

## **TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT**

**Joint Windsor Town Council, Windsor Redevelopment Successor Agency and Windsor Water District Meeting Date:** January 17, 2024

**To:** Mayor and Town Council  
**From:** Charlie Johnson, Parks and Facilities Superintendent  
**Subject:** Mediterranean Oak Borer Beetle Infestation Tree Maintenance Program

**Recommendation to Council:**

1. Receive status of Mediterranean Oak Borer beetle infestation in the Town of Windsor.
2. Adopt an urgency ordinance amending the Town of Windsor Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 27.36-Tree Preservation and Protection, to remove the percentage cap on allowed mitigation fees and forfeited security deposits collected that can be used for maintenance of protected trees to assist in emergency Mediterranean Oak Borer Treatment of heritage oak trees on public property within town limits.
3. Adopt a resolution amending the Tree Removal Mitigation Fund Fiscal Year 2023-25 Budget in the not-to-exceed amount of \$200,000.
4. Approve Amendment No. 1 to the Master General Service Agreement and Task Order No. 2 with Hagstrom and Sons Professional Tree Service for a not to exceed amount of \$300,000.

**Strategic Plan Element:**

The recommended action supports the goals of Infrastructure and Livability. Goal Statement: Through a lens of sustainability and innovation, invest in the Town's infrastructure and public facilities to meet the needs of future generations. Goal Statement: Preserve community character by maximizing the use of existing amenities and creating future opportunities that enhance quality of life for all.

**Background:**

The Mediterranean Oak Borer (MOB) beetle is an ambrosia beetle that attacks valley oaks, blue oaks, and Oregon white oaks and introduces deadly fungi into the tree. Town Staff learned of a possible infestation in July 2023 and contacted Certified Arborist John Meserve (Arborist). The Arborist took samples from Town trees and sent them to the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE), the leading researchers of this pest, and organized a field meeting with Dr. Michael Jones, Forest Advisor at the UCCE.

During his visit on August 23, Dr. Jones verified that MOB was in the Town trees in the center median along Conde Lane as well as neighboring private property trees within the same location. Several trees were identified with various stages of infestation, ultimately resulting in five (5) Town trees removed from that area. Dr. Jones delivered an informational presentation that same day to Town staff from Planning, Public Works, Risk Management, and Parks departments, as well as to staff from neighboring municipalities, including Healdsburg, Santa Rosa, Petaluma, and the County of Sonoma. A town-contracted tree service removed the Conde Lane trees the week of September 11, 2023.

On October 4, Dr. Jones presented to the Town Council with information about MOB and practices the Town could consider to slow the spread of the infestations, including reasonable standard operating procedures when removing affected trees. These procedures included proper disposal of affected wood

and chips. He also spoke about various treatment options for trees neighboring infestations. Since that presentation, several other trees within Windsor’s parks and public spaces have been confirmed to have MOB:

<b>Infestation Location</b>	<b># of Trees</b>	<b>Treatment</b>	<b>Treatment Date</b>
Conde Lane	5	Removal	September 11
Windsor Rd. west of Richardson St.	1	Removal	November 14
Portello Subdivision	1	Removal	December 5
Town Hall Oak Grove	2	Prune	December 20
Keiser Park by ballfields B & C	1	Prune/Removal	TBD
Pleasant Oak Park	2	Prune/Removal	TBD

The Arborist provided a comprehensive report (Attachment 3) outlining the infestation, the challenges with developing a treatment plan, the various treatment options on the market today and the serious risk of taking no action at all. Seeing the potential catastrophic risks of doing nothing, staff are preparing to aggressively treat high-profile areas in Town this spring.

**Discussion:**

The MOB beetle enters the tree in the canopy, making infestations difficult to detect early. There is not a lot of data available to develop a treatment regimen for MOB. Proposed treatments are experimental and are based on the success of treating similar pests. There are some cases in Napa County where the use of an insecticide has helped control the active infestation in a tree. The Town Arborist recommends a preventative treatment which includes an insecticide to treat the beetle and larva applied to trees both with confirmed infestations as well as trees in proximity to confirmed infestations. This product is injected every 6-8 inches around the circumference of the tree, into the vascular system where it is translocated to parts of the tree where borers are feeding. Successful application requires injections to occur during times when the vascular system is actively translocating, meaning during the spring and early summer. The insecticide could remain effective in the tree for up to two (2) years.

