

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
LARKSPUR PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 18, 2014

COMMISSION: PRESENT: Chair Matteo, Blauvelt, McNally

 ABSENT: Friedel

STAFF: PRESENT: Recreation Director Dick Whitley
 Recreation Supervisor Shannon Clegg

Chair Matteo called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT CALENDAR

Approval of Minutes of July 17, 2014

M/s Blauvelt/McNally to approve the minutes of July 17, 2014 as submitted

Ayes: Blauvelt, McNally, Chair Matteo

Absent: Friedel

OPEN TIME

There were no comments.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Re-hearing of Heritage Tree Permit Application Protest at 151 Upper Via Casitas, Greenbrae

Recreation Director Whitley presented a staff report.

Chair Matteo asked if the Commission could make a decision based on the Larkspur Municipal Code regardless of the Migratory Bird Act and Fish and Wildlife Code regulations. Recreation Director Whitley stated “yes” and noted that the only statute that the Commission is responsible for is the Larkspur Heritage Tree Ordinance.

Chair Matteo opened the Public Hearing.

Ms. Fay Mark, property owner, stated they purchased the property in November and it was in significant disrepair. They renovated the property and hired an arborist to advise them on the health and welfare of the landscaping. The arborist advised them to remove the Monterey Pine because it is diseased and has not been pruned properly over the years. The canopy is very sparse and the tree is infested with beetles. She is not sure they can do enough to bring the tree back to health. They are in the process of a major remodel of

the property and re-landscaping. They will be planting Flowering Plum trees that attract bees and are not prone to disease.

Commissioner Blauvelt understood Ms. Mark's concerns about the tree. There are significant views from the apartments that would be impacted and she asked Ms. Mark if this was taken into consideration. Ms. Mark stated the idea was to plant a Flowering Plum tree in its place- they grow to a height of 20 feet. She wants to make sure her tenants in the apartments have some privacy.

Commissioner Blauvelt asked about the height of the three trees that were just planted. Ms. Mark stated she was not sure but they were 24" box- the largest they could purchase.

Ms. Mary Moyer, Via Casitas, stated she lives across the street from the property. She is protesting the removal of the tree. She has looked down at it for 14 years and it provides graceful scenery. She could not imagine the view if the tree were removed. The tree is not in a healthy state and is sparse in spots but she thought that with loving care it could be brought back. She sees no evidence of pitch canker.

Commissioner Blauvelt noted Ms. Moyer is now looking down on the Flowering Plum trees and she asked if that changed her perspective. Ms. Moyer stated they were not taking up a lot of space.

Commissioner McNally asked Ms. Moyer if she thought the tree was healthy. Ms. Moyer stated she sees no evidence of pitch canker. Commissioner McNally noted trees do have a life span.

Ms. Ruth Gretchen, Via Gallardo, stated she has been concerned about trees in the neighborhood and ways they have been neglected. She looked at the Monterey Pine and thought it should be saved. It is an anchor for the landscape on that property. There are a number of pines in the neighborhood that have brown needles and some that have been topped. Trees enhance the value of property and neighborhoods. The subject tree does have brown needles and a sparse canopy but it looks like it has a lot of life to it. The arborist did not prepare an in-depth report but rather took a cursory look at the tree. The Heritage Tree Ordinance is based on the premise that trees are precious resources.

Commissioner McNally asked Ms. Gretchen if she had information verifying that the tree could be preserved. Ms. Gretchen stated she did some research and distributed a letter. This tree has been neglected and it should be given a chance for at least a year.

Commissioner Blauvelt stated the tree was neglected and needs some tender loving care. This is a reasonable approach. She would like to deny the request, without prejudice, and allow the applicant to come back in a year.

Ms. Mark stated she would love to save the tree but it was in such poor shape and has been severely neglected. It is clear that the tree has pitch canker and more significant

problems. She will replace the tree with a species that would grow quickly and have a large canopy.

Commissioner McNally asked Ms. Mark if she knew anything about pitch canker. Ms. Mark stated she has read about it and admits that it is not a death sentence for the tree. It weakens the tree and allows insects to infest the tree. It also makes it difficult for the tree to take in nutrients.

