

## **Open Work Session**

### **Discussion on Invasive Species Management Program**

**April 6, 2021**

Ms. Victoria Spice, Invasive Species Coordinator, came before Council and said she was here a couple months ago with an update on the invasive species initiative that Council supported and the restoration underway at two County parks. She said she is here tonight to present a proposal that was submitted to the County Executive's Office, which they were made aware this afternoon has been approved. She said she wants to give Council an opportunity to review the proposal and answer any questions they may have. She then introduced Mr. Jim Calio of the Maryland Department of Agriculture Plant Protection and Weed Management Division and said he has actually helped establish 15 of these programs within the State. She said also with her are Ms. Julie Pinto Schwab and Mr. Rick Glasgow from FSA and the Soil Conservation District just to show their support and answer any questions Council may have about how this program will not only benefit the County, but also some of their farmers within the County.

Mr. Calio said he is an Administrative Officer with the State of Maryland's Department of Agriculture and a weed control specialist. He said he is here to present the opportunity for the State of Maryland's support of a weed control program in Wicomico County. He said there is a list of weeds in Maryland State Law 9-401-406 and Regulations 15.060502-04 that require property managers and owners to control. He said there are 15 Counties in the State of Maryland that have active weed control programs, and Ms. Kayley Wells is the contact person for MDA in Wicomico County. He explained, a weed control program will benefit Wicomico County by helping provide information, education, management, and achieve control of noxious and invasive weeds to local landowners and property managers. He said it provides technical support, management plans, and billable services, such as FSA, CRP, CREP; open space areas, wildlife, wildflowers, landowners, managers of land, and reclaiming land and sometimes reviving native species, phragmites control, assisting in weed control maintenance for County facilities, stormwater drainage and retention ponds. He said these programs can be without cost to the County budget, as potential revenue will offset the program.

Mr. Calio said, in summary, as a representative of the State of Maryland, he will support a weed control program in Wicomico County and provide whatever resources are available through the State in addition to knowledge, education, and experience to have a successful weed control program here in the County.

Mr. Dodd asked Ms. Spice to go over the handout she gave Council, to which Ms. Spice responded, she and Mr. Calio put that together based off of Kent County when they started their program. She said, essentially, the \$30,000 they have asked for is seed starter money to support the equipment, purchase a rig to go onto the back of one of the trucks, as well as some of the personnel costs. She said Council can see at the bottom of the budget that there is potential revenue, and that is based off of a conservative number Mr. Calio came up with on potential State Highway Administration contracts, as well as private landowner work they would be working through. She said, as Council can see, it is a great program because it is self-sustaining, so with a little bit of seed starting money, after a couple of years they foresee it being profitable and the money can be rolled back into the program for equipment upgrades, additional personnel, and so forth, so it does not have to come out of the County's budget every year.

Mrs. Acle asked, with the example for revenue with private landowners, is this something the landowner would contact her to do weed control if they had a retaining pond in their development, to which Ms. Spice responded, yes. She explained, what is great about partnering with FSA and the Soil Conservation District is that they get landowners in and out their doors every day who have these issues with some of their conservation reserve programs, so they would actually contact the coordinator and be able to contract with them specifically to do the work, so the money would be rolled back into the program that way. She said it is typically a subsidized rate, which is a little bit cheaper than if they were to go to an outside contractor because they are able to support the program mostly through State Highway Administration contracts. She said it is a great benefit to the landowners in the area, as well as just for the County to have this amazing resource of having a weed control expert at their fingertips to help manage the County parks or any type of County infrastructure.

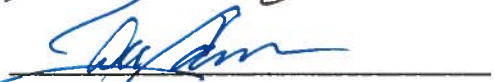
Mr. Dodd thanked them for being here and said maybe they will see this in the budget once Mr. Psota presents it. There was no further discussion.



Larry W. Dodd, President, District 3



Joe Holloway, Vice President, District 5



John T. Cannon, At-Large



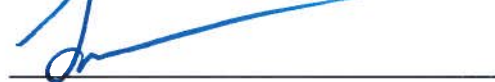
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Ernest F. Davis, District 1



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Josh Hastings, District 4



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator