

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
LARKSPUR PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
VIA TELECONFERENCE DUE TO COVID-19
JUNE 17, 2021

COMMISSION: PRESENT: Acting Chair Friedel, Harrison, Sunshine

COMMISSION: ABSENT: Koeppel, Chair Blauvelt

STAFF: PRESENT: Community Services Director Franklin Escobedo
 Planning Director Neal Toft
 City Clerk Alison Foulis
 Public Works Department Analyst Rita Schoch

1. Roll Call

Acting Chair Friedel called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

3. Approval of the Consent Calendar

3.1 Approval of Minutes of April 15, 2021

M/s Sunshine/Harrison, motion to approve the April 15, 2021 minutes as submitted.

Ayes: Harrison, Sunshine, Acting Chair Friedel

Absent: Koeppel, Chair Blauvelt

(through a roll call vote)

4. Public Hearing

4.1 Protest Hearing of Heritage Tree Permit Application at 130 Pepper Avenue

Planning Director Toft presented a staff report. On May 4, 2021 the City received an application to remove a Silver Maple at the corner of Elm and Pepper Avenues. Mr. James Lascot submitted an arborist report dated April 21, 2021. The report indicates the tree is healthy but is located directly under power lines and has been continuously pruned. There is evidence of decay in the trunk and the tree has other negative attributes. It poses a risk to persons or property. The City issued a Public Notice on May 19th and received a letter of protest from Donald and Karen Walker. He discussed the Findings that must be made to grant the application for removal.

Acting Chair Friedel opened the Public Hearing.

Ms. Cindy Winship, property owner, stated the reasons for removing the tree are indicated in the arborist report but her main concern is that it continuously grows into the wires and power line. Pacific Gas & Electric trims the tree every year. She is of the opinion that PG&E does not take a lot of care while pruning and the tree has been

“hacked”. It is difficult to maintain. None of her immediate neighbors have an issue with removing the tree. She will put more foliage in the yard.

Ms. Karen Walker, Elm Avenue, stated she walks by the tree every day and saw the Public Notice on a telephone pole. She questioned if this tree has been put on a list by PG&E as a problem tree. PG&E has removed other trees with similar proximity to power lines. This tree is deemed healthy per the property owner’s arborist. This tree can recover and needs better attention. It does not pose a greater danger than other trees on Elm or Pepper Avenue. She asked about the City guidelines for Heritage Tree protection.

Commissioner Harrison asked for more information on the condition of the trunk. Mr. Lascot, consulting arborist, stated the Silver Maple is located near and under the high voltage lines. PG&E is required to maintain at least eight feet of clearance. Silver Maples do not handle decay well and the smallest cut can cause a lot of decay. They also often have poor structure with limbs that are too closely connected where decay can form. He noted the “health” of the tree refers to the amount of foliage, lack of pests or disease, and not to structural issues. The continued removal of the upper branches (topping) is not considered an ISA approved method. There is a risk of limbs breaking over the roadway.

Commissioner Sunshine stated the ordinance addressed safety issues but does not mention limbs under electric wires. This will certainly be an ongoing issue. Mr. Lascot stated Code Section 16.070 F 2(a) does speak to interference with utility services.

Acting Chair Friedel stated the Commission had talked about revising the Heritage Tree Ordinance and perhaps this component can be addressed. This issue can be taken into account when deciding whether or not the Findings can be made.

Acting Chair Friedel closed the Public Hearing.

Acting Chair Friedel stated it might have been helpful to have positive or negative comments from residents of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Sunshine stated the issue of trees under power lines is compelling. She appreciates the applicant’s willingness to replace the tree with something that is more appropriate for that location.

Commissioner Harrison stated approving the removal of a tree is always challenging but has to be balanced with neighborhood safety. This tree has had ongoing issues.

M/s Sunshine/Harrison, motion to approve the application to remove the Silver Maple at 130 Pepper Avenue.

Ayes: Harrison, Sunshine, Acting Chair Friedel

Absent: Koepfel, Chair Blauvelt

(through a roll call vote)

Acting Chair Friedel stated there is a 10-day appeal period.

6. Director’s Oral Report

Community Services Director Escobedo reported Super Cool Summer School started on Monday- they are off to a great start! Kinder Camp will start in August at Bacich Elementary. Shout-out to Nicholas Stone for the great work! Staff is working on the Fall programs. Staff is waiting for the background check to clear on a part-time office employee. He is waiting to hear from Human Resources about hiring a full-time Community Services Assistant that will be shared between the two departments. He included the Recreation Department in the Library's Summer Reading Program in the form of an app that provides activities. There will be prizes! Staff is looking forward to the Larkspur Walkers starting soon.

Public Works Analyst Schoch discussed the construction going on in Piper Park including projects that were on hold. The crew has been working hard on Phase 1- planting mature trees in the picnic area, installing the performance stage and a path leading to the stage, and installing professional grade sand at Volleyball Court #2. Phase 2 will include engineering and fabrication for the shade sails. She gave an update on the Hamilton Park Project. The landscape architect, along with the donors, will be doing a kick-off meeting next Friday. This project will get underway soon. She discussed a new project involving another donor who lives near Dolliver (Dark) Park. The donor would like to help facilitate the installation of a play structure for children under five. She will present some preliminary designs and a budget to the donor. The new installation might require the removal of an existing piece of equipment. She will report back to the Commission next month.

7. Commissioner's Reports

Acting Chair Friedel asked when they could schedule the Music in the Park program. Community Services Director Escobedo stated perhaps September or October. Acting Chair Friedel report on the status of the Commons Foundation and noted the Rose Lane "thermometer", which tracks the money being raised, continue to go up! The Phase 1 goal is \$5 million. The Commons Foundation will be meeting with the Rose Lane Homeowner's Association next week.

Commissioner Harrison thanked the City of Larkspur for the new doggy waste bags. She noticed there are new picnic tables being installed along the Corte Madera Creek path.

Commissioner Sunshine thanked staff for keeping the parks and open spaces open during the pandemic.

8. Adjourn Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

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.

Franklin Escobedo

Franklin Escobedo, Community Services Director