September 9, 2025 Agenda Item No. 13

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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TITLE: Request to Waive City Council Policy G-6 for Alternate Palm and

Tree Species at the Sherman Library and Gardens (2647 East Coast

Highway)

ABSTRACT:

Sherman Library and Gardens (Sherman Gardens) in Corona del Mar approached the City of Newport Beach with a landscape beautification plan that included the City rights-of-way surrounding the property at 2647 East Coast Highway. The plan includes removal and replacement of City street trees on East Coast Highway, of which the specific replacement tree species required are identified in City Council Policy G-6 - *Maintenance and Planting of Parkway Trees* (Policy G-6). Staff recommends the City Council approve a waiver to Policy G-6 for alternate palm and tree species as part of the Sherman Gardens renovation plan.

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; and
- b) Approve a waiver of City Council Policy G-6 *Maintenance and Planting of Parkway Trees* for alternate palm and tree species in the City rights-of-way at Sherman Gardens (2647 East Coast Highway).

DISCUSSION:

Sherman Gardens has begun planning renovations to its property. Part of the renovations involve altering and beautifying the surrounding property, including the City rights-of-way on East Coast Highway and Fernleaf Avenue. On the East Coast Highway frontage, plans call for the removal of 13 City street trees, comprised of seven king palms (*Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*) and six orchid trees (*Bauhinia variegata*). The planned replacement tree species are 11 strawberry trees (*Arbutus unedo*) and two Mexican blue palms (*Brahea armata*), positioned on either side of the bell tower. On the Fernleaf Avenue frontage there are currently no City street trees, and the plan proposes three new catalina ironwood trees (*Lyonothamnus floribundus*).

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City staff reviewed the plans and found that a stipulation in Policy G-6 designated the tree species on the East Coast Highway frontage as king palm and purple orchid. There are no designated tree species on Fernleaf Avenue. Staff is comfortable with the proposed alternate species on East Coast Highway as they are reliable tree species in other areas of the city. However, staff called out that the new trees on East Coast Highway need to be of sufficient size, namely single trunk Mexican blue palms of at least 10-foot brown trunk height (BTH) and strawberry trees at a minimum of 36-inch box size, to provide for necessary pedestrian clearances. Sherman Gardens agreed with staff's specifications, but asked if the Mexican blue palms were unavailable, they could use similarly sized Cuban royal (*Roystonea regia*), Kentia (*Howea forsteriana*), or king palms. These alternatives too were acceptable to staff. Thus, staff recommends City Council approval of a waiver to Policy G-6 for requested alternate palm and tree species as part of the Sherman Gardens renovation plan.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

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).