MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 19, 2013

RE: 1911 Staples Ave Tree Trimming Violation

FROM: Karen DeMaria, Urban Forestry Manager, City of Key West

On January 29, 2013 I received a compaint regarding new construction at 1911 Staples Ave that was drilling into the roots of a large tree. An inspection revealed that footers were being dug and installed for the construction of a house on the site.   A large strangler fig tree was located in the rear portion of the lot. Footers were being dug within the root system/dripline of the tree but it appeared that primary roots were not being affected.   The tree though, had been severely trimmed of its canopy.

Strangler Fig Tree, 2010

Communication was initiated with Sea Tech of the Florida Keys, the contractor on record (Ryon LaChapelle) via e-mail on February 28, 2013. Mr. LaChapelle stated that he had hired Organic Accents to trim the tree 1/3.   Keys Energy Service had also recently done some trimming along a portion of the tree adjacent to the rear power lines (photo provided by Mr. LaChapelle) and the Sea Tech crew also trimmed a few branches near the roots.

Photo showing tree prior to Organic Accents trimming it. Note cuts made by Keys Energy crew.

Upon further investigation, Mr. LaChapelle agreed that it did appear that more than 1/3 of the tree had been trimmed. He also stated that an arborist was not on-site during the trimming.

Strangler Fig Tree

Google street view of property.

STATEMENT OF FACTS:

1. The Strangler Fig tree (Ficus aurea) is on the City of Key West protected tree list.

2. A permit is required for the trimming of 1/3 or more of a tree or its canopy. The entire canopy of this tree was removed (hatracked).

3. The trimming was not done to ANSI standards.

The tree appears to be regrowing. It is recommended that the owners of the property hire a certified arborist to properly trim the regrowth of this tree in a year and to make sure the tree stays healthy. After a year, if the tree shows signs of disease or ill health, then the owner shall have to do mitigation based on a 67" dbh healthy tree (80% value).