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APPROVED MINUTES

TREE BOARD
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF September 06, 2017

SEBASTOPOL CITY HALL
CONFERENCE ROOM
7120 BODEGA AVENUE
4:00 P.M.

TREE BOARD:

The notice of the meeting was posted on August 31, 2017.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Luthin called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present:	Ted Luthin, Chair Cary Bush, Vice Chair Lars Langberg, Board Member Christine Level, Board Member Lynn Deedler, Board Member
Absent:	Gregory Beale, Board Member
Staff:	Dana Morrison, Assistant Planner Rebecca Mansour, Planning Technician

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: August 16, 2017

Board Member Langberg amended the minutes.

Vice Chair Bush made a motion to approve the minutes as amended.

Board Member Langberg seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Luthin, Vice Chair Bush and Board Members Level, Langberg and Deedler

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

4. PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE ON MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST:

Assistant Planner Morrison updated the Board on the following:

- On September 12 the Planning Commission will conduct preliminary review for two projects. The first being the addition of an automatic car wash along with applicable site circulation and improvements at Benedetti Tire which is located at 6809 Sebastopol Avenue. The second being a 60 room hotel in the 'foundry' building at The Barlow.

- Although they will not be live-streamed, Tree Board and Design Review Board meetings will now be posted online after each meeting.

The Board asked questions of staff.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA: There were none.

A member of the public asked a question of the Board.

6. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: There were none.

7. CONSENT CALENDER: There were none.

8. REGULAR AGENDA:

- A. TREE REMOVAL PERMIT FOLLOW-UP LANDSCAPE PLAN:** This is a continued item from the August 16, 2017 Tree Board meeting. The Board approved the removal of two Coast Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) trees located at 550 Gravenstein Highway North. The approval was granted with the condition that the applicant return with a landscape and irrigation plan. That plan is now being presented to the Board.

Assistant Planner Morrison presented the staff report.

Board Member Level asked a clarifying question of staff.

A member of the public interjected with a clarifying question of staff.

Member of the public Loriel Golden interjected and commented that she had her own landscape plan to present.

Chair Luthin commented that Ms. Golden would have an opportunity to present that during the public comment period.

Chair Luthin asked if the applicant wished to make a presentation.

The applicant, Don Strouzas, gave a presentation and was available for questions.

The Board asked questions of Mr. Strouzas.

Chair Luthin asked if members of the public wished to speak on this item.

ila Benavidez-Heaster, Bodega Avenue, commented:

- Wished to talk about process.
- Thanked the Board for being extremely gracious during their last meeting.
- Asked any members of the public who are wishing to speak to please respect the limited amount of time that they are given instead of going over their allotted time.
- It is important to respect the Board's process.
- Asked members of the public to watch their aggressive behavior.
- People are welcome to say what they need to say and ask what they need to ask.
- Everyone's input is important.
- It is important to remember that we're all here together.
- Encouraged respect.

Ms. Benavidez-Heaster comments continued:

- Thanked the Board for their willingness to listen.

An unidentified woman asked clarifying questions of the Board.

Chair Luthin responded.

That same unidentified woman commented:

- Wants to stop the wheels in motion on removal of these trees.
- Suggested that thought be given to removing one of the Redwood trees rather than both.
- The heat has been excessive.
- We need trees for shade.
- Would prefer that both Redwood trees remain.

An unidentified woman commented:

- Has lived in Sonoma County for many years.
- Businesses don't seem to be held to the same standards, in terms of environmental consciousness, as regular citizens are.
- We don't see birds migrating here anymore.
- We are not contributing to the right things when we allow people to get away with stuff like this.
- We need to have more rules in place to protect trees.
- Feels very strongly about protecting our trees.
- Expressed concern over global warming.
- Wishes for more legislation on trees.
- People take down trees to accommodate development far too much.
- Thanked the Board for their time.

Members of the public asked clarifying questions of the Board and staff.

Chair Luthin and staff responded.

An unidentified man commented:

- Appreciates the Board's in depth review of this matter.
- Spoke on the mass of trees that was removed to accommodate the reunification of Santa Rosa's Courthouse Square.
- We are experiencing a ridiculous heatwave.
- Understands business, infrastructure, and the way people live on this planet.
- We need to consider ways to incorporate our way of living with preservation of our environment.
- Redwood trees are amazingly beautiful.
- We can sometimes take Redwoods for granted because we get to see them so much.
- Expressed being unsure on how these trees may be kept, but all options should be explored.
- Here to stand up for the trees because we don't want to lose them all.

Ms. Golden commented:

- The leak in the plumbing of the nearby market is drawing in the trees roots and needs to be fixed right away.
- These trees are in drought conditions and are dying of thirst.
- Presented her alternate landscape plan.

