



CITY OF

NEWPORT BEACH

City Council Staff Report

November 4, 2025
Agenda Item No. 6

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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TITLE: Approval of Amendment No. Two to Maintenance & Repair Services Agreement with Merchants Landscape Services, Inc. (Contract No. 8772-1) for Athletic Field Re-Sodding at Buffalo Hills Park

ABSTRACT:

The City Council Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Ad Hoc Advisory Committee (Committee) and staff met with members of the Harbor View and Newport Hills Community Associations to discuss several issues including concerns with the City of Newport Beach's (City) planned use of synthetic herbicide treatments to control excessive weeds on the Buffalo Hills Park grass athletic fields. After much discussion, the full Committee recommended that the City should undertake a pilot project for the Buffalo Hills Park athletic field, whereby the City would re-sod the entire grass athletic field (not including the Anderson School portion) in lieu of addressing excessive weed control by use of a chemical herbicide. To implement this pilot project, staff requests awarding the project to Merchants Landscape Services (Merchants), appropriating \$189,000 in increased expenditures from the General Fund and approving an amendment to the on-call portion of Merchants' agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly;
- b) Approve Budget Amendment No. 26-038 appropriating \$189,000 in increased expenditures in Account No. 0108031-851030 from the General Fund unappropriated fund balance; and
- c) Approve Amendment No. Two to Maintenance and Repair Services Agreement with Merchants Landscape Services, Inc. for Landscape Services for Parks & Facilities to increase the on-call not to exceed amount by \$189,000 for a total on-call not to exceed amount of \$4,489,000 and a total overall contract NTE of \$14,639,000, and authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to sign the amendment.

DISCUSSION:

On April 29, 2025, City Council established the IPM Committee, composed of Mayor Pro Tem Lauren Kleiman, Councilmembers Noah Blom and Sarah J. Weber.

The Committee's purpose was to review the City's current IPM program, which includes the use of pesticides, and submit possible recommendations for potential revisions to the full City Council for consideration.

The Committee first met on July 3, 2025, where staff provided an overview of the current IPM program. The Committee discussed specific concerns raised by some residents in the Harbor View and Newport Hills Community Association regarding the usage of synthetic herbicides on City-maintained athletic fields, particularly Buffalo Hills Park and Bonita Canyon Sports Park. The Committee recommended holding a community meeting with residents of the two associations to follow-up on their concerns using the Associations' Board Meeting as an avenue for this discussion.

The Committee met with approximately 30 residents of both associations at the Harbor View Association Clubhouse on September 15, 2025. Staff presented a brief overview of the current IPM program, with special emphasis on athletic field maintenance, followed by a question-and-answer session with attendees. Several residents expressed a desire to eliminate all synthetic herbicide use on the City's athletic fields, while staff relayed concerns regarding safety due to uneven playing surfaces should the weeds proliferate. After further discussion, a pilot program was recommended by Councilmember Blom on behalf of the Committee for the Buffalo Hills Park athletic field, whereby in lieu of addressing excessive weed control on the existing Buffalo Hills City athletic fields by use of a chemical herbicide, the fields would be stripped of grass and weeds, the surface would be repaired and leveled, and new sod would be laid. The new grass playing surface would then be monitored for weed recurrence and addressed through mechanical and/or organic methods over the next three years (or to the level where treatment for excessive weeds is deemed necessary). The Buffalo Hills Park athletic field would not be treated with any herbicides during this period.

Staff sought proposals from both of the City's current on-call landscape contractors for the athletic field repair, preparation and re-sodding work following the community meeting and direction from the Committee. The scope of work includes removal of 115,800 square feet of existing grass surface, incorporating 300 tons of wash sand with a rototiller to improve drainage, laser leveling the surface, installation of 115,800 square feet of overseeded hybrid Bermuda sod, and installation of protective snow fencing. The proposed re-sodding work will be undertaken in early December 2025 and take approximately two weeks to complete. Snow fencing will then be installed, and the field will be closed to all activity for four weeks. The field will then be open for passive use but restricted from further sports related use for an additional four weeks to allow the sod to establish.

Merchants provided the low bid of \$188,029.15, which was slightly lower than Brightview Landscape Services bid of \$200,672.57. Merchants is the current City park and facilities contractor and staff is satisfied with the level of service; the value Merchants has provided and the quality of the field renovations that Merchants has performed. Merchants' supervisors and field staff possess excellent technical knowledge regarding the intricate and time-sensitive work entailed with athletic field renovations and provide similar services for the City of Irvine, among others.

Staff requests approving a second amendment to the Merchants' agreement to provide for the re-sodding pilot project at Buffalo Hills Park, as well as approving a budget amendment appropriating \$189,000 in increased General Fund expenditures to fund the necessary amendment.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Budget Amendment appropriates \$189,000 in increased expenditures from the unappropriated General Fund balance to the Turf Renovation account in the Public Works Department, 0108031-851030.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the City Council find this action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the City Council considers the item).

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A - Budget Amendment
Attachment B - Amendment No. Two with Merchants Landscape Services, Inc.
Attachment C - Location Map