

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE FOR BIDS – WEED ABATEMENT SERVICES

SOURCE: FIRE DEPARTMENT


COMMENT: The Fire Department has evaluated the City of Porterville weed abatement contract and has developed a Request for Proposals (RFP) for weed abatement services. The most recent RFP for weed abatement services was conducted in 2007 and included a three (3)-year period of performance, renewable in additional one (1)-year intervals at the City's option and upon mutually-agreeable terms. Contract terms were modified in 2009 and have been renewed five (5) additional years. The Fire Department is recommending a three (3)-year, non-renewable period of performance in the current request for proposals. The Department would like to advertise for proposals in January of 2014 and bring the item back to Council in February or March 2014 for award. This schedule allows sufficient time for properties to be assigned to a weed abatement contractor by April of 2014.

During the first two years of the previous contract, 2007 through 2008, the average cost of abatement per acre including discing, handwork, debris removal and dump fees was \$109.00. Following the 2009 revision, the average cost increased more than 300%. In 2013 the average cost was \$451.78 per acre. This increase was due to a change in contract terms from "piece rate" to "hourly rate" for abatement services. Terms of the proposed RFP specify piece rates per acre, per linear foot of handwork, and per unit of debris or trash to be hauled, and should result in a more favorable total cost per acre to the City of Porterville. Staff has researched other weed abatement contracts and found payment for services by piece rate is the established practice for local jurisdictions and other municipalities in California.

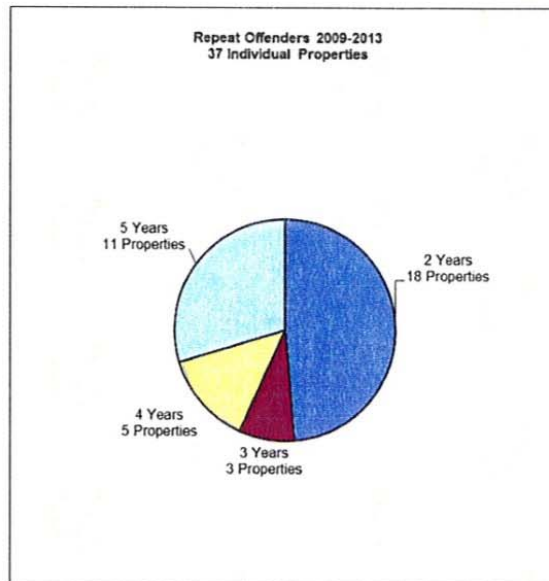
Both the Municipal Code and California Fire Code require property owners to abate fire hazards, including weeds on their properties. The weed abatement program provides a tool for the City to abate hazards when the property owner fails to do so. A review of performance over the previous five-year period, 2009 through 2013, shows a 96% rate of voluntary compliance by property owners. The 4% of property owners who failed to achieve voluntary compliance did so repeatedly over the five-year period as depicted on the following chart.

Dir. 

Approp./ Funded MFB

CM 

Item No. 3



When the City of Porterville takes action to abate weeds from private property, the property owner is charged for the cost of abatement including a 50% administrative fee. Over the previous five years the average fee for abatement and administration has been \$1,256 per property. For these few property owners, that fee has not been sufficient to encourage voluntary compliance. In an effort to improve voluntary compliance, the Fire Department intends to utilize the administrative citation process as allowed by City of Porterville Municipal Code, Chapter 2, Article XIV, Section 2-144, Violations, Penalties and Enforcement. Consistent with this section, property owners could be fined \$100, \$500 and then \$1000 for failure to abate weeds within specified time frames. Properties that still require abatement after assessment of such fines would be assigned to the abatement contractor, with all subsequent costs, including the administrative fee, being the responsibility of the property owner.

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council:

1. Authorize staff to advertise for bids for weed abatement services.