Ms. Golden comments continued:

- We can meet the needs of the trees for water and stop the roots from causing further damage.
- Like Board Member Deedler suggested, we can redesign the sidewalk by curving it out towards the street in order to give the trees more soil and surface area.
- For the past 14 years she has lived right next door to these trees, and has loved them.
- Will personally go out and water these trees every day.
- Has friends that would also be willing to nurture these trees and meet their needs.
- These trees will stop what they are doing if we train them and love them enough.
- Healing the body of mother earth should be a top priority, not just when it is convenient for business owners.
- Redwood trees are not weeds to be removed.
- When we kill living trees, like what was done in Santa Rosa's Courthouse Square, we are making a statement and we need to think about exactly what kind of statement that is.
- We are not seeing birds, bees and insects like we used to.
- Rachel Carson's 1962 book titled, "Silent Spring" has been proven true.
- We need to think about where it is safe for trees and children to live.
- Redwood trees protect us from fire and flood.
- We're not just talking about removing an object, we're talking about killing living beings.
- Redwood trees give us oxygen and sequester carbon, we cannot live without them.
- We're already in climate catastrophe.
- Mother earth always bats last.
- Can easily commit to what she has promised.
- Has spoken with a lot of people who are very interested in changing their lives in order to save these trees.
- Has been consulting lawyers.

Chair Luthin asked Ms. Golden to wrap up her comments as she had spoken in excess of her allotted time.

Ms. Golden comments continued:

- Supervisor, Lynda Hopkins, was quite alarmed by what she told her and wanted to be here but couldn't due to a scheduling conflict.
- If you go through with this disaster is planned.
- Removal of these trees will contribute to climate catastrophe and will endanger the public to the onslaught of fire and drought. This is where a lawsuit can come in.
- Needs to be given the chance to water and train these trees. It should only take a few months to see whether or not what she is doing is working.
- Going through with this disastrous plan will bring terrible publicity to those involved.
- Members of the Board have said that they want to save the trees and now, members of the public are empowering those same Board members to save these trees.
- There should be no rush to take down these trees.
- Reiterated that she will be bringing forward high publicity lawsuits if the Board allows removal of these trees. This will definitely have an impact of the market's business as well as the peaceful, loving image of Sebastopol itself.
- Wants to inspire love.
- The sidewalk should be fixed immediately.
- Reiterated her request to be granted three months to water and train these trees to stop causing property damage.
- The trees can be removed if she is unsuccessful after three months.

Ms. Golden comments continued:

- Sebastopol should establish a precedent of saving trees like these.
- She is from Los Angeles and her father is a millionaire.
- She is capable of bringing forward high publicity lawsuits as previously stated

Chair Luthin asked Ms. Golden once again to conclude her comments as her time had expired.

Ms. Golden reiterated a number of her comments and thanked the Board for their time.

Allan Paine, a resident of Sebastopol, commented:

- Worked for the Sebastopol Post Office for thirty years.
- His wife, who passed away a couple years ago, was an employee of the City of Sebastopol for many years.
- Has lived amongst Redwood trees for forty years.
- There is a lot of water that comes from the market and sits on the asphalt above where the tree roots are.
- The trees need adequate water and more surface area for soil.
- Liked the comments about creating a bulb-out or parklet to give the trees more room.
- Encouraged further exploration of ways to keep these trees.
- Cement being so close to the roots is not good.
- Thanked the Board for their time.

A woman named Libby commented:

- Watched the devastating process with Santa Rosa's Courthouse Square.
- Has lived in Sonoma County for fifty years and has watched the County change during that time.
- Sonoma County used to be full of beautiful farmland, now it's full of more and more shopping centers and cement parking lots.
- We need a change in our spiritual consciousness.
- Expressed feeling encouraged by the work of the Tree Board.
- People wishing to remove trees should have to meet all five of the required findings, not just three like this applicant did.

Chair Luthin clarified that only one of the five required findings needs to be met.

Members of the public asked questions of the Board.

Ms. Golden interjected that the area around the Redwood trees should be redesigned to accommodate them.

Libby's comments continued:

- Encouraged the Board to be as strict as possible in terms of saving trees.
- A lot of the global warming that we're experiencing can be attributed to deforestation of our planet.
- Appreciates the conversation.
- Wants to support the Board in their efforts with regards to trees.

A man named Marcel commented:

- Has lived in Santa Rosa for seventeen years.
- Loves Sebastopol and considers it a city with a heart.
- The people here appear to care about the whole environment.

