



Folsom City Council Staff Report

MEETING DATE:	5/27/2025
AGENDA SECTION:	New Business
SUBJECT:	Resolution No. 11392 – A Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Hire an Arborist to Support Citywide Tree Protection and Planting Services and Authorizing the Appropriation of Funds from the Tree Planting and Replacement Fund (Fund 226)
FROM:	Community Development Department

RECOMMENDATION / CITY COUNCIL ACTION

The Community Development Department recommends the City Council adopt Resolution No. 11392 – A Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Hire an Arborist to Support Citywide Tree Protection and Planting Services and Authorizing the Appropriation of Funds from the Tree Planting and Replacement Fund (Fund 226)

BACKGROUND / ISSUE

Trees provide an essential contribution to the general welfare, economic vitality, and overall beauty and character of Folsom. In 1995, the City Council adopted a Tree Preservation Ordinance (Folsom Municipal Code Chapter 12.16) primarily to establish and maintain tree cover and to promote conservation of tree resources. In the 30 years since that time, there have been a few amendments to the Tree Preservation Ordinance, establishment of a Tree Planting and Replacement Fund, and updates to the mitigation fees reinforcing the significance of trees in Folsom.

The City currently has one full-time arborist (Urban Forester, Aimee Nunez), who is responsible for implementation of the Tree Preservation Ordinance and management of the Tree Planting and Replacement Fund, along with related responsibilities listed below.

- Plan review, inspections, and permit issuance for all Community Development Divisions (Planning, Development Engineering, Building, Housing, and Code Enforcement)
- Plan review, inspections, and permit issuance for other City Departments (Parks and Recreation, Environmental Water Resources, and Public Works) involving protected trees throughout the City

- Landscape plan and irrigation review for compliance with local standards and State-mandated Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELo), including reporting for new landscapes and significant renovations to landscapes for all land use types
- Participation, review/advise, permit and inspect all Capital Improvement Projects and Special Projects involving protected trees
- Participation in all Code Enforcement and Public Safety concerns and cases involving protected trees
- Program management of the Sacramento Tree Foundation contract for plantings, community events, and NeighborWoods programs
- Program management of the City's Landmark Tree Program.
- Program management of the City's Vegetation Management with local utility companies, including issuance of annual permits and review/inspection of individual requests.

For the last five years, the workload associated with listed responsibilities far exceeds the capacity of one full-time Urban Forester. Even with supplemental contract support, the City is now facing many challenges with the current arborist staffing limitations:

- Plan review target timelines are not being met
- Expedited plan review cannot be offered due to capacity limitations
- Process modifications have been implemented to accommodate capacity limitations
- There is limited availability for public inquiries and concerns
- General Plan and Tree Preservation Ordinance implementation is limited
- Temporary contract staff work is limited due to credential requirements/expertise

Given ongoing and foreseeable demands for Folsom arborist services, Community Development is recommending a new second full-time arborist position paid in full as a qualifying expense of the City's Tree Planting and Replacement Fund (Fund 226). The estimated cost for this position for Fiscal Year 2025-26 is \$156,265 for salary and benefits which would replace the annual part-time contract staffing costs of approximately \$50,000 for tree permit and inspection work. If approved the annual cost for the additional arborist position will be fully budgeted for in the Tree Planting and Replacement Fund (Fund 226).

POLICY / RULE

Pursuant to *Folsom Municipal Code 3.02.030 section C*: the budget shall establish the number of authorized positions to be filled by employees,

Pursuant to *Folsom Municipal Code 3.02.030 section H*: The city council may make supplemental appropriations during the course of the fiscal year provided that the City Manager certifies that moneys are available. All such supplemental appropriations shall be made for the fiscal year by resolution, up to the amount of any excess money certified by the City Manager as being available.

ANALYSIS

As described in the background section of this report, the responsibilities for City arborist services far exceed the capacity of our single full-time Urban Forester. Over the last five years, Community Development has implemented a range of contract solutions including hourly on-call contract arborist services, contract with Sacramento Tree Foundation for new mitigation planting projects

and reforestation work in existing neighborhoods, and even a part-time contract arborist (retired annuitant) to address high volumes of tree permit and inspection demand.

