



THE CITY OF KEY WEST

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TO: Jim Scholl, City Manager

FROM: Doug Bradshaw, Senior Project Manager

CC: David Fernandez, Asst. City Manager

DATE: July 13, 2010

SUBJECT: **Recommend that FDOT Remove the Coconut Palm Trees on the North Roosevelt Boulevard Promenade and Plant Grass on the Promenade After Construction**

ACTION STATEMENT:

This resolution will provide FDOT direction to remove the coconut palm trees on the promenade and replant grass after the reconstruction of North Roosevelt.

BACKGROUND:

FDOT is developing the design to rebuild State Road (S.R.) 5/North Roosevelt Blvd from Eisenhower Drive/Jose Marti Drive to US 1/Overseas Highway (does not include the triangle). The work also includes the repaving of the road from south of the intersection with US 1 Overseas Highway to the Riviera Canal Bridge and from Bertha Street to the east end of Smathers Beach along the South Roosevelt Blvd. segment.

Historically since the 1920s a large portion of the North Roosevelt Blvd. promenade has contained Coconut Palms in the planting spaces. Currently the City maintains the trees through its right-of-way maintenance contract and City staff.

PURPOSE & JUSTIFICATION:

The City has several concerns about maintaining Coconut Palms on our right-of-way. These trees are a significant liability hazard to vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians due to the hanging coconuts. In order to mitigate this hazard, it takes a significant amount of effort for the City's Right-of-Way Crew to trim all of the Coconut Palm trees in the City. Additionally, Coconut Palms can be susceptible to lethal yellowing.

Key to the Caribbean – Average yearly temperature 77° F.

During the reconstruction of North Roosevelt Blvd., FDOT has presented the City with three options pertaining to the trees on the promenade along North Roosevelt. The only option where the City will not have to incur liability and maintenance issues is to remove the existing Coconut Palms. The new plan would call for only grass to be reinstalled along the promenade. However, FDOT has given the City the option of replanting Coconut Palms or any other type of tree/landscaping the City desires as long as the City is willing to sign a contract agreement to maintain the landscaping/trees and to assume any liability associated with the landscaping/trees.

OPTIONS:

1. Direct FDOT to plant Coconut Palms on the North Roosevelt promenade, agree to sign a maintenance contract, and agree to assume liability associated with the planting of the trees. This option would preserve the historic appearance of the promenade, but would maintain existing workload for the Community Services Dept. and Right-of-Way Crew and liability for the City.
2. Direct FDOT to plant another variety of tree or landscaping with input from Cynthia Domenech-Coogle, City of Key West Urban Forestry Program Manager, agree to sign a maintenance contract, and agree to assume liability associated with the new trees or landscaping.
3. Direct FDOT to remove the Coconut Palms, not to replace the trees or landscaping, and only plant grass along the promenade. Under this option, the City would not have to assume liability and maintenance requirements for the trees.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with the actual removal and placement of the new landscaping. However, based on the direction provided to FDOT, there may be future maintenance/liability expenses associated with the decision. All landscaping requires a certain amount of maintenance and potential liability. Coconut Palms require additional maintenance in removal of coconuts and do add additional liability because the possibility of falling coconuts on pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. Staff has estimated that there are 2,000 Coconut Palms in the City, and it would take our Community Services Dept. and Right-of-Way Crew 364 days to trim every Coconut Palm in Key West once a year.

RECOMMENDATION:

City staff understands the sensitive nature of the issue, but recommends option #3, that the Coconut Palms be removed and grass be planted to eliminate maintenance and liability issues for the City. If the City Commission chooses to reinstall Coconut Palms or other trees, staff does feel it is important that it understands that liability, along with continued maintenance and possible increased maintenance at additional cost will be required.