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APPROVED MINUTES

TREE BOARD
 CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
 MINUTES OF August 16, 2017

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

TREE BOARD:

The notice of the meeting was posted on August 10, 2017.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Luthin called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present:	Ted Luthin, Chair Cary Bush, Vice Chair Lars Langberg, Board Member Christine Level, Board Member Gregory Beale, Board Member Lynn Deedler, Board Member
Absent:	None
Staff:	Dana Morrison, Assistant Planner Rebecca Mansour, Planning Technician Becky Duckles, City Arborist

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: July 19, 2017

Board Member Deedler amended the minutes.

Board Member Langberg made a motion to approve the minutes as amended.

Board Member Deedler seconded the motion.

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

4. PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE ON MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST: There were none.

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

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

7. CONSENT CALENDER: There were none.

8. REGULAR AGENDA:

- A. TREE REMOVAL PERMIT:** This is a continued item from the July 19, 2017 Tree Board meeting. The project involves an application seeking approval of a Tree Removal Permit for two Coast Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) trees located at 550 Gravenstein Highway North. The trees are located on the south western side of the Pacific Market property. The applicant is seeking a Tree Removal Permit because the trees roots have been consistently causing damage to the concrete sidewalk. The two trees have diameters that are approximately 22.3" and 27.5" each.

Assistant Planner Morrison presented the staff report.

The Board asked questions of staff, including City Arborist, Becky Duckles.

Vice Chair Bush requested that discussion of mitigation requirements and other matters along those lines be placed as a discussion item on a future agenda.

Staff responded in the affirmative.

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

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

Chair Luthin asked members of the Board if they had questions for the applicant.

The Board had no questions for the applicant at this time.

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

Todd Spinel, a resident of Sebastopol, commented:

- Attended and spoke at the Board meeting of July 19.
- Lives nearby at Village Green.
- Passes by these trees regularly.
- A lot more information is being provided.
- Appreciates the various positions and perspectives expressed.
- The trees are very robust and vibrant and they're telling us that they want to be in that location.
- We need to accommodate these trees.
- Appreciates the applicant's statement on cost not being the primary issue.
- Wants the trees to remain.
- If the trees have to be removed, their replacements should be substantial.
- These are beautiful trees.
- These trees provide a lot of shade.
- The area under the trees is well-used.
- Appreciates the difficulty of the decision that the Board is being asked to make.
- Reiterated his hope for the trees to remain.
- Thanked the Board for their time.

Ken Silveira, representing the applicant, commented:

- While they are beautiful trees, they were not planted in suitable location.
- His main concern is the interior of the store.
- The store and the plumbing are fifty years old.
- Damage caused by roots is not easily fixed.

- The bathroom is in dire need of an update, however, they would not want to remodel it until the tree root issues have been resolved.
- Root barriers won't work.
- There are financial considerations as well.
- This problem won't be solved by giving the trees more room.
- Urged the Board to approve removal of these trees.
- Thanked the Board for their time.

Mr. Strouzas commented:

- A bulb-out to provide more room for the roots will not solve the problem, it will just kick the can down the road because damage will continue to occur.
- People tend to walk the path of least resistance rather than following a sidewalk. If the trees were to remain, so would the liability concerns.
- Expressed not being in support of the bulb-out concept whatsoever.

Loriel Golden, a resident of Sebastopol, commented:

- Asked a question of staff.
- Read from a prepared statement which was also circulated as a petition and signed by about a dozen community members.
- Urged the Board to protect the lives of trees at every opportunity.
- We are in climate catastrophe.
- We have placed our monetary or other human needs above the life of the planet.
- Every few years the roots of these two trees cause bulges in the sidewalk. As a result, the bulges need to be smoothed for safe and easy walking every few years.
- Would like to be allowed time to train the roots to stop destroying the building.
- Encouraged and inspired by the applicant's statement about wanting to save the trees.
- Grateful for the neon orange paint that indicates the hazardous condition.
- Wouldn't want anyone to trip and hurt themselves there.
- The damaged area should be smoothed immediately to avoid the potential for injury.
- Asked the Board if they were amenable to granting her time to work with the tree.

Chair Luthin responded that the matter of time to work with the trees should be taken up with the property owner.

