

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER  
DES MOINES, IOWA

ITEM 94

CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION 97-115  
MARCH 17, 1997 AGENDA

| SUBJECT:                 | TYPE:                                     | SUBMITTED BY:                             |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| TREE TRIMMING TASK FORCE | ◆ RESOLUTION<br>ORDINANCE<br>RECEIVE/FILE | JOHN P. BELLIZZI<br>PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR |

**SYNOPSIS —**

On December 18, 1995, by Roll Call No. 95-4750, the City Council voted to create a task force to evaluate the need for and feasibility of licensing private tree trimmers. The task force report to the Council was submitted on July 1, 1996. The motion to adopt the resolution to implement the task force recommendations failed. Council subsequently referred the report back to the task force, by Roll Call No. 96-2805 on August 5, 1996, for further review of the issues of enforceability, liability, and power line clearance procedures. Those issues have now been addressed and incorporated into the attached revised report.

**FISCAL IMPACT —**

Staff anticipates that the annual cost for printing and distribution of educational materials will not exceed \$500. Funding for the printing could be budgeted for in the Forestry Section of the Public Works Department.

**RECOMMENDATION —**

Adoption of task force recommendations as revised.

**BACKGROUND —**

The Iowa Arborists Association initially recommended implementation of a licensing program for private tree trimmers to promote consistency and to protect the public. A task force of state and local officials, arborists, private tree trimmers, etc. was established to evaluate the need for a licensing program. The task force's initial report was submitted to Council on July 1, 1996. On August 5, 1996, the City Council referred the report back to the task force for further study of the issues of enforceability, liability, and power line clearance procedures. Following is a summary of the task force response to these concerns:

1. *Enforceability.* How do we ensure that the tree trimmers are in accordance with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The self-policing nature of the arrangement may lead to controversy.

No enforcement by the City is expected or recommended. All tree trimming companies included on the contractors list would be provided with a complete set of the ANSI standards. The task force and the Iowa Arborists Association have agreed to provide training sessions for contractors and the public. The training will include requirements for meeting ANSI work standards. Complaints received by the City can be forwarded to an advisory committee so that tree care information is

made available to the contractor and training needs are identified. The advisory committee would initially be made up of task force members.

2. *Liability.* Are citizens going to come back and say that the City endorsed these tree trimmers? It was suggested that no list be presented as approved but identify the credentials of each service provider that appears on the list.

The City of Des Moines would not be endorsing tree trimming companies. A list of companies would be made available to the public which shows the names of tree trimming companies and lists their credentials. A disclaimer would be placed on the list stating that no endorsement is intended or implied by the City.

3. *Discrepancies.* These exist between commercial tree trimmers for the utility companies and those for residents.

Utility line clearance requires different tree trimming techniques in order to preserve affected trees while achieving optimum safety. The public education program will include information on utility line clearance.

A utility company representative has explained that trees below utility lines are trimmed every five years. It has been agreed that utility companies performing line clearance work within the City will provide contract specifications to the City. Information will include inspection/compliance procedures, the name(s) of the contractors performing the line clearance work on City trees, and the name of the contact officer at the utility company who is designated to receive and address complaints concerning the clearance activities. The City's Forestry Section will continue to plant only the right type of trees below power lines.

The above information helps to clarify the task force's revisions to their original recommendations which are now presented to the City Council for approval.

TREE TRIMMING TASK FORCE REPORT  
(REVISED)

Submitted by  
Tree Trimming Task Force  
March 17, 1997

REPORT FOR CITY COUNCIL  
TREE CARE "LICENSING" TASK FORCE

PROBLEM

Many professional tree care providers in the Des Moines area are concerned about the quality of private tree care as it impacts the health and appearance of the urban forest.

Concerns include:

- . Safety of citizens
- . Health of trees
  1. Increased risk for insect and disease outbreaks
  2. Increased risk for storm damage
- . Liability/accountability of tree care providers

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A program should be developed for educating tree care providers in proper tree care practices.
2. The public should be provided with the opportunity to obtain informational materials concerning proper tree care, power line clearance and techniques, routine maintenance procedures, and the hiring of tree care professionals.

3. The City of Des Moines should make available to the public a "list" of tree care providers who agree to abide by universally accepted professional standards as set forth in the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). All service providers on the list will document their liability insurance/bonding limits. The City of Des Moines is not expected to endorse the list.
  
4. The task force should continue as an on-going advisory group to City staff. No enforcement by the City is expected or recommended.

#### IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

1. The City, professional arborists organizations, and the private sector will jointly sponsor the development of educational materials, workshops, training sessions, and field demonstrations for the benefit of those involved in the tree care service industry.
  
2. The task force will develop informational materials for public distribution. Materials will address proper tree care procedures and considerations to be made when hiring a tree care service provider.

3. The City will compile a list of contractors who agree to meet minimum work standards as set forth in ANSI A300. This list will include a summary of services provided by each listed tree care operator.

#### SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The City and other members of the task force will utilize their resources to distribute tree care information. Distribution could be managed through:
  - A. Public service announcements
  - B. Handouts at Center Center, Botanical Center, Libraries, etc.
  - C. By request
  - D. By direct mailing to property owners under notice by the City to perform tree maintenance work
  - E. Public meetings
2. The task force will pursue joint training and educational development for members of the tree care industry by sponsoring a minimum of two "hands on" training events annually.
3. The task force will collect and review educational materials, make recommendations regarding materials to be made available for distribution, and update the selection annually.

PROGRAM MONITORING

The City will call a meeting of the task force annually in May to review the effectiveness of the program and make recommendations to the City Manager.

Tree Trimming Task Force Members

| <u>Name</u>    | <u>Representing</u>                            |
|----------------|--|
| John Walkowiak | Iowa DNR, Iowa Arborists Association           |
| Don Young      | Young's Tree Service                           |
| Dale Lucas     | Urban Trees                                    |
| Linda Wright   | Iowa Arborists Association<br>Wright Tree Care |
| David Bair     | City of Des Moines                             |
| Truman McCurn  | City of Des Moines                             |