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APPROVED MINUTES

TREE BOARD
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF July 19, 2017

SEBASTOPOL CITY HALL
CONFERENCE ROOM
7120 BODEGA AVENUE
4:00 P.M.

TREE BOARD:

The notice of the meeting was posted on July 13, 2017.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Board Member Langberg called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present:	Lars Langberg, Acting Chair Christine Level, Board Member Gregory Beale, Board Member Lynn Deedler, Board Member
Absent:	Ted Luthin, Chair (excused) Cary Bush, Vice Chair (excused)
Staff:	Dana Morrison, Assistant Planner Rebecca Mansour, Planning Technician

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: There were none.

4. PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE ON MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST: There

Assistant Planner Morrison updated the Board on the following:

- A recent parks report, triggered by City Arborist, Becky Duckles, was recently done. The report has to do with a number of issues with regards to street trees. The report proposes the gradual replacement of downtown street trees. This coincides with, but is unrelated to, recent Board discussion of mistletoe infestation, etc.
- Caltrans improvements such as bike paths in the city may also trigger further replacements.
- Input from the Board on types of replacement trees is requested.
- The City is planning on entering into outside service contracts with tree companies to help with specialized and routine tree care and maintenance. This will ultimately have budgetary considerations.

Hearing nothing further, the Board asked questions of staff.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA:

Loriell Golden, a resident of Sebastopol, asked a clarifying question of staff.

Assistant Planner Morrison responded.

Board Member Beale asked a clarifying question.

Chair Langberg responded.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Langberg closed the public comment period.

6. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: There were none.

7. CONSENT CALENDER: There were none.

8. REGULAR AGENDA:

- A. TREE REMOVAL PERMIT:** This is an application for the approval of a Tree Removal Permit for two Coast Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) trees located at 550 Gravenstein Highway North. The trees are located on the south western side of the Pacific Market property. The applicant is seeking a Tree Removal Permit because the trees roots have been consistently causing damage to the concrete sidewalk. The two trees have diameters that are approximately 22.3" and 27.5" each.

Assistant Planner Morrison presented the staff report.

The Board asked questions of staff.

Chair Langberg asked if the applicant was present and wished to make a presentation.

The applicant was not present.

Chair Langberg asked if members of the public wished to speak on this item.

Nadia Winstead, a resident of Sebastopol, commented:

- Spoke with staff regarding this matter.
- Is new to the area but has been visiting for the past 14 years.
- Research shows that Redwood trees are great for the environment.
- The two Redwoods slated for removal provide a significant cooling effect when standing under them on a hot day.
- Would like the trees to remain.
- It is unfortunate that they were put in a tiny planter box to begin with.
- The trees are mature and appear to be thriving, which is consistent with the City Arborist's report.
- Read from the website of the RCCI (Redwoods and Climate Change Initiative).
- Redwoods only live here.
- Encouraged retaining the trees.
- Encouraged creativity with regards to the sidewalk and plumbing.
- The property owner will have to pay a high cost to have these trees removed, if the request is approved.
- Thanked the Board for their time.

Natalie Timm, a resident of Sebastopol, asked a clarifying question of Ms. Winstead regarding the study she cited.

Ms. Winstead responded.

Lori Golden, a resident of Sebastopol, commented:

- Redwood trees store the most carbon.
- Every time a Redwood tree is cut down, it releases that carbon back into the atmosphere, which contributes to the climate catastrophe that we're in right now.
- Wishes to save the trees.
- There are other safe and creative ways of dealing with the sidewalk issue.
- Lives next door to the trees proposed for removal.
- Every couple of years the property owner may have to redo the repair due to tree growth.
- It is very, very important that we do not see trees as our enemy.
- We need to work with the life force.
- We are facing a climate catastrophe.
- We need to be the real Sebastopolians that we are, that really do care about the earth and the life force, that care to leave a functioning planet for ourselves and for future generations.
- This is not just about money.
- With regards to the roots possibly harming the plumbing or walls of the market, some of the plumbing for the condos where she is living is being redone due to root interception. The trees causing the need will remain.
- Doesn't want to see trees as something in our way.
- Moved here from Los Angeles 14 years ago.
- We don't just live on the planet, we live with the planet.
- Mother Nature always bats last.
- We need to love these trees as much as we love the humans in our lives.
- Consciousness is important.
- Counting on the Tree Board to really think about the statements that were made today and preserve these particular trees.
- These trees are protected by the heritage law.
- These are heritage trees, which should be of value.
- Thanked the Board for their time.

