



**CITY OF LOS ALTOS  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
May 12, 2015**

**INFORMATION ITEM**

**Agenda Item # 18**

**SUBJECT:** Receive an update on City of Los Altos agency water conservation efforts

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**BACKGROUND**

On April 1, 2015, Governor Brown issued an executive order mandating substantial water restrictions across the state of California. For the first time in state history, the Governor has directed the State Water Resources Control Board to implement mandatory water reductions in cities and towns across California in order to reduce state-wide water usage by 25%. Although California Water Service Company (Cal Water) – which provides water to the City of Los Altos among other municipalities – is a privately owned business, the Governor has requested such agencies to follow the same guidelines set forth for the State Water Control Board.

The State has created water conservation targets, tiers and goals for all urban water suppliers in order to meet the state-wide 25% conservation standard. Cal Water includes the City of Los Altos in a district along with parts of the cities of Cupertino and Mountain View, the Town of Los Altos Hills and unincorporated Santa Clara County. Per the state standards, the City of Los Altos, along with the entire district, is required to reduce water usage by 32% based on 2013 usage reports.

**EXISTING POLICY**

Resolution No. 2014-23 Water Conservation Measures

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION**

June 23, 2009 and June 24, 2014

**DISCUSSION**

The City of Los Altos has over 80 service connections with Cal Water to provide water services to civic facilities such as Hillview Community Center, City Hall, and Police Station, all the parks and play fields, and landscape medians throughout the City. The City agency water usage represents approximately 1.6% of the overall water usage of the City of Los Altos.

In order to achieve the 32% water reduction goal, the City has created a three-level approach to water conservation. The identified water conservation measures are aimed to meet the 32% reduction goal while considering the safety of athletic field users and long-term sustainability of landscape areas. Los Altos is fortunate to have many mature landscape areas that are capable of surviving with minimal irrigation applications.

The three levels begin with the most immediate action the City has and will continue to take to increase conservation. Measures included in Level One can be accomplished with little or no cost to the City. Levels Two and Three will require further consideration and capital investment before implementation.

### **Level One**

- Across-the-board reductions in the frequency and duration of watering of all publicly-owned landscaped surfaces including parks, fields and roadway medians. Watering frequency will be reduced from 3-5 days per week to 2 days per week while the watering duration will be reduced from 45 minutes to 15 to 25 minutes for the fields and from 5 minutes to 2 to 3 minutes for trees and shrubs.
- Adjust sprinkler range and coverage to ensure no runoff occurs.
- Monitor rainfall events and shut down watering of major fields during and immediately after rain events.
- Reduce watering of the Civic Center Orchard by approximately 75%.
- Discontinue use of water features at Grant Park and Marymeade Park.
- Test new technology, such as bio char, an organic soil amendment that is intended to improve water holding capacity, plant quality and landscape resilience.
- Implemented several water saving measures at all City-owned facilities including:
  - Installation of faucet aerators which dispense only 0.5 gallons per minute rather than the regular 2 gallons per minute
  - Restroom flush valves are receiving water saving flush kits
  - Prioritizing reports of water leaks so they are fixed expeditiously

### **Level Two**

- Public Works will continue to install drip-irrigation where appropriate. Funding for this water savings measure will be requested as part of a new Capital Improvement Program Project for Fiscal Year 2015/16. It is anticipated the implementation will take place after funds become available in July 2015.

### **Level Three**

- The City has formed an internal team comprised of staff from Public Works and Recreation & Community Services that will review water usage and potential for additional water saving measures. The team will then form recommendations that will be presented to the Environmental Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission in May. If approved by the Commissions, the recommendations will then be brought to the City Council in June 2015.
- The team will also consider the effect and impact of the browning-out of ornamental turf such as green medians and non-athletic field and park areas.

It is anticipated that Cal Water will assign certain water allocation for all City accounts. The City's water usage has to be below the allocation. The City will work closely with Cal Water to monitor our water conservation progress by reviewing water bills for all City accounts on a monthly basis. Information gathered from ongoing monitoring will be used to gauge the effectiveness of the water conservation measures already implemented. It will also be used to inform future decision-making, such as implementation timelines for the more intense water reduction measures.

It is important to share what the City is doing to reduce water consumption with the community. The City will rely on the following measures to help get the word out about water conservation and provide update on our progress:

- City website
- City e-News and Announcements
- City social media channels
- City cable access channel KMVT
- Press releases
- Communications with community, business and school groups
- Flyers that can be posted and distributed
- Signs and banners that can be placed in parks and other public spaces
- The City will explore the possibility of partnering with CalWater to host an information table at the Los Altos Arts & Wine festival in July 2015

#### **PUBLIC CONTACT**

Posting of the meeting agenda serves as notice to the general public.

#### **FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT**

Implementation of Level One water conservation will have little or no cost to the City. Levels two and three may require capital investment. Staff is in the process of evaluating the potential costs and will present recommendations to City Council as appropriate.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Not applicable

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Receive an update on City of Los Altos agency water conservation efforts

#### **ALTERNATIVES**

Provide additional direction regarding water conservation efforts

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**ATTACHMENTS:** None