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APPROVED MINUTES

TREE BOARD
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF September 05, 2018

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

TREE BOARD:

The notice of the meeting was posted on August 30, 2018.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Please turn off all cell phones and pagers during the meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chair Bush called the meeting to order at 4:01 P.M.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present:	Cary Bush, Vice Chair Lars Langberg, Board Member Christine Level, Board Member Ron Hari, Board Member
Absent:	Ted Luthin, Chair (excused) Gregory Beale, Board Member (excused)
Staff:	Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director Becky Duckles, City Arborist Dana Morrison, Assistant Planner Rebecca Mansour, Planning Technician

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: July 18, 2018

Vice Chair Bush asked a question of staff.

The Board continued this action due to lack of quorum.

4. PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE ON MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST:

Director Svanstrom introduced herself and updated the Board on the following:

- There will be a City Council election for three positions this Fall.
 - The three incumbents and one new candidate are running.
 - Additional information can be found on the City's website.
- The City is holding a Housing Fair on Sunday, November 4 at 1:30 p.m.
 - Topics for discussion will include accessory dwelling units, junior accessory dwelling units, homeshares, and the like.
 - All interested persons are encouraged to attend.

- The City Council will resume their discussion on the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map on Tuesday, October 2.

On behalf of the Board, Vice Chair Bush welcomed Director Svanstrom.

The Board had no questions for staff.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC REGARDING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:

There were none.

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

7. CONSENT CALENDAR: There were none.

8. REGULAR AGENDA:

- A. TREE REMOVAL PERMIT:** This is a Tree Removal Permit application, requesting approval to remove seven trees that are located at the former Aubergine site, 755 Petaluma Avenue. This application is subject to Tree Board approval because it involves the proposed removal of seven heritage size trees each with a diameter at breast height that exceeds 10 inches and are located on a commercial property.

Assistant Planner Morrison presented the staff report.

The Board asked questions of the applicant, the City Arborist, and staff throughout their discussion.

The applicant asked questions of the City Arborist, the Board, and staff throughout as well.

The City Arborist asked clarifying questions of the applicant throughout as well.

The applicant, Ron Wallace of TreePro, gave a brief presentation and was available for questions. He also provided the Board with additional photos that he had taken earlier in the day.

A woman named Mary Pattenoster, Chief Operating Officer of M & J Investments gave a brief presentation and was available for questions.

Board Member Level commented:

- A landscape plan should have been provided to the Board in conjunction with this request.
- The applicant is basically asking the Board to approve removal of almost all of the landscaping on the site with no plan for what will replace it.
- The Board needs a concrete landscaping plan to show what the applicant intends to do with the site if these trees are removed.

Board Member Hari concurred with Board Member Level and commented:

- The Board is used to seeing a rendering of what the applicant intends to do to the site.
- Would be willing to support removal of all these trees so long as the applicant provides a professional replacement plan that is better than what currently exists.

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

Hearing none, Vice Chair Bush closed the public comment period and brought it back to the Board for discussion.

Board Member Hari commented:

- Reiterated his request for the applicant to return to the Board with a professional replacement plan.
- Suspects the Board would be more accepting of this request with an adequate landscape plan.
- As is, the Board cannot tell what the plan is for the site outside of these trees being removed.

Board Member Level commented:

- The bulk of the cracking in the hardscape is probably the result of expansive soils, not tree roots.
 - You can see that there was no preparation under the exiting construction.
 - Acknowledged that some of the cracking in the hardscape, especially around tree #5, may be due to tree roots.
 - Removing these trees is not going to remove the issue of cracked hardscape, if due to expansive soils.
 - None of these older sites were properly prepared to deal with the types of soil that we have in this area and it will continue to be an issue.

Ms. Duckles agreed with Board Member Level on some of the cracking likely having been caused by expansive soils rather than tree roots.

Board Member Level comments continued:

- In general, trees require maintenance.
 - In terms of utilities, PG&E goes around and prunes trees to ensure that they stay at least 10' from all service lines.
- If this property owner has not maintained these trees adequately in the past, which could or could not be the case, the same could be true for any new trees that may be planted.
- It doesn't appear as though the site has seen much care or maintenance.

Mr. Wallace asked to respond to Board Member Level's comment on lack of maintenance.

Vice Chair Bush asked Mr. Wallace to hold his response as the Board was in the midst of their deliberation.

Board Member Langberg commented:

- Agreed on the importance of seeing a landscape plan before moving forward with allowing removal of these trees.
 - A detailed plan would be helpful.
- Cost is a huge factor.
 - It may be worthwhile for the applicant to consider the costs of replacing everything versus making what's there work and seeing how things go.

