

6/20/26
K. Smith
City Manager

Thank you, Mayor and Commissioners.

I want to briefly address the comments at our last meeting about recent tree removals and the suggestion that this work was done without professional review.

First, let me be very clear: the City does not remove trees casually or arbitrarily. Every removal decision follows our adopted codes and procedures, which require us to evaluate tree health, safety, infrastructure conflicts, and any other applicable requirements in each case.

When our code calls for a Certified Arborist, we use one. Even when it does not, staff and the City Arborist still evaluates whether a tree shows disease, structural instability, risk to utilities, or a public safety hazard. In the case discussed at our last meeting, staff determined that removal was necessary because of disease and risk of failure, and that decision was made in line with our current policies. The statement of over \$427k was spent is factually inaccurate as YTD for all tree work totals \$218,630 across three vendors.

I also want to address the process by which items like this are presented. If any member of the Commission has concerns or questions about operational decisions, my door is open, and I can be available to provide information, either in advance of a public meeting or to gather information to provide at the appropriate portion of the meeting. Raising a serious allegation in a 'gotcha' fashion, without first seeking clarification or the opportunity to gather and provide information, can unintentionally mislead the public and undermine confidence in the City's work, even when staff have acted appropriately.

Looking ahead, I welcome a Commission discussion about whether you want to strengthen our tree policies. That could include expanding when a certified arborist is required, enhancing public notification, or adopting a more formal tree replacement plan similar to what other cities use to maintain their canopy. My team and I stand ready to bring back options and best practices at your direction.

In this situation, our staff acted within current policy and code, and with the intent of protecting both public safety and the long-term health of our community. If the Commission decides to change the policy, we are prepared to implement whatever direction you provide.

Finally, as I noted in the memo, there was a serious incident in April 2025 that helped drive our proactive approach to tree hazard mitigation in FY26. I would now like to share a few photos and then a short video from that incident to provide context for our current practices.