

together was coming loose. The tree poses a risk to his home and the neighborhood and it would be irresponsible not to take action. One of the neighbors is in support of removing the tree since her car gets damaged by sap. They have planted two trees in the backyard that are more size appropriate for the house.

Mr. Henry Escobar, arborist, inspected the tree and determined that heavy winds could cause the multiple trunks to split. There are multiple trunks that are not well attached to the main stem. The tree was pruned incorrectly in the past. The location of the tree is a problem since it is in the front yard and the homeowners walk in and out of the house underneath the tree. He is also concerned that the tree is very close to the wires.

Commissioner Blauvelt asked Mr. Escobar if he works for Bartlett Tree Service. Mr. Escobar stated he works for All Stars Tree Service but his report was written by Arbor Logic. Commissioner Blauvelt asked about the age of the tree. Mr. Escobar stated it was difficult to tell without counting the rings. He would guess it was about 80 to 100 years old. Commissioner Blauvelt stated the report indicates there were no signs of disease or pests. Mr. Escobar agreed.

Ms. Mandy Downing stated the tree was not diseased, there was no immediate threat from the tree, the limbs could be cut back, and the tree could be saved. There were two heritage trees cut down in the past couple years- one on the applicant's property and one next door. This will be the third heritage tree removed. The owners bought the property knowing there were two heritage trees.

Ms. Karen Ellingbow, 8 Heather Way, agreed with the comments made by Ms. Downing and supported her protest. Those four heritage tree were provided nesting habitats for the Kites in the nearby wetlands. Two of the trees have been removed.

Ms. Movafaghi responded that both arborists have advised against trimming the branches back because it would threaten the stability and health of the tree. This is not an option.

Chair Harrison closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Blauvelt stated the Municipal Code Findings, Section 12.16.070, that need to be made to remove a tree was one small part of the Ordinance that governs the City regarding trees. She read the Purpose Section with respect to trees and which describes how the City values the environment and how mature trees are a part of the City's heritage and add to the quality of life. Both arborist reports indicate this is a healthy tree. There does not seem to be any reason to remove the tree.

M/s Blauvelt/Sunshine, to deny the Heritage Tree Permit Application for 16 Diane Lane based on the inability to make the necessary findings.

Ayes: Blauvelt, Sunshine

Noes: Friedel, Chair Harrison

Absent: Koepfel

This was done through a roll call vote.

Recreation Director Whitley stated the vote was split and the approval to remove the tree did not pass.

Recreation Director Whitley stated there was a 15-day appeal period.

5. Business Items

5.1 Community Services Department Discussion

City Manager Schwarz presented the staff report. He discussed the plan to merge the Recreation and Library Departments into one- the Community Services Department. He noted this was a work in process and the staff will find new and creative ways to capture the available synergies. The Department will consist of the Community Services Director, the Recreation Supervisor, and staff from the library that will be servicing both divisions. Administrative services will be provided as much as possible.

Library Director Escobedo stated he has been in communication with Recreation Director Whitley about all the services that the Recreation Department provides. The Library and Recreation Departments serve many of the same residents. They are looking at opportunities for virtual programming including getting the Community Garden involved.

Commissioner Friedel welcomed Library Director Escobedo. She asked if there would be a melding of the Library Board of Trustees and the Parks and Recreation Commission. Library Director Escobar stated he thought they would continue to be separate entities. The Library Board has more of an advisory capacity and he would check the Municipal Code.

City Manager Schwarz stated the Municipal Code distinguishes the two bodies and he does not currently intend to merge the two. The creation of this department is the result of the impacts from COVID-19 and if revenues restore themselves then he would consider going back to having two separate departments.

Commissioner Blauvelt stated the Commission has always thought of the Library Department as a basic programming tool and they will continue to be supportive.

Commissioner Sunshine asked Library Director about his top priorities within the next six months given the current state of affairs. Library Director Escobedo discussed virtual programming, building community, giving residents something to do, and bringing some normalcy back to our lives. They have to work around the challenges presented by COVID-19.

