

MWEO

From: Relph, Steve [Steve.Relph@cityofrc.us]
Sent: Tuesday, December 30, 2008 4:13 PM
To: MWEO
Cc: Barnes, Jeff; Bearly, Joan; Temme, Ed
Subject: Water Ordinance Comments

I wanted to make some comments concerning one aspect of the proposed water ordinance:

Comment 060.1

On page 29 the ordinance states: "Overhead irrigation shall not be permitted within 24 inches of any non-permeable surface. Allowable irrigation within the setback from non-permeable surfaces may include drip, drip line or other low-flow non-spray technology..."

Comment 060.2

This ordinance would create some serious issues for us or anyone maintaining landscaped median islands and parkways in a public works setting where budgets and manpower are limited. With the new regulations many of these planters would be forced to go to a drip system in order to comply. In over 15 years of experience using drip systems at various locations within our city, I have found that the benefits of drip irrigation do not outweigh the costs:

- Drip is nearly impossible to maintain effectively – leaking tubes and connectors become extremely difficult to locate and repair in mature planters and labor costs sky-rocket.
- The increased labor required to trouble shoot, repair, flush, and maintain this type of irrigation means that workers are exposed to traffic hazards for longer periods of time – especially on median islands along busy streets.
- No matter how much time irrigation maintenance staff spends trouble-shooting these systems leaks will continue to go undetected for long periods of time. This can often mean MORE water is wasted. In addition, hazardous and costly road failures can result if not detected in time.
- Many plants will die as emitters routinely clog, and tubing clogs or becomes disconnected. Roots will continually clog emitters and irrigation maintenance staff will never be able to keep up with it.
- Plant health will suffer dramatically as roots will not develop properly, soils will increase in salinity, and nutrients will become unavailable in the soil thanks to the increased alkalinity of the soil.
- Vandalism becomes a real nightmare when vandals cut, pull, and easily destroy the tubes.

I believe a better solution for saving water lies in the LANDSCAPE DESIGN. This means using water thrifty plants, properly spaced plants, lots of mulch, and incorporating some sort of non-irrigated hardscape such as cobble, decomposed granite, rock and other non-irrigated media as part of the design. One example of a good design that our city uses is its 60% planted areas to 40% hardscape ratio in all new landscaped sites.

Thank you for allowing us to comment on this new ordinance. Hopefully, some sort of a compromise can be implemented for median and parkway irrigation design. It is my opinion that the end result is far more important than the means to get there.

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