



Public Works Department

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE TREE COMMITTEE

Monday June 9, 2014 7:00 p.m.
El Cerrito City Hall
Hillside Conference Room
10890 San Pablo Avenue

1. Roll Call

Present: Committee Members Bleier, Boniello, Charlton, Christian, Hittle, Srago.

Staff Liaison Stephen Prée also present

Absent: Committee Members Cheng, Price

2. Comments from the Public on non agenda items-

A.) El Cerrito resident *John Montesa of 700 Richmond St. addressed the committee on the topic of his strong desire to remove two City street trees (Melaluca sp.) in the PROW on the Eureka side of his home. Mr. Montesa is offering to pay for the removal and replacement of the trees “with trees that will grow 15-20 feet tall”. Mr. Montesa paid the City to plant the Melaluca trees 40 years ago but has regretted this as the trees have grown large; he “wants some relief from the insidious mess” that the trees make with their leaf drop and he would like the trees to be removed to facilitate the installation of solar panels. Several years ago Mr. Montesa sought and received City approval to remove a separate City street tree (Eucalyptus sp.) in the PROW on Richmond St. at this address that he replaced with a smaller stature tree.*

Committee member Bleier asked City Arborist Prée if this tree species is appropriate for this location and relayed the need for site specific species selection. Prée responded that although the species is not ideal due to the potential for creating sidewalk damage, it has not posed a significant enough hazard for sidewalk or tree replacement. Prée noted the general environmental benefits of the two trees to the entire community and that the City is developing a protocol for private removal of City trees (to be reviewed by the Tree Committee) that will guide the decision making process for Mr. Montesa’s request.

B.) El Cerrito resident *Nick Arzio asked the committee what role they will have in determining the number of new street trees to be planted as part of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan. Committee member Boniello responded that the Tree Committee is providing specific comments to the planning department that will be considered in the final draft of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan.*

C.) El Cerrito resident *Cristina Castanha relayed to the committee her dismay with the removal of several mature trees at the PG&E substation and Casa Cerrito pre-school. She said she is “super upset” about the loss of habitat with the removal of trees on PG&E and City property. She asked how the City plans to replant and when. She recommended looking at Google Earth before and after photos. She wants to help get more trees in El Cerrito.*

City Arborist Prée responded that all but three of the removed tree species were Monterey Pine (Pinus radiata) that were either dead, diseased (Pitch Canker, Pine Bark Beetle) or had reached the

end of their lifecycle. The project was initiated, funded and completed by PG&E as part of their electrical substation upgrade project and PG&E removed 3 aged Monterey Pine trees on City property as a courtesy. The City intends to replant native disease resistant trees, on the Casa Cerrito property in the fall of 2014 but has no jurisdiction on the PG&E property. Up coming opportunities to help plant trees will be announced to the public and members of the public may join the tree committee after being nominated by the committee, interviewed and approved by City Council. *Committee member Price* reiterated that the City tree budget is limited and Monterey Pine is one of the more economically demanding species due to the high numbers of failure and removal associated with the species.

3. **Report from the City Arborist-** *Prée reported on recent limb failures of El Cerrito City street trees- Sweetgum and Chinese Elm species and he summarized a presentation he attended on trends in City tree species selection in the City of San Jose. He relayed that El Cerrito will not apply for the EEMP grant this year due to the constricted time frame of the grant and lack of human resources to complete it.*
4. **Action Items-**
 - Approval of the minutes from April 14, 2014 (a quorum not present May 12 to approve) *Committee agreed to title these “notes” as a quorum was not present.*
 - Approval of the minutes from May 12, 2014 *Motion: Steve Price, Second: Ralph Boniello, unanimous.*
5. **Update on the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan –** *Ralph Boniello and Steve Price summarized the scope of the Plan, defined Form Based Code, discussed complete streets, iterated the public comment period process and tree related elements contained in the draft plan. Boniello reviewed the draft document with the committee via the large computer monitor screen. The subcommittee (Boniello, Hittle, Price, staff Prée) agreed to meet and prepare comments for the whole committee for the July meeting.*
6. **Report from the ad-hoc subcommittee on the 2014/15 Tree Committee Action Plan –** *Cathy Bleier summarized progress, circulated the draft Action Plan and recommended that the committee refer back to the Plan periodically during regular meetings as a planning device. Steve Price commented that the committee needs its members to commit to taking lead roles for fulfillment of the various goals. The committee discussed and recommended changes to the plan including making it a two year plan. Ralph Boniello made a motion to adopt the 2014/16 Tree Committee Action Plan with the changes discussed, Mike Charlton second, approved unanimously.*
7. **Summary of activities on the Invest From The Ground Up business outreach campaign –** *Janet Hittle recommended that the sub-committee meet again before making this an agenda item. A list of businesses that have already received the brochure is needed.*
8. **Summary of Hillside Natural Area Festival Day, May 17-** *Ralph Boniello reported on the activities and attendance at the festival, the idea of making this an annual event, the monies collected so far for the purchase of the Madera Property, and Mr. Boniello distributed a brochure that he created regarding the Trees of the Hillside Natural Area.*
9. **Discussion of future committee actions and agenda items –**
 - July- the committee will discuss the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan
10. **Adjournment- 9:02**