

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY SHEET

Utility Commission

Meeting Date: June 2, 2026

Submitted By:

Staff on behalf of City Council (Schell)

Agenda Item:

Discussion and possible action on a policy to support property owners impacted by oak wilt through the provision of additional water, passed through to the customer at the city's cost, plus an administrative fee

Description:

Rollingwood has experienced active oak wilt infection centers within its city limits since at least 2015. Previous trenching efforts in 2017 were partially effective, but the disease has continued to spread beyond the containment area.

At the May 13, 2026 City Council meeting, Councilmembers voiced support for taking proactive action and ensuring the process would not be delayed by scheduling constraints. Staff also explained that the proposed water-use incentive program could be administered similarly to the City's leak adjustment process and potentially supplemented through future budget requests for treatment assistance.

Councilmember Kevin Shell opened a discussion regarding the continued spread of oak wilt within Rollingwood, noting that recent infections align with the Forest Service's 2022 'Hot Zone' projections. Additionally, he shared that two heritage oaks on his property were recently impacted by oak wilt. After working with an arborist who recommended fungicide injections, both trees have improved. This method has proved successful when the infections are caught early.

Councilmember Schell explained that he worked with the Mayor and staff to develop a draft ordinance framework for discussion purposes that would establish a long-term, proactive City response focused on awareness, prevention, early detection, treatment incentives, and formalized procedures to preserve continuity through future staff turnover. Council generally expressed support for continued discussion and development of a policy. Proposed incentives included temporary water-rate relief for affected homeowners to support intensive watering during treatment and potential reimbursement assistance for qualifying treatment expenses to encourage early self-reporting of infections.

Council Member Kevin Schell moved to request feedback from the Utility Commission on the impacts of providing additional water usage above normal at the city's cost, plus an administrative fee, to support property owners impacted by oak wilt. Council Member Phil McDuffee seconded the motion.

The motion carried with 5 in favor and 0 against.

Action Requested:

Recommend supporting the City Council on the creation of a policy to support property owners impacted by oak wilt through the provision of additional water, passed through to the customer at the city's cost, plus an administrative fee.

Fiscal Impacts:

No fiscal impacts at this time, but funds would need to be allocated in future budgets if the program is created.

Attachments:

- Oak Wilt Prevention Program concept
- 2022 Oak Wilt 'Hot Zone Map'