



# ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION

## Meeting Minutes

**January 4, 2006**

Burgess Recreation Center  
700 Alma Street, Menlo Park

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

**Commissioners Present:** Dan Kocher, Martin Engel, Rick Stevens, Frank Carney  
Bob Swezey, Doug Scott

**Commissioners Absent:** Sarah Granger

**Staff present:** Dianne Dryer, Environmental Programs Coordinator  
Ruben Nino, Director of Engineering and Maintenance

**Public present:** Barrie Coate

**A. PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None

**B. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Dianne Dryer announced that the 12 newly planted street trees on El Camino Real that were broken off by vandals on about Dec. 24th will be replaced by the City. In February, the City will hold three community input meetings on the upcoming budget. All information is posted on the City website.

### **C. BUSINESS ITEMS**

1. **Approval of Minutes of November 2, 2005:** Approved unanimously.
2. **Review of Draft Street Tree Management Plan:** Dianne Dryer presented an overview of the draft, which she and Barrie Coate (consulting arborist) composed. It is an update of the Plan that Mr. Coate produced in 1987. It includes goals, background information, an evaluation of problems with street trees, guidelines for prioritizing removals, and a list of species for planting replacements. Ruben Nino noted that the City is responsible for approximately 20,000 trees on public property in the City, including parks, medians and streets. Funds raised from the "Landscape Assessment" on property owners pay for the costs of the program, including sidewalk repair from root damage. Most of the pruning is done under a contract with West Coast Arborists (WCA), at an average of \$50 per tree (each tree pruned once every five years). Removals have been carried out on a "reactive" basis: mostly when a property owner calls to report a hazardous or fallen tree. After WCA did an inventory of City trees in 2003, trees found to be structurally unsound or diseased were removed, and in most cases, replaced. Still, the removal and replacement process has not moved quickly enough to ensure an attractive and healthy urban forest for the long term. Barrie Coate noted that in order to maintain a variety of healthy trees of differing ages and sizes throughout the city, declining or problematic trees should be selectively removed and replaced with

appropriate species. It is very important to avoid “large even-aged stands” – trees of one species and all the same age – because they are likely to all get a disease and/or die at the same time, leaving a very bare landscape. Commissioners agreed that the City should initiate a program of removals of “Priority Two” street trees as noted in the Draft Street Tree Management Plan. Priority Two trees are those that pose maintenance or minor safety problems, such as damage to sidewalks, curbs, utility infrastructure, or streets (or will do damage in the near future). Three species in high numbers in Menlo Park that cause significant sidewalk damage are ash, liquidambar, and camphor trees. When selecting replacement trees, Mr. Coate advised using a variety of cultivars in any one area. He stressed the importance of watering the root balls of seedlings for two to three years after planting. The Draft Plan includes the need for education of property owners on proper care, such as watering and not allowing vines to grow on the tree. Owners should be asked to sign a letter of commitment, which will encourage responsible watering (although no one will be forced to sign it).

Suggestions made by the Commissioners included prioritizing tree removal and replacement on heavily used streets, setting a limit for the number of times the sidewalk is repaired at a site and then remove the tree, and selecting one neighborhood section for a pilot education/removal/replacement program for Priority Two trees.

Staff expects to make final revisions to the Plan and return to the Commission at the February meeting for approval and recommendation to the City Council.

- 3. Commission Priorities for FY2006-07:** The Commission decided to submit the same list as last year, with one addition and one deletion. The Street Tree Reforestation Project will be added, including implementation of Priority Two removals and replacements as stated in the Street Tree Management Plan. Commissioner distribution of environmental brochures was deleted (no one volunteered this year).
- 4. Election of Officers:** Vice Chairperson Rick Stevens was elected as Chairperson for 2006 (in favor: Stevens, Scott, Swezey, Kocher; abstain: Carney, Engel). Doug Scott was unanimously elected Vice Chairperson.