

TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT

Joint Windsor Town Council, Windsor Redevelopment Successor Agency and Windsor Water District Meeting Date: September 17, 2025

To: Mayor and Town Council
From: Charlie Johnson, Parks and Facilities Superintendent
Subject: Landscape and Vegetation Maintenance Update

Recommendation to Council:

1. Receive an update on the landscape and vegetation management practices and the pre-emergent pilot program.
2. Adopt a resolution approving the extension to the exemption to the Integrated Pest Management Policy for pesticide application for town-owned streetscape landscaping areas.

Strategic Plan Element:

The recommended action supports the goal of Organizational Effectiveness. Goal Statement: Achieve a high performing organization by nurturing an engaged workforce committed to a shared vision of public service.

Background:

The Town maintains more than 110 acres of parkland and 26 miles of streetscapes (Attachment 2). This includes 61 acres of manicured turf which is mowed and edged by an outside contractor. The Parks Maintenance Division (Parks) of the Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the remaining landscaping areas. This is completed by a crew of 10 Town-employed maintenance workers and six part-time, seasonal (PTS) employees.

Since 2013, Parks has utilized a Total Efficient Area Maintenance (TEAM) approach to managing the maintenance of these landscape areas. The Town is divided into four main quadrants as reflected in Attachment 3. Each quadrant (or zone) includes a large community park, a number of smaller neighborhood parks, and streetscape landscaping. The quadrants have been divided in such a way as to create equity in workload for each team. The fifth team handles the Town Green, tree maintenance, special maintenance projects, and provides back-up support to the other four teams. The two-person team assigned to each quadrant is responsible for all maintenance work in their respective zone, including irrigation programming and repairs, pruning, and vegetation management. The TEAM approach has worked well, reduced workplace injury claims, improved employee attendance, and created a sense of ownership within the division.

A daily routine includes opening and servicing each park restroom and garbage cans, ball field maintenance, addressing vandalism and graffiti removal, irrigation maintenance and preparing for various special events. The Town special events and various sports seasons coincide with the spring growing season, making March - June an incredibly busy time of year.

In December 2018, Council approved an Integrated Pest Management Policy (Policy) developed in compliance with the provisions of the Phase I Municipal Storm Water permit. This Policy (Attachment 4) bans the use of glyphosate (Round-Up) and all synthetic pesticides on landscapes, parks, and recreational facilities on town-owned and/or managed properties. This includes herbicides, fungicides,

and insecticides in all synthetic forms, including bait, pre-emergent, and fertilizers.

The Policy applies to all Town of Windsor and Windsor Water District-owned and operated properties and follows widely accepted Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles, which include using the least-toxic methods of pest control to minimize the risks to human health, non-target organisms, and the environment. The full ban on all synthetic products had a greater impact than just eliminating glyphosate herbicides. It eliminated many other useful tools that were used to manage the public spaces and landscaping effectively. There have also been negative impacts to this implementation process, which the Town has attempted to navigate:

- Significant increase in maintenance costs
- Regular resident complaints regarding landscaping aesthetics
- Increased concern about fire hazards and danger
- Increase in workplace injury claims
- Late-season rains and drought conditions
- Resident complaints of organic product odors

Staff have been given the ability to obtain Policy exemptions. These exemptions include the use of glyphosate in the street median islands and roundabouts to minimize staff exposure to traffic hazards. Another exemption acquired was for treatments for the heritage oak trees to combat the Mediterranean Oak Borer (MOB) beetle infestation and Sudden Oak Death (SOD) fungus. These products are synthetic; however, the risk to the public is low due to the application process.

On November 16, 2022, the Town Council approved a pilot program to apply a synthetic pre-emergent herbicide during the winter months to prevent weed seed germination. These products are best applied between November and March each year and just prior to a forecasted rain event of approximately 0.5 inches. This pilot program period saw very little opportunity for application because of weather conditions. On July 19, 2023, the Town Council extended the pilot program for the use of a synthetic pre-emergent herbicide through July of 2025. This product is applied in proper winter weather conditions, so applications have been continued to be limited during the pilot program. However in the areas where it has been applied, it has shown promising signs of success.

Discussion:

On July 17, 2024, the Town Council approved a budget amendment to increase the weed abatement services during the 2025 spring growing season. This direct targeted approach combined with the pre-emergent usage during the 24-25 winter months, had a positive impact on many challenges from previous years. There were zero workers compensation claims as a result of repetitive, mechanical vegetation management. Also, the Town saw a dramatic reduction in resident complaints and concerns over fire hazards and weed growth.

Parks Staff worked with the water conservation team in Public Works to develop best practices in application to minimize run off of the pre-emergent product. Given the difficult in obtaining the ideal application conditions – it has been applied a handful of times each winter season. Given the successes with this product, Staff are requesting a five-year extension of this exemption, allowing the use of the product through July of 2030.

This spring, the Conservation Corps crew was strategically scheduled to worked with the Town staff to manage the immense weed pressure town wide. In 2024, staff received 24 complaints involving weeds. In 2025, staff received only 10. Staff also checked in with the Fire Marshall at Sonoma County Fire District to confirmed that they had not received any resident complaints of fire danger concerning

Town-owned properties, as they had in previous years.

As part of the budget reduction process. Staff has placed the use of the Conservation Corps on the discretionary list to discuss in October. Alternatively, should Council not be able to allocate these financial resources this year, Council could direct staff to revisit the IPM Policy to identify more substantial ways to address weed abatement through herbicide treatment which could bring reduce the financial need for additional resources during the spring growing season.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommended action.

Environmental Review:

The recommended action is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Attachment(s):

1. Resolution IPM Exemption Extension
2. Landscape and Lighting District Maps
3. TEAM Site Map
4. IPM Policy
- 14.1 PowerPoint - Landscape and Vegetation Maintenance (Distributed 2025-09-17)

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