Board Member Hari commented:

- Has pretty well stated his position on this.
- Expressed not being worried about the condition of the sidewalk along the frontage.
- Hopes the applicant will come back with a nice plan.

Vice Chair Bush read comments submitted by Chair Luthin for Board consideration. Chair Luthin's comments included:

- Has visited the site.
- A landscape plan is needed.
- Concurs with Ms. Duckles on not supporting removal of the sycamore trees (trees #1, #2 and #3).
 - While he observed minor damage done by the trees, he did not see anything to justify urgent drastic measures.
- Supports removal of tree #4.
- Trees #5 and #6 need pruning and proper care.
 - Does not support removal of these trees.
- Supports removal of tree #7.
- In general, the trees show signs of poor care over a long period of time.
 - Trees are valuable assets to both a property and the community.
 - Trees need to be maintained in the same way that buildings need to be painted, driveways paved, and roofs maintained.
 - It seems that too often, property owners allow trees to grow without care until they become a problem, then they want to cut them down.
- If in attendance, would be in favor of either denial of the application unless accompanied by a comprehensive site landscape plan, or approval of the removal of only trees #4 and #7.

Vice Chair Bush commented:

- Shares similar sentiments with Chair Luthin.
- Is a Landscape Architect.
- Finds tremendous value in overstory canopies.
- The overstory canopy at the corner obscures some overhead lines, anchors the corner, and provides much needed relief.
- Pistache trees grow really slow.
 - These pistache trees have survived harsh conditions and have been poorly maintained.
- Would wholeheartedly support the removal of trees #4 and #7.
 - This pistache is in poor condition and the cryptomeria has no real ornamental or cultural value.
- Wants to see what the long-term master site plan would be.
- The Board is always looking for a long-term approach in terms of site development which creates long-term value for the property owner as well.
- Echoed Board Member Langberg's comment on cost assessment.
 - Understands the costs associated with these types of things.
- The Board is in consensus on wanting to see a long-term master site plan.
- Trees bring an incredible identity to site value.
- Needs assurance on replacement plantings.

Board Member Level commented:

- Understands red maples to be pretty water intensive, especially when trying to get established.

Vice Chair Bush responded that red maples are medium on the scale in terms of water use.

Ms. Duckles responded:

- Red maples use a fair amount of water, especially when getting established.
- Understands that the building and site will receive different overview now than they have received in the past.

- Commends the work that the property owner has already done on beautifying the façade.

Board Member Hari asked Ms. Duckles if she could provide the applicant with a list of acceptable replacement trees that would be suitable for this location.

Ms. Duckles responded:

- Could discuss suitable replacement planting with the applicant further.
- Red maples require a lot of water and they get pretty tall.
 - Frequent pruning by PG&E to keep them away from service lines will eventually be required.
- This is a tough situation.
- Mr. Wallace is right about it being a little bit difficult to install root barriers after the fact.
- Has visited the site three times to look at these trees.
- Understands the dilemma.

Vice Chair Bush commented:

- Irrigation is a huge component to proper tree maintenance.
- Questioned if installation of subsurface irrigation would help bring the roots down for the existing trees on the site.

Ms. Duckles responded:

- In her experience, because the structural roots of these trees are already established, it would be really hard to train the roots to go deeper at this point.
 - Believed that the installation of subsurface irrigation could help.
 - Some amount of root pruning could occur.
- The environment in which these trees have been planted is a difficult one for trees with some stature to be established in on a permanent basis.
- The existing canopy really enhances the approach as people are coming into town from that direction.
- Hopes that the pistache trees can be maintained in place.
- Pistache trees are already used as street trees throughout town.
- The color of the foliage shown in the images of the red maples that the applicant used as an example of red maples planted at a local medical office in town seem to indicate that they may be a little bit stressed for water.
- Expressed being unsure about the use of red maples as replacement trees.

Board Member Level commented:

- There are currently some really nice and well-established canopy trees on the site.
- If we cut them down and replace them with saplings, it'll be another 25-30 years before we have a nice canopy again and that assumes that they'll survive.
- We don't want to end up with a dead corner.

Mr. Wallace interjected and requested the opportunity to respond to some of the comments he'd heard thus far.

Vice Chair Bush asked Mr. Wallace to hold his comments for the time being.

Board Member Level comments continued:

- Removal of the trees at the corner will eliminate a beautiful canopy at one of our primary entrances to town.
- It will take decades to get that canopy back.

- Any replacement trees are going to be given a poor situation to try to grow in.
- Reiterated her comments on cracked hardscape due to expansive soils and on these older sites not being properly prepared to deal with the types of soil that we have here.

Vice Chair Bush shared some of the sentiments as expressed by Board Member Level, however, he stated that the findings point more towards damage being caused by tree roots not expansive soils.

