

## 2005 PROPOSED BUDGET – DPW-FORESTRY SECTION

### Summary by Legislative Reference Bureau – Fiscal Review Section

Expense Category	2003 Actual	2004 Budget	% Change	2005 Proposed	% Change
Personnel Costs	\$9,850,329	\$10,128,803	2.8%	\$9,658,391	-4.6%
Operating Expnd.	\$828,211	\$791,793	-4.4%	\$809,750	2.3%
Equipment Purch.	\$107,187	\$149,200	39.2%	\$19,800	-86.7%
Special Funds	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$10,785,727</b>	<b>\$11,069,796</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>\$10,487,941</b>	<b>-5.3%</b>
Capital	\$1,203,815	\$796,500	-33.8%	\$1,281,000	60.8%
Positions	266	262	-1.5%	246	-6.1%

### Functions of the Forestry Section

The Forestry Section, which is part of DPW's Operations Division, has two primary functions. The first is maintaining a healthy City tree inventory, namely the "urban forest" of 200,000 City street trees. This includes growing trees at the City nursery, planting, pruning and maintaining trees, removing hazardous and damaged trees and combating tree diseases and pests.

The second function of the Forestry Section is to carry out the Boulevard Beautification Program. This includes mowing medians, designing and maintaining flower beds, and repairing irrigation systems for the City's 120 miles of boulevards.

### Historical Information

1. The 1999 Budget provided \$1,529,000 for capital improvement projects, an increase of 20.9% over the previous year. This increase was primarily due to expansion of the concealed irrigation program to reflect a policy of installing full irrigation systems, instead of the previous policy of installing bed-only systems.
2. In the 2000 Budget, boulevard mowing was reduced by 25%. The new mowing schedule reduced the number of mowings from 25 to 18 per year, for a savings of \$55,000. The elimination of 34 positions was also attributable to this change in the mowing policy.
3. By amendments to the 2001 Budget totaling \$343,292 in additional funding, the Common Council restored personnel for boulevard turf maintenance, watering and mowing to the 1999 level.
4. By amending the 2002 Budget to provide \$114,916 in additional funding, the Council restored funding for full irrigation of boulevards. Also, \$180,474 was added to restore funding for 10 positions of "Urban Forestry Laborer, Aux. (Seasonal)" for full turf maintenance and boulevard mowing.

5. In 2003, the Forestry Section used staff retirements as an opportunity to reduce its management staffing by 3 positions. Forestry now has one "Urban Forestry District Manager" and three "Urban Forestry Manager" positions for each of its three districts.
6. With the 2004 Budget, Forestry converted 40% of the boulevard flower beds from annuals to perennials. This was expected to produce long-term savings in boulevard maintenance costs. Forestry also changed the tree-pruning cycle from every three years for younger, smaller trees and six years for older, larger trees to every five years for all trees, for a savings of \$186,000 in 2004.
7. In 2004, the Forestry Section made two significant management-level position changes. First, the "City Forester" position was eliminated and that position, along with the former "Sanitation Supervisor," was replaced by the "Environmental Services Superintendent." Secondly, the grant-funded position of "Environmental Policy Analyst" was created. This position is responsible for securing new environmental grants for the City, as well as for developing policies and coordinating environmental efforts within DPW.

## **2005 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS AND ISSUES**

### **Personnel**

1. Under the 2005 Proposed Budget, the total number of authorized positions in the Forestry Section will be 246, a decrease of 16 positions from the 2004 Budget. Full-time equivalent positions will drop from 194.66 to 184.40 (-5.3%).
2. The Forestry Section's total personnel costs in the 2005 Proposed Budget are \$9,658,391, a 4.6% decrease from \$10,128,803 in the 2004 Adopted Budget. This reduction can be attributed entirely to lower fringe-benefit costs and to the proposed elimination of three "Urban Forestry Specialist" positions. These positions are being cut as a result of Forestry's plan to reduce the square footage of boulevard flower beds by 30% and to scale back the capital tree-planting program (these proposals will be discussed in greater detail below). All three "Urban Forestry Specialist" positions proposed for elimination are currently vacant.
3. In addition to eliminating three "Urban Forestry Specialist" positions, the 2005 Proposed Budget also reduces the number of "Urban Forestry Laborer (Seasonal)" positions from 51 to 38. This change is also related to the reduction in the area and number of boulevard flower beds.

### **Operating Budget**

1. The 2005 Proposed Budget provides \$809,750 for Operating Expenditures, an increase of \$17,957 (2.3%) from the 2004 Budget.
2. The increase in Operating Expenditures is largely attributable to increases in three categories:

Professional Services – Increasing from \$6,800 to \$30,000 (341.2%) because of plans to spend \$25,000 for Gypsy Moth control efforts in 2005. Specifically, the Forestry Section will participate in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Gypsy Moth Suppression Program, which provides aerial applications of pesticide for control of Gypsy Moths.

Information Technology Services – Nothing was budgeted for this line item in 2004, but \$12,000 in funding is proposed for 2005. These funds will be used to upgrade obsolete computer software and equipment.

Other Operating Services – Increasing from \$167,000 to \$191,750 (14.8%) to more accurately reflect actual expenditure experience in 2003. This line item primarily funds the Forestry Section's contracted tree removal services.

3. These increases in various Operating Expenditure categories are almost offset by a decrease in the Other Operating Supplies category, which has \$294,500 in funding in the 2005 Proposed Budget, down \$59,768 (16.9%) from the 2004 Budget allocation. This category funds tools and materials for pruning and planting, safety-related supplies and miscellaneous items used to support forestry programs. The proposed decrease in funding reflects actual 2003 expenditures.

