



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 03/21/2023

ITEM NO:12

DESK ITEM

DATE: March 21, 2023
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Receive a Report on Roadside Fire Fuel Reduction (Vegetation Management) (CIP 812-0130) and Provide Direction on 2023 Work Plan

REMARKS:

This desk item is provided to respond to Council Member questions noted below and provide additional public comments.

1. What is the opinion of the Town Arborist regarding the risk of the Eucalyptus trees falling on Overlook, College, Hilow, and other locations?

The Town Arborist is clear that no one can specifically predict which trees will fall or when. However, the recent drought did likely weaken root systems on many trees, and the non-native eucalyptus is among the species impacted.

With respect to the trees on Overlook, the Arborist had recommended the removal of these trees some years ago, but resident opposition prevented the work from moving forward.

2. Are there other vulnerabilities that Council needs to consider?

There are no known systemic vulnerabilities that staff is aware of with regard to species of tree. The winter 2023 storms have demonstrated that wind impacts all species of trees.

Since the roadside work started in 2021, staff is observing rapid regrowth of vegetation in areas where past management work has been completed.

PREPARED BY: Nicolle Burnham
Director of Parks and Public Works

Reviewed by: Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Finance Director

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REMARKS (continued):

With regard to the overall Roadside Vegetation Management Program, the Council may want to consider how private roadways will be managed. The total list of 31 miles of priority roads includes some private roads, and other private roads (e.g., Highland Avenue) are not included at all. Staff is not spending Town funds to address these private roads; however, they do contribute to wildfire risk.

3. If the Council chooses to remove all of the Eucalyptus on Overlook, what is the total cost? What could be achieved in terms of Wildfire Roadside Mitigation with the remaining funds?

Eighteen eucalyptus trees remain on Overlook Road. Removal and disposal of these trees and their stumps is estimated to cost \$270,000 to \$306,000 (\$15,000 to \$17,000 per tree). The actual cost will be determined based on competitive bidding and so may vary.

Assuming the Town allocates \$750,000 to the Roadside Vegetation Management Program for Fiscal Year 2023/24 and \$300,000 of that is used for removal of eucalyptus on Overlook Road, the remaining \$450,000 will be used on Priority 1 and 2 roadways where vegetation was not removed in 2021 or 2022. With approximately five miles of priority 1 and 2 public roadways remaining, staff believes that funding may be adequate to complete work on those roadways.

4. Can the annual \$100,000 Tree Removal funding be diverted for the Eucalyptus removal?

The allocation for Town-wide tree management has proven inadequate in the last five years. Each year, staff has returned to the Council to increase this allocation as shown below. This funding is used to respond to critical tree-related issues, both during storms and those that occur on a more routine basis. The funding is intended to be used for regular tree trimming and block pruning; however, in recent years block pruning and regular trimming efforts have been minimal as funds have been directed to addressing tree fall and storm damages.

Fiscal Year	Actual Spending – Tree Allocation
2022/23 (YTD)	\$200,000
2021/22	\$216,408
2020/21	\$240,401
2019/20	\$240,063
2018/19	\$244,878

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REMARKS (continued):

Attachment 4 contains public comment received between 11:01 a.m., Monday, March 20, 2023 and 11:00 a.m., Tuesday, March 21, 2023.

ATTACHMENTS:

Previously received with the Staff Report:

1. Roadway Vegetation Management Plan Priority Road List
2. Arborist Report for Overlook Road Eucalyptus Trees
3. Public Comments

Received with this Desk Item:

4. Public Comment