

Memorandum

To: HPOA Board

From: Byrne Conley, HMDAC

Date: 5/26/2021

Re: firebreaks. HMD landscape contractor

As you know, a number of neighbors have been complaining about the service from the Maintenance District, particularly lack of attention to the firebreaks.

I spoke with Jason Lacey, LMD Supervisor for the City, on Monday 5/24/2021 at some length. The problem is primarily with LandCare, the contractor. Jason tells me they are a big company, 4th or 5th largest landscape company in the U.S., and pretty reputable. The basic problem is that they underbid the contract (so they say) to get a foot in the local market and the LandCare managers have been complaining to the City regularly that they are losing money. The City in turn tells them they have to perform per the specifications. They are now on their third manager of the account since the contracts started.

Whether due to Covid issues or otherwise, the service has really fallen off in the last year. Jason said he had a meeting two weeks ago with the Branch Manager and Regional Manager and threatened to terminate the contract, hire another contractor, and pursue the performance bond – which would debar the company from bidding on any Vallejo contract for 5 years and affect their bond rating and contract bids on other projects. The City has also been withholding payments pending completion of punch list items.

At the meeting, LandCare agreed to address all the punch list items by 6/30/2021, when the current contract ends. This process has already started as they finally addressed weeds on the Parkway median (though not on the East side, which remains to be done). James Olson, the City LMD inspector for Hiddenbrooke, has given LandCare a punch list and last Monday he repeated his request for a written response with a schedule. He has also been passing on to LandCare the recent homeowner emails with complaints, redacting the names.

So, I do not have a precise date re the fire breaks but they are going to have to be done by June 30.

Jason was also candid about staff shortages at the City in overseeing contractors; the City had a hiring freeze earlier in all departments, including the LMD oversight even though that is fully funded through our LMD taxes. They just finally found another inspector to add, last week.

LandCare is also apparently having staffing issues due to the fact that they laid off many workers due to Covid restrictions and are having trouble re-staffing as maintenance workers are being hired for vineyards – of course that is not an excuse, they need to raise their salaries.

LandCare does not even want to renew the contract; so it is going out to bid shortly. The City might even have to hire a firm on a temporary basis depending on the timing. I would note that the HMDAC has been urging the City since last fall to go to bid this year, the

performance has been poor (the poorest I have seen in 20 years living here) and we needed a change.

There are other funds that might be available re the fire breaks, as the Fire Department has stimulus money – the federal government has distributed billions for wildfire protection – but this is part of the contract and LandCare needs to perform its contractual obligations.

In the past, the fire breaks were in a separate contract, and ran about \$20K per year. They were folded into the landscape maintenance contract at one point on the thought it would be more economical for a contractor already on site to do the work. That issue may have to be revisited in light of the delays we have seen this year.

On a personal note, I was not aware of this even being an issue until the last few days, since my home does not border on HMD property (we are bordering the golf course, which has its own serious maintenance deficiencies, so we just complain to a different entity) and while the tall grass was obvious from driving by, I figured it would get addressed whenever the schedule called for it. I had no idea that some homeowners were so upset over the issue and it was building up.

I will keep you posted re any developments.