

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

COMMISSION: PRESENT: Chair Matteo, Blauvelt, Cimino,
Friedel, McNally

STAFF: PRESENT: Recreation Director Dick Whitley
Public Works Director Mary Grace Houlihan
Council Liaison Catherine Way

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

APPROVAL OF CONSENT CALENDAR

Approval of Minutes of October 16, 2014

M/s Blauvelt/McNally to approve the minutes of October 16, 2014 as submitted.

Ayes: Blauvelt, Friedel, McNally, Chair Matteo

Abstain: Cimino

OPEN TIME

There were no comments.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Hearing of Heritage Tree Permit Application Protest at 127 King Street, Larkspur

Commissioner McNally recused himself from this item.

Recreation Director Whitley presented the staff report. He noted tree #3, indicated on the hand drawn site map that he prepared, was not a Heritage tree and would not be considered as part of this hearing.

Chair Matteo opened the Public Hearing

Mr. Richard Baumsteiger, representing St. Patrick's Church, stated he had no idea these were heritage trees. The trees need to be trimmed at the very least and cut down if at all possible. They have no intention of adding onto the property. They would like the Olive and Citrus trees to flourish.

Commissioner Cimino stated the arborist report notes the trees are prone to be ignitable and have poor structure. He asked if the backyard was too shaded to harvest the fruit from the Olive and Citrus trees. Mr. Baumsteiger stated "yes". Commissioner Cimino

asked if there was one particular tree that would open up the backyard to some sunshine. Mr. Baumsteiger stated there were citrus trees in the middle of the property and a series of Olive trees along the edge of the property. He would prefer to remove all the Acacia trees. Commissioner Cimino referred to tree #4 on the site map prepared by the Recreation Director, and stated the arborist is of the opinion that it jeopardizes the subject and neighboring property.

Commissioner Blauvelt stated the arborist mentions eleven trees that could be cut at will because they are not heritage trees. Commissioner Cimino noted removal of these trees might help the Olive and Citrus trees.

Mr. Erik Miller, King Street, stated he did not understand why the church was proposing to cut down these trees. The initial application asserted that the trees were threatening the retaining walls. The only tree that could possibly be a threat would be tree #3. It is an old retaining wall that has no cracks. The arborist report asserts that the trees are a fire hazard but the trees are far from the house that is not being used. He felt that the arborist report is inconsistent with the application. These are very nice trees and he wonders if something else is going on.

Mr. Doug Honnold, King Street, stated his backyard and house receives shade from three of the trees. The purpose of the Heritage Tree Ordinance is to try to preserve heritage trees due to the ecological and spiritual values that trees provide to the community. These trees provide shade, windbreak, cover, a sound break, etc. He objects to the shifting rationale that has been submitted by the applicants. The buildings are approximately 30 feet away from tree #4. The alternative is to trim the trees as opposed to cutting them down. These trees are not particularly flammable and the density of trees in this yard is relatively low. Cutting down tree #4 would not provide sunshine to the Citrus trees. He has not been able to meet or communicate with representatives of the church.

Mr. Baumsteiger reiterated he was not aware of any problems.

Mr. Don Turry, King Street, stated his side yard is right next to the trees. He has real heritage trees in his yard. He has had numerous fruit trees die because of these shade trees. He stated that the hillside was clear-cut of Redwoods trees many years ago for the railroad and they were replaced with "scrub", invasive trees. These trees could not be trimmed because it stimulates growth.

Mr. James Holmes, Larkspur, referred to the Heritage Tree Ordinance and stated the findings could not be made. He stated the record is confusing and it is unclear what they plan to do with the property. The tree service estimate indicates a large amount of cutting and the number of trees in the neighborhood would be greatly diminished. He cited Larkspur Municipal Code Section 12.16.070, Subsection F, and noted Finding 1(b) would be difficult to make. Removal of all these trees could be deleterious to the neighboring properties. The arborist reports cite vague and generic "potentials" and Finding 2(a) could not be made. The City Council has indicated in the past that findings could not be

made using mere speculation. He referred to Finding 2(b) and stated there is no evidence to support this finding.

Chair Matteo closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Blauvelt stated it was unfortunate that the neighbors have had a difficult time with this application. She was concerned that a back-and-forth dialogue did not occur. The three Heritage trees should remain since she could not make any of the findings for removal.

Commissioner Cimino stated the applicant has presented two different opinions- one professional and one based on his personal needs. This makes it confusing and difficult to support the request since the real intentions are unclear. He asked the applicant to speak to the neighbors and come up with a better plan and create some harmony.

Commissioner Friedel agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Cimino. She was confused by the application- she was not sure who the rightful applicant was. Mr. Baumsteiger stated the “applicant” is a committee- the property is owned by the church. Commissioner Friedel stated she could not make the findings to remove the trees.

Chair Matteo stated he did not see any reason why these trees should be removed. They do not seem to be causing any danger and there is no evidence that removal of the tree is necessary to prevent unreasonable interference with the property owner’s expectations.

Recreation Director Whitley asked the Commission to vote on each tree separately.

M/s Blauvelt/Friedel to deny removal of tree #1 (as indicated on the site map prepared by the Recreation Director).

Ayes: Blauvelt, Cimino, Friedel, Chair Matteo

Recused: McNally

M/s Blauvelt/Friedel to deny removal of tree #2 (as indicated on the site map prepared by the Recreation Director).

Ayes: Blauvelt, Cimino, Friedel, Chair Matteo

Recused: McNally

M/s Blauvelt/Friedel to deny removal of tree #4 (as indicated on the site map prepared by the Recreation Director).

Ayes: Blauvelt, Cimino, Friedel, Chair Matteo

Recused: McNally

Recreation Director Whitley stated there was a 15-day appeal period to the City Council.