To ensure the Town was looking at this issue from a wholistic view, staff conducted site assessments of all public spaces with heritage oak trees. This included thorough field inspections of 23 key locations within Town limits. During these inspections, staff collected the following data from 920 trees:

- Tree and site location
- Site significance and visibility
- Distance to a known infestation
- Tree number (with a numbered tag for identification)
- Tree circumference in inches
- Overall tree health
- Signs of MOB
- Public safety risk
- Additional tree notes

In areas where the trees were not easily accessible, such as creeks and waterways, field staff provided a tree count with circumference approximations.

Using the raw data from the field inspections, each tree was given a score to quantify its overall

vulnerability and public safety risk. Scores were tallied using a point system based on the responses generated from the field inspections. The points were assigned as follows:

Form Field	Response	Point(s)
Distance to Known Infestation		
	Less than 1 Mile	1
	1-2 Miles	2
	2+ Miles	3
Overall Tree Health		
	Poor	1
	Fair	2
	Good	3
	Excellent	4
Public Safety Risk		
	High	1
	Moderate	2
	Low	3

Based on the comprehensive scoring, each tree was then categorized in one of four risk categories based on its score (Attachment 2):

- **Critical:** Includes trees with signs of **MOB** and trees with a score of **3 points**
- **High:** Trees with a score of **4-5 points**
- **Moderate:** Trees with a score of **6-7 points**
- **Low:** Trees with a score of **8-10 points**

The number of trees classified to each category is as follows:

Risk Category	Number of Trees
Critical	9
High	478
Moderate	427
Low	6
<b>Total Trees</b>	<b>920</b>

Staff analyzed the data collected and have generated a ranked list of priority sites (Attachment 4). Due to the cost of treatment, this list proposes a phased treatment approach. This list, along with the Arborist’s report is the basis for the treatment plan that staff is proposing. In Phase I, trees listed in the Critical and High category will be injected with an insecticide by certified arborist and Qualified Applicator Licensee (QAL) Ryan Hagstrom of Hagstrom and Sons Tree Services between the months of March and May 2024. The selected insecticide has a two-year efficacy. These areas will be closely monitored by the Arborist, the QAL and Town staff as the treatment is still considered experimental and more information is needed to determine the long-range and sustainable plan for future phasing.

Currently Chapter 27.36 – Tree Preservation and Protection of the zoning code allocates up to 30% of the fund to be used for maintenance and preservation of protected trees on publicly owned land within the Town of Windsor. The unappropriated fund balance is approximately \$580,000 after the budgeted

project included in the FY2023-35 budget. Staff are recommending adopting an Urgency Ordinance (Attachment 1) to access the unappropriated funds to implement Phase I of the MOB Treatment Plan.

The estimated cost of the Phase I treatment is \$182,723 and will treat 545 trees. Staff is requesting \$200,000 be appropriated from the Tree Removal Mitigation fund (Attachment 2) to complete the treatment plan. The proposed Amendment No. 1 (Attachment 5) to the Master General Services Agreement (MGSA) with Hagstrom and Sons will increase the agreement by \$200,000 and will include all Phase I work. The amended Hagstrom and Sons Agreement for professional tree services will be a not-to-exceed total of \$300,000.

**Fiscal Impact:**

The Tree Removal Mitigation Fund has an unappropriated fund balance of approximately \$580,000. Staff is requesting \$200,000 be appropriated from the Tree Removal Mitigation fund to complete Phase I of the treatment plan. There will be no impact to the General Fund as a result of this request.

**Environmental Review:**

The Town Council hereby finds the approval of this Ordinance is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §§ 21000 et seq., “CEQA,” and 14 Cal. Code Reg. §§ 15000 et seq., “CEQA Guidelines”) under Section 15307 – Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources and Section 15308 – Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment, of the CEQA Guidelines. The actions that would be accommodated by the proposed zoning text amendment are in direct response to a threat to natural resources and the natural environment within the Town of Windsor

**Attachment(s):**

1. [Urgency Ordinance Amending the Town of Windsor Zoning Ordinance Chapter 27.36 Tree Preservation and Protection](#)
  2. [Resolution for Budget Amendment](#)
  3. [Certified Arborist Report](#)
  4. [Site Assessment](#)
  5. [Amend No. 1 and Task Order No. 2 Hagstrom and Sons](#)
- 12.3 PowerPoint (Distributed 2024-01-16)

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**Reviewed by:**

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**Reviewed by:**

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**Recommended by:**

Jon Davis  
Town Manager