

Minutes
Contra Costa County IPM Advisory Committee
Subcommittee on Weeds
April 21, 2015

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

Members absent: Sonce Devries

Staff present: Tanya Drlik, IPM Coordinator

Members of the public present: None

1. Introductions

2. Public comment on items not on the agenda

There was none

3. Choose a committee chair

Michael Kent nominated Cece Sellgren, who was elected unanimously.

4. Approve minutes from 2/17/15 and 3/10/15

A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2/17/15 minutes as written (CL/MK). The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the 3/10/15 minutes as written (MK/DF). The motion carried unanimously.

5. Hear and discuss staff report regarding Grounds Division and turf removal and the Texas A&M Landscape Conversion Cost Calculator

The Landscape Conversion Cost Calculator was not discussed.

Staff reported on the following points:

- The Grounds Manager has invited landscaping companies to submit proposals for turf removal and installation of drought tolerant landscaping at the Pittsburg Health Clinic.
 - This will serve as a pilot for turf removal at other County buildings. Signage alerting the public to the purpose of the turf removal will be installed at the Clinic.
 - The proposals must include water cost savings figures to help the Grounds Manager make the argument to the Departments and the Board of Supervisors.
 - The Grounds Manager wants to secure at least one and perhaps two companies under contract to the County to do turf removal before other counties and cities begin asking for similar services. If the County were to wait much longer, all the landscaping companies may be booked up for work many months in advance. It does not appear that other counties have requested similar proposals yet.
 - The County can take advantage of the drought crisis to improve County landscaping for the future and reduce both maintenance and water use.
 - Since County Departments make the decisions about landscaping at non-General Fund buildings, it may be easier to persuade them to make turf conversions around their buildings than it will be to persuade the County to make the conversions at the General Fund Buildings.
Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors can help remedy this.

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

- Turf basically has two purposes: aesthetic enhancement and providing a space for recreation. Turf that exists just for looks should be ~~removed~~considered for removal. (DF)

- Hardscape should be considered as another alternative to lawns. (DF)
- Landscapes take more attention and focus than the rough areas along the side of a road. (DF)
- The County Administrator's report on the Triennial Review of the IPM Advisory Committee requested more concrete recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding IPM issues. This subcommittee should be sure to formulate recommendations to the Board. (MK)
- Public Works still has the infrastructure to grow native plants. This is left over from the project they did for the restoration of a segment of Clayton Valley Drain. Perhaps more native plants could be grown for use in drought tolerant landscapes around the County. (CS)
- There is more latitude for a range in the quality of plants used along a flood control channel than there would be in County landscapes. It is probably not possible for Public Works volunteers to grow enough high quality plants to supply the Grounds Division. (LY)
- The County is creating a position for a Sustainability Coordinator. The IPM Committee could recommend that part of that person's job be to find outside funding for turf conversions. (MK)
- Kevin Lachapelle has said that many of the irrigation systems are aging in the County. The Grounds Division can use lifecycle costing to make a case for putting in new irrigation systems. (DF)

A motion was made and seconded (MK/CS) to take the following recommendations to the full IPM Committee:

Work with Susan Cohen (Special Districts), Kevin Lachapelle (Grounds) and other relevant County staff on the recommendations below:

1. Develop a Countywide policy to convert turf to drought tolerant landscaping.
 - a. Develop ideas for a funding structure that is not dependent on the particular building or the departments in the building.
 - b. There is a need to aggressively pursue outside funding for turf conversion. Direct the appropriate, knowledgeable Public Works staff to look for outside funding. Perhaps the position of Sustainability Coordinator, when it is filled, could pursue grant funding for sustainable landscaping projects.
 - c. Employ a design for the turf conversion that uses the least amount of pesticide in the preparation of the site.
2. Develop a County policy that would ensure that lifecycle costing is used when landscapes are renovated or created and that the renovated landscapes reduce maintenance and water and pesticide use.
3. Develop a County policy to take decisions on the type of landscaping around buildings out of the hands of the tenants of that building in order that long range plans and long term investments can be made.

The motion passed unanimously.

6. Hear and discuss report from Cece Sellgren on grant funding for turf removal

Cece will ask Dan Jordan to look into this.

7. Discuss committee work plan

The committee agreed to focus on

- navigating the drought in County landscapes,
- creating more decision-making documents for Grounds and Public Works Vegetation Management, and
- integrating the grazing study results into vegetation management at Public Works.

For the next meeting, the IPM Coordinator will work with the Public Works Vegetation Manager on a decision document about when to use grazing on flood control channels.

6. Plan next meeting agenda

June 9, 2015, 1:30 PM

- Report on any news on turf conversions
- Review goat grazing decision document