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## City of Sebastopol Tree Board Staff Report

Meeting Date: July 18, 2018  
Agenda Item: 8A  
To: Tree Board  
From: Dana Morrison, Assistant Planner  
Subject: Tree Removal Permit: Locust tree (*Robinia sp.*)  
Recommendation: Approval with Conditions  
Applicant/Owner: Andrea Ham/ Ham Delle Co. Inc.  
File Number: 2018-62  
Address: 876 Gravenstein Highway South  
CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption: Section 15301: Class 1  
General Plan: Commercial Office  
Zoning: CG: General Commercial

### **Introduction:**

This is a Tree Removal Permit application, requesting approval to remove one multi-trunk locust tree at 876 Gravenstein Highway South. This application requires Tree Board approval because it involves the removal of a multi-trunk tree from a commercial property.

### **Project Description:**

The subject tree is an eight-trunked locust tree which is located in the parking lot of a commercial property. The tree is also heavily infested with mistletoe, a parasite which weakens trees structurally as well as conditionally. The primary reason for removing the subject tree is that the tree is rapidly declining with weak attachments between the trunks, with decay in the base of several of the trunk; predisposing it to trunk failures. The City Arborist has reviewed the tree and has recommended that the tree be removed soon and replaced with an appropriate species.

### **Environmental Review:**

The project is categorically exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to the following:

Section 15301: Existing Facilities: Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination.

The project is consistent with this categorical exemption in that it involves the removal of a multi-trunk locust tree, which will result in the minor alteration of landscape features in an existing parking lot.

**City Departmental Comment:**

Becky Duckles, an ISA Certified Arborist serving as the City Arborist, reviewed the application, conducted a site visit, and prepared an Arborist's Report on June 24, 2018. The report is attached and its findings are reflected in the following sections of this staff report: Tree Protection Ordinance Consistency, Analysis, Recommendation, and Findings.

**Tree Protection Ordinance Consistency:**

Requirements for Tree Removal Permit: Section 8.12.060.D of the Tree Protection Ordinance states that a Tree Removal Permit may be approved when an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist has verified at least one of the following conditions:

- 1. The tree is diseased or structurally unsound and, as a result, is likely to become a significant hazard to life or property within the next two (2) years.***

The City Arborist found that the subject tree is heavily infested with mistletoe, a parasite which weakens trees structurally as well as conditionally. The tree is rapidly declining with weak attachments between the trunks, with decay in the base of several of the trunk; predisposing it to trunk failures.

- 2. The tree poses a likely foreseeable threat to life or property, which cannot be reasonably mitigated through pruning, root barriers, or other management methods.***

The City Arborist found that there are many targets in and around the parking lot if any of the trunks were to fall- cars, pedestrians, buildings.

- 3. The property owner can demonstrate that there are unreasonably onerous recurring maintenance issues, which are deemed necessary for safety or protection of property. The property owner is responsible for providing documentation to support such a claim.***

This condition is not applicable.

- 4. A situation exists or is proposed in which structures or improvements, including, but not limited to, building additions, second units, swimming pools, and solar energy systems, such as solar panels, cannot be reasonably designed or altered to avoid the need for tree removal.***

This condition is not applicable.

- 5. The tree has matured to such an extent that it is determined to be out of scale with adjacent structures and utilities, or with other landscape features.***

This condition is not applicable.

**Public Comment:**

*Public Notification of Tree Removal:* Section 8.12.060.F of the Tree Protection Ordinance states that trees proposed for removal shall be marked by City staff with a form prescribed by the City. Notice of a Tree Removal Permit application shall be posted on the subject parcel, and in at least two public places within 300 feet of the affected trees, at least ten (10) calendar days prior to the date of the Sebastopol Tree Board meeting at which the application will be considered.

Notice of the tree removal was provided at least ten (10) days before the Tree Board meeting with one notice posted on the subject parcel and two notices posted within three-hundred (300) feet of the subject parcel on June 12, 2018 and July 5, 2018.

**Analysis:**

The request involves the removal of one multi-trunk locust tree, which is located in the parking lot of a commercial property on Gravenstein Highway South. The Tree Board may find that the subject tree is heavily infested with mistletoe and is rapidly declining with weak attachments between the trunks, with decay in the base of several of the trunk; predisposing it to trunk failures. The City Arborist concluded that removal is appropriate in that the subject tree would likely damage the adjacent buildings, cars or even possibly pedestrians, if it were to fall in the event of inclement weather, as a result of its compromised health. While the site will lose a large tree as a result of this removal, there will be an opportunity to replant an appropriate tree species.

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the Board approve the application based on the facts, findings, and analysis set forth and subject to the conditions of approval contained in this staff report, if there is a consensus that the subject tree warrants removal.

**Attachments:**

- Tree Removal Permit Application
- Written Statement
- Location Map
- Site Plan
- Site Photographs
- City Arborist's Report

**TREE REMOVAL PERMIT: 2018-62**  
**Removal of one multi-trunk locust tree with a DBH of 20+ Inches**  
**876 Gravenstein Highway South**

**Findings for Approval:**

1. That the removal is categorically exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, pursuant to Section 15301, Class 1, in that it involves the removal of a multi-trunk locust tree, which will result in the minor alteration of landscape features in an existing parking lot.
2. That the removal is consistent with the Tree Protection Ordinance in that it was properly noticed at least ten (10) days before the Tree Board made a determination with one notice being posted on the subject parcel and two notices being posted in public places within 300 feet on June 12, 2018 and July 5, 2018.
3. That the City Arborist found that the subject tree is heavily infested with mistletoe, a parasite which weakens trees structurally as well as conditionally.
4. That the City Arborist found that the tree is rapidly declining with weak attachments between the trunks, with decay in the base of several of the trunk; predisposing it to trunk failures.
5. That the City Arborist found that the subject tree merits removal in that its health has been compromised, which increases the probability that it may fall and found there are many targets in and around the parking lot if any of the trunks were to fall- cars, pedestrians, buildings.

**Recommended Conditions of Approval:**

1. The Tree Removal Permit shall be valid for a period of three (3) years, except that the applicant may request a one (1) year extension of this approval from the Planning Director, pursuant to Section 17.250.050 of the Zoning Ordinance.
2. An Encroachment Permit may be required prior to the removal of the tree. Please contact the Engineering Department prior to removal if work will be performed, or materials placed, in the public right-of-way. The phone number for the Engineering Department is (707) 823-2151.
3. Tree removals shall only take place during the following hours: Monday to Friday, from 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M., and Saturday and Sunday, from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Additionally, no tree shall be removed on any of the following holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Christmas Day, and Thanksgiving Day.
4. The applicant shall plant two (2) onsite replacement trees of a type and number approved by the City Arborist for each protected tree, within 45 days of this letter. A site plan indicating the replacement trees, and/or receipts of the trees shall be submitted to the Planning Department upon tree replacement approval and selection. Alternately, the applicant may opt to allow the City to retain the per-tree replacement deposit of \$150.00, which will be transferred into the City's Tree Fund.

5. Any replacement trees that will reach a height greater than 20 feet at maturity shall not be planted within 20 feet (measured horizontally) of any overhead utility lines.