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LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Matti Herrera Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE: July 9, 2008

SUBJECT: Status Update of the Parks Reforestation Program

At the time the Reforestation Plan was presented to the Commission in February of 2007, the main goal of the plan was to achieve fully planted status within 5 years and to have trees planted in all available right-of-way locations and at optimal levels in each park. It was estimated that approximately 5,000 trees would be needed to replace trees lost in hurricanes and to fill other available but unfilled spaces. This estimate included all city parks and all city streets. It was stated that for the first few years the plan would focus on parks and streets that were not scheduled to receive GO Bond improvements. At the February 14, 2007, Commission meeting a motion was made to accelerate the tree planting timeframe from five years to four years. The Parks and Recreation Department has since been working to meet this schedule.

At the June 17, 2008, meeting of the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee a question was asked during the Parks and Recreation's Department's presentation concerning the status of the Citywide Reforestation Program. It was reported to the Committee members by the Parks and Recreation Administration that in fiscal year 2006 - 2007, 1,100 trees were planted and it is anticipated in 2007 - 2008 at least 1,100 trees will be planted. The Committee asked for the program status and how the 4 year goal could be achieved based on work done to date.

The reforestation program was originally developed with the goal of the entire City being planted in the designated period. A policy decision was made not to proceed with street tree plantings in neighborhoods or in Parks that still were expected to undergo construction as part of the CIP program. This choice recognized that if planting were to occur in CIP project areas prior to the capital improvements being completed, the trees planted may be disturbed, damaged, or removed during project implementation. As such, the reforestation program has focused on those areas of the City outside of the CIP program.

By the end of this fiscal year approximately 2,200 trees will have been planted through the reforestation program. In 2008/2009, it is projected to plant approximately 700 - 900 trees at an estimated cost of \$350,000, making the total approximately 3,000 trees planted. The plant total at the end of year three of the program will nearly complete the areas that are outside of the CIP areas pending construction.

For the CIP neighborhoods, Parks and Recreation and the Capital Improvement Projects Office have been working together to identify areas in the plan/ projects that will benefit from supplemental trees. As an example of this cooperative effort, under this year's planting program an additional 30+ trees will be planted in Belle Isle Park that is soon to

be completed by CIP. Parks staff recently met with Barry Miller, the project Landscape Architect to identify sites on the park that will benefit from in-fill. They also discussed the additional plantings on the Par 3 golf course, along the fence lines on the south perimeter of the property that will not impact any future plans for the site. The planting will be done this year. The Normandy Shores Golf Course will receive trees from this year's Reforestation Program and Pine tree Drive medians are being improved and planted at this time, the trees are from the reforestation program.

Examples of future planting opportunities that are yet to be determined due to the project timelines include Flamingo Park (it is anticipated that a few hundred trees could be planted there pending the final master plan) and South Point Park . Other planting opportunities that are pending are Alto Del Mar Park, Sunset Island II (other 1/2 that will be used for staging of the CIP project), the North Shore Band shell and the street end at 23rd and Bay Road.

In the future, if additional trees are anticipated to supplement a CIP project, the cost can be included in the specific CIP project as a line item increase, therefore not depending on the Reforestation Program to plant additional trees. The approach of funding through the respective construction budget would ensure that the funds are appropriated as and when needed. This should result in less of a need in the reforestation program funding beyond fiscal year 2008/2009. This determination can be a joint effort between CIP and Parks staff at the time a particular project is under design and development and in subsequent budget conversations with the City Commission.

As the construction schedules in neighborhoods dictates when planting is appropriate, it is difficult to predict when said schedules will allow plantings. As the City Commission is aware, the CIP Office has been moving a number of projects into construction.

Aside from public area tree planting, as noted in the Reforestation Plan, approximately 80% of urban trees are located on private property. Therefore future efforts in Greenspace Management to encourage and support tree planting on private property, especially setback plantings which contribute to the streetscape, will be productive in enhancing the tree canopy. Programs similar to those like Miami-Dade County's Adopt-A-Tree program could be areas to explore in Miami Beach. This may be our most productive strategy for the continued replenishing of the urban forest after available spaces on public property are filled.

The Reforestation Plan is on target to be completed in those areas available and as CIP neighborhoods are completed, the total sum of the trees planted under the Reforestation Plan and those planted in the CIP projects will meet and most likely far exceed the 5,000 trees committed to by the City as our effort to re-establish and expand our tree canopy.

Should you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me.

JMG/RCM/KS/jo/cl

c: Robert C. Middaugh, Assistant City Manager
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