

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
LARKSPUR PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
OCTOBER 15, 2015

COMMISSION: PRESENT: Acting Chair Blauvelt, Cimino, Matteo

COMMISSION: ABSENT: Chair Friedel

STAFF: PRESENT: Recreation Director Dick Whitley  
Recreation Supervisor Nick Stone  
Public Works Director Mary Grace Houlihan

Acting Chair Blauvelt called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT CALENDAR

Approval of Minutes of May 21, 2015

M/s Matteo/Cimino, to approve the minutes of May 21, 2015 as submitted.

Ayes: Blauvelt, Cimino, Matteo,

Absent: Chair Friedel

REMEMBERENCE

The Commission will observe a moment of silence for long-time Larkspur Parks and Recreation Commissioner Tom McNally, who passed away August 28, 2015

OPEN TIME

There were no comments.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Hearing of Heritage Tree Permit Application Protest at 105 King Street, Larkspur

Recreation Director Whitley presented the staff report. He asked the Commission to refer to the tree on Magnolia Avenue as tree #1 and the tree on King Street at tree #2.

Acting Chair Blauvelt opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. John Miller, applicant, stated he recently bought the property. He is concerned that the tree roots are damaging the historic wall. He had to remove one limb that was hanging over Magnolia Avenue- it was dangerous to cars and pedestrians. The trees pose a liability issue. He intends to replant the yard and the landscape plan has been approved by the City and the water district. The trees are unsightly and removing them would result in an unobstructed view of this historic house.

Commissioner Cimino asked if the proposed replanting would be trees or groundcover. Mr. Miller stated it would mostly colorful shrubs since the Heritage Preservation Board asked him not to plant anything tall. He has hired a landscape architect. Commissioner Cimino asked if the other trees in front of the house were an issue. Mr. Miller stated “no”.

Commissioner Cimino asked if the Commission should be concerned about the wall. Recreation Director Whitley stated they are only responsible for the code section that deals with trees. The wall does not fall under their purview.

Mr. Richard Cunningham, Chair of the Heritage Preservation Board, stated the Board voted unanimously in favor of removing the trees because of their detrimental impact on the historic King/Costello property. He discussed the history of the house. The garden has been mismanaged over the years and the removal of the trees would improve the visibility of this historic resource. He discussed the historic wall and stated the tree is damaging the wall. The Acacias are not special trees, are pyrophitic, and do not have favored status. He urged the Commission to approve the application to remove these two trees.

Mr. John Hart, member of the Historic Preservation Board, stated these trees were “volunteers” that occurred long after the property was developed and to preserve them at the sacrifice of an historic resource accomplishes nothing. He supported the request to remove the trees.

Mr. Elliott Magnuson, owner of Mags Yogurt, stated Acacias are “weeds” and do not do well near structures. He supported the removal of the trees.

Mr. James Holmes, Larkspur, stated the Downtown Specific Plan refers to this area as the “garden downtown” and the emphasis is supposed to be on landscape and garden features as opposed to the more urban aspects of the “central downtown”. The garden and vegetation features of that area have been diminished rather significantly over the past few years including tremendous loss of vegetation on the Costello property. These trees do not substantially interfere with the public view of the property and their removal would have an insignificant impact on the historical impact. He stated the findings could not be made and the trees should be retained.

Mr. Joe Bane, Locust Avenue, stated this is an historic resource due to the structure and not the landscaping. Landscaping comes and goes with the weather, owners, etc. He supported the request to remove the trees.

Ms. Barbara Freitas stated these are not “heritage” trees but rather “junk” trees- they are brittle and fall down. These trees should be removed and replaced with something else.

Acting Chair Blauvelt closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Matteo stated the Commission rarely hears so many people speaking in favor of the removal of trees. The historic nature of the house adds a dimension they are

not used to dealing with. However, the ordinance does not address this issue. He would agree that the tree on Magnolia (tree #1) has probably caused some damage to the wall but he is not going to take the historic nature of the wall into account. He is inclined to vote against the request to remove the trees.

Acting Chair Blauvelt stated this is a difficult situation. She noted there were similar situations when a tree request is in conjunction with a planning issue. This is not an appropriate place for the Commission to be making a decision about the removal of a tree. She sees an interesting parallel with this application. The heritage aspects of this application are outside this Commission's knowledge. She would suggest approving the removal of the trees based on the recommendation of the Heritage Preservation Board or forwarding this application to the Council.

Public Works Director Houlihan stated the historic wall was not designed to withstand the stresses of trees in close proximity and the City is being put on notice by a licensed arborist that the trees will most likely become unstable. These trees are located near the public right-of-way and a major arterial and could be considered a public health and safety issue.

