

## Town takes steps to cut turf management costs

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By Michael Kelley Staff Writer

The town is taking a slightly different approach to organic turf management this year by hiring a new organic pest management company and assigning more work to town employees in an effort to save costs.

The town has entered into an agreement with another organic pest management company this spring, nearly six years after adopting an organic pest management ordinance after years of synthetic pesticide use.

In June, It's Green, a Cape Elizabeth-based business run by Joe Fourre, the golf course superintendent at Dunegrass Golf Club in Old Orchard Beach, was awarded a contract to take over turf management duties from Go Green Landscaping, which had facilitated the organics approach for the past five years.

*"It was financial. It was looking at the best practices and me, coming in new with a fresh set of eyes, looking at what we are doing,"* Scarborough Community Services Director Todd Souza said about making the switch.

In March, with Go Green's contract set to expire in June, Town Manager Tom Hall met with the Pest Management Advisory Committee to let them know he was going to be *"seeking competitive bids for turf management."*

*"Two bids were received, and after evaluation, it has been determined that the It's Green proposal was the most advantageous to the town, particularly when considering cost,"* Hall told the committee members via email.

In 2012, the first full fiscal year with the organics approach, the town spent \$121,578 for turf management. In fiscal year 2013, the figure rose to \$137,920 and by 2015 was \$159,207.

Hall told the committee, starting with the It's Green contract, the town would also be taking a greater role in turf management to control costs and get more ownership in how things are done. The Community Services department has listed staying *"up to date on changing technology in*

*the organics program” and working “to refine the organic turf program since new technologies evolve all the time” as goals for this year.*

*“The town assuming more responsibilities has everything to do with the fact I have a new Community Services Director (Todd Souza) and new Grounds Maintenance Manager (Bob Loose) and they both expressed great interest in being involved and taking some ownership to ensure success in the program,”* Hall wrote in an email to the advisory committee. Loose, he pointed out, holds a master pesticide applicator license and is accredited in organic land care management by the Northeast Organic Farming Association.

Fourre started It’s Green in 2015 and will be working to get an organic land care certification from the Northeast Organic Farmers Association.

Work on the athletic fields to get them ready for the fall season took place earlier this month when organic fertilizer was placed on athletic fields at Wentworth School, Scarborough Middle School, Scarborough High School, as well as town fields at Memorial Park, Willey Sports Complex, Black Point Park, Peterson Sports Complex and Springbrook Sports Complex over the course of a three-day period from Aug. 3 to Aug. 6.

Souza supports the organic approach the town is taking, but it’s a challenge sometimes, he said, creating safe, healthy athletic field for young athletes while keeping in line with the pesticide ordinance.

Souza said there has been some thought about applying *“different standards (on the athletic fields) to allow for the performance we need and the safety we need for our athletes”* while abiding by the ordinance.

Memorial Field, he said, is a good example of how the different standards could be applied. The town may decide, for example to seed the athletic fields in the park three times a year, but other green spaces in the park just once or mow one section of the park more frequently than others.

According to the Scarborough Pest Management Advisory Committee, the town is one of nearly 30 communities that have ordinances or policies restricting “conventional pesticides and encouraging or requiring organic practices.”

The policy, adopted in September 2011 and put into place the following spring, not only dictates what products can be used and how, it also mandates how the public needs to be notified of applications. Signs are to be placed on the property at least 48 hours in advance and much remain on site at least 72 hours after the application is complete. The notification period is more stringent when school is in session.

While the policy only deals with town land, the committee urges organic approach on private property as well. To that end, the policy states: *“Scarborough recognizes that the use of pesticides may have profound effects upon indigenous plants, surface and ground water, as well as unintended effects upon people, birds, and other animals in the vicinity of treated areas. Scarborough recognizes that all citizens, particularly children, have a right to protection from*

*exposure to hazardous chemicals and pesticides.” “Scarborough recognizes that it is in the best interest of public health to eliminate the use of pesticides on town-owned lands; (and) to encourage reduction and elimination of pesticide use on private property.”*

The notification requirement is not used, according to the policy when there is “*imminent threat of serious injury to persons, property or agriculture,*” but notice should be given “*as soon after application as practicable.*” Emergency situations are defined by the pest management advisory committee through consultation of the town manager if practical. A list of “*alternatives to pesticides and least toxic pesticides for every foreseeable emergency will be given to town employees and given first consideration.*”

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