



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – March 10, 2021 Agenda Item 4

Voting Session

Resolution regarding Budget Hold Items

Recommended Council Action

Approve Resolution

Context with Key Issues

When the FY21 Budget was adopted in May 2020, the fiscal uncertainties of the pandemic led the Council to budget for a number of personnel, capital and other items that were then put on a “hold list.” The idea was that the list could be reviewed periodically throughout the fiscal year and determine if the City should proceed with any of these budget items. The list has been reviewed several times, most recently on January 13 and February 17.

At the Work Session on February 17, the City Manager recommended that several items be released from the hold list, so that they may proceed this fiscal year. The items were discussed at a Work Session on March 3 and the Council requested additional information to be provided. The items requested for releasing from the Hold List are:

- Recreation Supervisor (likely to be \$22,000 for the rest of this fiscal year) – this is a permanent Recreation staff position that has been vacant this year. The position involves both direct child care and oversight of part time staff for before and after-school program and camps. Montgomery County Public Schools are expected to reopen for some in-person education March 15. (Note that the position was referred to as two half-year positions on the hold list, but it is one person. Also, the information previously presented did not include fringe costs; those were identified separately on the Hold List.) The estimated minimum salary of the position for next fiscal year is \$57,500 with an estimated fringe of \$30,000.
- Vegetative Maintenance Supervisor (likely to be \$24,000 for the rest of this fiscal year). This is a permanent Public Works position that has been vacant this year. The position involves vegetation maintenance as well as supervision of staff. The estimated minimum salary of the position for next fiscal year is \$63,500 with an estimated fringe of \$32,500.
- Road resurfacing funds of \$450,000 that can all be spent this fiscal year if a decision to do so is done at this time. Staff has reviewed the list of streets to be resurfaced that was previously shared, removing some due to improvements by utilities and adding some due to increased deterioration. The top priority road resurfacing work to do is on Maple Avenue from Philadelphia to Kennebec. Other streets from the list to be done are: Kansas Lane between Westmoreland and Eastern Avenues, Erskine Street between 14th Avenue and the City line, Baltimore Avenue between New York and Philadelphia Avenues. Additional streets identified

by staff as needing work are: New York Avenue from Takoma to Baltimore Avenues, Kennebec Avenue and Houston Avenue.

- \$500,000 in ADA sidewalk funds that can be spent this fiscal year. \$250,000 would be for the City-side ADA sidewalk improvements along Flower Avenue, thereby completing the work, and then \$250,000 for sidewalk locations along State Highways, including Piney Branch Road between Ray Road and Philadelphia Avenue; and completing the sidewalk work on Carroll Avenue across from the work done last year.

Questions and answers related to the Vegetative Maintenance Supervisor position are attached.

Council Priority

Fiscally Sustainable Government
A Livable Community

Environmental Considerations

Sidewalks that hinder access to those with physical disabilities force residents to use vehicles that can contribute to air pollution. Poor pavement conditions can have negative environmental consequences in water runoff and can discourage bicyclists from using streets due to potholes or pavement ridges. The Vegetation Maintenance Supervisor can better coordinate care of vegetated areas across the community, including coordinating the removing of invasive plants and improving the beauty of the City.

Fiscal Considerations

Funding for all of the items on the hold list are in the FY21 budget. The items listed above total approximately \$996,000. A delay in street restoration work would result in deteriorated road surface that may require restoration of the road base in addition to resurfacing, which is much more costly than resurfacing alone. Funds not recommended to be released from the hold list total approximately \$200,000.

Racial Equity Considerations

The City wishes to provide summer camp and before and after school programs, with preference given to families in greater need from the impacts of the pandemic. Additional staff will allow additional classes and programs. The negative financial impacts of the pandemic are disproportionately felt by households of color.

Attachments and Links

- January 13, 2021 Financial Presentation (Hold List on slide 4)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS RE VEGETATIVE MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR

- How many positions are there in the gardening/maintenance department?

The Division was reorganized and retitled after the retirement of the former Garden Supervisor, Mike Welsh. The prior Gardens Division had a supervisor and 2 technicians. It was reorganized into the Vegetation Management Division and a technician from the Right of Way Division was moved into this Division. So 4 people total, 1 supervisor, 3 technicians.

- How many are filled now? How many are anticipated to be filled this fiscal year?

