



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION

MINUTES

October 1, 2003

Burgess Recreation Center
700 Alma Street, Menlo Park

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairperson Mary Kenney at 7:25 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Mary Kenney, Laura Teksler, Dan Kocher, Kevin McCarthy, Rick Stevens

Commissioners Absent: Frank Carney

Staff present: Dianne Dryer, Environmental Programs Coordinator
Justin Murphy, Principal Planner
Kent Steffens, Public Works Director
Juan Alvarez, City Arborist
Walt Fujii, Consulting Arborist

Public present: Chris MacIntosh, Bill Parker, Walter Nelson, Ginger Holt, Carol Vonder Linden, Karl Vonder Linden, Jim Inglis, Don Chelemeilos, Janet Davis

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

B. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Heritage Tree Award nominations are due October 24th. Mary Kenney passed out lists of awards given in the past. Deirdre Digrande has resigned from the Commission. The San Francisco Watershed Council will hold a 10th Anniversary event on Oct. 25th.

C. BUSINESS ITEMS

- 1. Approval of Minutes of September 10, 2003:** Approved unanimously. (Minutes of August 6 will remain as draft due to lack of quorum of Commissioners present at the August 6 meeting and resignations.)
- 2. Appeal of Heritage Tree removal permit denial at 950 Santa Cruz Avenue**
Dianne Dryer reported that the valley oak tree, located about two feet from a stucco wall and six feet from a building, is in good condition. The City denied the permit because the tree is in good condition and there is no evidence of imminent damage to the structures. Feasible alternatives to removal are pruning of canopy and roots before the tree becomes large enough to damage the structures. Bill Parker, representing the owner of the property (Menlo Presbyterian Church), stated that they wish to remove the tree before inevitable damage occurs. The Commission voted to approve the appeal (M/S by Kenney/Teksler) by a four in favor, one abstention (McCarthy) vote. The appeal was granted with the condition

that the owner of the property replace the tree with a valley oak, planted in a location where it could thrive for many years.

3. Appeal of Heritage Tree permit removal approval at Stanford Golf Course

Dianne Dryer reported that staff approved a permit for removal of fifteen heritage trees at Stanford Golf Course so that the course could be re-configured due to proposed widening of Sand Hill Road. Nine of the trees were found to be in very poor or poor condition by the City's consulting arborist. No feasible alternatives to removal were possible for the others.

Janet Davis, the appellant, stated that the trees and the golf course provide a nice buffer and greenbelt for the surrounding area and that the proposed removal of many trees related to the Sand Hill Road project should be looked at as a whole. She doesn't think there has been enough opportunity for public input. She pointed out that the trees on the creek bank are necessary for bank stabilization and habitat value, and therefore deserve priority for preservation. She also stated that non-native replacement trees are inappropriate and that there should be a maintenance plan for replacement trees. She listed and described by number the tree removals she objects to (listed in appeal letter).

Jim Inglis, representing the applicant Stanford Management Company, stated that the re-configuration of the golf course was determined after review and input from many experts and the community. He stated that the plan minimizes impacts on the existing trees and the creek riparian habitat. He pointed to their plan for installing 66 replacement trees to mitigate the loss of the fifteen heritage trees. He referred to his letter to the City dated September 24, 2003 responding specifically to each of Ms. Davis' complaints in her appeal letter.

Kent Steffens reported that there were several public meetings during the time when the Sand Hill Road project was going through City Council review. He stated that the agreement on the Sand Hill Road project between the City and Stanford does not require or include any further public meetings or review by City Commissions, however the project does have to go through other permitting agencies, where public comment is allowed.

Justin Murphy noted that most of the planned replacement trees are natives and there is a requirement for three trees to be planted for each native heritage tree removed for this permit.

Commission discussion and questions centered around the possibility of saving any trees in the creek area. Some removals will be necessary for bridge construction, which will eliminate detrimental crossings in the creek. Stumps will remain in order to help stabilize the banks. Another large heritage oak next to the creek is in hazardous condition. Other trees proposed for removal impair play-ability in the new course design. Some trees are casting too much shade on the grass, causing deterioration of the grass and therefore interfering with play-ability. Other types of grass are not suitable for a golf course.

The Commission approved a motion (M/S McCarthy/Kocher) to deny the appeal (four in favor; Teksler had left earlier), with the condition that priority be given to planting trees close to the creek on either side (not all concentrated along Sand Hill Road), and also requested an accounting of the location and species of all trees planted.