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**To: Joe Simonson, Parks & Recreation  
Director**

**From: Ray Greenlee, Maintenance & Fleet Superintendent**

**Date: March 7, 2012**

**Subject: Tree Removal from Heritage and City Parks**

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**Discussion:**

The Maintenance Division is tasked with maintaining all City Parks. There have been numerous ongoing and escalating problems occurring due to the palm trees located at Heritage Park (located on East Hanford-Armona Road) and City Park (located at the corner of Fox and Bush Streets). Staff has discussed and researched trimming and / or removing the palm trees at Heritage and City Parks and replacing them with trees recommended by a certified arborist.

Over the years, the department has been able to trim the palm trees at the Parks with ladders or a bucket truck. The tree height now requires staff to hire a company to trim the palm trees at an approximate cost of \$15,000 - \$20,000 per year at Heritage Park and \$5,000 – 8,500 per year at City Park. Palm fronds are an ongoing hazard to both the public and staff. A windy day creates opportunity for personal and property damage to citizens and necessitates a quick response by staff to cleanup the debris to prevent a hazardous situation. Staff also notes that a large number of bats and wasp nest are located within the trees.

Maintaining the irrigation system due to breakage from the palm tree roots and gophers has been extremely problematic causing unnecessary expense to the Maintenance Division budget. *Gophers are attracted to palm tree roots and follow pvc irrigation pipes. Additionally animals such as rabbits, mice, and rats like to gnaw on palm tree roots and trunks.* <http://www.wilkenspalms.com/care.htm>

After much research staff believes to remove the palm trees and replant with trees recommended by a certified arborist would be better use of the limited funds the City has. The trees would be properly spaced, provide shade for park use, create an inviting atmosphere and a less hazardous condition on a windy day.

**Budget Impact:**

The yearly budget impact to keep the trees and trim them at Heritage Park is \$15,000 to 20,000 per year and at City Park the cost is \$5,000 – 8,500 per year. A one time cost to remove the trees, grind stumps, remove the debris and replant new trees would be \$50,000 to \$70,000 at Heritage Park; \$21,000 – 28,000 at City Park and includes cost for replacement trees. A third option staff is exploring is to seek a company to take the trees for reuse. Cost would be lowered to include purchase of new trees and removal (if any) of remaining palm trees.

**Recommendation:**

This information be presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission members to decide to either trim the trees or to remove the trees, then forward their recommendation to the City Council for a decision regarding the palm trees located at Heritage and City Parks.