### **Equipment Purchases**

The 2005 Proposed Budget funds Forestry Section equipment purchases totaling \$19,800. This is almost \$130,000 (86.7%) less than the amount budgeted for equipment purchases in 2004. The 2005 allocation will be used to fund the purchase of four deck shells and seven field radios. The reason for the sharp decline in equipment purchase expenditures is that, in addition to deck shells and field radios, the 2004 Budget also funded the purchase of 3 Hustler mowers, 3 other lawn mowers and upgrades for 32 computers. In 2005, the Forestry Section will deviate from its 6-year mower replacement schedule and delay purchasing 3 Hustler mowers and one Hillside mower for another year, thereby saving \$105,000 in equipment costs.

### **Special Funds**

The Proposed 2005 Budget contains no special funds for the Forestry Section.

## **Capital Projects**

The Proposed 2005 Budget includes two capital improvement items for the Forestry Section:

1. Concealed Irrigation and General Landscaping/City Boulevards – The Proposed 2005 Budget allocates \$631,000 for repair of concealed irrigations systems and drainage systems in City boulevards, and for replacement of these systems necessitated by street paving projects. The 2004 Budget provided only \$196,500 cash-levy funding for this item, plus \$381,000 in carryover borrowing authority. The increase for 2005 is attributable to the number of large street paving projects scheduled for next year.
2. Planting Program - The Proposed 2005 Budget provides \$650,000 for the Forestry Section's planting program, a \$50,000 increase from the 2004 funding level. This program funds the planting of street trees and other plant materials in conjunction with the construction of new streets or the reconstruction of existing streets or sidewalks. It also funds the planting of replacements for dead, diseased or damaged trees. For 2005, the Forestry Section plans to plant 390 trees in conjunction with street paving projects, 40 in conjunction with sidewalk replacement projects and 3,850 as replacement trees, for a total of 4,290 trees planted. This is a 57% increase over the number of trees actually planted in 2003 (2,731), and a 110% increase of over the number of tree plantings budgeted for 2004 (2,044).

The Forestry Section is able to plant so many more trees with only slightly higher funding because of the increasing availability of "bare root" trees grown at the City nursery, which require less City labor to plant than "balled-and-burlapped" specimens purchased from private tree growers. Approximately 80% of trees to be planted in 2005 will be "bare root" specimens grown at the City nursery. This is the result of a decision Forestry made several years ago to plant a wider variety of tree species at the City nursery. The diverse seedlings planted at that time are now reaching transplant age, thus allowing Forestry to significantly reduce the backlog of tree replacements, currently estimated at 3,300 trees.

While Forestry's 2005 Proposed Budget calls for a sharp increase in the number of street trees planted, staffing to support the tree-planting program is actually being reduced in 2005. The elimination of one of the three "Urban Forestry Specialist" positions -- a savings of \$41,250 -- is attributed to a reduction in Forestry personnel dedicated to this program.

## **Program Changes**

1. Flower Bed Reduction - The 2005 Proposed Budget indicates that the Forestry Section plans to reduce the area of flower beds in the City's boulevards by 19,000 square feet, or 30%, next year. The Forestry Section has indicated that the roughly 100 flower beds to be eliminated will be distributed proportionately among the 15 aldermanic districts, with each Council member being given an opportunity to have input on which beds are chosen for elimination. The eliminated flower beds, which are currently beds of annuals, not perennials, will be seeded

over -- no "alternative" plant materials (e.g., shrubs) will replace the flowers that once occupied these locations.

The reduction in number and area of flower beds will allow the Forestry Section to eliminate two "Urban Forestry Specialist" positions and 13 "Urban Forestry Laborer (Seasonal)" positions, for a savings of \$247,500 in 2005. Forestry also estimates that it will save \$13,750 in water usage as a result of the flower bed reduction, for a total savings of \$261,250 in 2005.

One measure of citizen reaction to past and future changes in boulevard maintenance practices is the number of boulevard-related service requests received by the Forestry Section. Between January 1 and August 23, 2003, the Forestry Sections received 20 such requests. During the same time period in 2004, after 40% of flower beds had been converted from annuals to perennials (as mandated by the 2004 Budget), the number of boulevard service requests was 35, a 75% increase.

2. Project Clean and Green - In 2005, the Forestry Section will play a role in implementation of "Project Clean and Green," a cooperative effort between the City and various non-profit organizations to create cleaner, healthier, more beautiful Milwaukee neighborhoods. This program involves coordinating existing neighborhood clean-up efforts and combining them with new initiatives, including the targeted collection of "bulky" items, partnerships with non-profit waste reduction and beautification groups, and neighborhood-based clean-up and planting activities. While most of the City's involvement in this program will be the responsibility of the Sanitation Section, the Forestry Section will serve Project Clean and Green in an advisory capacity, working with Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful, Greening Milwaukee and other groups to determine which trees and other plant materials are most appropriate for particular locations targeted for beautification.

### **Departmental Revenues**

The Forestry Section estimates that it will receive \$350,000 in revenues in 2005. This is an increase of \$125,000 (55.6%) from the 2004 Budget figure of \$225,000 and comparable to the actual 2003 revenues, \$348,606. The \$350,000 for 2005 can be broken down into two categories: Tree Removal Charges, \$250,000; Miscellaneous Forestry Charges, \$100,000. The first category is the revenues Forestry receives from removal of hazardous trees from private property. The second category consists primarily of revenues from the sale of plants produced at the City nursery and greenhouses. While the 2005 estimates for both revenue categories are based on 2003 experience (i.e., actual revenues), the Forestry Section continues to view plant sales from the nursery and greenhouses as a potential source of future revenue increases.

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