



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

February 1, 2006

Burgess Recreation Center
700 Alma Street, Menlo Park

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Martin Engel, Rick Stevens, Bob Swezey, Doug Scott

Commissioners Absent: Dan Kocher, Frank Carney, Sarah Granger

Staff present: Dianne Dryer, Environmental Programs Coordinator

Public present: None.

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

B. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dianne Dryer announced that 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 January 4, 2005:** Approved unanimously.
2. **Implementation Planning for Reforestation Project:** Dianne Dryer outlined an implementation proposal for the Reforestation Project, which will be a multi-year program of removing selected problematic or declining street trees and replacing them with appropriate species as prescribed by the Street Tree Management Plan. Since nearly all of the Priority One Trees (dead or hazardous) have been identified and removed, Priority Two Trees should be scheduled over the next few years. Currently, the three most numerous species of problematic street trees in Menlo Park are liquidambar trees, camphor trees and ash trees. These species tend to damage sidewalks, curbs, utility infrastructure and streets. Some have inherent structural problems and pose minor safety problems. Many of one species were planted at the same time in the same neighborhood, so they are likely to decline at the same time and are susceptible to disease. Many of them are nearing the end of their natural life expectancy. In order to provide a gradual "turnover" from old to new trees, and allow for variety in size and species throughout the city, a systematic reforestation program of removal and replacement should be designed and implemented. At this time, it is unknown how many trees could be removed and replaced yearly by the City, or what the cost would be. Some of the funding would come from the Landscape Assessment Fees charged annually to all property owners. Commissioners expressed that consideration should be given to leaving relatively healthy trees and to planting new trees wherever space is already

available. However, in some cases, it will make sense to take out a declining, problematic tree to make space for a young healthy tree. The process should be selective, avoiding the removal of many trees in any one area at one time. Another suggestion was to require street tree replacement in front of new developments, where warranted. One of the most challenging components of a reforestation program is educating and gaining acceptance from residents. The Commissioners suggested starting with a pilot neighborhood where there are numerous street trees of one of the targeted species. An arborist could evaluate the street trees and compile a list of individual trees that are particularly problematic or in decline. The City could then send a letter to residents outlining the reforestation program and include the list, asking them to volunteer to have the tree(s) in front of their property removed and replaced. A citywide awareness campaign would help prepare residents for changes in their neighborhoods in the future. Articles in the newspaper, brochures and perhaps a cable TV program would be good methods. Residents should be made aware of the costs of repeated sidewalk and curb repair caused by problematic trees. Perhaps a walking tour with the City Arborist could help bring about acceptance of the reforestation program. Outreach to civic groups and garden clubs, as well as Trees for Menlo, should be conducted. A kickoff awareness event could be the Arbor Day Ceremony this April, which could be held in a pilot neighborhood, highlighting the replacement of two or three problematic trees.

- 3. Selection of Arbor Day and Awards Program Co-Chairs for 2006:** Dan Kocher and Doug Scott will coordinate the Arbor Day Ceremony, tentatively scheduled for April 28th. Bob Swezey and Martin Engel will coordinate the Environmental Quality Awards program, with nominations in the summer and presentation in the fall.