Board Member Level and Vice Chair Bush agreed to disagree on the cause of damage.

Board Member Langberg commented:

- The applicant could spend a lot of money and buy larger, more mature trees from a nursery to shorten the time it may take for a larger canopy.

Vice Chair Bush asked the Board if they were amenable to allowing Mr. Wallace the opportunity to respond to Board comments.

The Board responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Wallace commented:

- In response to the Board's impression that the trees have not been maintained;
 - This is not true.
 - He has been maintaining them for 15 years.
 - Trees on the site have suffered from verticillium wilt which may be why they look a little odd and misshapen.
 - Expounded on the maintenance that these trees and site have received over the years.
- Tree roots are on the surface of the soil because they need oxygen to survive.
 - The compacted, horrible soil prevents the roots from getting down below the surface.
 - Certain tree species have roots that are surface roots.
 - Surface roots are typical for sycamore and mulberry trees.
 - Crepe myrtles and red maples are known for having less invasive roots in terms of sidewalks.
 - He and the property owner had discussed planting crepe myrtles and red maples for that very reason.
- Red maples are planted throughout the city
 - To believe that red maples are not viable or suitable for this area is not correct.
 - This corner will not be without a canopy for 30 years.
 - Red maples are fast growing and do well here.
- In terms of remediation;
 - Grinding the sidewalk down will be a short-term fix. Roots will continue to disrupt sidewalks.
 - Root barriers will not work.
 - Root barriers are not a viable solution for the pistache trees.
 - The sycamore trees are impacted by the overhead utility lines.
 - Understands the desire to retain the sycamore trees.
- Understood the need for a new, professional landscape plan.

Ms. Duckles commented that this should be reviewed by the Planning Department in terms of a long-term street tree theme and in establishing some visual continuity throughout town.

Vice Chair Bush commented that Superintendent of Public Works, Dante Del Prete should be involved in that conversation as well.

Ms. Duckles commented:

- A lot of the red maples in our downtown are hybrid species.
- Hopes to find a way to reestablish some continuity and canopy through the city.

Mr. Wallace interjected:

- You don't want a monoculture here.
- Not having the same exact species everywhere in the city is important.
 - If there is a problem with that species they'd all be wiped out.
- A variety of trees is the way to go.

Board Member Level asked Ms. Duckles to expound on the irrigation requirements for red maple trees.

Ms. Duckles commented:

- Irrigation of new trees would need to happen weekly initially, depending on the weather.
 - The landscape contractor would need to adjust the irrigation system controls accordingly.
- Because the soil is highly compacted, the soil should be conditioned prior to any new planting.
 - Root barriers and subsurface irrigation should also be put in.
- A young tree in a 24" or 36" box could require around 50 gallons per week in hot weather.
 - Cooler, or wet weather would require less.
- Irrigation would be spaced out to become less and less frequent as the trees become established.

Vice Chair Bush commented:

- Spoke on tree tubes as a means of getting water down deep in weird soils.

Mr. Wallace commented:

- Disagreed on red maples being high water use trees.
- There are a ton of red maples around Sonoma County.

Board Member Level commented:

- Established trees require less water than young sapling trees.

Board Member Hari suggested that the soil along Highway 116 be amended.

Mr. Wallace agreed on the soil being compacted and not very viable for root growth.

Board Member Level commented:

- Pushing concerns on water use because the State of California has passed a strict rationing law.
 - In a short period of time we're going to be hit with really strong water rationing requirements that are considered permanent, not drought driven.
- We need to know that we're going to be able to adequately water new trees, so they may become established.
- Reiterated her desire to see a clear landscape plan.

Vice Chair Bush commented:

- Board Member Level brings up a good point.
 - Staff will review any plan to ensure compliance with MELOW requirements.
- Biggest question is what will happen if trees are removed, new trees are planted, and they fail.

Director Svanstrom spoke on process.

Board Member Level commented:

- Unwilling to agree to the removal of these trees without an adequate replacement plan that includes details on irrigation, maintenance, etc.
- Could support removal of trees #4 and #7.

Board Member Level made a motion to:

- Approve removal of tree #4.
- Support removal of tree #7.
- Deny removal of trees #1, #2, #3, #5, and #6.

Board Member Hari seconded the motion.

AYES: Vice Chair Bush and Board Members Hari, Level and Langberg

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Chair Luthin and Board Member Beale

9. DISCUSSION ITEMS: There were none.

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

11. ADJOURNMENT: Vice Chair Bush adjourned the meeting of the Design Review Board at 5:16 p.m. to the next Tree/Design Review Board meeting to be held September 19, 2018 at 4:17 p.m., at the Sebastopol City Hall, 7120 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol, CA.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Dana Morrison
Assistant Planner