Ms. Golden comments continued:

- Redwood trees sequester the most carbon and generate the most oxygen.
- Redwood forests are probably the single-most important thing to save to reverse climate catastrophe.
- Please do not allow removal of these trees or any others that may be in question.
- There should never be a question between money and life.
- There is no challenge that a well-functioning community cannot overcome when everyone works together to harmonize and enhance the flow of life rather than destroy it.
- Thanked the Board for their time.

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

Board Member Deedler commented:

- There is no question that these trees are too big for the space they are in, that this is a serious problem, and that it is costly to accommodate them.

- Ordinarily he would support removal, however, this particular situation warrants an effort to try to accommodate these trees.
- The corner of the building that faces these trees is rather dismal to look at.
- Covert Lane is one of our busiest side streets and has a lot of community presence.
- The public appreciates that those trees are there.
- Based on his own experience, he believes that the trees can be saved reasonably well by giving them more space.
- Chalked out a proposal on the site. His proposal would remove 14' of parking. His proposal will not impact traffic flow.
- Roots go after water.
- There is obvious evidence of a long-term leak at the building.
- The problem is not just the trees, the long-term leak needs to be fixed.
- The wall of the building is more than 20 feet away from the closest tree. Lateral roots on Redwood trees do not get significantly big at that distance.
- The problem will likely go away for many, many years, once the leaks are taken care of and the root is cut back to be closer to the tree.
- A deep concrete perimeter around the trees can serve as an effective root barrier for many years.
- Roots cannot pierce through a solid surface.
- The bulb-out will serve to protect the trees, and will also offer a place for a little bit of attractive landscaping in an otherwise very bleak area.
- The interior and exterior of the store has been upgraded over the years, however, the corner facing the trees is highly visible and something should be done to improve it.
- These trees can be kept happy for many, many years.

Chair Luthin asked clarifying questions of Board Member Deedler.

Ms. Duckles responded:

- Has found Redwood tree roots to be a lot less accommodating to structures than she ever expected them to be.
- Did not understand from Board Member Deedler's previous description of the bulb-out that he was suggesting that the roots be cut at the described distance. Doing so would destabilize the trees, create a highly hazardous situation, and undoubtedly kill the trees.
- Sometimes it is better to remove a tree rather than disfiguring it with pruning, root cutting, etc.
- If the request to remove the trees is approved, she suggested that the size of the replacement trees be increased from 4, 15-gallon trees to something like 2, 24-inch box trees.
- Agreed with comments with regards to improving a section of the parking lot, on the store side of the trees, with additional landscaping.
- Finds root barriers pretty useless in most situations.
- Believed that some good-sized trees that are appropriate for that space could be found and that they would provide good shade and screening along that elevation.

Board Member Deedler commented:

- There are many examples of very large Redwood trees, as well as other very large trees, that have not caused damage to nearby structures.
- Believed that the Redwood trees would survive and prosper if another source of water was provided for the tree, and the nearby leak was fixed.

Ms. Duckles responded:

- The mechanical stability of the tree is also a factor. Retention roots help to keep the tree upright and cutting them could destabilize the tree.
- There will always be decay at the face of the wound when a root is cut. Over time the roots will likely be infected with Armillaria, which is also known as oak root fungus.

Ms. Golden interjected with a clarifying question of Ms. Duckles.

Board Member Deedler asked a clarifying question of Ms. Duckles.

Ms. Duckles comments continued:

- Redwood trees are pretty resistant to decay and fungal infections, however, she has seen cases of it occurring.
- Wouldn't want to take the chance of reducing the stability of these trees and having them fall over.

Board Member Deedler commented:

- The root heading towards the store is pretty big, has a stability factor to it, and has grown well.
- With his proposal, the roots on the three sides away from the building wouldn't be destabilized. It would only be the one that reaches towards the store.

Ms. Duckles responded:

- When visiting the site with Superintendent of Public Works, Dante Del Prete, they could see the direction of the buttress and retention roots pretty well which helps in predicting where they will go.
- For anchorage, a tree needs roots in all directions.
- Agreed that this is a tough situation as the trees are beautiful and their shade is well used.
- Reiterated her support for enhancing the area with additional landscaping.

Mr. Strouzas interjected and commented:

- His concrete contractor told him that there was no way to repair the sidewalk without cutting the tree roots on the sidewalk side.
- Expressed being amenable to discussing ideas to beautify the space.
- The more we beautify the space the better off we all are.

