

Memorandum

City of Lawrence

Parks & Recreation Department

TO: Casey Toomay, Assistant City Manager
CC: Diane Stoddard, Interim City Manager
Ernie Shaw, Interim Director, Parks & Recreation
Crystal Miles, Horticulture & Forestry Manager
FROM: Mark Hecker, Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation
DATE: June 8, 2015
RE: Amur Honeysuckle – Staff response

Below is our staff response to Michael Almon's proposed budget enhancement to the City Commission. His proposal was to set up a program to eradicate invasive Amur Honeysuckle from properties in the City. We agree with his problem statement and potential cost to solve. However, we would take a slightly different staffing route.

1. Asian Bush Honeysuckle (Amur Honeysuckle – *Lonicera maackii*) is a becoming a serious, and growing problem plant in the Midwest, can be invasive, and the infestations are a nuisance in city parks and native areas. Eradication is a huge challenge, due to the mature size of the plant (can grow over 30' tall), adaptable character (tolerates sun or shade and kills all other understory native plants), fertile seed is spread by birds and an extremely long growth season. However we do not see this as a public safety risk as compared to other eminent pest issues, such as Emerald Ash Borer.
2. City forestry staff, as time allows, can work to successfully remove small quantities of honeysuckle plants in landscape areas such as East Lawrence Center, Holcom Park and Clinton Park.
3. Eradication of growing plants on private property would require changing and updating state and local governing laws.
4. At least 8 city park/woodland properties have contaminated areas with extensive infestation (mostly woodlands where birds sheltered) and would involve more difficult, massive, multi-facet , long term expensive undertakings.
5. The proposal mentions using a crew of trained volunteers in the beginning year to make a massive dent in the honeysuckle population in natural areas. We believe the effort would take much longer, due to conditions described above. Additionally, who would be recruiting, supervising and organizing the volunteers? What is the role of the proposed temporary 5 forest laborers & 2 supervisors? We believe it would prove extremely difficult to find reliable temporary workers who would repeatedly show up for this type of difficult labor on a seasonal basis. The equipment needed are sprayers, gators, trucks, chain saws , mowers...etc. Additionally, these underbrush areas are often infested with ticks and poison ivy making work conditions very harsh

and putting volunteers at a health risk. The honeysuckle is so dense the areas cannot be walked through and would require a full crew for safety reasons. How would the debris be disposed of under this proposal? The current city recycled site is closed for large projects like this. Most likely, the city would need a KDHE permit to do any new debris sites, or would the materials then be burned? This is all very labor intensive, expensive the proposal, that may not reflect all costs.

6. Other cities/counties have hired dedicated long term workers to deal with this issue, as a long term Integrated Pest Management Program. This would require a certified chemical applicator (One successful solution is overspray a Roundup solution on winter days, when leaves are off trees & other native plants –honeysuckle is still green) , someone who will be willing to deal with the adverse work conditions and know about trees & removal equipment, the honeysuckle plant capabilities and other environmental conditions. This would difficult to find a qualified person on a temporary hire basis and would not be suitable for volunteers. And we are not sure the Lawrence public would allow the Roundup spraying on such a high level.
7. The presented solution, provided by Mr. Almon, could work over time. Using the same request of nearly \$1,000,000 , we would propose a possible scenario for staffing as follows:
 - a. 3 full-time forestry workers (crew leader –forester / 2 full time laborers), Staff \$135,000 a year for 5 years (\$675,000)
 - b. Equipment for at least 5 years, purchased in year one at \$125,000. (truck , gator, sprayer, chain saws, safety equipment, Air Burner rental).
 - c. Native shrub planting \$40,000 a year for 5 years (include materials, seasonal labor for install, maintenance and watering). (\$200,000). Long term maintenance is essential to the success for a replant program.
Total : \$1,000,000
8. This type of additional funding, could also be utilized by increasing the forestry or park maintenance staff to address current and proposed priorities, such as decreasing the customer response time to the high number hazardous tree situations that plague the older city neighborhoods and parks. (hundreds ever year) and eminent Emerald Ash Borer infestations.

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