

**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION
ADDITIONAL WORKSHOP AGENDA**

**Wednesday, March 15, 2000, 6:30 p.m.
Two Rivers Convention Center, 159 Main Street**

*****NOTE DATE AND TIME*****

- 6:30 **WEED CONTROL PROGRAM:** David Varley and Ivy Williams will discuss the operation of the City's weed program. [Attach W-2](#)
- 7:10 **PRESENTATION OF ARTWORK FOR NEW CITY HALL**
- 7:25 **ADJOURN TO REGULAR MEETING**

Attach W-2

**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION**

City Council

Workshop

Formal Agenda

Meeting Date:

March 15, 2000

Date Prepared: March 6, 2000

Author: David Varley & Ivy Williams

Title: CDAD, Code Enforcement Supervisor

Presenter Name: Varley & Williams

Title: CDAD, Code Enforcement Supervisor

Subject: The City's Weed Control Program

Summary: The City's weed abatement program was mentioned at the last City Council retreat. It was decided to place this item on a workshop for further discussion.

Background Information: The attached report describes how the City's weed control/abatement program works. The purpose of the report is to provide background information for Council's discussion of this program.

Budget: The report does not recommend changes to the current budget for the weed control program.

Action Requested/Recommendation: Council discussion of the program.

Citizen Presentation: **Yes** **No. If yes,**

Name

Purpose

Report results back to Council? **No** **Yes, When** _____

Placement on agenda: <input type="checkbox"/> Consent <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Consideration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Workshop
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MEMORANDUM

TO: CITY COUNCIL

**FROM: DAVID VARLEY, ACM, CDAD, ACM
IVY WILLIAMS, CODE ENFORCEMENT SUPERVISOR**

SUBJECT: WEED ABATEMENT PROGRAM

DATE: MARCH 6, 2000

The City's weed abatement program was mentioned at the last City Council retreat. It was decided to place this item on a workshop for further discussion. This memo describes how the program operates to help Council discuss this issue and make any changes they deem appropriate.

The weed abatement program has been in the Code Enforcement Division since 1991. Prior to this it was in several different departments including Fire, Public Works and Parks & Recreation. There are two components to this program. Enforcement of the City's weed ordinance and spraying/mowing City property and rights-of-way.

The program operates between May and October with six full-time seasonal employees. These employees include two surveyors, one clerk and three workers on the cutting/mowing crew. The total budget in 19991 was \$97,709 and the program received \$10,185 in revenues.

ENFORCEMENT OF WEED ORDINANCE

The program to control weeds has been a proactive effort with the exception of the 1989 season where a complaint driven program was tried, but was not considered successful. The program is governed by Chapter 16, Article II of the Municipal Code. This section of the Code requires that weeds which are over six inches in height must be cut down to within three inches of the ground. It also identifies five undesirable plants or noxious weeds which must be removed from properties.

Around the first of May two seasonal surveyors begin searching for violations of the weed ordinance. The City is divided into a north and south area with North Avenue serving as the dividing line. (There are approximately 20,000 parcels in the City.) Each surveyor is assigned one area and systematically covers his/her assigned area of the City one section at a time. It takes the surveyor approximately three to four weeks to cover the entire area. Once the area has been covered the surveyor will go back and begin again.

Properties receive a Notice of Violation if the majority of weeds on the property are well over the six-inch violation height noted in the ordinance. In 1999, a total of 1,375 notices were issued. Courtesy cards are handed out to properties with weeds close to the six-inch height of violation, or if there is a small patch that needs attention.

The Notice of Violation is written by the surveyor to document the physical address and parcel number. A hard copy of the notice is posted on the property if there is a

structure on which to hang it. Each day the notices are turned in to the summer clerk for processing.

The Notice of Violation allows 10 days for the property owner/tenant to voluntarily comply by cutting weeds on the property. The notice provides a phone number to call if there are questions, if a list of local contractors is desired or if the recipient no longer owns the property. An Administrative Hearing can be requested within 10 days of the notice date. The Board of Appeals serves as the weed hearing board. No appeals were scheduled for hearing in 1999.

The summer clerk receives the Notices of Violation from the surveyors and sends a copy of by certified mail to the property owners. Property owners wanting an extension beyond the ten days allowed on the violation notice can call the clerk to make a request. Most extensions are granted and they usually allow one more weekend for the weeds to be cut. In 1999, approximately 100 extensions were granted. The summer clerk also tracks complaints, coordinates contact between property owners and the crews and submits billings to the Finance clerk.

All properties that receive a Notice of Violation are re-inspected after the ten day period. Properties found not in compliance upon re-inspection by the surveyor are noted in a database and appear on a cutting report to be subsequently cut by the City's cutting/mowing crew. When the City crew cuts weeds on private property the owner of the property is billed for this work.

In 1999, the cutting/mowing crew cut weeds on 337 private property lots. This is out of a total of 1,375 lots that received a Notice of Violation. During the peak of the season, from about July 15, to August 30, the cutting crew generally runs seven to ten days behind in cutting weeds on lots that have not been cut by the property owner. This occurs because the cutting/mowing crew generally gives priority to cutting weeds on City owned property and rights-of-way.

In addition to the violations found by the surveyors, complaints about weed violations are also received. A central weed complaint sheet is kept in the Code Enforcement Division. Complaints are generally inspected as part of the surveyor's systematic inspection of an area unless the reporting party indicates a sight distance or other safety problem. More than 500 complaints were received in 1999.