A gentleman named Todd Spinel, a resident of Sebastopol, commented:

- Lives around the corner from the market.
- Asked the Board to deny this request.
- Echoed statements already made by other members of the public.
- Personally, from an aesthetic viewpoint, these are really beautiful trees which he has enjoyed.
- Understands the importance of accessibility and safety when it comes to the sidewalk.
- When trying to imagine what the space will look and feel like if the trees are removed, it feels horrible.
- Has lived in Sebastopol for 14 years.
- To borrow a phrase from the Lorax, we need to speak for the trees.
- Reiterated his request that the Board deny this request.
- If removal of the trees is approved, their replacements should be substantial in its ability to absorb carbon, like the Redwoods are doing.
- Would really prefer for the trees to remain.

- Expressed concern over the effects of climate change, for our generation as well as future generations.
- If these trees are removed, people will be upset.
- Thanked the Board for their time.

Ms. Golden interjected with a procedural question.

Chair Langberg responded.

Tyler Menne, local business owner, commented:

- If these trees are going to be removed:
 - It would be reasonable to expect more than a one for one replacement. Two or three, for every one tree removed, should be required.
 - Also, the replacements should be equal to, or better than, what was removed.
- Thanked the Board for their time.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Langberg closed the public comment period and brought it back to the Board for discussion.

The Board asked additional questions of staff.

Ms. Golden interjected that she has consulted environmental lawyers and reiterated that these trees are protected by the heritage law.

Chair Langberg explained the format for these meetings and asked Ms. Golden to refrain from interrupting the Board.

The Board asked additional questions of staff.

Ms. Golden interjected that the sign posted on the tree indicated that the trees were heritage trees and therefore protected under the heritage law.

The Board asked for clarification from staff.

Assistant Planner Morrison and Board Member Deedler responded.

The Board and Assistant Planner Morrison made clarifying comments.

Ms. Golden interjected with a clarifying question of staff.

Assistant Planner Morrison responded.

The Board made clarifying comments.

Chair Langberg asked to hear from the Board on this item.

Board Member Deedler commented:

- Would like members of the public, as a group, to approach the City's Engineering Director and ask about the possibility of working around the trees.
- The space is too small for those trees.
- The sidewalk and driveway will continue to break up.
- This has been the case for many beautiful trees that were planted in too small of a space and to date, there has never been any thought about giving up one parking

space to put in a sidewalk that will give the tree lots of room to grow and continue in its place. In the case of these trees, it would cost one parking space.

- With regards to possibly damage to the plumbing and the wall; Redwood trees are probably one of the most benign trees there are in terms of causing damage. Their roots tend to go around things, not damage them.
- Would not address seriously a vague concern about possible damage.
- Hopes for Board support in setting a precedent for creation of space to retain trees, especially beautiful heritage trees that warrant retainment, by eliminating a parking space.
- Those trees are in an otherwise stark looking place. If removed, the trees would be sorely missed both visually and aesthetically.

Board Member Level commented:

- Agreed with Board Member Deedler on the trees not causing damage to the walls.
- Needs more information on the concern over damage to the plumbing.
- On one hand the City is heavily invested in climate change, on the other we have the City sending a letter to a property owner with costs associated due to damage caused by these trees. Both are understandable.
- Always leans towards keeping trees, wherever they are.
- It is absurd to consider removal of these trees due to a blip in the sidewalk.
- Questioned the future health and success of these trees given the confined space that they're in and whether or not removal of them was inevitable.
- Has seen Redwood trees survive in amazing locations.
- Removal of these trees will create an incredible, glaring heatsink in that location.
- Sympathizes with the property owner regarding having received this letter from City staff and the potential costs.
- Trees of this magnitude create their own environment and removal of them will result in dramatic change.
- Finding a comparable replacement for that location is unlikely.

Board Member Beale commented:

- Expressed having mixed feelings about this application.
- The safety and liability of the fact that these trees are creating a hazard where people could trip and injure themselves, brings about a lot of questions. Questions he'd like answered included; how often this has happened, the last time the sidewalk was repaired, and how long has the sidewalk been like this.
- Cannot weigh hypothetical without facts to support it.
- This is not a black and white issue. Seems like those involved are considering ongoing maintenance and potential costs versus repairing the layout of the sidewalk and keeping everything exactly the way it is.
- Does not see consideration for alternatives, such as inverting the sidewalk around the trees, onto the property side, rather than taking from the street.
- The focus seems narrow when compared to what the possibilities could be.
- Needs more information.
- Maybe there is a creative alternative that wouldn't require constant maintenance. Expressed a concern about exploration of that being onerous and questioned if that would be fair to ask of the property owner.