Chair Matteo closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner McNally stated he has visited the site three times. The tree looks sick and “pretty sad”. He did not think giving it a year would be helpful when they could have a new tree in that spot growing for a year. He cited several of the findings in the Heritage Tree Ordinance. He was in favor of removing the tree.

Commissioner Blauvelt stated they should give the tree a chance. It is poorly pruned and neglected. She suggested planting a Flowering Plum next to the tree and giving the Pine another year to see if it could recover. It is not totally infested and could thrive for years if it is taken care of.

Chair Matteo stated he did not know that he could recognize pitch canker but he did read up on the disease. It is a fungal disease that produces airborne spores that could be carried by beetles to other trees. It does not necessarily accelerate the death of a tree but there is not much that could be done about it. He is in favor of removing the tree.

M/s McNally/Matteo to approve the removal of the Monterey Pine at 151 Upper Via Casitas based on the ability to make the findings: Larkspur Municipal Code Section 12.16.070 Subsection F (1) (a) and (b) and (2) (a).

Ayes: McNally, Chair Matteo

Nays: Blauvelt

Absent: Friedel

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

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Park Signage for Park Hours and Non-Smoking Ordinance

Recreation Director Whitley presented a staff report.

Commissioner Blauvelt asked about the City Council’s position on this matter.

Recreation Director Whitley stated he would present the matter to the Council at the October 15th meeting.

Commissioner McNally asked Recreation Director Whitley if he had any examples of signage. Recreation Director Whitley stated this was not an opportunity to create a sign- the Public Works Department had a standard sign with appropriate language.

Chair Matteo asked if the signage would address only the issues regarding the hours in the park and smoking in the park. Recreation Director Whitley stated “yes”.

Chair Matteo stated he spoke to a resident named Ms. Snow who had several other concerns including: 1) people bring barbecues to parks that create smoke; 2) teens smoke in the park near the pier at Bon Air Park; 3) potential delay about getting signage in the parks.

Recreation Director Whitley stated there were no restrictions against bringing barbecues to the parks.

It was the consensus of the Commission to support the staff recommendation for signage in the parks.

RECREATION DIRECTOR’S ORAL REPORT

Recreation Director Whitley reported Summer School Directors Erin Duggan and Beth Seuss submitted the yearly statistics for the program- there were a total of 1,013 children that participated in the program this summer (including teen aides). The Recreation Department is temporarily using the trailer that was the former site of the Public Works Department until the renovations to the permanent Recreation office are finished. Staff anticipates moving back into the permanent office sometime in October. The City Council will be hearing presentations and interviewing three firms for the design of the Community Facility/Library on Saturday, September 27th. Creation of the new Dog Park is moving forward and the existing Dog Park will be restored to marshland. He reported the Commission meeting “packets” will be available on-line and at Commission meetings in a single binder. Staff will no longer make numerous copies of the packet.

Recreation Supervisor Clegg reported on the Teen/Tween Programs- staff went of numerous outings during the summer. Several participants from out of the school district signed up along with the usual crowd. There were more than 120 kids that participated in over ten outings. The kids particularly enjoyed “Inflatable Monday” which included playing in a “loopy ball” in the Hall Middle School Gymnasium. Fall programs have started and The Lounge at Hall Middle School and the Kent Klubhouse at Kent Middle School are in full swing. More Teen/Tween Events will start soon.

Chair Matteo asked if attendance for the summer programs was a mix of kids. Recreation Supervisor Clegg stated there was a group of regulars but a good mix of 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. She plans to open it up to 9th graders next year.

The Commission thanked Recreation Supervisor Clegg for her wonderful work on the Teen/Tween Programs. Recreation Supervisor Clegg stated Hall Middle School teacher James Fester is a big part of the program.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner McNally asked Recreation Director Whitley about the basketball court at Greenbrae Park. Recreation Director Whitley stated the Public Works Director had discussed this item at the Mini Parks Master Plan Public Hearing. Funding for the court came in sooner than expected.

Commissioner McNally asked about the status of the Bon Air Landing Pier. Recreation Director Whitley stated this is a part of the Bon Air Bridge Project and it is in the works.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis
Recording Secretary