

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
LARKSPUR PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
SEPTEMBER 20, 2012

COMMISSION: PRESENT: Acting Chair McNally, Friedel,  
Hauser, Matteo

COMMISSION ABSENT: Chair Blauvelt

STAFF: PRESENT: Recreation Director Whitley  
Recreation Supervisor Clegg

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

APPROVAL OF CONSENT CALENDAR

Approval of Minutes of June 21, 2012

M/s Hauser/Friedel to approve the minutes of June 21, 2012 as submitted.

Ayes: All Absent: Chair Blauvelt

OPEN TIME

Ms. Laura Lovett, Larkspur Plaza Drive, stated the Friends of the Corte Madera Creek applied to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for funds to upgrade Remillard Park and were granted \$1,100. The money would be used for signage. She displayed a photograph of the existing kiosk and noted it was in disrepair- the roof is falling off, it is moldy, etc. The plan is to upgrade the kiosk and the signage, replace the dirt with paving stones, and move the trashcan. She was at the park on Coastal Clean Up-Day and stated the major issues are dogs running around off-leash and the amount of dog excrement that is not picked up by pet owners. She encouraged the City to install a doggy bag dispenser. She displayed a picture of the existing sign and noted it was a black and white poster depicting the wildlife that could be found in the area. She stated the plan was to update the existing poster. The Friends of the Corte Madera Creek meet on the third Thursday of the month.

Acting Chair McNally asked if this proposal would come back to the Commission. Recreation Director Whitley stated replacement of existing facilities is not an issue. Any deviation from the Mini-Parks Master Plan would require review by the Commission.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Protest of Heritage Tree Permit Application: 132 Via La Cumbre

Recreation Director Whitley presented the staff report. He noted staff received one letter of protest.

Acting Chair McNally opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Carmel Lau, applicant, stated he would like to remove the tree because of his wife's allergies. The tree was not in season when they bought the house and they did not realize it would be a problem. His wife is reluctant to go into the backyard. The arborist report notes that there were some dead branches on the tree that could be a result of prior pruning. He stated there was a recent hillside fire in the area and the subject tree has a very low canopy. Removing it would help avoid the spread of any fire.

Commissioner Hauser asked Mr. Lau if he asked the arborist about pruning the tree. Mr. Lau stated "yes" and noted the arborist gave him two bids, one to prune and one to remove the tree. Given his wife's allergies, he opted to apply to remove the tree.

Acting Chair McNally asked if the allergic reaction lasted several months. Mr. Lau stated it was seasonal. Ms. Lau stated it lasted from April to the end of July or August. She stated they did not know this was an Oak tree when they moved in.

Commissioner Matteo asked if they would replace the tree if they were granted approval to remove it. Mr. Lau stated "probably" but they have not thought about it. The yard would be pretty bare if they removed the tree.

Acting Chair McNally stated the letter of protest asserts that the tree is a noise barrier for the highway below. Mr. Lau stated the tree has grown quite a bit since they bought the house and it is quieter. The tree probably helps but they would rather put up with the noise than the allergies.

Acting Chair McNally closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Hauser stated he has been on the Commission for a long time and this is the first time an applicant has raised the issue of allergies. He looked at the tree and stated it was in dire need of some serious pruning. This is a healthy heritage tree. Based on the provisions of the Heritage Tree Ordinance and City policies and he felt they should first try to mitigate the problem through pruning. This could help the situation.

Commissioner Matteo stated the tree seemed healthy and was in need of pruning. The issue regarding allergies is unique and one that the Commission has not encountered. The ordinance does not address medical conditions aside from a broad interpretation of Section 12.16.070 F, Findings, 2. (b), "unreasonable interference with the property owners' investment-backed expectations". This is a difficult issue and he is trying to put himself in the applicants "shoes". However, the tree seems viable and therefore there are no grounds for removal.

Commissioner Friedel stated there were certain criteria that need to be met. She was sympathetic to the fact that they could not enjoy the property. However, she would be hard-pressed to approve the applicant because the necessary criteria have not been met.

Acting Chair McNally stated he looked at the tree and noted there were some dead branches and it needed serious pruning. However, the tree was not diseased or in

danger of falling. The issue regarding allergies is new to the Commission. He noted there were few trees in the backyard and removing this tree would leave it quite barren.

Commissioner Hauser reiterated that he would like to see an attempt to mitigate the problem through pruning.

M/s Hauser/Friedel to deny the application to remove the Oak tree at 132 Via La Cumbre.

Ayes: Acting Chair McNally, Friedel, Hauser No: Matteo Absent: Chair Blauvelt

Recreation Director Whitley stated there was a 15-day appeal period.