Commissioner Matteo asked if the Fire Chief had the authority to approve the removal of a tree if it is deemed a safety hazard. Recreation Director Whitley stated "yes, in conjunction with fire safety".

Commissioner Cimino noted the majority of arborists reports claim that the tree in question poses a safety hazard.

Recreation Director Whitley asked the Commission to vote on each tree separately.

M/s Cimino/Matteo to approve the request to remove tree #1.

Ayes: Blauvelt, Cimino

Noes: Matteo

Absent: Chair Friedel

M/s Matteo/Cimino to deny the request to remove tree #2.

Ayes: Matteo

Noes: Blauvelt, Cimino

Absent: Chair Friedel

Recreation Director Whitley noted the motion failed.

M/s Cimino/Matteo to approve the request to remove tree #2.

Ayes: Cimino, Matteo

Noes: Blauvelt

Absent: Chair Friedel

Acting Chair Blauvelt stated there was a 15-day appeal period to the City Council.

Acting Chair Blauvelt reiterated her opinion that the Heritage Preservation Board should play a part in the decision making process about the removal of Heritage trees on historic properties.

The Commission took a 5-minute break at 8:05 p.m.

### BUSINESS ITEMS

#### 1. Presentation and Request for Recommendation on Canine Commons Dog Park plans

Public Works Director Houlihan presented a staff report. The recent “Woofie Rumble” was a big success and staff got a lot of good input from the public. The on-line survey also resulted in a lot of feedback. Staff was looking for direction to move forward with design drawings and begin construction in the spring.

Mr. Sam Harnett, representing KLA Landscape Architects, gave a PowerPoint presentation. He stated restoration of the marsh was a mitigation component related to the Bon Air Bridge Project. This requires relocation of the dog park to the area adjacent to the Central Marin Police Authority building. The process has gone through the City Council and there has been a lot of community outreach. Some of the design features include a separated vestibule entry, separated areas for large vs. small dogs, shade, water, benches, and waste receptacles. He displayed the two design options. Both options had the same amenities however the configuration of the small dog vs. large dog areas were different. They are proposing limited plantings- the existing landscaping will be augmented with shade trees. They plan to use pavers in and decomposed granite in the transition area. He noted the community expressed support of Option 2. ADA access would need to be provided to Doherty Drive and the parking stalls. The area would be 28,000 square feet in total- the large dog area would be 20,000 square feet and the small dog area would be 8,000 square feet.

Commissioner Cimino asked if the grass would be watered. Ms. Harnett stated “yes” with an irrigation system. Commissioner Cimino asked about the buffer area between the high tide area and the fence. Public Works Director Houlihan stated there is currently a separation between high tide and the edge of the turf (a 25-foot buffer). Staff has been working with various agencies and a wildlife biologist regarding the proper location of the fencing.

Public Works Director Houlihan stated the public expressed a preference for a larger separation between the two entrances (small vs. large dog areas), a longer run for the large dog park, a vinyl coated chain link fencing, doggy bag dispensers in both parks, and a kiosk and message board. Additional features, such as agility equipment or a shade structure would not be covered by the mitigation funding.

Commissioner Matteo asked if the benches would be in the shade. Mr. Harnett stated they have located benches under each of the existing shade trees- the other bench seating would be under the cluster of trees.

Ms. Lucinda Smith, Corte Madera, stated she uses the dog park every day. She asked about the comparison between other dog parks. Public Works Director Houlihan stated both dog parks were twice the size of the existing park. Ms. Smith asked Mr. Harnett to point out the existing trees.

Ms. Kathleen Gulf, Cedar Avenue, had questions about the size of the park. Public Works Director Houlihan reiterated that the new facility would be twice the size of the existing dog park. Ms. Gulf stated the existing park was too small when two or three dogs were playing and running around. Public Works Director Houlihan stated an ideal dog park would be about an acre- the new facility would be about ½ acre and an improvement on what currently exists. Ms. Gulf asked if the fences could be moved if the small dog area was not being used. Public Works Director Houlihan stated there were costs associated with any modification. Ms. Gulf was concerned that the metal benches would get hot from sitting in the sun. Public Works Director Houlihan stated the benches would be located in the shade as much as possible. Mr. Harnett stated the bench was “powder coated” and not bare steel and offers some protection against the sun. Ms. Gulf had a question about the trash vs. recycling cans and the use of decomposed granite vs. grass in the transition area.

Ms. Barbara Freitas had a question about the proposed trees. She asked if people who use a walker or a cane could walk safely on the decomposed granite. Public Works Director Houlihan stated it was not loose material and this transition area would be ADA accessible.

A resident asked about the grant amount. Public Works Director Houlihan stated the overall Bon Air Bridge Project was around \$25 million. The mitigations were over \$2.5 million dollars. The dog park relocation was around \$200,000. The grant for the design was 80% and 88% for construction. The balance will come from the City Bridge Fund. The resident had questions about the bidding process.