Board Member Level commented:

- Questioned if inverting a sidewalk from public to private property could even be allowed.
- Referred to the letter from the City Public Works department and commented that the City is threatening the property owner.

The Board asked additional questions of staff.

Chair Langberg commented:

- Used to live in the area.
- Questioned how much the market even uses the nearby driveway and how much it is really needed.
- It feels like there is a lot of room to come up with a different, more creative solution.
- Unless death of the trees is imminent anyway, which it doesn't sound like it is, these trees should not just be cut down.
- May make sense to defer action, in terms of removal, in order to see how healthy the trees remain.

Board Member Deedler commented:

- A bulb-out for the sidewalk, towards the street, could add years to the life of the trees and make the area quite attractive.
- Spoke on a prior example of a stunning tree having been removed rather than eliminating one or two parking spaces.
- Reiterated his hope for Board support in setting a precedent for creation of space to retain trees, especially beautiful heritage trees that warrant retainment, by eliminating a parking space.

Board Member Level commented:

- Read from the letter sent to the applicant by the Public Works department.
- Would like to know what City pricing would be on the requested repair.
- Needs more information before she can make a decision.
- The trees are healthy and doing well.

Board Member Beale commented:

- Questioned if repairing the sidewalk, according to City standards, could even be accomplished without damaging and destabilizing the tree.

Chair Langberg commented:

- It sounds like the Board is in agreement on trying to keep the trees.
- Denying the application would not be enough due to the unresolved issues surrounding the request.
- The Board could continue the application for more information.

The Board agreed with Chair Langberg's summation.

Board Member Level commented:

- Suspects that the issue with the growth space of the tree is not going to kill the trees, it will probably just limit their ability to become as massive as they might otherwise.

Board Member Beale asked Chair Langberg if he could ask the public if they were aware of how long the sidewalk had been lifting.

Chair Langberg allowed it.

Ms. Golden responded that she walks that area frequently and has never tripped. She noted that she was unsure how long it had been like that.

Board Member Deedler responded:

- Has experience with these matters.
- The lifting doesn't happen suddenly, once it begins it probably averages about half an inch per year. On heavy rain years, it could lift about three quarters of an inch.

Mr. Spinel commented:

- There are also picnic table benches there that people often use as a social space.
- The shade from the trees is nice and would be missed.

Chair Langberg thanked Mr. Spinel for his comments.

Board Member Deedler made a motion to continue this application to give the applicant additional time to explore tree-saving options, including expanding the space to allow the trees to grow.

Board Member Level commented that she would like Board Member Deedler to amend his motion to include a request for information, more specifically, on the costs that the City would impose on the property owner to conform to City standards. She would also like information on the survivability of the trees moving forward.

Board Member Beale commented, in addition to what Board Member Level is requesting, if the trees truly are a nuisance and there is no way around it, it would be helpful to understand past history of repairs and associated costs. It would also be helpful to have information on anticipated repair issues and costs if the trees were to remain. He echoed Board Member Level's comment on the survivability of the trees moving forward and commented that it sounded to him like the issue was more about the health of the hardscape around the trees, versus that of the health of the trees.

The Board concurred with Board Member Beale.

Board Member Deedler commented that it would also be helpful to know the estimated cost to remove the trees as well.

Board Member Deedler amended his motion to include comments made by Board Members Level, Beale, and himself.

Board Member Level seconded the amended motion.

AYES: Chair Langberg and Board Members Level, Beale and Deedler
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None

Board Member Level commended the public for their involvement.

Board Member Deedler encouraged the public to stay engaged and to see staff for guidance regarding this application.

9. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- A.** Discussion of mistletoe infestation and general tree issues affecting the City. Review of proposed letter to City Council, discuss edits, suggestions, and corrections.

The Board asked questions of staff.

After some discussion, the Board agreed upon some revisions to the letter and requested that the revised draft return to the Board for final approval before being forwarded to the Council.

10. REPORTS FROM THE BOARD/STAFF: There were none.

11. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Langberg adjourned the meeting of the Tree Board at 5:17 p.m. to the next Tree Board meeting to be held August 02, 2017 at 4:00 p.m., at the Sebastopol City Hall, 7120 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol, CA.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Dana Morrison
Assistant Planner