

**MEMO**

**CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS**

**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission

**FROM:** Kevin Hansen, Director of Public Works

**DATE:** September 16, 2021 for Commission meeting of Wednesday, September 22 2021.

**SUBJECT:** **Fertilizer and Weed control in City Parks**

At the June Park and Recreation Commission meeting, the Commission discussed and requested information on the turf maintenance at City Parks. Discussion included the what, where and when of TruGreen's application to our City Parks.

The City of Columbia Heights goal for the use of fertilizer and herbicides in City Parks is to maintain a consistent turf in both the appearance and long term health of the grass. Over time, staff has determined the practice of contracting this service out is the best use of City resources.

The City Forester / Natural Resource Specialist provided the following information for what is being applied and why:

In recent years Trugreen Commercial has made applications of herbicide and fertilizer to turf twice a year in select areas of City parks. Applications were limited to high-maintenance turf areas, primarily athletic fields, once in the late Spring and once in late Fall.

Liquid nitrogen fertilizer containing no phosphorus (17-0-5) was applied at the lowest recommended rates to maintain the health and function of the turf. The urea based formulation used has no classified hazards or restrictions on use; similar products are widely available and used regularly by homeowners, farmers, and landscapers.

Herbicide applications included application of a pre-emergent in the Spring and a selective post-emergent product in the Spring and Fall. The pre-emergent herbicide targets the germination and establishment of annual grass weeds including crabgrass, foxtail, and goosegrass but does not affect established perennial turf. The pre-emergent utilized was one of the products Barricade or Dimension, depending on the crabgrass status at the time. A fertilizer and pre-emergent application in the Spring is a standard part of turf care and is used by University of Minnesota Landcare in the maintenance of University turf areas, they primarily use the product Dimension. The post-emergent selective herbicide targets broadleaf weeds including thistle, knotweed, chickweed, ragweed, and others. The post-emergent product used was Tri-Power Selective Herbicide, which contains three herbicides. These herbicides are classified as Group 4 (Auxin mimics), and they are close analogs of the family of plant hormones called auxins. Widely used since the first EPA approval in 1967, group 4 herbicides have low environmental toxicity and rapidly degrade in the soil. The dilute product has very low contact toxicity and minimal irritation.

No insecticide applications of any kind, including Neonicotinoids, have been made to turf at City parks or facilities.

The parks department contracts with TruGreen annually for fertilizer and weed control applications – the applications are all in liquid form and often combined in a single application. The attached spreadsheet shows the applications of either spring or fall. The contracted cost ranges from \$12,000 to \$15,000 annually.

Attachment: Parks Application Frequency