## BUSINESS ITEMS

### 1. Discussion of potential replacement of Community Garden Combination Lock

Recreation Director Whitley presented a staff report. He stated Ms. Laura Lovett was successful in getting a grant from Marin County Supervisors Rice and Kinsey in the amount of \$3,500 and donations from 34 gardeners in the amount of \$1,140. The County grant also allows for the provision of interpretative signage for the garden.

Commissioner Hauser asked if this project was fully funded from sources outside of the City budget. Recreation Director Whitley stated "yes".

Acting Chair McNally asked for clarification on the cost for the new gate and the lock. Recreation Director Whitley stated the cost for the self-closing gate and lock would be \$2,985. There would be a surplus of approximately \$1,600 which could be used for the interpretative signage. Ms. Lovett's initial estimate was that the signage would cost about \$1,550. Acting Chair McNally asked if the Commission would review the proposed signage. Recreation Director Whitley stated "yes".

Commissioner Matteo stated this was a great example of public activism and he praised Ms. Lovett for her efforts.

M/s Hauser/Matteo to approve the proposal for a new self-closing gate and lock at the Community Garden in an amount not to exceed \$2,985.

Ayes: All Absent: Chair Blauvelt

Mr. Steven Conner, Community Garden Coordinator, stated the kiosk/bulletin board in front of the garden is in disrepair. They are proposing to remove it and replace it with a similar structure at a different angle. Ms. Laura Lovett displayed her proposal for a sign that is called a "rail graphic". It would be at a very low height and would have a minimal impact on the environment. The materials would include a painted steel base with high-pressure laminate at the top. It would be scratch, graffiti, and mold proof. One disadvantage is that it would fade in about 10 years. The proposal is to remove the existing kiosk and put in some paving. It would be ADA compliant.

Acting Chair McNally asked if they got a lot of input from the other gardeners. Ms. Lovett stated they have a team that is working on content and picture research.

Commissioner Friedel asked if the new bulletin board would allow for signs and postings. Mr. Connor stated “no”. He stated it would include only information about the Community Garden-Who we are, what the garden is about, etc.

Recreation Director Whitley asked Ms. Lovett to submit to staff a mock up of the proposed bulletin board as soon as possible for next month’s meeting. This should include the location, size, materials, colors, and content.

2. Community Facility Parcel Ad-Hoc Committee Appointment from the Larkspur Park and Recreation Commission

Recreation Director Whitley presented a staff report.

M/s Hauser/Matteo to appoint Commissioner Friedel to serve on the Community Facility Parcel Ad-Hoc Committee with Commissioner Hauser serving as the alternate.

Ayes: All Absent: Chair Blauvelt

RECREATION DIRECTOR’S ORAL REPORT

Recreation Director Whitley reported that the City Council reappointed Chair Blauvelt and Commissioners Friedel and McNally to the Commission. The City Council denied the appeal and upheld the Parks and Recreation Commission’s decision regarding the Heritage Tree Removal Permit for 10 Parkway. The Council conditioned the removal of the five trees with a 2:1 replacement ratio, either on the subject property or in a City park. The City Manager and the City Attorney are of the opinion that the Heritage Tree Ordinance should be revisited. The Super Cool Summer School program was a big success with over 840 children enrolled. It will be held on the Kent Middle School campus next summer. Acting Chair McNally asked if the program paid for itself. Recreation Director Whitley stated “yes”. He distributed the fall brochure which was a joint effort with the Town of Corte Madera. Staff is currently working on the winter/spring brochure. Staff has met with the United States Tennis Association (USTA) regarding adding new lines on the tennis courts for the Quick-Start Children’s Tennis Program. The cost is covered by the USTA. Staff is working with the Public Works Department to install new chips in the Dog Park. The chips are being donated by local arborists. He invited everyone to “Dress Up Your Dog Day” scheduled for October 27<sup>th</sup> at the Dog Park. He noted the Recreation Department office was newly floored and painted and looks fantastic. Additional bike racks were recently installed in front of the Recreation Department in an effort to encourage Hall Middle School students to bicycle to school. The Hooked on Marin Speaker Series started tonight and included a presentation and panel discussion on the Organic Food Movement. Commissioner Matteo asked if the College of Marin was a participant. Recreation Director Whitley stated “yes” and noted they were the driving force.

Recreation Supervisor Clegg reported the Recreation Department now has Facebook and Twitter and she encouraged everyone to check them out. She stated the site could use more photographs and she asked the Commission to email any pictures they would like to see posted. Staff implemented the new on-line registration program that allows for on-line registration and it is working very well. After school classes started this week at Bacich and Hall Middle School.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner McNally asked about the kids he often sees running in Piper Park. Recreation Director Whitley stated they were probably on the Redwood Cross-Country Team.

Commissioner Friedel stated she was very concerned about the number of dogs off-leash in Piper Park and the amount of dog excrement in the park. Recreation Director Whitley stated he has not received any complaints and the citations would come from the Humane Society.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis  
Recording Secretary