- Expressed concern over the tree issue especially following the destruction of twenty five beautiful Redwood trees for the reunification of Santa Rosa's Courthouse Square, all for business and with a price tag of ten and a half million dollars which he was disgusted by.
- Would rather live in Sebastopol than Santa Rosa.
- Believes that this Board will take the most reasonable and humane action with regards to this application.
- Has studied a little bit about Redwood trees.
- Redwood trees need a lot of space.
- The planting of these Redwood trees in this location was very shortsighted.
- Can see the Board's point of view because these trees never should have been planted there.
- The required findings are quite reasonable.
- This is not a black and white issue.
- These trees will continue to grow and the roots will continue to destroy what is around them.
- Something reasonable needs to be done.
- Suggested that eight Redwood trees be placed elsewhere, in place of the two that will be removed, where there is room for them to grow and thrive.

Ms. Golden interjected.

Members of the public asked questions of the Board and staff.

A member of the public commented:

- We need to leave a few places here and there, in place of wineries and vineyards, for nature and wildlife.
- We are annihilating our diversity with nature.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Luthin closed the public comment period and brought it back to the Board for discussion.

Ms. Golden interjected and asked if the Board was going to discuss her request to be given time with the trees.

Chair Luthin responded that the matter of tree removal had been decided and that the only matter before the Board was the landscape plan.

Ms. Golden asked questions of the Board.

Chair Luthin and Board Members Langberg responded.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Luthin asked for Board discussion of the landscape plan.

Board Member Level commented:

- Asked to hear from the Board on the City Arborist, Becky Duckles, suggestion that two Chinese Elm be planted rather than one Chinese Pistache.
- Would certainly be in favor of something that would grow faster in this location.

Mr. Strouzas interjected with a question.

Board Member Level comments continued:

- Holds Ms. Duckles' comments and opinions in high regard.

Board Member Level's comments continued:

- Otherwise she expressed being comfortable with the landscape plan.

Vice Chair Bush commented:

- The Chinese Pistache is a good choice because it is already planted elsewhere in the parking lot of the shopping center. It has stature and long-term value.

Board Member Level asked a question of Vice Chair Bush.

Vice Chair Bush comments continued:

- Chinese Elm are awesome and would be a faster growing tree. They are a little more open and lacy than the Chinese Pistache.
- Reiterated that the Chinese Pistache is probably the best long-term value tree because they meet really vigorous conditions.
- On planting one versus two, he felt comfortable leaving that up to the applicant.
- Planting two would provide more of a canopy quicker.
- Creating a little bosk or cluster by planting three of the trees might even be nice.
- If doing the cluster could go with three 24" box trees rather than one 36" box.
- The current proposal includes a great combination of tree and groundcover and is a solid choice.
- We're seeing good faith from the applicant.
- Revisited the site today.

Chair Luthin commented:

- The space for the landscape area is not huge.
- He revisited the site today as well.

Vice Chair Bush comments continued:

- Either we torture these Redwood trees further or we just remove them.
- While it is hard to make the decision to remove these Redwoods, he is unwilling to torture these trees any longer.
- The applicant has presented a good plan with a much longer term value.

Board Member Level commented:

- Appreciates hearing Vice Chair Bush's thoughts.
- There is obviously a lot of public emotion involved here.
- It will be a drastic change to the environment there when the Redwood trees are first cut down.
- A quick recovery is needed.
- Likes the cluster idea as suggested by Vice Chair Bush.

Board Member Langberg commented:

- Regardless of how many new trees are planted, they will not take the place of the Redwoods in an immediate sense.
- Short-term thinking is what caused this problem in the first place.
- It is clear that members of the public feel passionate about this, however, that is not where the Board's focus should be.
- The Board's focus is on long-term thinking.

Board Member Level commented:

- Understood what Board Member Langberg was saying, however, it would be in everybody's benefit to emphasize that the Board is not trying to denude the public and that there are very good reasons for removing these two Redwood trees.

Vice Chair Bush commented:

- Thanked Board Members Level and Langberg for their comments.
- Wants to be sensitive in the short-term.

Chair Luthin agreed with Board Member Langberg on the Board needing to keep the longer horizon in mind.

Board Member Deedler commented:

- Like Vice Chair Bush said, Chinese Pistache are a good choice because they're already there in the parking lot and repetition often occurs in these type of settings.
- In nature and in parks you see more diversity in tree types.
- Likes the cluster idea as suggested by Vice Chair Bush.
- Subscribes to the fact that trees can marry very well.
- Has some minor concerns but the overriding feeling that he has is that this shopping center generally lacks good landscaping.
- The side of the building, where the Redwood trees are, lacks the most and faces a very well used street with high visibility.
- More than just landscaping is warranted here.
- While he appreciates the extra space that this particular plan from the applicant has, the landscape area could and should be more than doubled if they also did a bulb-out into the street.
- Hopes that the Board will support continuing this application in order to look at things a little longer, to consider a bulb-out, and to create a significant landscape piece on an otherwise bleak façade.
- The Board is here to represent the community.
- Understands being sympathetic about costs but the costs of this will be borne by the entire shopping center.
- Given that this is such a big project with so little landscape, the potential to do more should be further explored.
- If done well, this could serve as a great example for other areas in the community as well as future design work.
- This plan feels very much in progress and is lacking a lot of detail, the Board should see a real plan.
- Expressed being unable to approve this plan as presented.
- The moisture content in the ground under the trees on the site should be checked, all of the trees seem moisture stressed.
- Better irrigation is needed throughout.

