

**Addenda**  
**Minnetonka City Council Study Session**  
**Meeting of April 24, 2023**

**ITEM 6 - Pilot Buckthorn Pickup Program and the Resilient Minnetonka Initiative**

Correspondence was received after the distribution of the packet.



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**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Leslie Yetka, Natural Resources Manager  
**DATE:** April 24, 2023  
**SUBJECT:** Change Memo for April 24, 2023 City Council Study Session

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**ITEM 6 – Pilot Buckthorn Pickup Program and the Resilient Minnetonka Initiative**

The attached email comment was received after the distribution of the packet.

**From:** [Dennis Yockers](#)  
**To:** [Bradley Schaeppi](#); [Brian Kirk](#); [Leslie Yetka](#); [Matt Kumka](#); [Mike Funk](#); [Paul Schiller](#); [Brian Golob](#); [Christine Petersen](#); [Brad Wiersum](#); [Deborah Calvert](#); [Kimberly Wilburn](#); [Kissy Coakley](#); [Rebecca Schack](#)  
**Subject:** Study Session Meeting of April 24, 2023 - Item #6: Pilot Buckthorn Pickup Program and the Resilient Minnetonka Initiative  
**Date:** Friday, April 21, 2023 1:33:48 PM

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Council Members and City Staff:

I saw the agenda and materials for the upcoming study session on the city website. I will not be able to attend the session in person. If I did, I know that people attending the session are not allowed to make any public comments about the topics being discussed. I'm sharing my thoughts and ideas on Item #6: Pilot Buckthorn Pickup Program and the Resilient Minnetonka Initiative. Will the council be making a recommendation on the pilot program after the presentation? Will there be any opportunity for the public to participate in a public session on the topic or will they only be able to submit written comments?

I was at the City Council meeting when they approved dedicating \$15,000 to a pilot buckthorn pickup program.

Most of you have had on-going correspondence from me regarding how challenging it's been for the City to get its private residents involved in natural resources management activities especially as it relates to large infrastructure projects involving their property.

I am in support of a pilot program which includes a **follow-up research evaluation** to determine if the program was effective and met its intended goals. If the program is deemed successful then a consideration will be made to continue it. **Such a pilot program does address some of the opportunities in the 2021 Natural Resources Plan.** Financial and other incentives may help to get citizens to become more active in natural resources management.

**The pilot program is more than a buckthorn pickup program! It is a buckthorn management program and the pickup is a small part of the program. I think that labels are very important. Buckthorn management is not just cutting buckthorn. It involves a lot of other strategies over time to eliminate this invasive. It is not a one cut deal and it's over.**

The proposal says that up to 80 eligible participants could be approved for the program. What happens if more than 80 residents apply? Will a lottery be conducted like the tree sale? I'm assuming there will be a **deadline date for the application.** I've looked at the \$15,000 project total. **If 80 participants are successful in being chosen that means that \$187.50 is the cost for each participant.** Will that \$187.50 amount cover the cost of city staff time to review the applications, the consultant fee from Metro Grows to do an on-site evaluation, and the cost of pickup by the contractor, Sav-A-Tree? Also, as I mentioned earlier, a research component to see if the program was successful. The staff time to review the applications, program oversight and follow-up research will be in addition to all their regular work duties and we know that staff has an already full project workload.

I also have some recommendations regarding the program application process. In the materials provided for the study session **I could not find an actual application for the buckthorn program. The application should have a submission deadline so the city can make timely decisions.** Will they review applications when being submitted? I have an issue with an on-

going application process as it relates to the effectiveness of buckthorn removal and treatment process. I'm not sure that the city is encouraging residents to cut buckthorn this spring and summer. Buckthorn has already sprouted **and the city has recommended discontinuing buckthorn removal on its park management projects. I think the buckthorn removal program needs to be tied to the best management practices available.** We want landowners to see the benefits of effective resource management and if they cut now and not treat, the majority of the buckthorn plants will sprout and additional funds and time commitment will be necessary.

As part of the application process, residents are provided links to education and training resources to assist them with buckthorn management. As I read the application from this educational training is recommended **but not required. I recommend that the applicant agree to participate in a buckthorn management workshop in person or on-line before approval of the application.** There are ample training opportunities available. I don't think this training requirement is a burden to the resident. The training will provide the buckthorn management strategies so all are comfortable with getting involved. **This minimal training time will also demonstrate that the resident is committed.** The City will be investing a minimum of \$187.50 per resident and we want to make sure that they are truly committed for the long run as it relates to buckthorn management.

As a part of the application process it states that residents who apply to the program **need to demonstrate that they have a buckthorn management plan that they can discuss with the consultant or city staff.** Is this management plan a required part of the application process? It's not clear when the written management plan needs to be submitted.

There is a discussion question in the study session materials that states: Does the council agree with the direction of the pilot buckthorn pickup program and the broader Resilient Minnetonka Initiative?

As I said earlier in this e-mail **I support a Pilot Buckthorn Management Program with a refined application process and components** that I have discussed above.

There is a second part of the question that talks about the direction of the broader Resilient Minnetonka Initiative. The Buckthorn Management initiative is an important component however **I feel that more community discussion needs to take place providing input into this program and how it addresses the Natural Resources Management Plan.**

For example: there has been some thoughts and discussion by the city and other organizations in **developing some sort of Natural Resources Stewards Program.** This program might be modeled with components from programs like Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists and Master Water Stewards. **With a Natural Resources Stewards program, Minnetonka citizens would be trained to assist the city in a variety of natural resources management activities.** City staff is so overwhelmed with current initiatives that it has very limited time to work directly with residential, business and other institutions. Having a team of natural resources stewards can assist with so MANY projects (reviewing applications for various initiatives - like buckthorn mgt., providing on-site consulting to landowners regarding natural resources management activities). **We need to get more of our citizens working with other citizens on resource management in order to reach more sustainable and resilience goals.**

I appreciate the opportunity to provide input in regard to our city's natural resources initiatives. Please let me know if there are any questions in my comments.

Thanks for all your time and commitment involving making Minnetonka natural resources more sustainable and climate resilient.

Dr. Dennis Yockers,, Ph.D Emeritus Professor of Natural Resources Management and Education, 3648 Hazelmoor Place, Minnetonka, MN 55345 [REDACTED]