



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION

MINUTES

April 2, 2003

Burgess Recreation Center, Room 112
800 Alma Street, Menlo Park

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Theo Keet at 7:25 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Theo Keet, Frank Carney, Deirdre Digrande, Mary Kenney, Mark McBirney, Kevin McCarthy

Commissioners Absent: Laura Teksler

Staff present: Dianne Dryer, Environmental Programs Coordinator
Walt Fujii, Contract Arborist
Juan Alvarez, Acting City Arborist

Public present: Marjorie Johnk

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS None.

B. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dianne Dryer announced that the proposed Linfield Project will require an Environmental Impact Report. Staff expects to return the Project to the Environmental Commission for review of heritage trees in June or July. At that time there will be an updated arborist report with correct tree locations and sizes, additional information about the close proximity of trees to be retained to planned buildings, along with staff recommendations.

Dianne Dryer announced that the twelve month review of the new Heritage Tree Ordinance would be reported at the next Environmental Commission meeting. Commissioners will be asked to make recommendations for any changes to the ordinance to the City Council, which will discuss the matter at an upcoming meeting.

Mary Kenney passed out a revised Heritage Tree Appeal Review form for Commissioners to use in evaluating trees being appealed.

C. BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Approval of Minutes of March 5, 2003: M/S: McCarthy/McBirney. Approved.

2. Heritage Tree Removal Permit Appeal: 654 Hermosa Way (#03-006)

Dianne Dryer presented the staff report which stated that the applicant, Marjorie Johnk, had applied for a permit to remove a heritage oak tree in the rear of her property because of the problem of leaves accumulating on her pool cover and

shade over part of the doughboy pool. The City arborist report stated that the coast live oak, measuring 21.9 inches in diameter and 45 feet in height, is in good condition with no structural problems. Staff denied the permit application because there are feasible alternatives to removal of the tree.

Ms. Johnk summarized her reasons for wanting to remove the tree, stating that it had recently become difficult for her to remove the leaves from the pool cover over the doughboy pool. When asked if she had a gardener, she said that she has a service once a week, but that she hasn't asked them to remove the leaves from the pool cover. She thought that she would have to pay them more to do so. She expressed disappointment that the tree blocked sun from the pool area when she uses it in the summer. Ms. Johnk was also concerned about the possibility of roots damaging the pool.

The Commission asked a series of questions to the City arborists concerning the dropping of leaves, pruning and root damage. Coast live oaks, which are not deciduous, do drop some leaves in the early spring as new leaves come in and a few leaves during July and August. The arborist recommended pruning the tree to reduce the amount of leaf drop and to allow more sunlight on the pool. Pruning would be necessary every five years or so. Oak roots are not likely to damage the pool because they usually bend when they meet resistance. There is no evidence of damage to the doughboy pool, which is about 27 years old according to Ms. Johnk.

The Commission asked the arborists about the age of the tree and were told that it is probably around 50 years old and that, under reasonable conditions, the tree could live another 200 years. Some Commissioners expressed the hope that the tree could be saved by asking the gardeners to remove the leaves from the pool cover a few times a year and by pruning the tree to allow more sunlight.

The Commission then discussed the possibility of relocating the tree. The arborist stated that it is possible, but expensive. Ms. Johnk stated that the cost would be too high and that her estimate for removal was \$1,650. The possibility of relocating the tree to an adjacent property, if a neighbor was willing to participate, was discussed. The Commission asked staff to inquire to the neighbors about this option, both of whom had expressed regret about the potential loss of the tree. The Commission voted unanimously to postpone the determination on the appeal until their next regular meeting on May 7, 2003.

- 3. Planning for Arbor Day Event:** The Parks Supervisor and other staff recommended that a tree be planted at either Kelly Park or in front of the Teen Center at Onetta Harris Community Center. The Commission chose to plant the tree at Kelly Park next to the newly installed picnic tables. Commissioner Laura Teksler is coordinating participation of students from Belle Haven School.

D. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.