

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 14, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 19 : USE OF THE INMATE WORK DETAIL FOR PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE OF CITY TREES AND TREE WELLS

This memorandum is in response to a question from Councilman Krupicka concerning the use of Inmate Work Detail for planting of trees, maintenance of tree wells, and the training necessary to have inmates perform these tasks.

Given the limited number of inmates who meet the criteria necessary to work in this program and the existing workloads, staff of the Recreation Department and Sheriff's Office do not recommend adding new tasks for the Inmate Work Detail. Recreation staff recommends that the Inmate Work Detail continue mowing and leaf collection work.

The Sheriff's Office Inmate Work Detail consists of three Deputy Sheriffs who supervise eligible inmates working in the city on public or non-profit owned property. Inmates are placed in this program if they are willing to work and meet the stringent criteria. The Sheriff's Office tends to have anywhere from 7 to 14 inmates on the program at any given time. An inmate in this program must be sentenced then less than 18 months and meet the criminal history criteria. Typically, 50-70 inmates fit the sentencing criteria at any given time; however after further limiting the selections due to violent or other disqualifying charges, the average is about 12 inmates on the program. The Inmate Work Detail has high turnover due to the release of inmates upon the completion of sentences.

The Inmate Work Detail has maintained the mulch beds in the past for trees located on King Street when requested by Parks and Rec. They have also done so on public school properties on a limited basis as this can only be done when schools are closed per our agreement with the ACPS. They have not been trained in the proper planting and maintaining of city trees. The Inmate Work Detail does work on similar projects with Parks and Rec. Two years ago, the Sheriff's Office Work Detail Program, successfully implemented the Inmate Work Detail to take over the maintenance of over 40 "mini parks" in the City of Alexandria. Contractors once handled most of the parks but due to budget reductions, funding was eliminated for this need in FY 2010. The work detail has successfully handled the grass cutting and leaf removal in these parks and will continue to do so. Recreation staff recommends that use of Inmate Work Crews for maintenance of "mini parks" continue given the success of this program.

Should the Inmate Work Detail be assigned to another task, Recreation staff would most benefit from assistance with watering, weeding, and mulching tree wells as opposed to tree planting. Horticulture and Arborist staff would be available to provide training for the new skills required to perform any new assignments. Recreation staff believes that 20 hours of training with the Sheriff's staff and inmate crews would be sufficient. This would provide 5 to 10 hours at the beginning of the program and another 10 during the season to review the tasks and amend them as the season changes. The approximate cost for this training would be \$1,200 in terms of staff time and equipment.