

W. G. A.

Memorandum Date: August, 6 2008
Order Date: August, 20 2008

TO: Board of Health
DEPARTMENT: Public Works
PRESENTED BY: Orin Schumacher, Vegetation Management Coordinator
AGENDA ITEM TITLE: ORDER/IN THE MATTER OF ELIMINATING THE LANE COUNTY VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

I. MOTION

Move approval of the Order eliminating the Lane County Vegetation Management Advisory Committee

II. AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

The Board is being asked to review and select one of the options listed within the Order to restructure or eliminate the Lane County Vegetation Management Advisory Committee.

III. BACKGROUND / IMPLICATIONS OF ACTION

A. Board Action and Other History

During the June 18, 2008 Board of Health meeting, the Board directed staff to come back to the Board with a proposal that will either keep VMAC operational, at a scaled back level, or if deemed non-essential, roll VMAC into another established Committee in the near future.

The Lane County Vegetation Management Advisory Committee was established by Board Order on December 20th, 1988. The Committee was created to assist in the development of a Lane County Integrated Vegetation Management program, and to act as a liaison between Commissioners, County staff and the public at large. The original VMAC was comprised of 15 members representing a wide spectrum of both opinions and professions. Over the years the Committee has been reduced in size to that of its current level of 9 committee members, with Board discussion to reduce that number even further in the future. In 2007 there was discussion among Commissioners, Staff and members of VMAC to sunset the Committee for an indefinite period of time, until a need arose to reinstate the Committee.

With an established Integrated Vegetation Management Program, and a decision by the Board of Health in June of 2008 to eliminate the use of herbicides for roadside vegetation management, many of the VMAC charges have been fulfilled, or the need for committee level discussions of these issues significantly reduced.

B. Policy Issues

Lane Manual, Chapter 3, Section 3.515 lists the Vegetation Management Advisory Committee as one of 10 non-mandated Advisory Committees. There would be no policy restrictions with regards to disbanding or restructuring VMAC. All current responsibilities of the Vegetation Management Advisory Committee would transfer to other standing committees as required, or as directed by the Board of Health of Lane County.

C. Financial and/or Resource Considerations

Lane County has a large number of advisory committees that provide a platform for interested public members to input their ideas and concepts to both County staff and Commissioners. These advisory Committees serve a valuable purpose for Lane County and this should not go overlooked, as much as we should not overlook the resource and financial investment associated with managing and maintaining advisory committees.

The Vegetation Management Advisory Committee is composed of nine public volunteers, three staff members and occasional presenters or specialists. The costs associated with the Committee are travel reimbursements, catering expense, staff time and necessary materials for meetings and presentations. The two year expense total from 2006-2007 for the Vegetation Management Committee totaled \$29,839.21 per year. This is a nominal expense when viewed as a single committee, but with the large number of advisory committee's county wide, that number becomes significant. Lane County is looking at a resource and financial picture over the coming years, that is being significantly reduced, and staff is being asked to find news ways of doing business with less resources.

By eliminating or modifying the current Vegetation Management Advisory Committee and distributing their workload to other existing advisory committees, such as the Roads Advisory Committee and the Health Advisory Committee, the County could save on both the financial and resource front. The issues would not change and the discussions would not disappear, they would just be re-directed to other, well established advisory committees to assist in managing limited resources, staffing and monies.

D. Analysis

The proposal to either modify the frequency or structure of the VMAC Committee, or disband the Committee all together come from analysis of the continued need for this specific committee. The Vegetation Management Advisory Committee over the last few years has focused primarily on the Last Resort Policy and the use of herbicides for roadside vegetation management. The Committee has dealt with other important issues and has provided valuable input to both staff and County Commissioners, but over recent times the forum of discussion has revolved around the County's use of herbicides.

