
2006 BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE – No. 2

Pilot Program to Cost-Share Tree Watering with BIAs

Issue / Background:

The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation and the Acting Executive Director of Economic Development were requested to report to the Budget Advisory Committee, during the 2006 Operating Budget process, on offering to BIAs a cost-shared Pilot Program in 2006 for tree watering, in the amount of \$200,000 gross, \$100,000 net. The matter was discussed at the January 31, 2006, TABIA Interdepartmental Committee meeting, attended by 20 BIA representatives and City staff.

Although 2006 budgets for BIAs have been established, the BIA representatives supported the initiative and felt confident that BIAs would participate by matching funds should the program be made available.

Key Points:

- All BIAs have street trees in their boundaries. This cost-share program would be made available to all 54 BIAs to either enhance existing tree-watering programs or institute new programs in those BIAs that do not currently have a tree watering program.
- It is also envisioned that by offering a cost-sharing program, the level of tree care would also be improved by providing deep-root watering, mulching, and pruning, resulting in a substantial improvement in the urban tree canopy.
- Three delivery options for a pilot program were presented at the meeting:
 - Reimbursing BIAs half the cost for tree watering contracts initiated and managed by individual BIAs;
 - Economic Development contracting a company to deliver the program to interested BIAs and billing those BIAs for 50% of the costs; and
 - Implementing a new BIA specific tree watering program operated by Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and billing participating BIAs for 50% of the costs.
- The BIAs endorsed the first option noted above, whereby the City would reimburse BIAs half the cost for BIA-initiated tree watering contracts. Currently, many BIAs already have plant-watering/maintenance contracts in place, and believe such contracts can be extended in a cost-efficient manner to include deep root tree watering and ancillary services such as mulching/minor pruning. In BIAs where plant watering/maintenance contracts do not exist, the BIA would have the option of retaining their own contractors, or pursuing economies of scale by utilizing contractors currently retained by nearby or adjacent BIAs.

- If approved by Council, staff will prepare program guidelines, standards and controls that will ensure all BIAs are eligible to participate, while not exceeding the funding allocation, and maximizing the benefit to street trees.
- It is estimated that \$200,000 would pay for 16,000 to 18,000 deep root tree waterings. Assuming that a tree would be watered once a week for 8 weeks over the period from June to August (depending on weather), between 2,000 and 2,250 trees could be watered at a cost of approximately \$100/tree per season. If weather dictated fewer occasions per tree, more trees would be watered and the cost per tree would be less.

Prepared by:

Henry Byres (416) 392-1134 (EDCT)

Richard Ubbens (416) 392-1894 (PFR)

Contact for further information:

Karen Thorne-Stone – Acting Executive Director of Economic Development (416) 395-6152

Date: February 6, 2006