Chair Luthin thanked Mr. Strouzas for his comments and asked to hear from the rest of the Board on this item. In particular, he asked how members were feeling about the bulb-out.

Board Member Langberg commented:

- Expressed being all for beautification and expansion of the area.
- The suggested bulb-out, by itself, does not seem to be the practical idea that we're looking for in order to save these trees.
- Enhancing the space there will be a good thing. As is, the space is pretty nice thanks to the Redwood trees.
- Replacement trees larger than the standard 15-gallon size would be better.

Chair Luthin commented:

- It is unfortunate that a landscape plan wasn't provided for Board consideration.
- Would like to see a landscape plan.

Vice Chair Bush commented:

- Thanked Board Member Deedler for coming up with such a great design.
- Board Member Deedler's proposal offers a generous space, and that is something that we don't see enough of.
- We're wasting time right now.
- It is the Board's role to talk about site development.
- The heart of the problem is that these trees were planted in a space that was never appropriate for them to begin with.
- Cutting the roots will likely result in the trees going into decline which will create a hazardous situation.
- Doesn't want to lose the trees, but keeping them is a bad idea.
- There is no long-term growth potential for these trees in this location.
- We want a space that is viably creating a conducive environment for a nice tree with a really strong canopy that can create a big swath of shade.
- The Tree Board needs to start talking about things like tree types and ensuring that the right tree goes in the right place.
- These Redwood trees have already cost the property owner a ton of money and if they remain, they'll continue to cost the property owner even more.
- We need to start valuing our landscape more.
- Nature is the most dynamic element on earth and cannot be predicted.
- Reiterated his appreciation for the work that Board Member Deedler did and commended him on an awesome design.
- Reiterated that he does not want to see these trees go.
- These Redwood trees do not belong in this urban environment.

Board Member Level asked Vice Chair Bush if he had a replacement tree in mind.

Vice Chair Bush commented:

- A Pistache has a great canopy.
- Would love to encourage replacement with a 48" box, or greater.
- The Board needs more teeth on matters dealing with mitigation measures and appropriate planting.
- The City's Zoning Ordinance needs updating.

Board Member Level commented:

- Clarified that Vice Chair Bush is of the opinion that a tree, with a generous canopy for shading, could be planted in that location without causing the issues that the Redwood have.

Vice Chair Bush concurred.

Board Member Level asked the applicant if they would be amenable to that.

A member of the applicant team responded that they would happy to discuss that further.

Another member of the applicant team interjected that he did not believe that that space would be adequate for any kind of tree as it is too small.

Vice Chair Bush commented that that is why the bulb-out is a great idea.

Board Member Level commented:

- Appreciates that the Board has had a lot of good discussion about the bulb-out, which she agreed with.
- It is important to consider the costs that will be incurred by the property owner if they are to create the bulb-out, or a parklet, as discussed.

Board Member Langberg

- Board Member Deedler's letter broached the subject of sharing costs with the City.
- Other businesses may be willing to chip in, as well as organizations such as The Core Project.
- Leaving the trees could result in thousands of dollars in costs incurred over time.
- There are a lot of factors to consider.
- Should be looking at the big picture, not just the cost.

Board Member Level commented:

- The Public Works Department sent the letter to the property owner due to it having received a complaint about the condition of the sidewalk.
- A complaint is a first step towards a lawsuit.
- Given that a complaint was received, time may be a factor.

Chair Luthin commented:

- To Board Member Level's comment on timing, the property owner may need to do some interim work to show good faith in an effort to address the hazardous condition while fully developing their plan.
- The ideas about a bulb-out and/or parklet sound fantastic.

Ms. Duckles commented:

- In the interest of progression, the original idea that she suggested in an attempt to retain the trees, was to place a steel plate over the damaged section of the sidewalk. A suggestion that the Superintendent of Public Works said was acceptable to the Public Works Department.
- With regards to the bulb-out idea, she favored the bulb-out on the interior side, not the street side.

Board Member Langberg asked Ms. Duckles a question and commented that there would be ample width on Covert Lane to have a bulb-out on the street side.

Board Member Deedler commented:

- Agreed with Board Member Langberg on there being ample room on Covert Lane.
- While they would not meet the requirements of the Public Works Department, there are other means, such as concrete patches, that don't require much work, are inexpensive, and could be used to buy some time.

