Approved by City Manager:

CITY *of* CALABASAS

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: **MAY 25, 2022**

TO: **HONORABLE MAYOR AND COUNCILMEMBERS**

FROM: **ROBERT YALDA, P.E.,T.E., PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR/CITY ENGINEER**
HEATHER MELTON, LANDSCAPE DISTRICT MAINTENANCE MANAGER
ALBA LEMUS, E.I.T., ASSOCIATE CIVIL ENGINEER

SUBJECT: **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CITY'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE SEVERE WATER CRISIS**

MEETING DATE: **JUNE 8, 2022**

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

For City Council to provide direction to staff on the following options:

City Owned Landscape

1. Discontinue irrigation of all potable water areas in City medians, parkways (Thousand Oaks Blvd and Mullholland Hwy) and City Parks (Freedom Park and Pocket Park)
2. Move forward with the transition of turf areas with reclaimed irrigation in City parkways, medians and parks in phases
3. Proceed with reduction of reclaim water to two (2) days a week in all of the City's parkways, medians and parks

HOA Owned Landscape

1. Begin working with Homeowner Associations within the Assessment Districts to reduce reclaim water usage up to 50% by watering two (2) days a week

BACKGROUND:

The City of Calabasas has been a leader in water conservation projects and initiatives. The City of Calabasas uses reclaimed water to irrigate the majority of the City parkways, center medians and public parks with the exception of medians located on Mulholland Highway, Freedom Park, Pocket Park and Highland Park. In 2014, the City completed the Smart Irrigation Controller system which involved the consolidation of 58 pre-existing controllers to 52 weather-based evapotranspiration smart controllers located at City parks and all City maintained landscape areas. Later, the City continued the project with phase II by expanding the reclaimed irrigation system and replacing the existing system with low flow sprinkler heads. The completion of both phases allowed the City to reduce its water usage by approximately 35%. In 2015, the City adopted a Green Street Policy. The resolution states that the Public Works Director shall consider opportunities to implement Green Streets BMPs since then has begun implementing to locations around the City.

In July 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a State Emergency Declaration in which the City responded by reducing water usage voluntarily by 15% in all parks and medians. The Governor then expanded the Drought Emergency Statewide and the City further reduced water usage by an additional 15% in October 2021. In May 2022 Las Virgenes Municipal Water District issued notice of upcoming water usage restrictions, the City then began additional reductions. All potable water areas of landscape were reduced to one (1) day a week and all reclaim areas to three (3) days a week.

The Sustainability Task Force would like to further explore additional actions that could be taken to further reduce water usage due to the current drought conditions. In addition, staff was directed to identify possible areas where turf could be removed and potentially replaced with native drought tolerant landscape in order to help conserve water.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

City staff has taken action by temporally closing water features located at all City facilities including the splash pad at De Anza Park and water fountains located at the Civic Center Site. Urinals at City Hall will be replaced with waterless urinals. Power washing park amenities has been reduced. The landscape at Tennis & Swim and Civic Center Site will be transitioned to native-drought tolerant plants.

Per the direction of the Sustainability Task Force, City staff identified several locations around the City of Calabasas where existing turf can be converted to native-drought tolerant landscape. A total area of 40,600 square feet was identified in City medians and parkways along Las Virgenes Road, Mulholland Highway,

Thousand Oaks Blvd, Park Capri and Park Granada. In the parks, a total of 44,800 square feet of non-functional areas can be converted to native-drought tolerant landscape. These areas are located at De Anza Park, Freedom Park, Grape Arbor Park and Gates Canyon Park.

The majority of the areas are irrigated with reclaimed water three (3) times a week for ten minutes with the exception of Mulholland Highway and Thousand Oaks Blvd. If converted, approximately 933 sprinkler heads will be closed. The implementation of this project can conserve about 73,000 gallons of water annually.

In order to implement, the existing turf will need to be removed, soil prepared and the current irrigation system would need to be converted to a drip system to ensure the establishment of the new plants. If transitioned into drought-native landscape, there will be an initial investment for removal of turf, modification of irrigation, design and installation of new plant material. Based on informal proposals that staff received for removal and installation of plants, the total cost to remove and install new landscape will cost approximately $8.55 per square feet.

Potential savings can be achieved in Homeowner Associations (HOAs) owned landscape areas that are part of the special assessment districts (LMD and LLAD). These are City managed areas for which the City may begin discussing water reductions to two (2) days a week with the HOAs' consent. Staff can assist the HOAs in transitioning turf if decided and provide a planting palette.

FISCAL IMPACT/SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Cost of turf transition in City owned landscape areas (parks, medians and parkways) would be covered by general funds.

Cost of turf or planter transition within the HOAs would be funded by their assessment district budget.

REQUESTED ACTION:

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ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: PowerPoint Discussion Regarding the City's Water Conservation Efforts Presentation
Attachment B: Turf Area Water Conservation Maps