

Moab City Council Agenda Item
Meeting Date: March 22nd, 2022

Title: Landscaping Code Updates

Presenter: Mila Dunbar-Irwin

Attachment(s): Memo from Western Resource Advocates

Recommended Motion: N/A, Discussion and Direction

Background/Summary:

The Council has seen a presentation on the possible landscaping code updates from WaterNOW and Western Resource Advocates. These have since been presented and discussed by Planning Commission and the Water Conservation and Drought Management Board. At this time, staff requests direction from Council in choosing which approach to take forward.

The main questions are as follows:

- 1) Which approach do you like best – Water Budget? Standards? A combination of the two?
- 2) Are there any standards you are wholeheartedly in favor of and would like to see move forward?
- 3) Are there any standards you are wholeheartedly against and would like to see struck from the list?

The Planning Commission discussion ended with a general agreement (not unanimous) around the water budget approach (#7), with the addition of hydrozones, a plant list as a guideline, irrigation system requirements, and some kind of turf limits. They felt the minimum plant material requirement would be too high and advised to strike it. Mulch was considered likely too expensive and unnecessary.

The Water Board concluded that they were also in favor of the water budget approach, with the addition of a maintenance requirement, hydrozones, and a plant list (including known problematic and prohibited plants as well as recommended). They did not find any particularly problematic from a cost perspective and also recommended lowering the minimum living plant material requirement and allowing any amount of turf as long as it fit within the water budget for residential, but keeping a 200sf maximum for commercial. The Water Board also recommended striking a requirement for ground cover for residential properties, but keeping it for commercial. They were, as a whole, in favor of strict

requirements for commercial properties and none / minimal requirements for residential. They also wanted to note that they felt it would be more prudent to wait to adopt anything until the County is aligned and ready to adopt their own ordinance via the proposed discussion with the management group.

Staff is supportive of the recommendations from the Water Board and Planning Commission, and propose a tiered approach according to levels of development. For developments under 2,000sf, staff recommend easy-to-design requirements such as turf limits, waterwise plants, and hydrozones, with any of those being allowed to change if the applicant chooses the water budget approach instead to allow for more flexibility. For developments between 2,000sf and 8,000sf staff recommend the water budget approach in combination with the other recommended requirements. For developments over 8,000sf staff recommend requiring a robust water budget analysis, decreasing allowable turf, and including the recommended requirements from the other two categories.

These development levels correspond to current Planning Department requirements for various permits. It is staffs' opinion that this approach would not create an overly onerous demand on staff time and the added burden could be shared between the Sustainability Department and Planning / Building / Engineering. The Water Budget approach with some additional requirements seems to be the most streamlined for review purposes, while still achieving water conservation goals.

However, any of the recommendations are well-founded in science, practical examples from other communities, and best practices in Moab, and any combination of the recommended standards would be a benefit to the landscape regulations currently in place.