

ST. PETERSBURG CITY COUNCIL
Committee Report
February 19, 2009

TO: Members of City Council

FROM: Public Services and Infrastructure Committee:
Karl Nurse, Chair; Herb Polson, Vice-chair; Jeff Danner; Leslie Curran Polson
Alternate: Council Member Kennedy
Also attending: Council Members Newton and Bennett

RE: Public Services and Infrastructure Committee Meeting – February 12, 2009

- A. **Election of new Chair and Vice-chair**
Action: Council Member Nurse was elected Chair; Council Member Polson was elected Vice Chair.
- B. **Use of Nitrogen Fertilizers** – Michael Connors
Council Member Bennett introduced a proposed ordinance that would encourage residents to refrain from using fertilizers with nitrogen or phosphorous, especially during rainy months. In addition, the ordinance would also prohibit the sale of such fertilizers from June 1 to September 30 (effective two years from the passage of the ordinance). Mike Connors explained the harmful effects of nitrogen and phosphorous upon Tampa Bay, inhibiting the growth of sea grasses and the clarity of water, both of which have a harmful effect on sea life and lead to algae blooms. As an example, he mentioned that three costly storm water projects at Lake Maggiore, Mirror Lake and Booker Lake, cost the city \$21 million (plus \$170,000 annually to maintain) and will benefit the Bay by eliminating 4.3 tons of nitrogen. The proposed ordinance, at no cost to the city, would eliminate an estimated seven tons of nitrogen annually. The ordinance was drafted with input from Tampa Bay Estuary Program.
Action: Committee asked that the ordinance be divided into two separate ordinances, with the voluntary request to refrain from using nitrogen fertilizers as the first, and the prohibition of the sale of nitrogen fertilizers the second. Committee recommended passage.
- C. **Westminster Playground** – Susan Ajoc and staff
A high priority of the recently adopted Westminster Heights Neighborhood Plan is to acquire land and develop a neighborhood playground. At the Dec. 11 PSI meeting, four parcels of land were proposed. After discussion, committee members decided to postpone a decision until they had an opportunity to visit the sites in question. After site visits, two parcels remained under serious consideration. The first vacant lot is at 5200 Fourth Ave. S. The second, which was nearly double in cost but 3000 sq. foot larger, was located at 49th St. and Third Ave. S. Council Member Newton, a resident of the Westminster Heights Neighborhood, indicated that the neighborhood preferred the lot on 49th Street; however, several committee members raised concerns about the parcel being located on a congested traffic corridor and that it was not in the center of the neighborhood.
Action: The committee recommended proceeding with negotiation and purchase of the parcel at 5200 Fourth Ave. S.

- D. Use of St. Augustine Grass and Landscaping Ordinance** – Cliff Footlick, Julie Weston Council Member Nurse introduced a guest from the Native Plant Society who presented a slide show of properties that have incorporated drought-tolerant plants and reduced the use of St. Augustine grass in their landscape plans. The Parks Department highlighted their use of grass in citywide parks and medians, and discussed their ongoing plans to reduce the use of St. Augustine grass wherever possible and replace with groundcover and Xeriscaping. The use of perennial peanut groundcover was discussed – a drought tolerant material that is more costly to install but over a three to five year period recoups the installation cost in lower maintenance costs. Julie Weston discussed the city's Land Use Regulations (LDRs) and current regulations regarding landscaping of both commercial and residential properties. She has observed a trend toward the use of more drought-tolerant landscaping.

Action: The committee encouraged the Parks Department to continue experimenting with applying drought-tolerant landscaping where appropriate, and asked Parks to further investigate using reclaimed water wherever possible. Julie Weston was asked to discuss more stringent landscape regulations with both commercial and residential customers and return to the committee with her recommendations regarding new LDRs that incorporate drought-tolerant landscape regulations.

Next Meeting: February 26, 2009