

# **TOWN OF PALM BEACH**

Information for Town Council Meeting on: September 13, 2022

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TO: Mayor and Town Council

VIA: Kirk W. Blouin, Town Manager

FROM: H. Paul Brazil, P.E., Director of Public Works

RE: Estimated Budget Increases Associated with Invasive Removals (Phipps Ocean Park Project)

DATE: August 29, 2022

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## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Town staff recommends that Town Council review the summary provided below regarding the increased costs associated with the removal of invasive species within Phipps Ocean Park.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

A presentation of the updated master plan for the Phipps Ocean Park project was made by the Preservation Foundation and their consultant, Raymond Jungles Inc., at the June 14, 2022, Town Council meeting. Based on the Town Council's approval of the concept, the design development phase of the project will commence. One of the suggestions made at the meeting was to consider removing invasive species in advance of the project construction. Staff has been tasked with providing preliminary cost estimates for the invasive species removal for consideration during the budget workshop for potential inclusion in the FY23 budget. This removal effort is comprised of animal control (invasive iguanas) and plant control (invasives such as vitex, Brazilian pepper, portia tree, and beach naupaka). Staff met with existing vendors to review the site conditions and to obtain input regarding scope of work, estimated costs, and the suggested approach. A summary of that input is provided below.

Invasive animal control will address the removal of green iguanas at Phipps Ocean Park and has commenced with an existing vendor already under contract. Since this type of animal control is an ongoing effort, staff recommends this work continue during FY23 until the project construction begins. The estimated cost for the continued iguana removal is approximately \$22,000 per year and would require an increase to the FY23 budget in the Contracted Services line item for the Parks Department (551 Program). Subsequent to the completion of the new Park Improvements Project, it is recommended that this removal effort continue as an ongoing maintenance requirement and will be included in the future maintenance budget. During the removal process there will be a need to close the park which will affect the park/tennis/beach patrons' access; this will be kept to the shortest time possible to accomplish the removal activities.

Invasive plant control will address the removal of invasive species in the vicinity of the dune area and replanting with sea oats or similar material for temporary stabilization. Limited removal of invasive species along the west side of South Ocean Boulevard will also be performed (along the bulkhead and mean-high-water edge adjacent to the mangroves) since the opportunity exists to remove those invasives before they become more widespread.

Staff met with four (4) vendors familiar with removal of invasive plants and performed a site visit with them. Preliminary cost estimates have been obtained ranging from \$70,000 to \$199,000. Based on the use of “piggy-back” contracts, it may be possible to award this task without further advertisement and competitive bidding. Since the exact extent and quantity of plant removal to be done is not easily defined, the task will be undertaken on an hourly basis for labor and equipment.

The low end of the range includes a more widespread use of herbicides throughout both the beach/dune and mangrove areas. To be consistent with current Town Code, Town staff recommends the work to be budgeted at the higher end of the range. This work can be performed either without the use of herbicides or with only a targeted use of herbicides to specifically avoid mangrove impacts based on the proximity of some invasives to mangroves.

Including contingency, staff recommends that a budget of \$229,000 be established for this initial plant removal work and would require an increase to the FY23 budget in the Dune Vegetation Maintenance line item for Coastal Management (309 Program) of \$300,000 that includes a second removal effort and replanting sea oats on the beach/dune to replace the removed invasives. [Note: the invasive removal and sea oats planting was previously performed at Mid-Town Beach only.] The initial effort will occur in October/November time frame and be coordinated with turtle nesting season to avoid any conflicts. A second removal effort in the Spring of 2023 is recommended to remove any plants that have regrown since the initial effort. The second effort assumes a removal volume on the order of ten percent (10%) of the first effort with a ten percent (10%) contingency. An annual maintenance budget for invasive removal in the dune and in the mangroves will need to be established similarly to Mid-Town.

During consultation, the use of safe and effective herbicides to control re-growth may be prudent if mechanical removal is not efficient or practical. An example of this would be the cutting down of portia trees (*Thespesia*) along the mangrove edge, and then applying a systemic herbicide locally to the remaining stump. Otherwise, removal of those plants by mechanical means would damage the existing mangroves and result in additional costs due to required mitigation. Staff will review the details of proposed products and ensure that they are not harmful to other plants to remain. As noted above for the iguana control during the invasive plant removal process, there will be a need to close portions of the park where the work is occurring which may affect the park/tennis/beach patrons' access, this will be kept to the shortest time possible to accomplish the removal activities.

### **FUNDING/FISCAL IMPACT**

The funding impacts associated with this item will be funded from contingency in FY22 for the iguana removal, and invasive plant removal will be funded from FY23 contingency once the final bid amount is known.

## **PURCHASING REVIEW**

This item has been reviewed by the Procurement and Contract Manager for concurrence.

cc: Carolyn Stone, Assistant Town Manager  
Eric Brown, P.E., Assistant Public Works Director  
Dean Mealy, Procurement and Contract Manager  
Robert Weber, Coastal Program Manager  
Paul Colby, Facilities Maintenance Division Manager