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MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council

FROM: John Donnelly, Public Works Director

DATE: January 9, 2024

SUBJECT: Discontinue All Alley Brush Pick Up -
Implement Curbside Brush Removal Policy & Procedures

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This is a request to consider discontinuing all alley brush removal by implementing a Curbside Brush Removal Policy. Currently, alley brush pickup is performed by a crew and chipper machine, as the use of the grapple trucks in the alleys is unsafe due to electrical lines, tree and garbage obstructions and in some areas, unimproved pavement.

The proposal is to educate the public on the hazards of alley pickup and provide new policy procedure information via mailouts, social media and possible door-to-door communication with the affected homeowners. This would be a step-by-step process to inform affected residents, set a start date for grapple pickup at curbside and set an effective date for both residential customers and city crews.

The proposal is as follows:

- 1) Work with all City Council members affected by this change. Maps are attached for each district that has alleys and where the alleys are located.
- 2) Once the policy is endorsed by the council members, the policy will be made available to the public via mailouts, social media and if needed, door-to-door communication with the affected property owners.
- 3) Upon completion of the public education process, the Curbside Brush Removal Policy utilizing an all-grapple truck removal will be implemented and become effective. During the period of transition, crews will continue to use the chipper in alleys to assist property owners with the new process. A friendly reminder will also be placed on the resident's front door with the new process, schedule and the end date of all alley service.

We will also need to determine if procedures need to be implemented to limit the amount of brush removed per visit. Currently all brush that is placed at the curb by residential property owners is removed. The new policy is for residential properties only. We have assisted commercial properties as a one-time gesture.

Public Works

I estimate the new policy will also save the city by significantly lowering back injury claims with the current chipping operation. In 2016, Public Work experienced **300 lost days of work** for “Workman Compensation” claims. Since the purchase of the first grapple truck in June 2017, Public Works has only had 25 lost days due to work-related injuries. Most of the lost time was for a snake bite and a couple of bee stings. In addition, with the grapple trucks we have been able to remove more brush debris in a shorter time frame and obviously less injuries than before.

There are many day-to-day benefits of the city owning a small fleet of grapple trucks. We are now better prepared for any natural disaster that may happen in our community. When Hurricane Harvey hit Seguin in 2017, the city had to hire companies with grapple type trucks to remove over 85% of the downed tree debris and a company with a very large horizontal grinder to grind the massive pile of material. Currently, the city can respond to this type of disaster with very little outside help. The fleet includes two grapple trucks already in use, one currently on order and another to be added later, for a total of 4 grapple trucks, allowing the city and its’ crews more capability to respond to everyday jobs and large-scale disaster events.

To support an all-grapple brush service and added fleet equipment, the following is recommended:

- Upgrade Two Service Workers to Equipment Operator I
- Potential Upgrade of Equipment Operator II to a Heavy Equipment Operator
- Evaluate new policy to determine if new positions are warranted.

Together we can create the best path forward to better assist our residents and help keep Seguin as clean as we possibly can. I am looking forward to working with you, so Public Works can be the best asset to all in every task we are given.