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MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Brent Walker, Parks and Recreation Manager
Date: July 27, 2015
Subject: **Update of Weather Alert Policy**

ITEM DESCRIPTION

Update of the Weather Alert Policy for the weather alert systems located at Dunwoody Park and Brook Run Park.

BACKGROUND

In April 2014 The City solicited quotes from qualified vendors for the design and installation of inclement weather alert systems at Dunwoody Park and Brook Run Park. Federal Signal was selected to install a tornado alert system and Earth Networks was selected to install a lightning alert system. The tornado alert system has only recently come on-line and has yet to sound an alert. The lightning alert system, however, has been in operation at Dunwoody Park since the end of March.

The lightning detection system consist of an air horn that sounds one long blast in the event of an alert and three consecutive blasts once the alert duration time period has been met. A strobe light flashes between the initial alert blast and the "all-clear" blasts. During the installation of the tornado siren, Federal Signal informed the City that they could also integrate a verbal command into the lightning detection system that would trigger when the horn sounded. The verbal command informs park users that there is lightning in the area and to seek cover immediately.

The settings for the lightning alert system include:

- Lightning Strike Distance: The distance of a lightning strike from the location point that should trigger an alert. The system will allow the user to set the distance between 6 and 50 miles.

- Alert Duration: The length of time an alert will be active. The system will allow the user to set the duration from 15 to 60 minutes from the last alert.

- Time of Day: The system allows the user to set the time frame in which the horns will sound in the event of an alert.

Our system is currently set to National Weather Service (NWS) recommendations which are a lightning strike radius of 10 miles and a 30 minute alert duration. The hours when the system is operable are 7:00 AM-10:30 PM for Dunwoody Park and 7 AM-10 PM for Brook Run Park which generally coincide with the hours of park usage.

Based on the frequency of the storms in the past months, we have received several complaints from neighbors about the noise from the alert horns and the verbal command.



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Because of this, staff requested guidance from Council at the June 22nd Council Meeting and based on their input the lightning detectors were temporarily disconnected until other options were determined.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on discussions with the City's electrical contractor, it was determined that a system of strobe lights could be added to the existing lightning detection system in lieu of the horn. Strobe lights can be mounted on each score board, behind home plate and on the concession building at a cost of \$19,000. There is currently \$13,000 available in the Capital Fund for this project and the additional \$6,000 could be paid from the Parks Operating Budget if Council chooses to move forward with this option.

If this option is implemented, staff recommends maintaining the detection radius at 10 miles and a 30 minute alert duration per the NWS recommendations.

This type of alert system would alert park users within the baseball field area but not within the entirety of Dunwoody Park. The responsibility of clearing the fields in the event of a lightning event would fall on the agency using the fields.

Staff feels that this type of alert system would not be beneficial at Brook Run Park as there is no presiding agency over the activities in that location. Therefore staff requests that council provide further direction on the system at Brook Run Park.