A member of the applicant team interjected that the patch idea would not resolve the issue of the tree roots entering the plumbing.

Board Members concurred.

Board Member Beale commented:

- Not much else to add.
- Likes the idea of a bulb-out.

- Likes the idea of enlarging the landscaped seating area, however noting that there may be functionality issues in terms of market deliveries, and where the bulb-out should be.
- Has not heard a solution, including the bulb-out, which leads him to believe that the Redwood trees should stay. He cited cost and ongoing maintenance as reasons why he did not support retention of the trees.
- The community, along with the people who use the table there, benefits from a natural buffer along that side of the building.
- Expressed being unsure about the best type of replacement tree, however, he'd like for it to be substantial.

Chair Luthin commented:

- Completely agrees with Board Member Beale.
- Thanked the Board for a great discussion.
- Thanked Board Member Deedler for all of his efforts.
- The bulb-out concept began the conversation about what this space could be.
- Has not heard mention of any sort of viable solution to retain the Redwood trees.
- The more space the Redwood trees are given, the more vigorous they will be.
- Agrees that the trees should be removed.
- Would love for the Redwood trees to be removed in the context of some sort of site improvement that screens the building and provides a decent area for members of the community to use the space, if they so choose.

A member of the applicant team interjected and commented:

- A bulb-out would carry a totally different cost.
- Interested in hearing more about the notion of sharing costs, as was previously mentioned.
- Willing to commit to working with, and talking to, the Board about these matters.
- A parklet is a great idea, presuming the City is willing to share on the costs.
- The costs will impact the tenants as well.

Chair Luthin responded to the applicant.

Board Member Level commented:

- Anytime a tree is removed, she wants to ensure that adequate replacement is occurring.

The Board concurred.

The Board asked clarifying questions of staff.

Board Member Deedler commented:

- Encouraged exploration of a parklet and discussed fundraising and cost sharing opportunities.
- The addition of a parklet would set a great precedent for the community.

Board Member Langberg echoed Board Member Deedler's comments on inclusion of a parklet.

The Board asked questions of the applicant.

Board Member Beale commented:

- Expressed being appreciative and grateful for the level of scrutiny that this application has seen.
- This isn't a brash decision.
- We want trees, but there needs to be a balance.
- One of the main reasons he thought that the Board needed more information and more discussion about this is that there was minimal context during the initial meeting. This resulted in the Board being left to make a lot of assumptions.
- Appreciates that the applicant team is present and available for questions.

The Board asked questions of staff, as well as Ms. Duckles.

Comments from Ms. Duckles included:

- We need to ensure that there is adequate irrigation in order to establish new trees.
- Commented that Chinese Elm, Pistache, or Magnolia may be good as replacement trees.
- Would like replacement trees that are at least 24-inch box in size.
- Suggested that the Board require two, larger trees, rather than 4 smaller ones.

Ms. Golden interjected with Chair Luthin's okay.

- Asked Ms. Duckles for her thoughts on granting her a small window of time to train the roots not to cause damage to the nearby structure and surrounding paving.

Vice Chair Bush responded that that would be something for Ms. Golden to talk to the property owner about.

Ms. Duckles responded:

- In terms of the biological functions of tree roots, she is more science-based than that.

Ms. Golden asked additional questions of Ms. Duckles.

Ms. Duckles responded:

- Appreciates that Ms. Golden has given her and the Board additional thoughts on how to affect change.
- With tree roots, a long period of study would be required to better understand what may happen down the road which would not work for this situation due to the time constraints.

Ms. Golden interjected.

Board Member Langberg noted that the Board was likely to require that the applicant return with a landscape plan prior to removal, so that could give her time to discuss options with the property owner.

The Board concurred.

The Board asked clarifying questions of staff.

Vice Chair Bush made a motion to approve removal of the trees with the following conditions:

- The applicant shall satisfy the replacement planting requirement by planting at least 1, 36" box tree.

- The applicant shall return with a detailed landscape plan
- The applicant shall return with an adequate irrigation plan.

Board Member Beale seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Luthin, Vice Chair Bush, and Board Members Level, Beale, Langberg and Deedler
NOES: None
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 5:45 p.m. to the next Tree Board meeting to be held September 06, 2017 at 4:00 p.m., at the Sebastopol City Hall, 7120 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol, CA.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Dana Morrison
Assistant Planner