

**Minutes**  
**Contra Costa County IPM Advisory Committee**  
**Subcommittee on Weeds**  
**March 10, 2015**

Members present: Doug Freier, Larry Yost for Chad Godoy, Michael Kent, Cheng Liao, Cece Sellgren

Members absent: Sonce Devries

Staff present: Jill Ray, Supervisor Andersen's Office; Tanya Drlik, IPM Coordinator

Members of the public present: Shirley Shelangoski, Michael Sullivan, and Susan JunFish, Parents for a Safer Environment.

**Note: Cece Sellgren, interim chair, was absent when the meeting began so Michael Kent chaired the meeting until the beginning of the Staff Report.**

**1. Introductions**

**2. Public comment on items not on the agenda**

Susan JunFish asked that the subcommittee minutes for 2/17/15 reflect how the committee chose to work on the Grounds Division rather than the Public Works Department. Susan JunFish gave a presentation on pesticides (see attached).

**3. Choose a committee chair**

This was postponed until the next meeting.

**4. Discuss staff report on Grounds Division and discuss Grounds landscaping program with Grounds Division Manager**

Some of the additional information provided to the committee by staff was as follows:

- Grounds is responsible for
  - all County buildings that house staff (not leased buildings) and
  - various zones for Special Districts (mostly from the sidewalk to the soundwall in developments).
- Funding
  - A number of County buildings are "General Fund buildings" and receive a certain amount of money per building.
  - Other buildings are "assessed" money for grounds maintenance; the assessment is tied to the department or division housed in the building and not the grounds of the building itself so that some buildings where not all office space is occupied do not contribute enough money to maintain the landscaping. Even buildings that are fully occupied may not contribute enough to maintain their landscape.
  - Some buildings/departments have requirements for different levels of service and have a maintenance "contract" with the Grounds Division.
  - County departments are pretty much dictating how much is being spent to maintain landscaping in non-General Fund buildings.
  - Libraries are well used and their landscape maintenance budgets are not sufficient to take care of their grounds, but they do have a number of volunteers who help a great deal.
  - It is not possible to move line items around in a department's budget. For example, it would not be possible to trade a position for landscaping maintenance time. Money in the General Fund can be moved around a bit.
  - With solid figures on cost savings for landscape changes over the life of the landscape, the Grounds Manager could make a case for the Departments to invest in renovation. He does not have the time to

do the calculations. Using the Resource Conserving Landscape Cost Calculator from Texas A&M University is an option. The Grounds Manager and the IPM Coordinator will look carefully at the Cost Calculator. The easiest solution may be to have a landscape contractor do the calculations for the costs to install a water-efficient, low maintenance landscape and determine the number of years it would take to pay back that investment.

- Turf at County buildings (this refers to living turf and not artificial turf)
  - Head Starts must have a playing surface. Some have living turf and others have artificial turf.
  - New buildings need a certain amount of landscaping and turf has been part of that.
  - There are many sites in the County that have turf that is extremely difficult to maintain. The Grounds Division would like to change that, but it must convince the Departments with these turf areas to change. This would entail determining a cost figure for the change.
  - With the current drought, this is an ideal time to convince people to remove turf.
  - The current mechanisms for funding landscape maintenance make it very difficult to fund renovations because no money can be banked to pay for them. The County is working on an internal service fund that could pay for renovating landscapes.
  - Grounds can have input into landscaping for new buildings and landscaping repairs and renovations. The Grounds Manager reviews landscape architect submittals, and has redlined items, but the architect may still leave them in.
  - Grounds would like to remove the turf at 597 Center that is so hard to maintain and replace it with ivy. The Health Services Department must be convinced to spend the money.
  - The County has a lot of older buildings whose landscaping (and structures) need care. One idea is to remove the turf at these older sites and create a more drought-tolerant and low maintenance landscape standard for older buildings.
  - Summit Center on Arnold Drive has been very difficult for the County to maintain over the last 5-6 years because of lack of funding, an overabundance of landscaping, and poor plant choices that were there before the County bought the building. Currently a contractor is physically removing all the brush around the building because of fire danger. One of the Acacia species planted at the site is a prolific seeder and is very invasive. The Grounds crew has been cutting off sprouts and painting the stumps with Roundup (glyphosate) to kill them.

Some of the comments from the committee discussion were as follows:

- There may be grants that could assist with landscape conversions. Cece Sellgren will have one of her staff look at Proposition 84 water bond funds. (CS)
- A Decision Document could be a concise way to help with the pitch to Departments for conversion.
- If the landscaping around one building could be changed, the committee might be able to interest the Board of Supervisors and County Departments. (MK)
- The decision to work on County landscapes rather than roadside vegetation management was made because there is more risk of exposure to pesticides used on landscapes than on roadsides. Another factor in the decision was the current drought and the water savings that could be realized. (MK)

Some of the comments from the public were as follows:

- Just under 1000 lbs. of Roundup is used by the Grounds Division and 90% is used on hardscapes. PfSE did a training on using flaming for weeds. The Grounds Division should consider using this technique. (SJ)
- The Division should look for IPM training in their new hires. (SJ)

**5. Discuss committee work plan**—this was postponed until the next meeting

**6. Plan next meeting agenda**

April 14, 2015, 1:30 PM

- Discuss the committee work plan.
- The IPM Coordinator and the Grounds Manager will review the Texas A&M Cost Calculator and report to the committee.