TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: UTILITIES
DATE: AUGUST 5, 2002 CMR:297:02

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF A RESOLUTION TO REVISE THE CITY OF PALO ALTO LANDSCAPE WATER EFFICIENCY STANDARDS

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Council amend the Palo Alto Municipal Code to adopt revised Landscape Water Efficiency Standards.

BACKGROUND

The Landscape Water Efficiency Standards for the City of Palo Alto (Standards) were adopted by Council in 1992, Ordinance 4106. The first revision was adopted by Council in 1993, Ordinance 4162. The Standards were developed in response to the State Water Conservation in Landscaping Act, AB 325 (the Act) requiring that cities and counties adopt an ordinance to address the efficient use of water in landscaping. As directed by the Act, the State Department of Water Resources developed a model ordinance that incorporated the best knowledge available at that time for water conservation in ornamental horticulture. In consultation with local landscape architects and irrigation experts, staff adapted the State model ordinance to the City of Palo Alto organization and local conditions. Utility Marketing Services administers the Standards in conjunction with the Planning and Building Divisions of the Department of Planning and Community Environment.

DISCUSSION

After nine years of experience in applying the Standards to landscape plans in Palo Alto, it has become apparent that another revision is necessary to add clarification and enforcement
language.

- The statement of applicability should state that City facilities are included.
- An exemption to the water budget requirement needs to be added for very small landscaped areas of 1500 square feet or less. Installing a dedicated irrigation water meter and associated irrigation circuits in very small areas has proved difficult for landscape architects and is perceived as a burden by property owners. This exemption is expected to decrease application processing time for smaller sites to help with overall Building Division process streamlining.
- Additional language to clarify water use calculations for the amount of water needed by trees would be helpful to landscape architects. Calculating the water use of trees based only on the square feet of the planted area typically yields too small an amount of water to maintain tree health. The proposed change will take into account the amount of area covered by the tree canopy and yield a more accurate calculation of tree water use.
- Adding a Certificate of Substantial Completion would increase compliance with the Standards. This would be signed by both the landscape architect and the installing landscape contractor and submitted to the City. If the Certificate is not received within 30 days of landscape installation by the Water-Gas-Wastewater Engineering New Services office, the Utilities Department would send notices to the responsible parties. A flow restrictor could be installed in the irrigation meter if there is no response.

**RESOURCE IMPACT**

Resources for administering the Standards are included in the Utilities Department Operating Budget and no additional funding is required. No new personnel are needed.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The adoption of these revised Standards does not represent any substantive change to existing City policies. This recommendation is consistent with the Council approved Utilities Strategic Plan Strategy 3: streamline and manage business processes to allow the City of Palo Alto Utilities to work efficiently and cost-effectively.
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Adoption of these Standards does not constitute a project for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act.

ATTACHMENTS
A: Revised Landscape Water Efficiency Standards for the City of Palo Alto.
B: Resolution

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