In 2024, the City's Urban Forester workload included:

- 93 plan reviews on building permits
- 63 plan reviews for design review and civil improvement plans
- 9 irrigation and landscape review projects
- 349 tree work or removal permits and 5 street tree planting permits
- 517 inspections for building permits involving trees or landscape and irrigation
- 58 code enforcement cases for tree violations
- Management of the Sac Tree Foundation program and plantings contract and work
- Management of the landmark tree program with two new landmark groves (including management of survey contract for one of the groves) as well as maintenance for other landmark trees throughout the City
- Work with utilities on annual vegetation management plans and individual permits throughout the City
- Review of capital improvement projects and special projects involving significant tree work (e.g., Phase 2 Water Line for the Folsom Plan Area, Regional Transit Double Tracking, and EWR Sewer Capacity Work along Folsom Boulevard)

This workload is unsustainable for our single Urban Forester and the supplemental contract services we have are simply not sufficient in breadth or depth. Additionally, the retired annuitant currently in the part-time temporary arborist position is relocating out of the area in June so an alternative staffing solution is critical to avoid additional backlog/delay for all types of development permits involving arborist services. Even with current supplemental resources, arborist service challenges are as follows:

- Plan review target deadlines are not being met because of the constant volume of work with high development activities, capital projects, and assistance for other departments
- No expedited plan review available due to capacity limitations for arborist services
- Limited availability for public inquiries and concerns
- Limited availability for implementation on General Plan policies, adopted Tree Preservation Ordinance, or other City Council initiatives

There are plan check, permit, and inspection fees in place for most arborist services and those fees have been updated recently for full cost recovery. The table below provides a summary of the plan check, permit, and inspection fees collected through the City's eTRAKiT (ComDev) system over the last three-year period. The current fiscal year number reflects revenue collected through December 31, 2024.

Arborist Fees Collected for Services (past 3 years)			
Type of Arborist Fees Collected	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24	FY 2024-25*
Tree Permits	\$ 16,038	\$ 14,712	\$ 28,714
North of 50 Plan Check and Inspections	\$ 47,458	\$ 75,927	\$ 28,040
South of 50 Plan Check and Inspections	\$ 414,042	\$ 177,867	\$ 91,897
Residential Plan Check	\$ 9,522	\$ 7,249	\$ 1,656
Non-residential Plan Check	\$ 303	\$ 303	\$ 21,036
TOTAL	\$ 487,363	\$ 276,058	\$ 171,343
<i>* First half of FY 2024-25 only</i>			

In addition to the plan check, permit, and inspection fees for arborist services, there are also tree mitigation fees collected for qualifying tree work and removal of protected trees. These mitigation fees are paid into the City's Tree Planting and Replacement Fund to be used for qualifying expenditures. As outlined in Folsom Municipal Code Section 12.16.160, the fund may be used for tree planting and revegetation projects such as parkways, parks, planting of trees along public trails and beautification projects, to purchase property for tree mitigation sites, or beautification projects, **for the retention of a city arborist**, or for the development, staffing or implementation of an urban forestry program.

The table below shows the annual mitigation fees paid into the Tree Planting and Replacement Fund over the past five-year period, along with annual expenses, and fund balance. The current Tree Planting and Replacement Fund balance is \$1,477,302.

Tree Planting and Replacement Fund Revenue, Expenses, and Balance (past 5 years)					
Tree Fund Accounting	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24
Tree Fund Revenue	\$ 155,500	\$ 191,323	\$ 302,284	\$ 178,901	\$ 184,714
Tree Fund Expenses	\$ 125,033	\$ (193,106)	\$ (143,638)	\$ (140,411)	\$ (226,901)
Tree Fund Balance	\$ 1,037,658	\$ 1,035,875	\$ 1,194,521	\$ 1,233,011	\$ 1,190,824

Annual expenses for the tree fund over the last five years were primarily for tree planting projects contracted with the Sacramento Tree Foundation, along with minor irrigation connection improvement contracts with existing landscape contractors. Prior to that time, expenses to the fund included on-call contract arborist services and expenses for planting projects associated with other City projects as part of separate contracts. The Community Development Department is now recommending we fund an additional permanent Arborist position to assist the Urban Forester in managing the City's arborist services budgeted for in the Tree Planting and Replacement Fund (Fund 226).

FINANCIAL IMPACT

If the City Council approves the addition of a new Arborist position, the projected cost for salary and benefits starting for Fiscal Year 2025-26, would total \$156,265 with annual increases (merit and inflation) in subsequent years to be funded through the Tree Planting and Replacement Fund (Fund 226). If the City Council approves the addition of the position these amounts will be included in the proposed budgets for those respective fiscal years and presented to the City Council for adoption as part of the City's annual budget process.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is therefore not subject to environmental review.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution No. 11392 – A Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Hire an Arborist to Support Citywide Tree Protection and Planting Services and Authorizing the Appropriation of Funds from the Tree Planting and Replacement Fund (Fund 226).

Submitted,



Pam Johns, Community Development Director