



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:16-3696

Agenda Item Number: 6.

Agenda Date: 6/15/2016

In Control: Governance Committee

Department(s): Parks and Recreation, Development Services, and Solid Waste Management

Department Head(s): Janet Martin, Roderick J. Sanchez, and David W. McCary

Council Districts Impacted: City-Wide

Subject:

Stronger Oak Wilt Suppression Program

Summary:

On March 31, 2016, Councilman Joe Krier, Council District 9, requested a plan to address a stronger oak-wilt suppression program to be considered at a future Governance Committee session.

Background:

In 2003, City Council approved an ordinance creating general requirements to help prevent and control the spread of oak wilt. Per the ordinance all cuts or wounds on oak trees shall be painted within 30 minutes. Furthermore, the ordinance prohibits infected firewood from being brought into the city. Development Services tree inspectors inspect construction sites for compliance and areas scheduled for brush collections. In addition, the ordinance also implemented a requirement that a tree maintenance license be obtained by any person/company in the business or occupation of tree work that prunes trees.

Since the March 2, 2016 City Council B Session on oak wilt, city staff representing Development Services, Parks and Recreation, and Solid Waste have collaborated on the development and implementation of an enhanced oak wilt communications plan and have met to discuss a potential schedule change to the city's brush and bulky collection program.

Regulatory efforts inclusive of the city's oak wilt ordinance are currently in place. One of the primary objectives of this ordinance is to prevent and control the spread of oak wilt by targeting specific best practices associated with oak wilt management.

Development Services tree inspectors inspect construction sites for compliance and areas scheduled for brush collections

Issue:

The CCR submitted on March 31, 2016 directed City staff to take the following steps to combat oak wilt, a

fungal infection that destroys oak trees, threatening the City's tree canopy and the property values of affected home and business owners for a stronger oak wilt suppression program: 1) change the city's brush collection schedule to avoid pickups between February 1 - July 1; 2) study other cities' responses to oak-wilt infestation in Texas, 3) initiate a much stronger public awareness campaign on oak wilt, and 4) work closely with the Texas A&M Forest Service and partner with Bexar County to fund an additional arborist to focus on this problem. The arborist's tasks should include mapping oak wilt "hot spots" in the area and post information on the city's web site.

Brush Collection Schedule:

The Solid Waste Management Department (SWMD) operates the city's brush and bulky item collection service which includes collection of brush twice per year and bulky items twice per year, alternating these collections.

After discussions with Mark Duff, Texas A&M Forest Service, Mark Bird, City Arborist and Ross Hosea, City Forester; the SWMD is recommending a schedule change for its brush and bulky collection program to avoid brush collection in the northwest quadrant of the city during the oak wilt season. The oak wilt season in San Antonio, when oak trees are most susceptible to the oak wilt disease, is February through June. New data provided by the Texas A&M Forest Service illustrates that all of the active oak wilt centers in San Antonio are located in the northwestern quadrant of San Antonio. There is one small oak wilt center located in Alamo Heights. With this new information, the department recommends that the twice per year brush collection schedule for the northwest quadrant be July and December/January. The general schedule for brush and bulky collection is as follows:

Location	Brush Collection	Bulky Collection	Brush Collection	Bulky Collection
West & SW	October	February	May	August
East & SE	November	March	June	September
North & NW	Dec/January	April	July	October

This proposed schedule may be adjusted periodically to ensure that the north and northwest side brush collections are outside the oak wilt season, is a minor shift that will continue to provide alternating and evenly spaced two brush and two bulky collections annually for the entire city. Additionally, this schedule provides a late spring/early summer brush collection and avoids bulky collection during the winter holidays.

Other Cities' efforts relate to Oak Wilt:

The City of San Antonio's regulatory provisions to prevent and control the spread of oak wilt are consistent with best practices by the Texas Forest Service and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Development Services Department staff has contacted several large Texas cities and other municipalities and has identified that most other major Texas cities have yet to adopt specific practices regulating tree care professionals or establishing oak specific pruning practices.

Education and Outreach Campaign:

City staff has implemented several education based strategies in support of an Oak Preservation campaign that increases awareness around important oak wilt prevention strategies which are pivotal in managing the disease.

- Completed development of Oak Preservation project logo and oak wilt collateral materials. A door hanger notice on oak wilt prevention practices was delivered in conjunction with the SWMD's brush collection notices, approximately 350,000 oak wilt informational pieces have been delivered during this brush collection cycle.
- Information on oak wilt management was placed on the social networking service, Nextdoor, which targets approximately 80,000 residents and information was posted on the Development Services social media page as

well as the Parks Department and Solid Waste Management web sites.

- The Parks Department has coordinated with Texas Public Radio to extend a public service announcement introducing the Oak Preservation Project. These radio spots initially began the week of March 14, 2016 and aired three times each week through May 22, 2016. The department has re-engaged Texas Public Radio to support increasing the radio spots to air 4-5x per week for an additional four months (through September 30, 2016).
- The Parks Department has completed production of a public service announcement video targeting oak wilt prevention strategies that will air on public access television and be placed on social media to include Facebook, YouTube, and the department's constant contacts distribution list which targets over 10,000 individuals. A request will also be coordinated with local media outlets to air the PSA on news channels as part of their community outreach efforts.
- In support of a bilingual marketing strategy, coordination will also occur with local Spanish television news outlets to air the oak wilt informational piece.
- The Development Services Department has published an Oak Wilt information brochure which is provided to customers and contractors who are developing within the city and the ETJ. DSD continues to host and participate in neighborhood association meetings and training sessions on the prevention and control of Oak Wilt.
- Coordination with CPS Energy and SAWS to include oak wilt information in their monthly residential newsletters has occurred. CPS Energy has included information on the oak preservation project and oak wilt in their residential newsletter, Energy Connection, and SAWS has also made information available on oak wilt.

Partnership with Bexar County and State Forester:

City staff has been in discussions about oak wilt with Bexar County representatives. During the most recent meeting between COSA/County, it was conveyed that they have received a commitment from a consortium of Mayors representing bedroom communities in Bexar County to support funding of a new forester position to assist with oak wilt in Bexar County.

The Texas A&M Forest Service has recently completed their field work and data collection of oak wilt activity in Bexar County. New data that identifies active oak wilt centers are mapped and will be presented. Mark Duff, Forester, Texas A&M Forest Service and regional oak wilt expert has confirmed his availability to provide this summary. The availability of this information can serve as a guide in the future development of oak wilt management practices.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends forwarding this issue to the Neighborhoods and Livability Committee for further discussions and to determine the appropriate policy action if necessary.