



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

October 5, 2005

Burgess Recreation Center
700 Alma Street, Menlo Park

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by at 6:34 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Dan Kocher, Bob Swezey, Sarah Granger, Martin Engel

Commissioners Absent: Frank Carney, Rick Stevens, Doug Scott

Staff present: Dianne Dryer, Environmental Programs Coordinator
Juan Alvarez, City Arborist
Silvia Vonderlinden, City Clerk

Public present: Gina Anibale, Norma Glidden, Neal Woolner

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

B. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The newest appointee to the Commission, Martin Engel, was introduced. He stated that he is interested in the aesthetics of the community.

C. BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Approval of Minutes of September 12, 2005: Motioned (BS/SG); approved unanimously.

2. Application to Remove 19 Heritage Trees at 525-545 Middlefield Road:

McCandless Management Corporation applied for a permit to remove 19 heritage trees at their office complex at 525 through 545 Middlefield Road. They intend to upgrade the landscaping and plant new trees along the edge of the property facing Middlefield Road. Twelve heritage redwood trees proposed for removal are located directly under PG& E power lines and have been severely topped for many years. These trees are in the City's 20 foot easement next to the road, so are considered street trees. All of the trees are described by the applicant's arborist as having poor structure with irreparable problems. Five additional heritage trees in the City's easement are proposed for removal and are also under the power lines: three Canary Island Pines, one Monterey Pine, and one Red Oak, all of which were described by the applicant's arborist as being in decline and having poor structure, with irreparable problems. Two other heritage trees, a Monterey Pine and a Eucalyptus, proposed for removal are not in the City's easement. The applicant's arborist rated the structure of the Pine as fair, and the structure of the Eucalyptus as poor. The Pine is leaning toward the adjacent building.

The Commission discussed concerns about the desirability of trees along the road (but not under power lines), locations for the replacement trees, species of replacement trees, adequate irrigation, reduction of impervious surfaces near the trees, and relocation of the sidewalk. The possibility of undergrounding the utility lines was dismissed after staff outlined the lengthy and expensive process required.

The Commission unanimously passed a motion (DK/BS) to approve permits for removal of 19 heritage trees, specifically tree numbers 1 – 4, 6, 7, and 10 – 22, contingent on the following:

1. At least 18 replacement redwood trees, 36 inch box size, will be planted along Middlefield Road in locations where they will never interfere with the utility infrastructure.
2. 20 additional replacement trees, 24 inch box size, will be planted in other areas of the properties at 525-545 Middlefield Road, including coastal live oaks, valley oaks, red oaks and other species that will reach a mature height of at least 30 feet.
3. McCandless will pay for relocation of areas of the sidewalk closer to Middlefield Road to allow for planting of the new redwood trees.
4. The driveway and parking area pavement will be reduced wherever possible to allow more pervious ground surface for saturation by rainwater and more space for trees and landscaping.
5. Replacement trees will be adequately irrigated using water efficient methods.
6. McCandless will present a detailed tree replacement plan to City staff for approval, including drawings with specific species located and the proposed locations and dimensions of changes to sidewalk, driveway and parking areas.
7. Existing river rocks will not be placed under new trees, but should be used on site where appropriate, used elsewhere, or recycled.

There will be a 15 day appeal period during which the City will post notices at the site and mail notices to property owners within 100 feet of the property. If there is an appeal, a hearing will be scheduled before the Environmental Quality Commission at the earliest available regular meeting date.

3. Review of Draft Revisions to Street Tree Management Plan:

Dianne Dryer reviewed the approach to updating the Street Tree Management Plan. In 1987, the City Council approved a Street Tree Management Plan which included a survey and description of trees in the City right-of-way areas adjacent to roads, problems associated with certain types of trees, a list of species to be used as street trees, and a plan for implementation. In 2003, the Public Works Department contracted with West Coast Arborists to update the inventory of street trees, set up a database with locations and conditions of the trees, and provide a list of recommended replacements where necessary and an implementation plan. In March 2005, the Environmental Quality Commission reviewed West Coast Arborists' draft tree replacement list and implementation

plan. The Commission didn't think it would be suitable for Menlo Park. Staff has since updated certain sections of the original plan from 1987.

The Commission suggested looking at other nearby cities' street tree plans for additional ideas, and discussed species variety on each block, determining a plan for removing and replacing certain percentages of trees each year, a marketing brochure to educate residents about street trees, and the need for more editing of the draft document to make it current (especially the vision, goals, policies and timeline). Additional fine-tuning of the "Problem Species" section needs to be done, in particular, to determine if any of these species should be planted.

Commissioners were invited to email specific comments and suggestions to Dianne Dryer for the next draft. Staff intends to return a final draft of the Street Tree Management Plan to the Commission for further discussion in December or January. At that time the draft details of the process for carrying out the Plan will be presented, including property owner notification and education.