When the Vegetation Management Advisory Committee was first formed in 1988, it was to assist County staff in developing a Integrated Vegetation Management Program the first of it's kind in Lane County. Their goal was accomplished in 1990 with the completion of a Lane County IVM program, and in turn the Committee workload declined and the Commissioners voted to reduce the Committee size to nine members with the reduced need.

In 2006 the Board of Health directed staff to look into the need for the Vegetation Management Advisory Committee stemming from Committee stagnation and lack of diversity of the Committee. This occurred in 2006 and the Board decided to appoint 2 new members to the Committee that were selected by both commissioners along with two VMAC members to increase the diversity of the Committee with no further discussion of disbanding or altering the Committee in other ways.

In June of 2008 the Board of Health voted to eliminate, for an indefinite period of time, the use of herbicides for roadside vegetation management. This decision will once again reduce the workload for the Committee, similar to that of the early 1990's prompting the need to once again review the continued need for the Committee.

Lane County currently has a Roads Advisory Committee that was established to assist the public, county staff and Commissioners in regards to issues that relate to county road projects and roadside management. The VMAC deals with roadside vegetation management issues and these same discussions could be held on the Roads Advisory Committee that voted unanimously in favor of this proposed transfer of roadside vegetation management to their future agenda. If herbicide use was to resume in the future and health concerns were a topic, those concerns could be voiced and discussed with Lane County's Health Advisory Committee, a group comprised of doctors and health practitioners familiar with these potential risks and concerns.

F. Alternatives/Options

1. Disband the Lane County Vegetation Management Advisory Committee and direct all issues regarding roadside vegetation management to the Lane County Roads Advisory Committee, and any Health related issues to the Lane County Health Advisory Committee. This option would not increase the member levels on either Committee.
2. Disband the Lane County Vegetation Management Advisory Committee and direct all issues regarding roadside vegetation management to the Lane County Roads Advisory Committee, and any Health related issues to the Lane County Health Advisory Committee. Increase membership levels on both committees by a Board defined level.
3. Maintain the Lane County Vegetation Management Advisory Committee but reduce the yearly meeting frequency to that of a Board defined level.
4. Take no action.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board of Health review and select the option that is appropriate to Board goals. The Vegetation Management Advisory Committee is a Board created entity, and it would be inappropriate for staff to provide a recommendation regarding a committee that was established to act as a liaison group to the Board of County Commissioners. Public Works staff will support, in full any decision made by the Board of Health regarding VMAC. Should the Board of Health choose options two or three, an appropriate Board Order will be placed on a future Board agenda.

IN THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LANE COUNTY, OREGON

ORDER NO. (IN THE MATTER OF ELIMINATING THE LANE
(COUNTY VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ADVISORY
(COMMITTEE

WHEREAS, The Vegetation Management Advisory Committee has reduced in size since it's founding in 1988, stemming from limited workloads and advisory need at the Committee level; and

WHEREAS, The Vegetation Management Advisory Committee has fulfilled its founding directive of assisting with the creation of Lane County's Integrated Vegetation Management program in 1990; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Health imposed an indefinite moratorium on the use of herbicides in roadside vegetation management in Lane County, one of the key discussion topics for the Committee over the last three years of its existence; and

WHEREAS, The Lane County Health Advisory Committee comprised of health practitioners and doctors, is the appropriate Committee to discuss health concerns from potential herbicide applications if the need arose; and

WHEREAS, The Lane County Roads Advisory Committee voted unanimously in favor to support the transfer of roadside vegetation management topics onto future agendas of the RAC when necessary; **NOW THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY**

ORDERED, that the Lane County Vegetation Management Advisory Committee be disbanded and all issues related to roadside vegetation management be handled by the Roads Advisory Committee, and any potential human health concerns related to the County's IVM program be handled by the Health Advisory Committee.

DATED this _____ day of _____, 2008

Faye Stewart, Chair
Lane County Board of Commissioners

APPROVED AS TO FORM

Date 8-11-08 lane county.


OFFICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL