



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

May 3, 2006

Burgess Recreation Center
700 Alma Street, Menlo Park

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Rick Stevens (Chairperson), Martin Engel, Dan Kocher, Bob Swezey, Frank Carney

Commissioners Absent: Sarah Granger, Doug Scott

Staff present: Dianne Dryer, Environmental Programs Coordinator
Deanna Chow, Associate Planner

Public present: Elaine Breeze, Walter Bemis, Lisa Van Dorn

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

B. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dan Kocher reported on the successful Arbor Day ceremony on Oak Avenue, with a class of third grade students from Oak Knoll School participating. Dianne Dryer reported that Sarah Granger notified her that she will resign from the Commission due to continuing health problems.

C. BUSINESS ITEMS

1. **Approval of Minutes of April 5, 2005:** Approved unanimously.
2. **Determination on Heritage Tree Removal Permits for Proposed Development at 75 Willow Road:** Elaine Breeze, representing the developer Summer Hill Homes, explained the revised plan for 33 detached homes. The new design would remove 46 heritage trees (36 of which are eucalyptus) and preserve 52 heritage trees. Four heritage trees would be relocated onsite. The plan includes planting of 69 replacement trees (including 51 large sized trees). Many of the large replacement trees will provide screening for adjacent homes. Neighbors were interviewed about current trees between their property and the new development and only one asked that the current eucalyptus near his home be preserved. The new plan also includes preservation of the current courtyard trees in a new small park. Frank Carney expressed his opposition to the project as a whole, citing the attractive appearance of the current building and landscape, the high cost of the proposed homes, the loss of many trees, neighborhood opposition, and the re-zoning and General Plan amendments required. Commissioners were pleased with the proposal to plant many larger sized replacement trees (24 and 36 inch box

sizes), but asked that more of the replacement species be native trees. It was noted by the developer that future homeowners will be prohibited from removing the replacement trees. Dianne Dryer stated that the whole project will be considered for approval by the City Council this fall. Motioned and seconded (BS/DK) to approve the application to remove 46 heritage trees and to relocate 4 heritage trees at the proposed 75 Willow Road residential development, with the condition that the developer change the Tree Replacement Plan to include more native species, such as valley oaks and coast live oaks. Motion passed 3/1/1 (Carney against; Engel abstained).

3. Proposed Fee Increase for Heritage Tree Removal Applications and Appeals:

At the April 5th Commission meeting, several Commissioners asked that this topic be included on the May 3 business agenda. Dianne Dryer explained the proposal from staff to the City Council to raise the application fee from \$100 to \$160 and to raise the appeal fee from \$15 to \$50 in FY2006-07. The reason for the increases is to raise more money to cover costs of processing. Commissioners' discussion topics included: the increase was too steep and would put a burden on some property owners; high fee may discourage some people from removing hazardous trees, resulting in unsafe conditions; people may have trees removed without permits by gardeners who are not qualified, causing unsafe conditions for the workers, other people and property; higher fees may lead to more violations of the heritage tree ordinance, which are costly to enforce; some residents might be reluctant to voice their concerns through appeal by a \$50 appeal fee. Rick Stevens suggested an alternative fee structure: \$125 each for the first three applications and \$75 each for subsequent, if applied for at the same time, and a \$25 appeal fee. Commissioners asked that a letter recommending these fees and explaining the reasons for them be sent to the City Council. Commissioners also expressed concern that heritage tree violations be investigated and penalties be assessed.

4. Change of Meeting Date: Commissioners agreed to cancel the July 5 regular meeting.