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Title: Parks Maintenance: Irrigation and Management of City Water in Parks

Presenter:
Eric Becker, SIMD Unit Administrator
Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services - Parks Maintenance

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Attachments: 1. 2021 Parks Irrigation Update.Final, 2. 2020 Water Conservation Annual Report FINAL

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7/26/2021	1	Council Work Session	received	

Parks Maintenance: Irrigation and Management of City Water in Parks

Presenter:

Eric Becker, SIMD Unit Administrator
Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services - Parks Maintenance

In 2010, the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department (P&R), in conjunction with Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU), developed a multi-faceted Water Conservation Program for the park system. The program was implemented to improve irrigation system infrastructure, provide educational resources to Parks staff, and to create a culture of water use efficiency. Funding has primarily come via the support of City Finance, CTF and TOPS funds, and through CSU’s Conservation Program. The program is now in its 12th year and continues to be a primary focus and priority of senior leadership and parks staff.

Background:

Budget reductions and drought impacts and resultant watering restrictions led to reduced watering to parks and downtown medians. At the direction of City Council, Utilities entered into two water conservation pilot programs with P&R on May 1, 2010: the Water Conservation Rate Pilot Program and the Pilot Irrigation Efficiency Program. The collective program goals were to:

- Provide a short-term solution to keep parks attractive and healthy under tough budget constraints.
- Make water available through a budget-based rate structure which encourages proper watering and discourages over watering.
- Implement parks efficiency audits, evaluations, and retrofits that assure long-term sustainability of parks irrigation infrastructure.
- Promote a lasting culture of efficient irrigation management.

The two programs initiated by Colorado Springs Utilities concluded in spring of 2015. Shortly thereafter, P&R hired a full-time Water Conservation Specialist to lead and support program goals. The program implemented by P&R has continued to flourish, becoming a model program around the state in supporting a comprehensive and proactive approach to park water management. The Department manages irrigation systems that deliver water to over 860 irrigated acres of turf, native grasses, landscape plants, and trees. To meet the never-ending maintenance challenge of keeping the irrigation systems operating at peak efficiency, the Department employs 45 ALCC (Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado) Certified Irrigation Technicians to maintain the irrigation systems and manage annual water allotments.

Previous Council Action:

At the direction of City Council, Utilities entered into two water conservation pilot programs with Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department on May 1, 2010: the Water Conservation Rate Pilot Program and the Pilot Irrigation Efficiency Program. The program with Utilities lasted five years ending in May 2015. In 2018, City Council passed resolution #49-18 Fixing water surplus rates. City Council member Don Knight requested a water project account be established for the Department's water usage.

Financial Implications:

N/A

City Council Appointed Board/Commission/Committee Recommendation:

N/A

Stakeholder Process:

N/A

Alternatives:

N/A

Proposed Motion:

N/A

N/A