Board Member Langberg commented:

- Appreciates Board Member Deedler's comments on the information that was provided.

Staff mentioned that the applicant may want to look into the Façade Improvement Program that is offered by the City.

Board Member Langberg comments continued:

- The applicant has made a nice effort here and has indicated that they may do even more than what they have presented.
- Agreed with Board Member Deedler on this plan feeling in progress, not final.
- The Board has discussed one, two, or three trees.
- Would be good to know where the applicant plans to use pavers and where the tables will be placed.
- Questioned protocol in terms of what was asked for and what has been provided.

Chair Luthin commented:

- Expressed feeling similarly to other members of the Board.
- Would love to see something that defines the space.
- Encouraged to know that there is some enthusiasm from the applicant's side for making it a nicer space.
- The area seems small for three trees.
- Likes the idea of expanding the overall area to 16'.
- Expressed being comfortable with one larger tree or up to three smaller ones.

Board Member Level commented:

- Comfortable deferring to Ms. Duckles.
- The Board's purview is to address the trees.
- Expressed not needing to see more detail on the landscape plan.
- Would like to see two trees.
- Suggested to the applicant that ensuring an adequate water supply is absolutely necessary.

Chair Luthin commented that it sounded like the Board was headed towards continuing this application.

Mr. Strouzas interjected and commented:

- He has satisfied the Board's request of coming up with a basic plan.
- Has met with a member of the Board on site and has had conversations with another member of the Board over the phone.
- Wants the Board to proceed in good faith and trust that he will do what he has said he is going to and that he intends to make the space as nice as possible.
- The Public Works Superintendent didn't seem super enthusiastic about the bulb-out/parklet concept.
- Expressed being open to these concepts however, he needs to be allowed to move forward.

Board Member Level commented:

- Agrees with Mr. Strouza's statement.
- Expressed not being in favor of continuing this request.
- Reiterated that she would like to see two trees based on Ms. Duckles' recommendation.

Chair Luthin commented that he was okay with moving forward in good faith.

Board Member Langberg concurred.

Vice Chair Bush commented:

- Good faith has been met.
- The process has gone above and beyond in a lot of ways.
- The plan that has been presented is a good direction forward.
- There is substantial work to be done here.
- Agreed with Board Member Level on things like adequate irrigation as that will help protect the investment that the applicant is making here.
- The applicant has provided what the Board previously requested.
- Expressed being in support of moving forward with one tree, as that is what the applicant has presented based on previous Board feedback.

Board Member Level made a motion to approve the application as submitted with the following:

- The applicant shall plant two of either species, the Chinese Pistache or Chinese Elm, as noted in correspondence from Ms. Duckles.

Board Member Langberg seconded the motion.

Chair Luthin asked Board Member Level if she'd be willing to amend her motion to reflect the applicant's intent to increase the overall area to 16'.

Board Member Level agreed to amend her motion as stated by Chair Luthin.

Board Member Langberg seconded the amended motion.

Chair Luthin asked if members wished to discuss the amended motion.

Board Member Deedler commented that he would prefer that Chinese Elm be planted as there are already enough Chinese Pistache planted in the shopping center.

Board Member Level commented that she wouldn't have any problem with that.

Board Member Langberg, Vice Chair Bush and Chair Luthin commented that they would be fine leaving it up to the applicant.

Board Member Level commented that she would be fine with that as well.

Staff clarified that the Board was talking about two 36" box trees.

Board Member Level responded in the affirmative.

Board Member Level commented that her intent is to try to get as much coverage as quickly as possible.

Mr. Strouzas asked Vice Chair Bush if he believed that two 36" box trees would work in the specified landscape area.

Vice Chair Bush responded that two 36" box trees would work in the specified location.

The Board voted the motion as follows:

AYES: Chair Luthin, Vice Chair Bush, and Board Members Level and Langberg
NOES: Board Member Deedler
ABSTAIN: None

9. DISCUSSION ITEMS: There were none.

10. REPORTS FROM THE BOARD/STAFF: There were none.

11. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Luthin adjourned the meeting of the Tree Board at 5:21 p.m. to the next Tree Board meeting to be held September 20, 2017 at 4:00 p.m., at the Sebastopol City Hall, 7120 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol, CA.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Dana Morrison
Assistant Planner