

represents a problem. She referred to finding 2(a) and stated the arborist's report claims that the tree is a nuisance and a hazard (high risk). It is damaging the infrastructure and will continue to do so. It has suffered one trunk failure and is at high risk of three potential failures as a consequence of its life history which includes girdle root failure and failure of two false leaders attached to the fractured top. The tree has co-dominant false leaders, the leading cause of high-risk failure in Redwoods. She stated the findings could be made to approval removal of the tree. She referred to an historic photograph of Palm Hill in the City Hall lobby and noted there were no Redwoods in the area before the homes were built. Redwoods are not native to that area and they were all planted after the houses were built.

Commissioner Hauser asked Ms. Bogin about the function (ornamental or structural) of the cracked retaining wall in front of the tree. Ms. Bogin stated the wall was there when they bought the house. She was not sure about its function.

Commissioner Hauser stated the arborist's recommendation was to remove the tree and replace it with a more suitable species. He asked Ms. Bogin if she has put any thought into what she would plant. Ms. Bogin stated she would be happy to put in anything that is suggested. She would like to put in any indigenous species that would thrive in that location. Commissioner Hauser asked Ms. Bogin if she had a plan. Ms. Bogin stated she was not removing the tree in order to re-landscape the area. She would consult with the neighbors.

Ms. Helen Heitkamp, Elm Avenue, stated she lives across the street from the subject property. She has been concerned about the tree since the top blew off years ago. She stated that the new arborist's report confirms her concern about the tree. She stated that native trees are native to certain areas- Redwoods are native to the flatlands and the canyons. There were no Redwoods on Palm Hill since it was a bare slope and all the existing Redwoods were planted when the homes were built. She noted that Redwoods grow in clusters and support each other. She stated the majority of the lone Redwood trees on Palm Hill were in a distressed state. The Heritage Tree Ordinance protects and encourages the planting of native trees but they have to be planted in their native habitat.

Mr. James Holmes, Madrone Avenue, discussed a recent newspaper article about Larkspur that spoke to how trees have long defined the character and history of Larkspur. The request to remove this tree should be considered in light of this statement. This application repackages the same information that the Commission found inadequate at the first hearing. The new arborist's report uses scary language and foreboding quotations from general textbooks. The report refers to a "girdled root" and he noted everything in nature has imperfections. He suggested this application receive peer review from the City Arborist. The new arborist's report does use the term "hazard" but the evidence does not substantiate this. The fact that the tree is "off-site" is not grounds for its removal. The report repeatedly refers to co-dominant leaders and twin trunks but it does not consider whether or not they could be pruned away. The potential for pruning has not been sufficiently explored. The cracked retaining wall and driveway is a recurrence of a pre-existing condition and could be due to geology and gravity. He

pointed out that the concerns expressed about this tree were widespread elsewhere on Palm Hill and could be used as a justification for removal of all the other trees.

Mr. James Bogin, applicant, stated Mr. Holmes is not an expert in trees and has no definable interest in this situation. He stated the tree is a hazard and he is living in fear that it might fall on his house. He asked the Commission to approve the request to remove this tree.

Chair Blauvelt closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Friedel stated the Commission challenged the applicants to go back and do their due diligence. They have accomplished this. She stated several trees have fallen in the recent storms. The Commission denied the application at the last meeting on a 3-0 vote but the situation has changed based on the new information.

Commissioner Matteo stated he was swayed by the new arborist's report. The combination of the girdled root, the co-dominant leaders, and the fact that this is a solitary tree without a supporting root system is enough to convince him to err on the side of caution. He could support the application.

Commissioner Hauser stated everyone in Larkspur has the right to express their opinion about the application of City Ordinances. The new arborist's report was done by a professional and in good faith. The arborist gives the structure of the tree a very low rating. He noted there was damage to the driveway and retaining wall that could be caused by the tree. This is an extremely close call but in light of the new arborist's report and the structural damage he could make the findings that the tree is a danger and a hazard.

Chair Blauvelt disagreed with the comments made by the other Commissioners. She stated the new arborist's report uses words like "eventually", "more likely than not", and "possibly". She stated she stood in the street and saw many single trees with co-dominant leaders. A case could not be made that the tree would die anytime soon. She did agree that this is a close call.

M/s Matteo/Friedel to approve the request to remove the Redwood tree at 75 Elm Avenue.

Ayes: Friedel, Hauser, Matteo

No: Chair Blauvelt

Absent: McNally

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

BUSINESS ITEMS

There were none.

RECREATION DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT

Recreation Director Whitley welcomed City Council Liaison Ann Morrison to the meeting. He reported the Community Garden would hold its Work Day/Pot Luck on Saturday depending on the weather. The Larkspur Super Cool Summer School (formerly Ross Valley Summer School) brochure was posted to the City Website and was available at the Recreation Department and the Library. Recreation Supervisor Clegg has been submitting information to the Larkspur/Corte Madera Patch. Staff is also working on a department Face book page and twitter. Recreation Supervisor Clegg will be attending the California Parks and Recreation Society State-Wide Conference next week in Long Beach.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Chair Blauvelt asked Recreation Director Whitley about the status of the Piper Park Master Plan. Recreation Director Whitley stated the plan would be reviewed by the City Council at their April 18th meeting. Commissioner Hauser asked if the Commission could somehow move along some improvements to the Dog Park. One of his suggestions was to remove the fence that creates the "small dog area". Recreation Director Whitley stated he could bring up this matter at the Council meeting when they discuss the Piper Park Master Plan. Chair Blauvelt asked staff to provide the Commission with an updated copy of the plan.

Chair Blauvelt asked if a "Thank-You" letter was sent to Mr. and Mrs. Gilardi for their generous donation of a merry-go-round at Dolliver Park. Recreation Director Whitley stated "yes".

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis
Recording Secretary