



CITY OF GAINESVILLE COMMUNICATION

DATE: November 2, 2000

TO: Public Works Committee

FROM: Meg Niederhofer, City Arborist

SUBJECT: Urban Forestry Maintenance: Parks Division Tree Crew

- * There are approximately 26,000 trees on property maintained by the City of Gainesville; we have a legal obligation to be attentive to the structural stability of these trees and to make sure they are pruned so public safety is not jeopardized.
- * Every year the Parks Division tree crews respond to approximately 1000 work orders; almost every one requires an on-site evaluation. Half are initiated by private citizens.
- * The Parks Division tree crew is the first response team in storm emergencies. They clear the roads of downed trees and branches so emergency vehicles can pass.
- * Most of the tree crew's time is spent in structural pruning. Post-hurricane research has confirmed that trees with single trunk/scaffold branch structure allow winds to pass through, rather than uprooting or breaking.
- * The Tree Advisory Board consults on tree policies. They have discussed minimum and maximum canopy heights. Factors that affect the height-to-prune include tree species and condition, the need for corrective structural pruning, root-top balance, streetlights and infrastructure, signage, and work load/length of trim cycle.
- * Parks Division tree surgeons are educated. One has a B.S. degree in Urban Forestry from the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. All have been to training classes conducted by the International Society of Arboriculture. Three are preparing to take the ISA certification examinations which cover tree biology, identification, tree/soil relations, water management, tree nutrition and fertilization, tree selection, installation and establishment, pruning, cabling/bracing/lightning protection, problem diagnosis and management, construction management, climbing techniques, and safety.
- * Prior to adding the contract tree crew, which helped the Parks Division for 5 months in FY '99-00, the "trim cycle" (number of years it takes to prune all the trees on City of Gainesville properties) was 10 years. Gainesville Regional Utilities protects utility service by pruning on a 3-year trim cycle. They operate 5 crews within the city limits. The Parks Division has two bucket truck crews; the same as in 1986. Even with the contract tree crew and autumn season (dormancy), the tree crew still has a current work backlog of 5 weeks.
- * The cost of the work performed by the tree crew in FY '99-00 was \$296,233. This entailed trimming 2,830 trees, removing 102 living trees (23 hazardous trees, remainder for construction or infectious lethal infestations/infections) and 195 dead trees.

COST SUMMARY: PRUNING, CLEARING STREETS OF LIMB AND TREE FALLS; REMOVING DEAD AND HAZARDOUS TREES	
Personnel Costs: 5 Tree Surgeons and MEO II	\$195,339.
Vehicles: 2 Tree Trucks, 3 Chippers, Clamshell Truck, 2 Pick-ups, Stump-grinder.	\$55,003.
Supplies: chainsaws—repairs, parts, safety equipment; tools, ropes, loppers, chemical controls, pole saws, etc.	\$5,265.
Contracts: Asplundh crew (5 mos) and 4 Gastons or ATS removals.	\$40,626.
TOTAL	\$296,233.

WORK ORDERS ACCOMPLISHED – PRIORITY DISTRIBUTION									
<p>Every work order received by the Parks Division is evaluated quickly to assure public safety. Priority 1=emergency, 2=hazard, 3=routine work, 4=benefits very few citizens, 5=Commission or Manager request, 6=inspections, NE=no action, but we looked at it, NS=office staff resolved the situation (e.g. determination of private responsibility)</p>									
		Priority Classes							
YR	Total	1	2	3	4	5	6	NE	NS
99-00	961	89	299	328	69	4	98	56	18
98-99	729	60	172	231	63	0	90	73	40
97-98	962	89	300	328	69	4	98	56	18

DISTRIBUTION OF WORK ORDER ORIGINATIONS						
Citizens	GPD	School Board	Traffic	Parks	Public Wks	Other
50%	5%	1.5%	1.5%	21%	14%	7%

CITY OF GAINESVILLE, PARKS DIVISION
TREE CREW ACTION MEMOS -- PRIORITIZATION

There are too few tree surgeons and tree trucks to handle all the requests for tree service. Accordingly, we assign work orders based on importance, location, and the size of the job. The priority ratings are:

- (1) EMERGENCY: Sidewalk or street blocked by tree that has uprooted/broken or by a large branch. If failure is toward private property, damage or injury has occurred or threatens to occur.
- (2) HAZARD: Large dead trees with target (i.e. when the tree breaks up and the branches fall, people may be hurt or property damaged); hazard abatement in living trees--removing dead limbs (<8" diam) or entire tree; limbs blocking traffic lights or stop signs; low limbs preventing passage of emergency vehicles (fire/ambulance), school busses, or impeding sidewalks within 1 mile of a school; limbs actually touching the top of cars.
- (3) PRIORITY: Small dead trees; dead limbs 4-8" diam; low limbs over road (collector streets take priority over side streets); work so other City Departments can do their jobs (sweeping streets, mowing parks); control of insect infestations (Southern Pine Beetle).
- (4) GENERAL: Immediate safety is not an issue; the benefit is for a few citizens. Streetlight trim; trimming palm fronds; limbs brushing top of RV's.
- (5) SPECIAL -- Directives from City Management.
- (6) INSPECTIONS -- For landscape plan or tree barricade compliance with approved site plans on construction sites.
- (N-S) NO-DIRECT ACTION: Work order received and handled by Office Staff. These are the calls that sound as if the Tree Crew would respond but that turn out to be on non-City owned property or inappropriate for Tree Crew response based on information determined within the Parks Division offices.
- (N-E) NO-DIRECT ACTION -- EVALUATION WAS REQUIRED: The nature of the order required complaint was such that someone to actually had to look at the situation. Requested streetlight trim, but streetlight not blocked by trees on public property; tree on private property; tree evaluation at request of Codes Enforcement or other City Department; any work order that we look at that the tree crew ends up not having to respond to.