



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Laurel Lunt Prussing and Members of the City Council
FROM: William R. Gray, Public Works Director
Michael J. Brunk, City Arborist
DATE: April 14, 2014
RE: Request to Utilize City Funds for Sim Hackberry
(Update) Recuperate Costs

Introduction

The initial March 24th request for Sim Hackberry memorial funding sought use of left over tree inventory funds for completing one or several recognition projects for the City's largest and oldest hackberry tree.

- At the March 24th Committee of the Whole meeting members suggested staff further study funding options for this request including potential use of the Public Arts Program funds.

Staff has concluded that the use of the Public Arts Program funds is not a viable option as all available funds in the current fiscal year have been allocated, leaving no available funds for new projects. There may be unspent funds encumbered into FY 14-15, but the amount of unspent funds will not be determined until closer to the end of the current fiscal year. The Public Arts Commission is currently engaged in planning for the FY 14-15 program. If the Commission were to add the Sim Hackberry Memorial to their annual program plan, the project would likely come at the expense of other arts programming. Also, a question arose about salary savings from the vacancy in the Public Arts Coordinator position. While the City did experience salary savings, salary savings are generally not encumbered or used for projects/programs.

- Members of the Committee of the Whole were disappointed in the lack of community participation in funding the project and were cautious of funding the memorial with tax dollars only.

There has been little effort to date to initiate a community fund raising campaign for this tree project. Staff believes that a finite amount of funds could be raised with motivated people soliciting for the project. Whether or not a sufficient donation drive for a hackberry memorial takes place remains in question. Therefore, staff has provided some options to address the concerns of using tax dollars for this project. Staff believes the Legacy Tree Program can provide an avenue to replenish funds used for the Sim Hackberry memorial.

The Legacy Tree Program was crafted to enhance recognition of the community's significant trees and increase community sensitivity towards trees. This program is planned to be a self-sustaining program that relies on community support for its funding. Like many self-sustaining programs, Legacy Tree needs seed money before it can grow on its own. Staff recommends the surplus tree inventory funds be utilized for this purpose. These funds will be expended to initiate the program and eventually be replenished by community donations. A limited effort to recognize the Sim Hackberry could easily be rolled into the Legacy Tree Program as one of its first projects.

An expenditure limit of \$1,000 could be set for the Sim Hackberry. These costs would eventually be recovered through Legacy Tree Program donations.

Below are alternative options to consider for utilizing the remaining tree inventory funds. The first two options include the City's new Legacy Tree Program and Sim Hackberry Memorial project.

1. Transfer \$10,000, anticipated tree inventory surplus, from B09-1-0400-0416 "Tree Inventory Costs" to a B09-1-0400 Legacy Tree Fund line item to be used as seed money to allow sufficient funding to initiate a full Legacy Tree program this year. Funds would support production of an attractive Legacy Tree publication that lists and maps the locations of the first twelve or so Legacy trees, provides information on each tree, and recognizes the first Legacy Tree donors. This option also allows the installation of a percentage of tree plaques for 2014 Legacy trees.
 - a. A limited portion of this amount (up to \$1,000) could fund one of the artisan hackberry memorial projects. This cost will be replenished by donations.
2. Same as above but transfer \$5,000, or one half of anticipated Tree Inventory surplus, to the Legacy Tree Program. This amount would support production of an attractive Legacy Tree publication that lists and maps the locations of the first twelve or so Legacy trees, provides information on each tree and recognizes the first Legacy Tree donors.
 - a. A limited portion of this fund (up to \$500) could fund the completion of one of the artisan hackberry memorial projects. This cost will be replenished by donations.
3. Transfer tree inventory surplus to another B09 green infrastructure program such as contractual tree work. This option allows more high priority tree hazards to be contracted and more staff time for corrective tree trimming. No funds would be provided to the Legacy Tree Program or the Sim Hackberry Memorial.
 - a. Take down the hackberry tree log, and have a percentage of the wood milled and dried (at no cost) for future use or sales.
 - b. Take down the hackberry tree, grind the stump and haul to the Landscape Recycling Center for processing. Allow those interested to take limb or trunk wood for personal use.

Fiscal Impact

The Arbor Division saved money in tree inventory costs by seeking an intergovernmental partnership with the Urbana Park District and limiting its hardware purchases. The anticipated surplus is expected to be over \$10,000. The partnership saved money in contractor work, software costs and annual license fees.

The preferred use of these funds is to transfer the remaining amount from the budget line item, B09-1-0400-0416 "Tree Inventory Costs," to the Legacy Tree Program to provide seed money.

These remaining funds, if not transferred to the Legacy Tree Program, would first be requested to be transferred to other arbor division related capital improvement programs before being considered for expenditures outside the division. The Arbor Division would like to utilize its savings rather than request new money for initiating the new Legacy Tree Program ordinance.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval to transfer all or portion thereof of surplus funds from the Tree Inventory Costs to the Legacy Tree Program.