Commissioner Cimino asked if the \$200,000 would also refurbish the current dog park to wetlands. Public Works Director Houlihan stated was a separate line item. She would be bringing that plan to the Commission sometime soon.

It was the consensus of the Commission to support this design and forward it to the Council.

## 2. Presentation and Request for Recommendation on Bon Air Landing Park plans

Public Works Director Houlihan presented a staff report and noted this was another Bon Air Bridge mitigation project. The project includes providing ADA accessibility all the way to the street. This requires refurbishment and enhancement of the park.

Mr. Tom Holloway, representing KLA Landscape Architects, described the park and the public access dock. They will be dealing with quite a bit of an elevation change (14’ to 15’) from the street level down to the dock. There has been a lot of public outreach through review of the Mini Parks Action Plan process and a community meeting during

the summer. He discussed the existing conditions including the circulation, the path to the gangway and the dock, plantings, etc. He noted this is a well used park with a gathering place at the entrance to the dock. At the community meeting people expressed concern about reestablishing the perimeter plantings and maintaining the usefulness of the lawn area and the gathering/event space. He discussed the design of the ramps and the dock. The existing trees would remain and they plan to install several new trees. The plan includes the addition of several benches and a seat wall.

Commissioner Cimino asked if the lawn would be irrigated. Mr. Holloway stated “yes”. Commissioner Cimino asked if they could install a drinking fountain. Public Works Director Houlihan stated “no” since it would require a new, separate meter.

Commissioner Cimino asked if the length of the pier would be increased. Ms. Holloway stated “no”. Public Works Director Houlihan noted this is primarily a kayaking dock.

A resident had questions about the construction of the stairs and the ramp.

It was the consensus of the Commission to move forward with the design of the Bon Air Landing Park plans.

### 3. Presentation and Request for Recommendation on Heatherwood Park plans

Public Works Director Houlihan presented a staff report. Staff has had several meetings with the Heatherwood community representatives. The community has raised over \$40,000 that has been deposited with the Larkspur Community Foundation. They have committed to installing upgraded fall zone material under the play equipment. Funding after that would go towards refurbishing the picnic area. She displayed the concept plan. The new swing set has been delivered and will be installed soon. The Council and Commission recently recommended applying Measure “A” dollars towards the purchase of another play structure. She displayed the play structures chosen by the community. Fall zone material would be replaced under all three structures. An eagle scout has volunteered to take on the refurbishment of the basketball court as a project.

Acting Chair Blauvelt asked Public Works Director Houlihan to point out the new trees.

Commissioner Matteo asked about the cost of the play structure. Public Works Director Houlihan stated it was \$49,000.

It was the consensus of the Commission to recommend to the Council the purchase of the play structure, authorize installation of the fall zone material, and accept the donation from the Heatherwood community.

### 4. Presentation and Request for Recommendation on Piper Park Playground equipment themes

Public Works Director Houlihan presented a staff report. Staff will be going out to the community in several weeks for suggestions about a preferred theme (pirate ship, tree

house, etc.). Once the theme is chosen then staff would develop the concept. This will be a phased project.

Acting Chair Blauvelt had questions about the plans for community outreach.

#### RECREATION DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT

Recreation Director Whitley reported recently hired Supervisor Nicholas Stone has "hit the ground running". The Commission will hear a presentation on Super Cool Summer School next month. The Larkspur Community Garden will hold its Annual Clean-Up Work Day on October 24<sup>th</sup>. The Larkspur Walkers recently celebrated their 30-year Anniversary. The Recreation Department Community Room will be a polling place on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. The next Town Hall meeting regarding the Larkspur Library/Community Facility would be held on November 14<sup>th</sup> in the Drake's Landing Community Room at 10:00 a.m.

Recreation Supervisor Stone reported Bacich after school classes were underway with all classes full to capacity. He is looking to expand after school classes at Hall Middle School and Kent Middle School. He is also looking to expand programming for young families.

#### COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Cimino reported he will be teaching a Beginning Bird Watching Class starting on October 24<sup>th</sup>. He plans to use the local parks during his class as a way of promoting them. He has some ideas for a small boardwalk through the marsh at Niven Park.

Acting Chair Blauvelt stated it would be nice to install a bench at Centennial Park in memory of former Commission McNally.

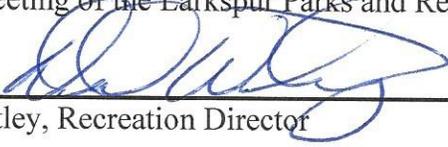
#### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 p.m. in memory of former Commissioner Tom McNally.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis  
Recording Secretary

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Larkspur Parks and Recreation Commission.



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Dick Whitley, Recreation Director