Chair Harrison stated this will be a new and interesting way to operate within the City. She views the Commissions' role as being a guardian and cheerleader for parks and recreation.

5.2 Possible Transfer of Tree Hearing Responsibilities to the Planning Commission

City Manager Schwarz presented the staff report. The Planning Commission reviews Tree Removal Permits when they are incorporated into a planning/development project. They are very familiar with the code. He would like to shift the analysis for Tree Hearings to the Planning Department regardless of which Commission will be the hearing body. He asked for some feedback from the Commission.

Commissioner Friedel stated they have discussed this idea in the past. She asked how often the decisions made by the Parks and Recreation Commission were overturned on appeal to the City Council. City Manager Schwarz stated he can remember only one time that this happened and it involved a complicated set of circumstances. He added that community character could certainly be included in a decision and made a part of the Findings.

Commissioner Blauvelt stated it made sense for the Planning Commission to take on the Public Hearings for Tree Removal Permits.

Commissioner Sunshine stated she could see it one way or another and appreciated the historic perspective. She is open to whatever is the best for Larkspur.

Chair Harrison stated she was initially surprised that the Parks and Recreation Commission was tasked with reviewing Tree Removal Permits. However, she is of the opinion that the Commission brings more of a community perspective on the concept of retaining or removing trees. She is concerned about diminishing Parks and Recreation and the perception that would bring to residents.

Commissioner Friedel stated she did not necessarily want to hold onto the task but was also concerned about residents' perceptions. She asked if they could hold off on this until they see how the two departments meld.

Commissioner Blauvelt stated the Planning Commission is extremely community oriented and thoughtful in its deliberations. The community will be well served.

City Manager Schwarz stated he was not sensing a strong feeling one way or another from the Commission and was hearing good points on both sides. They could revisit this down the road and see how the experiment of melding the two departments works out.

5.3 Awards, Citations, Proclamations Discussion

Recreation Director Whitley discussed how Boardmembers and Commissioners are citizens who want to make Larkspur a better place. He thanked them all and in particular Commissioner Blauvelt for her 40 years of service on the Parks and Recreation Commission. He asked Commissioner Blauvelt to check her front door- her family was there with a beautiful cake and a proclamation!

Chair Harrison read the Proclamation commending Commissioner Blauvelt for her 40 years of service to the City of Larkspur.

6. Director's Oral Report

Recreation Director Whitley reported at the May 21st meeting there was a letter from a resident asking about the procedure for Tree Removal Permits and whether or not it had changed. He explained the process and noted there have been no changes. He reported staff was working on the new stage in Piper Park for Music in the Park, bands, etc. The Commission will need to amend the 2012 Piper Park Master Plan to accommodate the

addition of the stage. He reported he would be conducting a Parks Tour with Library Director Escobedo on Monday, June 22nd.

Recreation Supervisor Stone reported the Super Cool Summer School was cancelled for this year. Staff attempted to run a few camps with some of the local instructors following the new protocols. It was too quick a turn around to get a satisfactory enrollment. There are, however, some very successful camps renting the facilities for the summer including volleyball and soccer. They are running in three-week blocks. He discussed some of the safety protocols including constant cleaning, wearing of masks, separate bathrooms, staggered drop-off and pick-up, and others. They are doing an amazing job! Staff is getting calls from yoga studios and exercise classes about using the outdoor facilities. Small exercise classes of ten individuals will be allowed in Piper Park starting in July. Staff has identified three areas in Piper Park that could be rented for one-hour increments at a cost of \$25 per hour.

Recreation Supervisor Stone thanked Recreation Director Whitley for his leadership and creating a “team” atmosphere.

Recreation Director Whitley thanked the Commission for being the “Fun Commission” and for their service to the community.

7. Commissioner’s Reports

The Commission thanked Recreation Director for his leadership and congratulated him on his retirement.

8. Adjourn Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis
Recording Secretary

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Larkspur Parks and Recreation Commission.

Franklin Escobedo

Franklin Escobedo, Community Services Director