



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

April 5, 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: Rick Stevens (Chairperson), Martin Engel, Dan Kocher, Bob Swezey, Doug Scott

Commissioners Absent: Sarah Granger

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

Public present: None.

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

B. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS: Frank Carney brought a newspaper article about the human health and environmental problems resulting from canopy decline in urban areas. Martin Engel shared an article about illegal tree removals in San Jose and the problems with enforcement and low fines. Frank Carney reported that he made a statement at a recent City Council meeting against the proposal to increase the fee for the heritage tree removal application by 60% to \$160. He believes that the high fee would discourage people from applying, which would lead to trees becoming hazardous and trees being removed illegally by untrained gardeners who don't know about the regulations. Commissioners expressed desire to have this topic put on next month's agenda for further discussion. Frank Carney also noted that a development proposal at 1300 El Camino Real includes removal of all trees on the site, including three heritage trees (notably the large redwood at the front of the property), and the London Plane trees that were recently planted by the City with financial support from Trees for Menlo. The developer is proposing replacements with palm trees.

C. BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Approval of Minutes of March 1, 2005: Approved unanimously.

2. Reforestation Pilot Project: Dianne Dryer explained that no funds for implementing the Reforestation Project have been included in the budget proposal for FY2006-07, except for the pilot project. If the Council approves the budget proposal, the pilot project can proceed in July, starting with a consulting arborist rating the condition of the street trees in the project area, then outreach to the property owners in August and September, removal of the worst trees in October, planting of new trees in November, and a survey of residents in December about

the program. Staff would then evaluate best methods of proceeding with Reforestation citywide and draft an implementation plan, budget and schedule for Council consideration in the budget approval process for FY2007-08. Dianne handed out a summary of the objectives of the pilot project, the schedule of activities, and a brief description of the categories for the rating of the trees. A suggestion was made that the Council be advised in advance of the pilot project, through a report or a study session. There was a discussion about the goals of the pilot project, including majority of poor condition trees being removed, survival of at least 90% of the replacement trees for more than two years, measuring the willingness of residents to water and care for the young trees, and the number of positive ratings from residents on the survey. It was suggested that residents be given the option to pay the difference for a larger sized replacement tree if they thought the City's provision of a 15 gallon size was too small. Commissioners encouraged staff to continue to plant trees in sites that are presently vacant. Commissioners discussed the likelihood that residents will be resistant to the removal of large trees in their neighborhood because of aesthetic values and screening function. Trees shouldn't be removed any earlier than necessary, i.e. there should be good cause, such as serious decline, structural problems, disease, or utility damage.

3. **Arbor Day Planning:** Doug Scott confirmed the participation of a fourth grade class from Oak Knoll School. Dan Kocher will make a short speech at the ceremony on April 27 at 11 a.m. at 1840 Oak Avenue. Dianne Dryer will send postcard invitations to the neighbors, issue a news release, invite the Mayor, and ensure that the City tree crew prepares the site and assists with the planting.