We currently have 2 technician positions filled, one is vacant. We have delayed filling the vacant technician position until a supervisor is in place. If funds are released we would try to hire a supervisor as soon as possible and once in place, fill the 3rd technician position.

- Can you remind me if this supervisor position is a totally new additional position, or converting an existing position to a supervisor position, or something else?

It is not a new position; the prior position was Garden Supervisor. The new position is Vegetative Maintenance Supervisor. With the transfer of one technician from Right of Way Division into the Vegetation Division the goal was to bring all turf and garden maintenance within this Division (previously mowing was done through the Right of Way Division).

- Reiterate info about why the supervisor position vs lower-level is important (and that it's a working supervisor)

All supervisors in Public Works are working supervisors. They all are in the field and work alongside the technicians to complete the work of the Division. In addition, the Supervisors are responsible for purchasing, supervising staff, managing work schedules, responding to requests for service, staff training, etc.

- What work has not been able to be done, and what work will not be able to be done if this position is not filled?

Since we have two technicians in this Division, they have been combined with the other Department Divisions to complete priority assignments. In the early days of the pandemic, we were (and still are) focused on custodial services, facility maintenance, sanitation services and urgent right of way maintenance. The Vegetative Maintenance technicians were assigned to Building Maintenance, Right of Way and the Sanitation Division as needed to complete essential work. As we entered the Fall, the Vegetative Maintenance staff joined with the leaf collection division. For the recent winter storm response, the Vegetative Maintenance staff have done the sidewalk clearing - which is the regular assignment they have during winter events. As we enter spring, we will be doing minimal garden planting and maintenance through one of the technicians and the other is working with the Right of Way Division. Once we get into spring and summer, the 2 technicians will be needed to provide

turf maintenance through October. If we do not bring on another Vegetative Maintenance tech, not much garden maintenance will be able to be done this spring and summer as the priority will be turf maintenance. We are limiting the number of seasonal staff we bring on, due to COVID and trying to maintain safe work spaces and limit the number of staff in the yard and in vehicles as much as possible.

- What would the long-term impacts of not doing this work be on the condition of City property, and on environmental initiatives such as stream restoration, stormwater management and resilience, native plantings, etc.? I know there has been interest by some residents in working on a native planting list, etc., and I also worry about long-term degradation of public land if there is not ongoing maintenance to keep out invasives, preserve the plants that have been planted there, etc.

The Vegetation Management Division is not involved with stream restoration per se - for major projects we do that work through contractors. There will be some minimal planting (some was done earlier this year in Circle Woods). Most stormwater system maintenance is done by contractors - video inspection, cleaning and repairs. We also have a contractor who maintains 35 of our bioretention facilities 6 times per year. Our Right of Way Division also does inlet inspection and minor clean outs as needed and that has continued all along as our Right Of Way Division is fully staffed. The biggest impact will be to the appearance and maintenance of planted areas in city parks, facilities and gardens and along street boxes. There will be major weed growth and some loss of plants as a result. Most well established gardens will be able to be revived once staffing levels are back up to normal and there will likely be some supplemental planting to be done.

Introduced by:

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

RESOLUTION 2021-XX

REGARDING BUDGET HOLD LIST ITEMS

WHEREAS, when the FY21 Budget was being considered by the City Council, a number of expenditures and vacant positions were placed on a “hold list” to allow for flexibility regarding the uncertain fiscal impacts of the pandemic, with the option to approve the use of the funds for the intended purposes if the need and fiscal capacity would so allow; and

WHEREAS, the City Manager recommends allowing several of the expenditures and positions to come off of the hold list, due to the need to provide child care for those returning to in-person education, the need to manage vegetation during spring and summer months, and the need to proceed with road maintenance and ADA sidewalk work; and

WHEREAS, not all of the budgeted funds for the Recreation Supervisor and Vegetative Maintenance Supervisor will be spent due to the lateness in the fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, there are adequate funds in the City budget to allow funds for these positions and the infrastructure work to proceed; and

WHEREAS, budgeted amounts for the remaining items on the hold list will not be spent during this fiscal year.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of Takoma Park removes the Recreation Specialist, Vegetation Maintenance Supervisor, and funds for road maintenance and ADA sidewalk improvements from the FY21 Budget “Hold List.”

Adopted this ____ day of March, 2021.