The Commission took a 5-minute break at 8:15 p.m. Commissioner McNally resumed the dais at 8:20 p.m.

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Park Furniture Uniformity

Public Works Director Houlihan presented the staff report. She displayed pictures of park furniture that were provided by landscape architects. She asked for comments from the Commission.

Chair Matteo asked about the useful life of concrete vs. wood furniture. Public Works Director Houlihan state concrete would last quite a bit longer and was less prone to vandalism. The heavy wood structures would not dilapidate anytime soon and they have an option to refinish the structures.

Commissioner Friedel asked how often the wood structures would need to be refurbished- sanded, stained, etc. Public Works Director Houlihan stated this would need to be done every 10 years or so. Commissioner Friedel asked about other options such as metal or resin materials that look like wood. Public Works Director Houlihan stated the resin materials do not really look like wood and tend to warp. She would be happy to bring back some options.

Commissioner Cimino asked if there were any sanitary or health issues to consider- concrete easier to keep clean than the wood, etc. He asked if there was spacing between the planks of the wooden tables. Public Works Director Houlihan stated “yes” since the wood expands and shrinks. Commissioner Cimino asked if these were catalogue items. Public Works Director Houlihan stated “yes” and they had warranties and were meant for public use. Commissioner Cimino asked who would install the furniture- the City, the manufacturer, or a third party. Public Works Director Houlihan stated the wood benches come in a kit and the Public Works Maintenance Crew would assemble and install them. Commissioner Cimino asked if they could go to a concrete base on the picnic tables to make them more stable. Public Works Director Houlihan stated staff would discuss this as they look more at the design of the park. She noted there were several residents who recently offered to donate benches so she would like some direction.

Commissioner McNally asked if there was a great cost differential between the options. Public Works Director Houlihan stated “no”. A wood table would cost about \$1,800 to \$2,000. Commissioner McNally asked Public Works Director Houlihan if she had a preference. Public Works Director Houlihan stated she could see the advantages of all of them. However, the full contemporary did not really fit Larkspur. She likes the “chunkier, bigger” type of table.

Chair Matteo referred to the examples shown and asked if they were simply representative. Public Works Director Houlihan stated those were the “real deal”.

Commissioner McNally asked Public Works Director Houlihan if she had worked with these manufacturers. Public Works Director Houlihan stated “yes” and so has the

landscape architect. Commissioner McNally stated he wanted someone who would stand behind their work. Public Works Director Houlihan stated these were all reputable companies.

Commissioner McNally stated he did not like the table with the four benches-he preferred the two. The ends should be open. Commissioner Cimino stated the one with four seats would work well for families with young kids but not every bench has to be that style. He stated most parks have a lot of young families and the option of these “booster seats” would provide good variety.

Commissioner Friedel stated the benches should not be movable. Public Works Director Houlihan agreed.

Chair Matteo stated concrete in a park is not aesthetically pleasing- it looks weird. Commissioner McNally agreed. He likes option #1. Commissioner Blauvelt agreed.

Commissioner Cimino stated he likes them all but could easily go with option #1. He noted wood has always been a part of Larkspur’s history and legacy. Wood is more aesthetically pleasing than cement.

Commissioner Friedel stated she liked options #6 and #7.

Chair Matteo stated there were three votes in favor of wood. Public Works Director Houlihan stated she would like to get some input from the public. She did not want to throw out options #7 or #8. She stated she wanted to go with metal for the garbage cans but could come up with some alternatives.

Chair Matteo asked for the favorites of both wood and concrete. It was the consensus of the Commission to choose option #1, option #2, and option #6 (concrete).

Public Works Director Houlihan stated she would come back next month with some full cut sheets of these options.

2. Larkspur Community Facility Advisory Committee Opportunity

Recreation Director Whitley presented a staff report.

Council Liaison Way stated the architectural firm of LMS has been hired and hopes to present a completed design by the summer.

Public Works Director Houlihan stated the process presents a lot of opportunity for public input. There would be update presentations being made to the various Commissions and Boards each month. Information would be taken from the public and presented to the Advisory Committee. The goal is to develop Larkspur’s vision of what the facility would look like, how it would sit on the site, what the rooms would be and how they would function. This would also go thorough the Design Review and Use

Permit process. All of this would be based on the Master Plan. This will be a new facility but should also retain the history of Larkspur.

Commissioner Friedel asked if the Library Director and Recreation Director would be involved in the process. Public Works Director Houlihan stated “yes”. Commissioner Friedel asked who would be facilitating the meetings and how long they would be. Public Works Director Houlihan stated the meetings would run a couple of hours and LMS Architects would help run the meetings along with staff. The Technical Committee (staff) would be meeting with the architects.

Council Liaison Way stated the Capital Campaign, chaired by Mayor Morrison and herself, would be running parallel to this process.

Commissioner Blauvelt volunteered to serve on the Larkspur Community Facility Advisory Committee.

RECREATION DIRECTOR’S ORAL REPORT

Recreation Director Whitley welcomed Commissioner Cimino to the Commission. He distributed the Winter/Spring Brochure, a joint effort between Larkspur Recreation and Corte Madera Recreation. He stated the Commission would be appointing a Chair and Vice Chair at the next meeting. He noted the department has moved back into the remodeled offices.

Commissioner Friedel asked if the Recreation Department offices would be open next week. Recreation Director Whitley stated the office would be open Monday, Tuesday, and half day Wednesday.

Commissioner Cimino asked if there was anything on the City Website encouraging individuals to teach classes. Recreation Director Whitley stated “yes”.

The Commission sang “Happy Birthday” to Commissioner Friedel.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner McNally noted both trailers have been removed from Piper Park.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,
Toni DeFrancis, Recording Secretary