are mainly doing spot spraying with Roundup (glyphosate) and SureGuard (flumioxizin). Roundup makes up the bulk of their pesticide use. Pre-emergents are not used around buildings anymore, so pre-emergents constitute a very small proportion of their pesticide use. The site that uses the most herbicide is the Marsh Creek Firing Range that must be kept as bare ground because of the fire danger.
- Grounds is a service provider to customers, so they must be cognizant of the expectations of their customers. The customers have defined budgets for landscape maintenance and those budgets cannot be exceeded.
- Grounds has been de-landscaping sites in the last few years because of the lack of money for maintenance.

Summit Center

- Summit Center at 2530 Arnold Drive in Martinez was very plushly landscaped, and the County took over the site when the building was full, meaning that all the offices were filled and there was enough revenue from the tenants to pay for maintenance. After the recession, it was too much for the County to handle, especially since many tenants moved out.
- As the number of building occupants decreased, the site deteriorated. Initially there was enough revenue for Grounds to have 20 hr/week at the site, but that diminished to 1 hr/week.
- There were large numbers of complaints from the tenants.
- Contra Costa Water was pushing to reduce landscaping at the site, so Grounds killed the grass and began maintaining those areas with a pre-emergent.
- This was a case of using pesticides for a short time to gain long term benefits.
- Sheet mulching was not used at Summit Center to kill the grass because most of the areas that were being de-landscaped were on medians planted with trees where the soil was mounded. Without digging out soil, wood chips or any other mulch would have slid right off of sheet-mulched medians into the parking lot. Digging would have been very difficult among the grass and tree roots, could have damaged the trees, and would have taken more manpower than was available.
- Grounds changed the irrigation and mulched appropriate areas as much as they had time for.
- They applied for a grant from PGE to re-landscape the site, but didn't get it.
- In the next budget cycle the Division got more money to manage the site. By this time the grass roots in the medians had decomposed and the soil level was lower. In the entryway medians, Grounds put in new irrigation, weed fabric, and mulch. The entryway was replanted, but very sparsely.
- Grounds asked Contra Costa Water for a rebate for reducing landscaping and water use, but were unable to get it because they had taken out too much landscaping.
- Grounds does much more hand pulling of weeds at Summit Center now. It's easy to pull weeds out of the areas with weed fabric and mulch, because the weed roots can't go down very far.
- The committee discussed the possibility of using artificial turf at a site like Summit Center.
 - This is an experiment that Grounds could do.
 - ~~The County's Head Start sites could be a good place to experiment with~~ are converting to artificial turf, but Community Services cannot do the conversion without grants or other extra funds, and the Head Starts are already interested in converting their lawn areas to artificial turf. Artificial turf shouldn't be used on play areas, though, because it radiates heat, and could make play areas too hot to play on.
 - ~~It costs from \$20 to \$30K to convert a small playground to artificial turf, and this would not be possible without grants or other extra funds.~~
 - The high cost is probably contractors charging what the market will bear. The Grounds crew could probably do it for much less, but Kevin would need more staff and would have to train them to do installation.
 - With good drainage, could artificial turf keep more water on site than real turf?
- It is hard to get meaningful data about the maintenance costs before and after a change in County landscaping because sites have only so much money to work with. All maintenance prior to the change had to be accomplished within that budget, and the same is true after the change. In addition, there is usually very limited funding to make changes.
- Perhaps the County could look at using County buildings to do storm water treatment to offset treatment that should be done at other sites but isn't feasible. The Grounds crew would need training in how to maintain bioswales, and they would need to get used to the mandated plant materials.

5. Develop a work plan and consider what information to collect

Ideas on where to focus first efforts:

- The original idea was to focus on areas where there was a lot of pesticide use, but Grounds doesn't use a lot of pesticide on County landscapes, except at the Marsh Creek Firing Range
- Health centers could be a good place to start.
- County parks such as Lefty Gomez? Lefty Gomez is not in a district that has enough money to make any changes. Better to look at Livorna Park or a health center.
- Look at a small site, which would be easier and less costly, or look at one that is in bad shape.
- 625 Court Street is a beautiful historic building in need of serious renovation. Kevin has the go-ahead to put in a new irrigation system. There is a small turf area, some shrubs, cypresses, and olives. Grounds has been thinking of putting in more drought-tolerant shrubs. Could look at putting in artificial turf. The olives are in the turf area now and are historic trees that cannot be cut down. They would need irrigation to keep them alive. The site gets a lot of traffic and could be a showcase for drought tolerant landscaping.

The committee chose the question "Would turf replacement save the most money and other resources?"

-The committee needs data on the cost of maintaining turf vs. ornamentals. Costs that would have to be considered include:

- Maintenance: water, aeration, dethatching, fertilizing, pruning, pest management
- Costs of gas-powered equipment: gas, pollution, health and safety effects on workers
- Worker injuries
- Data to be collected for the next meeting:
 - Amount/cost of herbicide used by site
 - Costs to maintain a similar area of turf vs. ornamentals
 - Cost for converting a small non-play area to artificial turf
 - Cost for converting turf to ornamentals

6. Consider other topics to work on

The committee did not specifically address this item.

7. Plan agenda for next meeting

- Reports on data to be collected
- Discussion of reports
- Next steps