



## ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION

### MINUTES

July 1, 2003

Administration Building, First Floor  
701 Laurel 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, Mary Kenney, Kevin McCarthy, Laura Tekslar

**Commissioners Absent:** Frank Carney, Deirdre Digrande, Mark McBirney

**Staff present:** Dianne Dryer, Environmental Programs Coordinator  
Ruben Nino, Director of Engineering  
Art Morimoto, Senior Engineer

**Public present:** Harry Harrison

**A. PUBLIC COMMENTS** None.

### B. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mary Kenney announced that the San Francisquito Watershed Council will be funded \$17,000 in the new City budget (a \$3,000 reduction from last year), for creek cleanups, revegetation and educational programs.

Mary Kenney reminded Commissioners that nominations for Environmental Quality Awards are due July 15.

Dianne Dryer passed out new brochures about water pollution prevention.

### C. BUSINESS ITEMS

**1. Approval of Minutes of June 10, 2003:** M/S Kenney/Keet, approved.

**2. Recommendations Regarding Proposed Tree Removals at Burgess Park:**

Ruben Nino and Art Morimoto presented the City's plans for renovations at Burgess Park, pointing out that the plans were designed to preserve as many trees as possible at the site. Commissioners asked questions about specific trees, noting that the removal of five oaks and one redwood to construct the skateboard park along Alma Street near Mielke Drive was very regrettable. Staff explained that other locations for the skate park were found not to be feasible. The cost of relocating the trees is too high. Commissioners suggested that some screening of the skate park would be a good idea, such as a hedge. The Commission recommended that the redwood near the child care center and Mielke Drive be preserved if possible, and that the sycamore (#38) and the coast live oak (#43) near the pool area also be preserved. The Commission recommended that trees

not be removed during nesting season, and that trees should be removed as late as possible during construction to avoid loss of habitat and scenery during the transition. They suggest that replacement trees be oaks and other native species as much as possible and that the rather unusual carob trees be replaced with the same species. Other recommendations are to use native and drought tolerant plants, avoid water runoff (maximize permeable surfaces), use artificial turf if feasible, and to increase the use of solar panels (add to top of the gym).

### **3. Review of Heritage Tree Ordinance**

Commissioners discussed the recent Council meeting regarding possible changes to the ordinance, and expressed their agreement with Council that the process of obtaining a removal permit should be made more user-friendly and that costs of administering the program should be reduced. A proposal that would address both of these goals was developed. It was noted that about 80% of the trees over the documented 12 month period (April 2002 to April 2003) were permitted for removal due to serious, usually unquestionable, conditions. Commissioners would like staff to evaluate and propose amendments to the ordinance which would allow property owners with trees that are believed to be structurally deteriorated, diseased, dead, or emergency-related to receive expedited permits. Streamlining 70% to 80% of the permits would simplify the process for the majority of property owners and could greatly reduce City costs related to the ordinance. Under the proposed permitting scenario, the property owner would have a certified arborist fill in a simple City form about the condition of the tree. The property owner would submit the form to the City, along with a heritage tree removal permit application. The City Arborist would go to the site and evaluate the tree. If the City Arborist found the tree to be clearly in a condition that requires removal, he would issue a permit on the spot to the property owner. The City Arborist would also post a sign visible from the street stating the reasons for removal, so that neighbors and other interested residents would be informed about the pending removal. The City might also send notices to directly adjacent neighbors of the property to be sure that they are aware of the reasons for removal. If the City Arborist found that the tree was **not** clearly in any of the above conditions, the applicant would go through the current permitting process. This would ensure staff review, sufficient public notification and the possibility of appeal. Trees in this permitting category would include those related to proposed construction projects or possible property damage and those in good health, but the owner wishes to remove them for other reasons. Thus, only a small percentage of trees would need staff review and reports, public notification, and/or appeal processing. These amendments to the ordinance would be compatible with the intention of the ordinance.

### **D. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 p.m.