In addition to weeds that are too tall, the City also recognizes five weeds designated by the State and Mesa County as noxious. The most prevalent of these weeds found in the City limits is Russian knapweed. There were 110 cases of this weed documented in 1999. When one of the five noxious weed types is found on a property, the owner has an additional responsibility of taking measures to eradicate the noxious weeds by implementing a management plan. A letter is sent to the owner requesting that the owner notify Code Enforcement of a plan for eliminating the noxious weed from the property.

SPRAYING/MOWING

A spraying contract is put out to bid each spring that provides for herbicide weed control on City owned properties, along roadsides, walking paths, medians and other areas in the City. Each spring this contract is reviewed by the City's Real Estate Agent and Public Works Department. The surveyors are provided with a copy of the contract and monitor their assigned areas for satisfactory performance by the contractor. The contract for 1999 contained 55 locations and was awarded to Colorado Vegetation Management at a bid of \$11,500.

The cutting/mowing crew consists of three seasonal employees and has two main jobs to do. Their first job is to cut weeds on City properties such as City-owned lots, medians, around barricades and signs and to mow weeds on City rights-of-way along streets. Their second job is to cut weeds on private properties that have not complied with a Notice of violation.

Currently 120+ miles of roadway are mowed by the cutting/mowing crew using a tractor and a variety of mowing attachments. Approximately 337 tractor hours were logged just for roadside mowing in 1999. Approximately 70% of the miles of roadside mowing require a follow vehicle for safety. The other two members of the cutting crew follow the tractor with one driving and the other cutting around poles and traffic devices. The total number of miles continues to increase as annexations bring roadways into the City's maintenance responsibility. Keeping the roadsides adequately mowed has been difficult. Last year our tractor mowed the entire 120 miles at least twice with some roadways getting three cuts. Once a month, however, would be preferred in a good growth year.

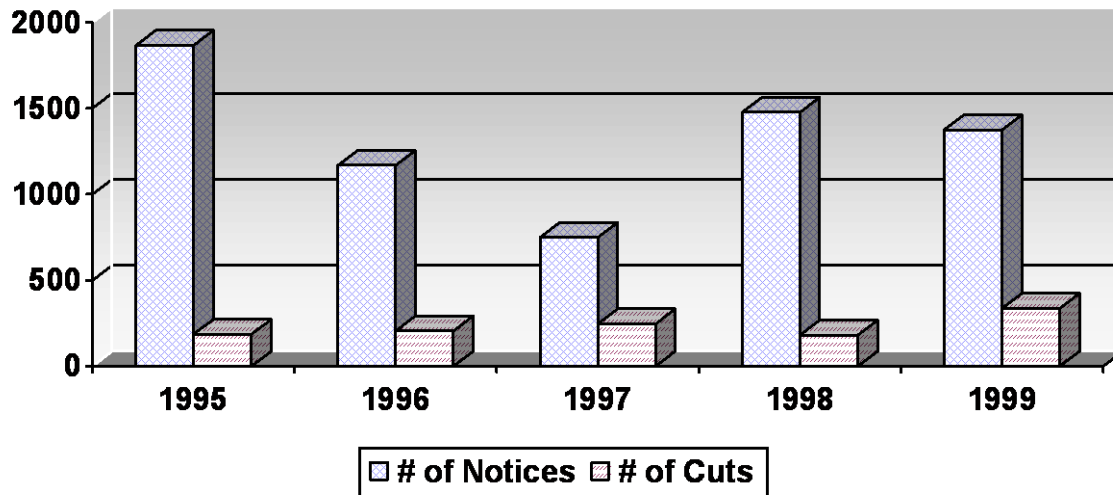
A list of barricades, walking paths, utility boxes and fire hydrants that have either drawn complaints in the past or have been noted as requiring cutting is provided to the cutting/mowing crew along with City properties such as parking lots. The list has approximately 70 locations, but is not comprehensive. The crew checked these locations at least three times during the 1999 season. In addition, the crew is instructed to stop when possible and trim around any City pole, hydrant or utility box that has weeds growing around it and begins each season checking City owned locations.

COMMON CRITICISMS OF THE PROGRAM:

- Properties over one acre, like some kochia fields, are not required to clear cut. A 20 foot perimeter cut is required on the sides adjacent to roads or developed property. When weed season ends, these weeds dry out and blow out of the field onto neighboring and sometimes not so neighboring properties. City properties over an acre are included in this criticism.
- Fields or vacant lots between developed lots that contain native vegetation, such as greasewood and sage, are not required to cut at all. Some adjacent properties do not agree that natural vegetation spaces over one acre should be exempted from cutting a 20 foot perimeter.
- Property owners adjacent to a violation get impatient during peak periods in the season when the crews are running behind in the private lot cuts.
- Some think no extensions should be granted and others think we don't allow enough time for absentee owners to receive notice and make cutting arrangements.

- It is a judgement call whether a notice is issued, and sometimes the judgement of the surveyor is called in question.

WEED ABATEMENT SUMMARY



	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Number of Notices	1866	1168	750	1477	1375
Number of Cuts	186	205	246	181	337
Non-Compliance	10%	18%	33%	12%	25%
Voluntary Compliance	90%	82%	67%	88%	75%