



# Agenda Report

**MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, May 11, 2021

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** PARKS & COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR CALUBAQUIB  
BEN HEISTEIN, ASSISTANT PARKS AND COMMUNITY  
SERVICES DIRECTOR

**SUBJECT:** RESOLUTION ENTERING INTO AGREEMENT WITH  
WATSONVILLE WETLANDS WATCH IN THE AMOUNT OF  
\$349,800 FOR URBAN FORESTRY SERVICES FOR THE  
WATSONVILLE COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROJECT

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## **STATEMENT OF ISSUES:**

Watsonville Wetlands Watch is a non-profit corporation and grant partner for the Watsonville Community Forestry Project, funded by CAL FIRE. This agreement would allow Watsonville Wetlands Watch to support the City with Tree Planting, Urban Forest Management Plan Development, and Grant Administration/Reporting to meet grant project objectives.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt a Resolution that:

1. Authorizes the City Manager to execute all necessary agreements between the City and Watsonville Wetlands Watch to carry out grant objectives for the Watsonville Community Forestry Project, and
2. Appropriates \$349,800 from the Special Grants fund (0260) for the project.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The City Council authorized the application for CAL FIRE Urban Forestry Program grant funds on April 14, 2020, by Resolution No. 46-20 (CM). Following the application, the City was awarded a \$700,000 grant from The CAL FIRE Urban & Community Forestry Program in August 2020.

The program's goals are to optimize the benefits of trees and related vegetation through multiple objective projects as specified in the California Urban Forestry Act of 1978 (Public Resources Code §§ 4799.06-4799.12). This grant program uses funds provided by Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) for California Climate Investments (CCI) and projects that further the goals of the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32), result in a net greenhouse gas (GHG) benefit, and provide environmental services and cost-effective solutions to the needs of urban communities and local agencies. Co-benefits of the projects include increased water supply, clean air and water, reduced energy use, flood

and storm water management, recreation, urban revitalization, improved public health, and producing useful products such as bio-fuel, clean energy, and high-quality wood. Projects may provide a combination of these co-benefits or other co-benefits not mentioned, or even benefits that are not yet clearly defined. Urban and Community Forestry efforts play a significant role in meeting the State's GHG emission reduction targets. Cal Fire encourages resident participation in the development and implementation of each project, although due to the size and complexity of projects, applicants are limited to local agencies and non-profit organizations.

Expansion and improved management of urban forests is greatly needed in the City of Watsonville. The City is significantly deficient in urban forest resources, with a current 7.8% canopy coverage. This severe lack of urban trees directly impacts the City's public health and well-being and the freshwater wetlands that underlie the City. Watsonville is a predominately low income community, where for example among the approximately 20,000 students in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, over 75% qualify for free and reduced lunch and unemployment rates are the highest in Santa Cruz County. The entire City qualifies as either SB 535 or AB 1550 under the CA ARB designation, and has a combination of high pollution burden and low income. Watsonville exemplifies the type of community in California that will benefit most from urban forest development.

The City of Watsonville and Watsonville Wetlands Watch are currently collaborating on an Urban and Community Forestry grant, which will install 300 trees throughout the City's highest need areas by the end of 2021. This very successful project represents the first major collaboration in urban forest expansion and to date has supported over 1,500 youth and family volunteer hours in tree plantings and care. Both the City and Watsonville Wetlands Watch have extensive experience in regional plan development, including the City's Urban Greening Plan (2012), the Climate Action Plan (2014), as well as in the design and implementation of new ordinances.

### **Watsonville Community Forestry Grant Project**

The proposed Watsonville Community Forest Grant Project represents a second phase of urban forestry revitalization and expansion efforts based on a collaborative partnership between the City of Watsonville and Watsonville Wetlands Watch. The proposed project will build off the success of prior work while addressing the lack of tree protection policies and an urban forest management plan needed to develop and sustain public and environmental benefits. This project will also pilot new neighborhood tree planting events and community engagement strategies important to urban forest expansion in Watsonville.

The proposed project will develop and implement comprehensive urban forest management activities designed to evaluate current urban forest resources, identify locations, opportunities, and needs for urban forest expansion activities, develop appropriate policies to sustain and enhance urban forest resources within the City of Watsonville over time, and implement urban forest expansion activities in a way that advances these efforts.

Specific project objectives include:

1. Develop an urban forest inventory for the City of Watsonville;
2. Develop an urban forest management plan, per CalFire guidelines;
3. Develop project designs and plans for at least 30 future street, neighborhood, and school tree plantings that can be implemented following the urban forest management plan creation;
4. Develop a City of Watsonville tree preservation ordinance;
5. Complete a resident survey to support the urban forest management plan and ordinance development;
6. Establish a tree canopy cover goal for the City;
7. In partnership with Watsonville Wetlands Watch, install 260 trees on City streets, parks, and neighborhoods during 20 public and local student education and outreach events that will also include surveying of residents;
8. In partnership with Watsonville Wetlands Watch, pilot resident neighborhood tree planting events and an adopt-a-tree tree stewardship program to engage City residents in urban forest stewardship and foster public interest and appreciation for urban forest expansion.

Through this agreement, Watsonville Wetlands Watch will support the City in meeting objectives 7 and 8 along with supporting development of the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) (Objective 2) and design of future street, neighborhood, and school tree plantings (Objective 3). Additionally, they will provide grant administration and reporting services. Watsonville Wetlands Watch was selected for this project because it is uniquely positioned to support long-term Watsonville urban forest expansion and stewardship and has a demonstrated commitment to community-based non-profit environmental education and stewardship in the community.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This project meets the Council Strategic Priorities of 03-Infrastructure & Environment through tree planting and long-term planning to improve the environment and 05-Community Engagement & Well-Being, through engaging the community in the development of the UFMP and participation in tree plantings throughout the City.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

This agreement in the amount of \$349,800 will be funded entirely by the CAL-FIRE Urban Forestry Grant (337) Project #10070.

**ALTERNATIVE ACTION:**

The City Council may choose not to award this agreement.

**ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (If any):**

None.